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The Poet as Scholar: Essays and Translations in Honor of Jonathan Chaves

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THE POET AS SCHOLAR:
ESSAYS AND TRANSLATIONS IN HONOR OF JONATHAN CHAVES



In a story from the Spring and Autumn Period, when Boya played the qin and Zhong Ziqi listened, Ziqi's thoughts were transported to towering mountains. He exclaimed to Boya, "How wonderful, with majesty akin to Mount Tai!" But in another moment his thoughts were carried to flowing waters. "How marvelous," he said, "bubbling and flowing like our mightiest rivers!" When Ziqi died, Boya smashed his qin and broke its strings. Despite many requests, he never again played the qin, for he felt no one in the world could fully perceive him through his music. The two-character phrase "understand the sounds" (知音) thus came to mean not only full awareness but also true friendship.

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in Honor of Jonathan Chaves

edited by David K. Schneider

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INTRODUCTION



Portrait in pencil of Jonathan Chaves, 1983, by Dora Lee

The Poet as Scholar:
Essays and Translations in Honor of Jonathan Chaves

David K. Schneider

INTRODUCTION

This book is a tribute to the truly protean mind of Jonathan Chaves, Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at George Washington University since 1979. The range and depth of Chaves' work is astounding. He is the author of twelve books and dozens of scholarly articles that cover a vast array of intellectual and aesthetic ground. He is at heart a poet, as his translations attest. But he is a poet with the skills of a most excellent philologist. His scholarship is legendary for its fidelity not only to the original language of poetry and art, but also to what poetry and art have to say, and to their aesthetic beauty. Chaves' interests are not only in translation. He is one of our most insightful scholars of Chinese aesthetic theory and poetics, Chinese and Japanese art history, and literati culture and thought. Moreover, his interests are not limited to purely academic translation and philology. He takes the view that the job of the humanities, East or West, is not to subject literature and art to theoretical "interrogation," but rather to make available to the modern reader, specialist and non-specialist alike, the beauties and truths of great literature and art; to revive for us the culture that nurtured such works so that we may once again appreciate them as objects of aesthetic, philosophical, and religious contemplation—a powerful voice emerging from the Great Tradition of humanistic studies that flourished so brilliantly in Columbia University's Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures under the leadership of Wm. Theodore de Bary, Donald Keene, Burton Watson, and C.T. Hsia, from which Chaves graduated with a PhD in 1971.

It is no surprise that a book dedicated to such a poet-scholar would be somewhat eclectic. My

purpose in organizing this volume was to ask Chaves' friends, collaborators, and former students to contribute to a book that would serve as a just tribute to the personality and accomplishments of this truly Renaissance mind. The essays I received did not disappoint. In this volume, there are essays and translations that are not oriented around a single academic theme or problem. Rather, we have a collection of excellent contributions that add a singular perspective and academic or cultural contribution to a field of endeavor substantially influenced, or even originated, by Jonathan Chaves.

Opening this feast of essays commemorating Chaves' career, we have the honor of a short look at the life of one of the scholars who inspired him to such great heights. We all have that one figure who represents an ideal we aspire to, a person whose achievements we admire and hope one day to emulate. For me, and for many of his former and present students, that person is Chaves himself. For Chaves, one of these great figures was his Columbia University mentor Burton Watson. Chaves' first book, *Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow: Poems from Sung Dynasty China by Yang Wan-li*, published in 1975, was inspired by Watson's translations of classical Chinese and Japanese literature. Chaves emerged as his equal both in terms of philological accuracy and in terms of quality as literature, "translation" in the highest possible sense. The *Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* is meant to be a companion to Watson's *Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry from Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (1984). It is significant and appropriate that a book in Chaves' honor would begin with an autobiographical essay by Burton Watson on his later life. From this sketch, we learn of Watson's life in Japan, many of the circumstances of some his best known scholarly works and translations, and of his deep encounter with Zen Buddhism.

Following Watson's contribution, the book is organized into four sections:

- I. Translations,
- II. Classical Chinese Poetry,
- III. Art, Literati Culture, and Aesthetics in China and Japan, and
- IV. Culture and History.

I. TRANSLATIONS

My first experience with Chaves' work was with his *Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow*. Translation of

classical Chinese poetry and literary prose is Chaves' first field of achievement. *Heaven My Blanket* was followed by many equally superb translations: *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry: Yüan, Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties* (1986), *Pilgrim of the Clouds: Poems and Essays from Ming China by Yüan Hung-tao and His Brothers* (1992), *Cloud Gate Song: The Verse of Tang Poet Zhang Ji* (2006), *West Cliff Poems: The Poetry of Weng Chüan* (2010), *Every Rock a Universe: The Yellow Mountains and Chinese Travel Writing* (2014), and the just published *Cave of the Immortals: The Poetry and Prose of Bamboo Painter Wen Tong (1019-1079)* (2017). This is not to mention the many translations contained in virtually all of Chaves' scholarly studies and other works.

The literary and scholarly quality of his translations have garnered him the Lucien Stryk Award for Best Asian Translation, conferred by the American Literary Translators Association; the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission Award for the Translation of Japanese Literature; and a nomination for the National Book Award in Translation. His seven books of translations of Chinese classical literature and Japanese literature written in classical Chinese have earned him a firm place among the greatest translators of East Asian literature into English such as Arthur Waley and Burton Watson.

In this volume, we present a group of translations inspired by Chaves' work. The first two are from works by the Yuan 袁 brothers, Hongdao 宏道 (1568–1610) and Zhongdao 中道 (1570–1624). They both draw inspiration from one of Chaves' books in particular, *Pilgrim of the Clouds*, which contains translations of essays by the Yuan brothers. First, Stephen McDowall, of the University of Edinburgh, offers "Fourteen Records of West Lake from Yuan Hongdao's *Deliverance Collection*." McDowall draws together fourteen superb essays by the Ming dynasty intellectual giant Yuan Hongdao, seven of which are here translated for the first time into English. There is a vast corpus of poetry and prose in the Chinese tradition about Hangzhou's West Lake. Hongdao's pieces are written in the form of the travel essay, the quality of which stands high in the tradition established by the likes of Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), both of whom wrote beautifully about West Lake. Yuan Hongdao gives us some of the finest examples of landscape description in the West Lake tradition. McDowell renders them into lovely English prose that evokes the language and spirit of the originals. Here is a small taste of the delight of these translations:

At the sides of the path were planted peaches of deep red, weeping willows, jade orchids and over twenty different kinds of wild tea. The causeway banks are layered in white rocks, as fine as jade, while the path itself is laid with soft sand. Nearby there is another small causeway, with even more flowers of various kinds, their numbers increasing with every step. It is such a delight that one forgets to turn back, a feeling that does not diminish even after several trips.

Indeed, reading these translations is “such a delight that one forgets to turn back.” The last time I had such a feeling reading a new translation of Chinese travel writing was when I reviewed Chaves’ *Every Rock a Universe*.¹

Second, Duncan Campbell, of the Australian National University, has translated “*The Last Days of Yuan Hongdao*, by Yuan Zhongdao,” which contains excerpts from Yuan Zhongdao’s diary. In this contribution, we have two things, an explicit tribute to Chaves’ brand of humanities scholarship and intellect, and a translation that both follows the Chaves tradition—now we can talk about a Chaves-inspired tradition—of translation, which also gives us insights into the lives and mentalities of the Yuan brothers Hongdao and Zhongdao. Campbell quotes Chaves himself on the question of ideology in the humanities. Chaves seeks a “humanities scholarship both more modest in its claims and more dependable in its conclusions.” The job of the humanities is to understand the past on its own terms so we in the present can learn from the past. Chaves’ translation project is an integral part of this view of the humanities. Translation brings the great people of the past to life in the present. Translation allows those people to speak in their own unmediated voice directly to us. And in that vein, Campbell gives us a compelling picture of the relationship between the Yuan brothers in their own words, both the pathos and the comedy. We get to see the actual practice of traditional Chinese medicine and the all too familiar struggles all human beings experience in questioning their own being and its purpose, especially as life slips toward its end:

¹ For a review of Jonathan Chaves, *Every Rock a Universe: The Yellow Mountains and Chinese Travel Writing* (Warren, CT: Floating World Editions, 2012), see *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 36 (2014): 244–247.

... “Once one has become enlightened to the truth of Chan one finds therein both the secret of survival and that of the preservation of life.” Hongdao took up on what I had said, saying: “Yes, I have become enlightened to some aspects of the truth of Chan in recent days.... After the age of forty, one really must resolve to pay attention to the ways of preserving life, of being moderate and considered in matters of rest and diet, this being the way of longevity.” I replied, “Yes, I’ve often heard this said and am myself attempting to show greater restraint in life.”

When we stop to contemplate the experience of the people of the past, through the medium of these excellent translations, we see not how far they are from us, but rather how close, how much the human condition has not changed. The lesson for Campbell is one of humility in our approach to the humanities and to those who came before us.

Chaves has also done substantial work on the Japanese poetic tradition, represented by three wonderful books, *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing: The Wakan rōei shū*, co-authored with J. Thomas Rimer (1997), *Shisendō: Hall of the Poetry Immortals*, co-authored with J. Thomas Rimer, Stephen Addiss, and Hiroyuki Suzuki (1991), in which Chaves gives us translations of the *kanshi* of Ishikawa Jozan (1583–1672), and *Old Taoist: The Life, Art, and Poetry of Kodōjin*, co-authored with Stephen Addiss. In this spirit, Judith Rabinovitch and Timothy Bradstock, both formerly of the University of Montana, have contributed an annotated translation, the very first into English, of a *kanshi* dialog by the two Heian courtiers, Minamoto no Fusaakira (Hideakira) 源英明 (904/911?–939) and Tachibana no Arisura 橘在列 (ca. 890–953?). One is a “minor court official” and the other a “Buddhist novice.” This contribution captures another aspect of Chaves’ scholarly achievement—meticulous philological accuracy. Chaves is at heart a poet, and his translations are poetry. But they are not loose paraphrases that “capture the spirit of the original.” Chaves’ translations are not only literary gems, but philological gems as well. Philology is the handmaiden of the poetic muse, a rare achievement that stands the test of rigorous scholarship and literary quality. Both these qualities are demonstrated here in the Rabinovitch-Bradstock translation of what amounts to a philosophical dialog about the best path for human life. Short biographies serve to place both authors in their social and cultural context, and meticulous annotations make these lively translations understandable, no

mean achievement given the difficulty of the original language, in both cultural and linguistic terms. Of particular interest is the authors' engagement with the centuries-long debate in Chinese civilization about the ethics of eremitism, especially as articulated in Six Dynasties sources, a debate that was very much alive in China in the eighth and ninth centuries.² We learn from this paper, as the authors conclude, that this debate animated

two distinct polarities in the classical philosophical tradition in Japan: on the one side, a sense of duty as a servant of the court, and on the other, a desire to be free of hierarchies in which opportunities for advancement were often restricted. This counterpoint figured prominently in the consciousness of courtiers throughout the Heian period, especially among persons in the lower-to-middle reaches of the aristocracy, and was a constant refrain in Japanese court literature for centuries to come.

Our final contribution to our section dedicated to that aspect of Chaves' work devoted to translation is not a translation per se but rather a discussion of Chaves' own work in translation, specifically a review, authored by Chen Cheng, of Shanghai Ocean University, of one of his most influential translations, *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry*. Chen offers a compelling argument that, while the anthology has, since its publication in 1986, become a classic of literature in translation in its own right, it has also been very influential in initiating new ways to think about the history of Chinese literature and about the question of canonicity. Chen makes the case that in the act of selecting poets and poems to translate, Chaves has offered a new way to see the history of Chinese poetry. He establishes the persistence of the great tradition of *shi* 詩 poetry in the later dynasties that followed the Tang, thereby overturning the cliché that *shi* poetry was really superseded by the lyric 詞 and the aria 曲 in the Song and Yuan dynasties and by the novel in the Ming and Qing dynasties, which, Chen argues, is a bedrock assumption of Chinese literary history as written in China. Thus,

² See David K. Schneider, *Confucian Prophet: Political Thought in Du Fu's Poetry (752–757)* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2012), 87–131.

Chaves offers native Chinese scholars a new way to think about the history and content of the Chinese canon, while at the same time introducing to the Western reading public a completely new look at the Chinese poetic tradition. But within this re-conception of the Chinese canon, there is a subtler point about the book. By including many painter-poets in the volume, Chaves has done two things. First, he has shown in concrete terms the deep and abiding relationship between poetry and painting in the Chinese tradition. Second, he has opened up the canon to the inclusion of many writers not previously considered to be among the great poets of Chinese literary history. Chen argues that this, again, opens a whole new way to see the Chinese canon.

II. CLASSICAL CHINESE POETRY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

Chaves is not only a translator. He is also the author of seminal scholarly studies both of Chinese and of Japanese writers. With books such as *Mei Yao-ch'en and the Development of Early Sung Poetry* (1976), *Singing of the Source: Nature and God in the Poetry of the Chinese Painter Wu Li (1632–1718)* (1993), and *Old Taoist: The Life, Art, and Poetry of Kodōjin*, co-authored with Stephen Addiss (2000), Chaves brings us profound studies of the history of Chinese poetry and aesthetics, literary criticism, and of Christianity and Christian poetry in China. He has also authored foundational essays on literary criticism and aesthetics, works such as “The Expression of Self in the Kung-an School: Non-Romantic Individualism,” “‘Not the Way of Poetry:’ The Poetics of Experience in the Sung Dynasty,” and “The Panoply of Images: A Reconsideration of the Literary Theory of the Kung-an School,” to name just three among many listed in Chaves’ published works appended to the end of this introduction.³

In line with this aspect of Chaves’ work, we have two important essays on literary thought, criticism, and poetics. First, Yale University’s Kang-I Sun Chang gives us a study of Ming literary

³ “The Expression of Self in the Kung-an School: Non-Romantic Individualism,” in Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney, eds., *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

“‘Not the Way of Poetry:’ The Poetics of Experience in the Sung Dynasty,” *CLEAR*, vol. 4, no. 2, (July 1982),” actually published in 1984.

“The Panoply of Images: A Reconsideration of the Literary Theory of the Kung-an School,” in Christian Murck and Susan Bush, eds., *Chinese Theories of the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

celebrity Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559?) as a literary critic. Yang has been studied as a poet and scholar, but his contribution to Ming literary-critical thought has gone for the most part unstudied by modern scholars. Chang argues that Yang was actually the “first person to courageously step forth and criticize the views on poetry and lyrics held by the Archaists (*fugu pai* 復古派), also known as “Seven Early Masters” 前七子, who raucously advocated a return to the High Tang (盛唐).” Yang crafted a historical and literary-critical argument that even the masters of the Tang became great because they sought the sources of the greatness of the pre-Tang writers they admired, rather than simply imitating their achievements. He thus advocated a distinct character for the poetry of each successive dynasty rather than slavish imitation of the past. In laying out her case, Chang lets her readers experience directly the vibrant Ming debate over the nature, function, and practice of poetry, revealing many fascinating insights into Yang Shen’s personality and intellect along the way. One of the most interesting is that Yang advanced his position not merely in intellectual debates, but also in the uniqueness of his poetic style in all forms, *shi*, lyric, and aria. In the end, Chang firmly establishes Yang Shen as a major voice in the critical debates of the time and successfully overturns the long-standing neglect of his literary thought.

In another contribution that features scrupulous philological scholarship, Richard John Lynn, of the University of Toronto (Emeritus), addresses a question that has been debated for centuries: “the exact meaning of *shenyun* 神韻 (spirit-resonance), the most salient term in the poetics of Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711).” In this essay, Lynn navigates through the elaborate and subtle analogies of the characteristic language of the literary criticism of the day, which used both the language of painting and of Chan Buddhism, to tease out the conclusion that Wang Shizhen’s thinking about the relationship between Chan enlightenment and the highest poetic achievement, spirit-resonance, was quite different from those who have tended to equate the two. The consensus for many was that the ultimate in poetic achievement was attained in the “serene landscape poetry” characteristic of such poets as Wang Wei 王維 (699–761). And many writers through the centuries, including the author himself, identified Wang Shizhen with that school of thought. But in a model example of the academic pursuit of truth, Lynn draws a contrary conclusion from the new evidence he examines here. He concludes:

The later so-called “*Shenyun*” School of poetry that regarded Wang Shizhen as its founder may have reduced his “teachings” to a formula of detachment and indirect expression of mood and sensibility in poetry through the vehicle of landscape, but this development should not be confused with Wang’s own far more catholic and sophisticated views.

Reading Lynn’s argument we find that these views encompassed not only a poetic mode that penetrates a quietude akin to the meditative state of Samadhi, but also poetry powerfully expressive of human emotion, more characteristic of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) than of Wang Wei.

III. ART, LITERATI CULTURE, AND AESTHETICS IN CHINA AND JAPAN

Chaves’ record as a scholar equals his reputation as a translator of Chinese poetry. And here is where the word protean is fully applicable. Chaves’ range of interest and achievement encompasses a long list of fields and topics, in all of which he has authored major publications. In so many of these fields Chaves has been a pioneer, unafraid to break down barriers between what we think of as the standard disciplines of poetry, art, religion, and philosophy, and he has always stood ready to bridge gaps between the Western and Eastern humanistic traditions. He has written major studies of later imperial Chinese poetry (Song-Qing), most especially of Chinese aesthetics and literary criticism as explored in traditional *shi hua* 詩話 literature. He has also written extensively on religion in literature; the relationship between poetry and painting in China and Japan; Japanese *kanshi* poetry; and Christian literature and culture in China. In the history of the arts in both China and Japan, he has not only published important works on everything from major paintings to decorated snuff bottles and contributed translations and essays to important museum catalogs, but he has also curated a major art exhibition at the China Institute in New York titled *The Chinese Painter as Poet*, for which he also authored the exhibition catalog of the same title.

As a tribute to this line of Chaves’ work, we have seven essays. The first, by Li-ling Hsiao, University of North Carolina, treats one of Chaves’ most consistent and fruitful lines of inquiry, the

relationship between poetry, painting, and calligraphy. Citing Chaves' book *The Chinese Painter as Poet*, Hsiao "attempts to affirm Chaves' conception of the Chinese painter as poet by exploring the interaction of poetry and image in a landscape painting titled *Shanjin chunxing* 山徑春行 (Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path), by the famous Southern Song court painter Ma Yuan 馬遠 (active 1180–1224)." Extending the work of several scholars who have explored "how poetry guides and inspires the design of images," and "the way literary tropes like irony equally inform poetry and painting," Hsiao studies "the trope of paradox" in what amounts to a close reading of a painting. Hsiao has two goals here. First, she wishes to explore a particularly deep and sophisticated example of the subtle and determinative relationship between painting and poetry. Second, she argues, based on the use of these aesthetics of the multiple paradoxical relationships between word and image, to establish the authenticity of her subject painting *Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path*, whose authenticity has long been in doubt. Along the way, Hsiao gives us an insightful and philosophically rich discussion of the interpenetrating realms of natural and human activity and their expression in image and word. She makes a compelling argument for the continuity between art and nature in Chinese aesthetics, a conclusion that invites speculation of wider questions concerning the philosophical reading of painting. Hsiao concludes, however, that Ma Yuan's use of paradox ultimately raises art to a position superior to nature.

Qianshen Bai of Boston University offers a rare study on the difficult and intricate art of seal carving. The essay focuses on the artistic and scholarly activities of Wu Dacheng 吳大澂 (1835–1902) and his associates and friends in the literati intellectual, scholarly, and artistic world during the period of the Taiping Rebellion. Seal carving involves not only the ability to carve characters into stone, but also the knowledge of the different stone media, the calligraphic skills of a specialist in calligraphy, and the scholarly knowledge of the various forms of antique characters used in ancient pre-Qin bronze vessel inscriptions. Here is an excerpt of a letter Bai translates for us that demonstrates both the nature of the art and the sophisticated level of the cultural dialog about it: "Seal carving should exclude the habits of contemporary seal carvers and imitate the brush method of inscriptions on ancient bronze vessels and ancient seals; only then can one surpass ancient precedents." Bai carefully traces out from multiple sources the history of this art. We learn that the collection and study of ancient seals became an important part of the wider interest in seal carving and in excavated ancient

clay seal impressions. Large collections were amassed during this period and multi-volume seal books were published, as were scholarly studies on seals and the government institutions that used them. From this interest there developed a major niche in the broader business of antique markets, shops, and dealers and the operations of actual antique transactions. Finally, we learn that the culture surrounding seal carving and collecting gave rise to new scholarly fields such as paleography, which in turn contributed to the rise of the objective academic and philological study of China's past for which Qing scholars are justly renowned.

Colin Hawes, of the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, contributes a paper, inspired by Chaves' book on Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002–1060) and strongly reminiscent of his essay on Chinese snuff bottles, that uncovers a fascinating aspect of literati culture that has as its subject the tools used for writing—ink stones, brushes, etc. But Hawes does not study them as physical objects, as a paper on “material culture” might, but rather as subjects of literary expression, as images imbued with an animated nature. His evidence is the sub-genre of northern Song poems on writing tools exchanged between Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), Su Shunqin 蘇舜欽 (1008–1048), and Mei Yaochen. Hawes' purpose is both to introduce this interesting literature to the world and to speculate about why the Song literati elevated writing tools to such cultural significance by making them the subject of poetry. A particularly good example is found in Hawes' excellent translation of a poem by Mei Yaochen, addressed to Ouyang Xiu, a portion of which is reproduced here:

You are the most gifted [scholar] in the empire,
 And you use your mind as you use the brush:
 Upright and strong, moving with spontaneity,
 You never miss a single stroke;
 And then, looking at the characters on the page,
 Great and small are perfectly proportioned.

Hawes' thorough study of this sub-genre shows how writing tools are invested through poetry with “moral, historical, and cosmic energy,” and often represent the moral character of fellow literati. His discussion provides important insights and glimpses into the actual practice of writing and

calligraphy, the attitudes poets took to the art, and their individual practices. In the end, writing tools as objects become deep expressions of friendship, conveyed through an epistolary poetry, between some of the greatest figures of the Northern Song.

In an essay that combines biography, art history, literary translation, and literary criticism, Richard A. Pegg, Curator of Asian Art for the MacLean Collection, brings to life the Yuan dynasty poet, painter, seal carver, swordsman, and military strategist Wang Mian 王冕 (c.a. 1287–1359), with a sharp focus on Wang's prunus paintings and poems and their use as moral and political symbols. Pegg details the history and aesthetics of the tradition of painting and writing about prunus trees and blossoms and places Wang in the tradition as the greatest prunus painter of his generation, whose brush style was related to his cultivation as a sword master. With another take on the relationship between poetry and painting, Pegg notes that Wang's paintings were routinely inscribed with poems to create a unified poem-painting, a continuation of the Song dynasty tradition described by Hsiao in her essay on Ma Yuan, here carried on in the Yuan, and forward into the Ming by Wang's followers.

Felice Fischer, of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, brings another great painter-poet of the past to life, this one from eighteenth-century Japan. She gives us a biographical portrait of the towering figure of Kimura Kenkadō 木村兼葭堂 (1736–1802), who was both a major patron of the arts and artists and an innovator who combined painting, poetry, and calligraphy to create his own unique contribution to late traditional Japanese culture. She first delineates the political and cultural history of Osaka, where Kimura lived and worked, particularly the rise and importance of Chinese literati culture. She then describes Kimura's role as an art patron and collector. Kimura had a key role in creating something new in Japanese early modern art culture:

What Kenkadō partly pioneered, was having secular art by living artists on exhibit at a temple exhibition, and also most likely for sale, though this is not specifically mentioned by Taiga or Kenkadō. Kenkadō succeeded in merging the larger popular temple venue with the mode of elite viewing for a chosen few.

He also did much to promote a deep engagement with a number of aspects of Chinese literati culture. He established Chinese-style tea ceremonies in Japan with his Sencha tea gatherings, which featured

appreciation of antique Chinese bronze vessels and other activities associated with the Chinese literati. He also founded a “study group on Chinese language and literature that came to be called the Kenkadō-kai,” which served as the origin of future clubs dedicated to the study and practice of poetry in classical Chinese. Fischer shows Kimura to be a true Renaissance man in the style of the eighteenth century across the globe. Similar to contemporary figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, Kimura amassed an immense library containing works from all over the world on a vast array of subjects, and his “home was a veritable natural history museum, featuring, besides the botanical items and his shell collection, butterfly collections, Ainu objects, and fossils.” Fischer succeeds in establishing Kimura as a towering figure of late traditional Japanese culture whose influence lasted well into the twentieth century.

Willow Weilan Hai, of the China Institute Art Gallery, contributes a rare study of Six Dynasties material culture and custom, particularly those of the Shangsi Festival 上巳. Her evidence consists of a vast array of brick murals found in tombs dating from as early as 260 AD. She provides an enlightening history of this form of tomb art and an account of its artistic techniques and design. Hai then sharpens her focus on: “some scenes decorating the tombs of this period that have been generally described as ‘picture of an outing’ (*chuxing tu*).... But the purpose of the outing is not known—where are they going and why?” Hai attempts to answer this question with evidence from a Nanjing tomb unearthed in 2007, the brick designs of which present elaborate depictions of the elite life and customs of the time. Hai describes one reconstructed mural scene as:

“outing” scenes in which the main male figure rides on a horse while the women accompany the ox-drawn carriage. All the servants walk with light steps, holding various objects, such as a mat—which is seen in all of these tombs—fan, umbrella, the musical instrument *qin*, incense burner, stick, etc.

Combining the bricks with literary sources, Hai concludes that the murals depict the ancient Shangsi Festival, which purportedly dates back to such mytho-historical figures as Nü Wa 女媧 and Fuxi 伏羲. She goes on to describe the features of the festival, which ranged from purging bad spirits in early times to activities such as feasts and poetry sessions in later times. She concludes with some

contemporary literary celebrations of the festival, translated by none other than Jonathan Chaves.

Victor Mair and Zhenzhen Lu, of the University of Pennsylvania, in yet another display of meticulous scholarship, give us a piece of biographical reconstruction, an imagined “day in the life” of the famous author of *Strange Tales from the Liaozhai Studio* 聊齋志異 Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715), “constructed from his poems, prose writings, a eulogy he wrote for his wife, as well as what others in his day and later wrote about him.” The piece starts off with a humorous poetic dialog between Pu and his aging and aching teeth. Readers get to experience the realities, both the joys and the sorrows, of daily life in Qing times in a whole new way, through the keen eyes of one of its major literary figures. Mair and Lu are able to show intimate details of Pu’s personality. One trait is revealed in their description of Pu’s reluctance, combined with his inability, to refuse frequent visitors from his village seeking to see the region’s most famous resident:

And Pu was rarely able to fend them off despite his reluctance. He was, after all, the pride of his village since his youth; and despite his eloquence with brush and ink, in person he was hardly skilled in the art of negotiation. One may even say that he was a little bashful. Bashful people harbored great capacities for the imagination in their sensitivity and reticence.

This evaluation is not just conjecture; it is firmly rooted in a tomb inscription, cited in a footnote, written by a man who had firsthand experience with Pu and knew him. Everything, especially the fictional episodes in the recreation, is grounded in documented sources in footnotes that in many cases become mini sinological essays in their own right, and the translations are all worthy of a tribute to Jonathan Chaves. Toward the end of the essay, we gain insights into the possible background of the composition of Pu’s *Monan qu* 磨岷曲, a folk opera written in his native Shandong dialect believed to have been completed by Pu sometime late in his life—“a full-fledged opera in thirty-six sections; it would tell of not only one man’s trials but it would depict an entire world, from villagers to emperor, from bandit-king to the immortals.”

IV. CULTURE AND HISTORY

Finally, in the fourth section of the book, we reach the outer bounds of Chaves' activities and interests. First, his scholarly work and his literary criticism are decidedly out of the mainstream at the present moment, so dominated by various schools of postmodern criticism. Thus, Chaves has become an insightful and trenchant literary and cultural critic and author of serious critiques of Edward Said's "Orientalism" and other postmodern schools of thought. He rejects postmodern criticism and seeks to revive literary criticism, as practiced particularly by C.S. Lewis in his book *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, published in 1936. Perhaps his most cogent critique is his essay "Soul and Reason in Literary Criticism: Deconstructing the Deconstructionists," published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.⁴ He has also been thinking deeply about religious and philosophical questions for decades and has written on questions related to epistemology and religious experience, focused primarily on Orthodox Christian icons.⁵ Finally, in conversations with friends and scholarly collaborators, he has explored how civilizations exchange and absorb ideas and cultural forms from and with each other, especially music in the cultural realm, and political ideas in the intellectual realm. In this regard, we have a group of four essays that reflect these interests and interactions with fellow scholars.

Thomas Rimer, of the University of Pittsburgh, contributes a rare study of the origins of modern Japanese music. The study emphasizes the "second generation" of cultural leaders, who followed the first generation figures involved in cultural exchanges with the West, such as Mori Ogai 森 鷗外 (1862–1922) and Natsume Soseki 夏目 漱石 (1867–1916). Rimer argues that this second generation should perhaps be credited with an even greater accomplishment than the first, because of the difficulty of importing cultural forms such as Western theater and music, which require "Western-style theatre buildings, art galleries, training institutions, and other support that requires time and money." But Rimer's main question asks why the Japanese were so quick to adopt and integrate

⁴ "Soul and Reason in Literary Criticism: Deconstructing the Deconstructionists," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 122, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 2002) [actually published summer 2003], 828–835.

⁵ "Kicking the Stone and Viewing the Icon: Realist Epistemology between Heaven and Earth," *Praesidium: A Journal of Literate and Literary Analysis* 3:2 (Spring 2003): 5–23.

Western music into Japanese culture. As Rimer states, the answer has important implications for the study of globalization and the transnational circulation of culture, as Japan is a specific, and highly significant, case. He dates the most important period to the two decades of 1900–1920, especially in the career of Yamada Kosaku 山田 耕筰 (1886–1965). Based on a reading of his autobiography and other sources, Rimer traces Yamada’s progress toward a full understanding of a complex cultural form and his promotion of it in Japan. Rimer concludes that the pattern Yamada experienced was shared by most other important figures involved in the deep engagement of Japanese with Western culture during that twenty-year period. Rimer recounts many amusing descriptions of the early encounters of Japanese audiences with the strangeness of Western classical musical forms. But “[b]y 1914, there was enough interest in Western opera to provide an audience for Japan’s first opera company, the Akasaka Opera, under the direction of a certain V.S. Rossi.” At the close of his essay, Rimer suggests some important conclusions about the factors that allowed for the assimilation of European music into Japanese culture.

Emmet Kennedy, emeritus professor at George Washington University, contributes a welcome essay that explores a question this writer has long wondered about. Two French political philosophers traveled to two of the great rising non-European powers of the nineteenth century—Marquis de Custine (1790–1857) went to Russia and Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) to America, both to combine Platonic contemplation with Aristotelian observation of the respective societies and politics. I have often wondered what they might have said had they gone to China. Now, in this essay, Kennedy sifts through Tocqueville’s written “fragments about China—letters, passages, and footnotes in disparate works” to reconstruct for us the philosopher’s likely views of Chinese politics. Kennedy argues that these fragments are significant because “they offer a rare comparison of Chinese and French centralization—crucial political characteristics of both countries, an obsession which appears repeatedly” in Tocqueville’s work. He argues that, while other enlightenment philosophers had a favorable view of China’s centralization, Tocqueville abhorred it as “despotic” in that it limited freedom in China as much as it did in Old Regime France. In Tocqueville’s view, “America had avoided the evil consequences of such centralization with the religious and political institutions of New England—the congregation and the town meetings—later reinforced and arranged by federalism.” Kennedy shows that, while much intellectual opinion during the Enlightenment viewed China as a

positive model and used China as a critique of European civilization, Tocqueville saw it in exact opposite terms. In his view, the future belonged to democracy and not to the enlightened despotism so many of his contemporaries saw in both Russia (an idea debunked by Custine) and China. These conclusions lead Kennedy to further explorations regarding the merits of revolution and European imperialism.

Arthur Pontynen, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, in line with Chaves' long-standing efforts to critique and reverse the creeping domination of the study of literature and art by postmodern theory, puts forth an argument that shows "how a positivist and constructivist methodology is antagonistic to the pursuit of the Dao and Dharma through art and culture." Pontynen takes the cases of the Ming dynasty painter Tung Ch'i-ch'ang 董其昌 (1555–1636) in China and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) in the West to explore the respective consequences of taking both traditionalist and progressive approaches to cultural criticism. The traditionalist approach seeks an ontological truth, which Pontynen terms Dao and Dharma. The positivist and constructivist methodology "centers on producing facts and placing those facts within constructed and deconstructed narratives." The main point Pontynen wishes to establish is one that advocates a return to traditionalism as the main methodological basis for the study of premodern cultures both East and West, for "to study all cultural traditions via a constructivist-deconstructivist methodology interferes with our ability to understand non-modernist-postmodernist cultures." The respective cases of Tung and Kant show that "[i]n East or West, the synthetic a priori transforms science, ethics, and art from the pursuit of Beauty (that which is true and good) to an aesthetic formalism. That is the tragedy of Tung and Kant: each attempts to defend freedom and dignity, but a rationalized formalism contradicts both sincerity and wisdom."

In an essay published in the September 1995 issue of *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, Jonathan Chaves refutes the claims of Edward Said and other critics of "Orientalism." One facet of his argument adduces Voltaire's use of Asia in general, and Confucius in particular, "as a club with which to beat the West!"—just one example among many that contradict Said's sweeping assertions. He argues that the image of Asia in the Western mind has inspired both serious scholarship and cultural debate in which the East is more often than not seen, not as inferior, but as superior in important respects.

Inspired by Chaves' trenchant critique of Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism," Philip F.

Williams, of Montana State University, investigates the actual history of the once large and vibrant Chinese community of Virginia City, Montana, and shows that, despite some “nativist resistance and exclusionary legislation,” and contrary to the claims of Said and many others, “the overall upward trend has proven that the West can accommodate the East rather than merely dominate or colonize it.” First, Williams treats the causes and background of the Chinese migration to Montana in the nineteenth century, highlighting the conditions of scarcity, ethnic conflict, the devastations of the Taiping Rebellion, and British demands for reparations following the Opium Wars that pushed many Chinese to seek the riches of new gold and silver discoveries in the Western territories of the United States, where labor was in great demand. Of particular interest is William’s vividly depicted descriptions of the once vibrant Chinese community of Montana’s Virginia City. Here is one example:

The town also housed a Chinese dry goods store run by a Cantonese shopkeeper who always tallied his customers’ purchases with an abacus, which was something of a sensation among Virginia City’s Euro-American children who curiously observed the shopkeeper’s fingers flicking the beads of this foreign device back and forth.

Williams’ essay is valuable both for its wonderful recreation of a long-gone Chinese community, which includes illustrations, and for its historically demonstrated case in which Chinese and Euro-American communities coexisted with mutual respect, communities that both contributed to a vibrant, pluralist, and prosperous American town.

Our final contribution is my own. As in the Williams case discussed above, my paper relates to Chaves’ critique of Said’s sweeping claims. My subject is the China image in the American mind, one case of it in particular, a novel titled *The Cat’s Paw*, authored by Clarence Buddington Kelland (1881–1964) and published in 1934. Kelland was a major literary, political, and cultural figure of the first half of the twentieth century, who, despite the continuing popularity of movies based on his books, remains completely unstudied. This essay, to my knowledge, is the first scholarly study of one of Kelland’s literary works. *The Cat’s Paw* is a unique and important example of how the image of China works in the American mind, especially in debates over political reform. In this novel, Kelland creates a hybrid American-Chinese character, the son of an American missionary born and educated in China,

culturally Chinese but ethnically Caucasian, who uses the lessons of Chinese history and philosophy to reform a corrupt American urban political machine. Kelland's character is rooted in a long tradition of Western thinkers from the Enlightenment forward who used the East to criticize the West, Montesquieu (1689–1755), Voltaire (1694–1778), and Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774), to name a few. Kelland's is a uniquely American development of this tradition stemming from deep within the American political and cultural tradition, a tradition Kelland seeks to revive through his very sophisticated use of the figure of a Chinese gentleman as a prompt toward American revival.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all of the contributors to this collection who put forth such a heartfelt effort to celebrate the protean mind and multiple accomplishments of Jonathan Chaves. I hope the world will see this as a fitting tribute to a poet and a scholar whose work will certainly be read and enjoyed for many decades to come. On a more personal note, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Jonathan for his steadfast confidence in me through the years. I was a student of Dr. Chaves for only one semester, a time that became a turning point in my career. In 1995, I had returned to Washington for Russian language instruction at the Foreign Service Institute in Virginia in preparation for my next post as the head of the Commercial section of the American Consulate in St. Petersburg, Russia. I had spent the previous three years in Beijing serving as a diplomat in the Commercial Section of the American Embassy. Toward the end of my time there, I experienced a major revival of my older interests in classical Chinese thought and literature, interests I had pursued in college, but had set aside for years as I was studying international affairs and preparing for a career as a Foreign Service Officer. I remembered *Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow*, and that the author of that book was teaching at George Washington University. I stopped by his office one day and asked if he would teach me in an independent study of classical Chinese. He said yes. As a professor myself now, with frequent requests to run independent studies with individual students, I know what an act of generosity that was. Ever since then, Jonathan has been a guide and mentor, as he has supported me all throughout my career as a student and now a professor. He is not just a great and generous scholar—he is simply a marvelous human being.

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PART I

JONATHAN CHAVES AND HIS MENTOR BURTON WATSON

My Later Years

Burton Watson

Most people are probably familiar with my name through the fact that I taught at Columbia and through my works on Chinese and Japanese literature that were published by Columbia University Press. I would like here to say a few words about my years after leaving regular teaching in 1973, and, in particular, about my relations with the country of Japan, where I have lived more or less continually since then.

I remember the day I first arrived in Japan, September 20, 1945. I was a yeoman on a U.S. Navy vessel, the *Baham*, an old Liberty ship that had been converted into a repair ship. Our arrival in Tokyo Bay was noteworthy because, as we pulled in to the place we were to anchor in Yokosuka, the battleship *USS Missouri*, the ship on which the peace papers had been signed, was preparing to leave Japan on its homeward voyage to the United States. But I have already described my initial reactions to Japan in a piece titled “First Impressions” in my small volume *The Rainbow World*, and so I will not repeat what I have said there.

What my fellow countrymen and I saw in Japan was a nation flat on its face, its cities almost all reduced to rubble by repeated bombing raids. And there was talk among the Allies of keeping it that way in retaliation for its war crimes. China, by contrast, was one of the Allies, headed by a democratic regime and with a seemingly bright future. So, when my thoughts turned to post-war plans, it was in the direction of China. I would return to the United States, and with money assured by the government, study Chinese and then come back to these parts — this time the mainland — to pursue a degree in Chinese studies.

My second visit to Japan came in the fall of 1951, six years after the first arrival, six years that

changed the shape of things entirely. I had gone to Columbia in the fall of 1946, finished college in three years, and had spent two years in graduate school, emerging with a Master's degree in Chinese. Meanwhile, however, Mr. Mao had taken over in China and there was little possibility of going to that country to study Chinese. With only a MA, there seemed little chance of finding a job teaching Chinese in America. My best bet, it appeared, was to get a job in Japan — teaching English, presumably — and to carry on my study at a Japanese university. These plans were greatly helped by the fact that that year, 1950–1951, saw the first group of Government Aid and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIOA) students from Japan at Columbia. I made friends with them, and one of them, Mr. Kurosu, proved to be extremely helpful in assisting me to make arrangements for my second expedition to Japan. Through him and others at Columbia, I received assurance of employment in Japan and even a promise of a place to live with a family in Kyoto. I took a ship to Japan and, with Mr. Kurosu's aid, arrived in Kyoto and took up residence with the Uemura family there.

This time was, of course, very different from my earlier encounter with Japan. This time I was really into Japanese life, eating Japanese food, sleeping on tatami mats, and living on a Japanese salary, all things that Professor Kaji predicted I could never do. (He was a Japanese professor visiting at Columbia who, when consulted, had thrown cold water on my plans to look for a job in the Tokyo area.)

In the spring of 1952, I received a request from Columbia to prepare a section of the book titled *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, the stipend for which allowed me to quit one of my jobs, that of a teacher of English. From now on, I had only my job as assistant to Professor Yoshikawa of Kyoto University, which was mainly concerned with works of Chinese literature and hence highly profitable to my studies.

After one year, I moved from the Uemuras' house to a small place of my own, sharing it with a Japanese friend, Shimada Noboru. There I wrote a dissertation on the *Shiji*, the monumental history of ancient China by Sima Qian. And in the summer of 1955 I returned to Columbia, submitted it the following year, and received my PhD.

In the fall of 1956, I went once again to Japan, this time on a Cutting Fellowship, to translate sections of the *Shiji* for Columbia. I should perhaps have gone to Taiwan instead to work on spoken

Chinese but went back to Kyoto because I was accustomed to life there and knew where to put my hands on the materials I would need.

By this time, Japan had long outgrown the period when it could claim to be a *bimbō no kuni* or a “poor country” and was awash with prosperity. Not only academic people like myself, but all types of Japan fans — tea people, pottery people, Zen people, poets — poured into the country, and Kyoto, in particular, was anxious to get its share of the experience. One of them, my friend Charles Terry from Columbia, who started as a student of Chinese history at Tokyo University but had shifted to work as a professional translator of Japanese works, was continually trying to lure me to Tokyo so I could help him in the translation business. I resisted, sure that a move to Tokyo would mean eventual sacrifice of my own translation interests to those of Charles’ plans. So, I stuck it out in Kyoto.

In 1966, after more trips to New York to teach at Columbia, I went back home for a period of extended teaching, 1966 to 1971. This was the time of the student riots at Columbia, a very dramatic period, and I’m glad I was there to experience it all. In the fall of 1971, I had my one and only sabbatical leave from Columbia, and I took a ship to Japan. Nixon floated the dollar, and so my stipend was greatly reduced in value in terms of the *yen* exchange. I lived in Wakayama, a town on the sea south of Osaka and had a wonderful time translating works I enjoyed, selections from the *Hanshu* and the poetry of Lu You. I also joined a zazen group at Kōshō-ji, a small temple in Wakayama. This was the beginning of my Zen training.

I had earlier had contact with Zen through my part-time job in Kyoto with Mrs. Sasaki’s First Zen Institute of America in Japan, run by an American woman who had married a Japanese named Sasaki. But Mrs. Sasaki’s approach and personality put me off the subject completely, and I never took any interest in the zazen activities there, though I would later regret that decision greatly.

At Kōshō-ji we gathered one afternoon a month, sat for three 25-minute sessions, listened to a tape recording of a *teishō* or lecture by Yamada Rōshi, the Zen master of a large temple in Kobe, and wound up in the main hall of the temple, reciting texts and bowing before the Buddha.

Later, I went with friends from the zazen group to a large Zen temple south of Wakayama, Kōkoku-ji, that had a *rōshi*, Meguro Zekkai. He said to come anytime, and so I did, joining a group that gathered there once a month and receiving a *kōan* from him. I passed it on the last visit I paid to the temple before departing for America. I think of the day I passed as one of the three happiest of my life,

the other two being the day in 1943 when I was admitted to the Navy and the day in 1956 when I got my PhD from Columbia. (I wish I could give an answer to a kōan to show readers how the system works, but of course all answers are supposed to be kept secret. There are a few Western writers on Zen who will give just one answer to show how it works, but then another writer will give the answer to just one kōan — another kōan — and so on, and before you know it the whole system is destroyed.)

I returned to Columbia for a year of teaching and then, according to previously arranged plans, asked for permission to withdraw from teaching. I was given a leave of absence and returned to Japan. There I had made arrangements to work for the Kokusai Kyōiku Jōhō Center, a semi-government agency, translating three large reference works on Japanese history, literature, and art respectively. This served to get me re-acquainted with the Japanese field and opened the way for later works of mine on Japanese literature.

I continued my Zen practice, going to Kōkoku-ji one weekend a month for meditation and kōan study. This is described in detail in my essay, “Rōhatsu Notes,” in *The Rainbow World*, and I will not repeat what I have said there.

In 1974, I began working for the Sōka Gakkai, translating some works by Ikeda Daisaku, the virtual head of the organization. I have never been a member of the Sōka Gakkai organization; our relations have been strictly business. But I have found them to be excellent to work for, wholly reasonable and fair, and we have had an extremely pleasant association, one that continues to the present. It has enabled me to work on translations of major works of the Buddhist tradition, beginning with the Chinese version of the *Lotus Sutra* and the writings of Nichiren, and has helped me to see that tradition in a varied and well-rounded fashion. And in the summer of 1988, the Sōka Gakkai people sent a Japanese friend and me from the Gakkai on a three-week trip to China, Japanese-speaking guides throughout, all expenses paid. It was in the post-Mao period, when things were just beginning to loosen up, so that this was a memorable event, particularly the visit to Xi'an (Chang'an). I asked about job possibilities there, but was told that the only openings would be as a teacher of English conversation. Too bad, I could never go back to that!

Beginning in 1977, I also began working two days a week as a copy writer for Standard Advertising, an advertising agency in Osaka. This was mainly to get me out of the house and into downtown Osaka. It was varied in nature, sometimes fun, sometimes dull, or worse, and I mostly

worked on short ads in English aired on car radios and similar items. But it had its bright moments, particularly after the working day was over when we went drinking, often at the customers' expense.

In October 1981, as I was preparing to go to Kōkoku-ji for my annual week of Zen practice, I got a phone call saying that Meguro Rōshi had had a stroke and was hospitalized — the end of Zen study with him. The following year, I started attending Sunday practice at Nagaoka Zenjuku in Nagaoka, a town near Kyoto. The sitting was fine, but the kōan study never went satisfactorily, and I gave up after about a year there.

In 1983, I resumed Zen study with Mr. Mamiya, the head of our group under Meguro Rōshi, a layman but fully qualified to continue Meguro Rōshi's teaching line. This continued at Sarōzan, a place in Osaka, and when that was torn down, at Chūō Shimin Center in Osaka until Mr. Mamiya terminated the group in 1996.

In the meantime, Japan was experiencing a strange era known as the "bubble period," a time of unprecedented prosperity. People left the big cities, moved to the suburbs or even farther, went to Hawaii for weekends of golf, and retired to Spain to colonies of aged Japanese. Land prices soared; everyone was living high and looking down on America. I was alone in Moriguchi now, Noboru having died in the hospital in 1986 of complications from diabetes.

In January 1990, I went to Hong Kong at the invitation of the Translation Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, staying in a fancy high rise and translating another volume of material from the *Shiji*. This, along with revised versions of the two earlier volumes, was published by Columbia and Hong Kong Press jointly. In July, I returned to Columbia for my last year of teaching there. Then I went to Japan once more, moving into a small house in Shijōnawate, a suburb of Osaka, and resuming my work for Sōka Gakkai. During the following years, I lived in Osaka, then Niigata, Nishinomiya (near Kobe), and finally in Tokyo. Meanwhile, the bubble had burst, and Japan was in a much more somber mood, financially depressed but back to its old self again. I joined a zazen group that met once a month at Kankō-ji in Tokyo. It is headed by Yoshida Shōdō, a Zen *rōshi* and head of one of the most famous temples in Kamakura, Kenchō-ji. He comes to Tokyo once a month to this temple, which was his old temple before he assumed his position in Kamakura. We meet at two in the afternoon, sit for two sessions, have a lecture, and perform devotions before the Buddha.

I am meanwhile working on various books on Bai Juyi, Santōka, Du Fu, etc. The years pass,

and I continue with Zen practice several times a month at Kankō-ji. The participants are all lay persons, mostly of advanced age. There is none of the tension and secretiveness associated with kōan study; no one marches off to an interview with the *rōshi* with a confident air, certain that he or she has the right answer, only to return a few minutes later looking punctured and confused. *Rōshi* in his lectures keeps assuring us that desire itself is not bad — it is when we try to cling to it that we get into trouble. And he usually manages to wind up his remarks with his favorite admonition, “And when the time comes to die, just die!” — as though we had any intention of doing otherwise!

And then, when we thought everything was going along peacefully, comes March 11, 2011, rattlety-BANG!! — the biggest earthquake ever to hit Japan! True, it did not directly affect the Tokyo area, only gave it a good shaking. But what it did to the coastal region of northeastern Japan is almost beyond description. However, the Japanese have had lots of experience with earthquakes and tsunamis in that area, and they have set about with admirable courage and determination to restore life to normal as soon as possible. What is different this time is the situation at the nuclear power plant in Fukushima, where the damage from the waves is of an uncertain nature, hard to assess because of the leakage of nuclear radiation, and difficult to control. How bad are things, and how long will it take to get them under control? These are the questions facing the nation, while foreigners flee the country and aftershocks of some considerable size continue to rock the area.

The prime minister has called it the greatest blow to the nation since the end of the Pacific War. One can see his point, though the two disasters are hardly comparable. The war was wholly human-made in nature, inspired and driven by errors of human calculation. Moreover, it affected the whole area of the country; almost all the major cities were left in ruins. This, by comparison, is a local event, albeit of horrendous scale, and wholly nature-driven. Preparation for it was poorly planned for, but no amount of preparation could have staved off the results.

What will its effects be upon the economy of the country as a whole? How long will we have to wait for a return to normal? These are questions we are left to ponder, while the lights of the cities are dimmed to conserve electricity, and the slow work of clearing the debris goes forward. *Ganbare!* we tell each other. Do your best, fight against the odds confronting us. But only time will tell how successful we may be.

PART II
TRANSLATIONS

Fourteen Records of West Lake
 from Yuan Hongdao's (1568–1610)
Deliverance Collection

Translated by Stephen McDowall

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

In former times a scholar was free to flutter about the libraries and academies, never taking up his brush until he had fully comprehended the variations in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and the *Commentary on the Classic of Waterways*. Alas, these days the volumes that daily spill out from the publishing houses pile up on one's desk like the steps of Mount Tai, and trying to find scholarship of substance is like traipsing the streets of Luoyang in search of the lost monasteries of the Northern Wei. But Jonathan Chaves' work on Yuan Shigong and Qian Muzhai is of superior quality, and, although I myself have also penned a few lines on these men, these have always fallen short of the standard he has set.

Recently I heard that Professor Chaves is planning to take up his travelling staff once again for a visit to the Yellow Mountains. As he is not only a scholar of quality, but also a fine poet; one can only hope that he does not follow old Xiang Ziping of the Latter Han, who toured the Five Marchmounts without ever composing a line!¹ To this volume, I humbly offer the following translation in admiration of Professor Chaves' scholarship and in gratitude for his support.

¹ "Xiang Chang zhuan" 向長傳, *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (SKQS, ed., 113.3b–113.4a). Editor's Note: Subsequent to the composition of this essay, Chaves actually took this trip to the Yellow Mountains. One product of the visit was his recent

— *Playfully recorded in late-Ming style*
during the first month of the xinmao year (2011),
at the University of Warwick

* * *

For biographical treatments of Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (*zi Zhonglang* 中郎, *hao Shigong* 石公; 1568–1610) in English see the entries by C. N. Tay in L. Carrington Goodrich & Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 2:1635–1638 and Ming-shui Hung in W. H. Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 1:955–956. Ren Fangqiu's 任訪秋 *Yuan Zhonglang yanjiu* 袁中郎研究 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1983) contains a useful *nianpu* 年譜 (chronological biography) on pages 119–208. Jonathan Chaves has produced three major works on Yuan Hongdao and his brothers: *Pilgrim of the Clouds: Poems and Essays from Ming China* (Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1978); “The Expression of Self in the Kung-an School: Non-Romantic Individualism” in Robert E. Hegel & Richard C. Hessney, eds., *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 123–150, and “The Panoply of Images: A Reconsideration of the Literary Theories of the Kung-an School” in Susan Bush & Christian Murck, eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 341–364.

The fourteen short essays that form this translation are drawn from those that first appeared in the Shuzhongtang 書種堂 edition (hereafter SZT) of the *Jietuo ji* 解脫集 (Deliverance Collection) published between 1602 and 1610, as well as those in the revised Peilanju 佩蘭居 edition (hereafter PLJ), published in 1629. SZT contains one essay, “雨後遊六橋記,” which was omitted from PLJ, but which I have included here. The essay that appears as “遊飛來峯至北高峯記” in SZT is split into two separate essays in PLJ, “飛來峯” and “靈隱,” and I have retained this separation as it seems to make more narrative sense. PLJ also adds two new essays, “南屏” and “雲棲,” which I have declined to include here, as they do not seem to me to fit easily into the collection as a whole. For each individual

book *Every Rock a Universe: The Yellow Mountains and Chinese Travel Writing* (Warren, CT: Floating World Editions, 2013), which won the 2014 Lucien Stryk Award for best translation from an Asian language.

essay, the version of the text I have used as my base text is indicated in a footnote. Both versions can be found in Qian Bocheng 錢伯城, ed., *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* 袁宏道集箋校 [hereafter YHDJJJ], (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1981), 1:422–439, which has been my primary reference. Occasionally, the lightly annotated texts in Xiong Lihui 熊禮匯, ed., *Yuan Zhonglang xiaopin* 袁中郎小品 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1996), 157–171 and Ren Liangzhi 任亮置, ed., *Yuan Zhonglang shiwen xuanzhu* 袁中郎詩文選注 (Kaifeng: Henan daxue chubanshe, 1993), 195–199 have also been useful. Seven of the fourteen essays exist in alternative translations by various scholars, including two by Jonathan Chaves, and these references are also given in the footnotes. An early set of drafts, completed while I was a graduate student at Victoria University of Wellington and based in some cases on alternative versions of the texts, appeared as an Asian Studies Institute Translation paper (Wellington, 2002).

RECORD OF FIRST ARRIVING AT WEST LAKE 初至西湖記²

Travelling west through Marshall's Forest Gate, I was confronted with the Pagoda for the Protection of King Qian Chu standing proudly among the cliffs, and my heart took off toward the lake. We entered the Temple of Manifest Blessings at noon, and, having taken our tea, we finally took a small boat and paddled out onto the lake. The hills were colored like the eyebrows of a beautiful woman, while the flowers shone like her cheeks. The warm breeze tasted of fine wine, while ripples made the lake's surface look like the finest silk.³ Simply raising the head was enough to leave one intoxicated.

Wanting to put down a few words on paper, I took up my brush but found that the scene defied description. No doubt it was something akin to the way Cao Zhi felt when he first encountered

² Following SZT. Alternative translation: Yang Ye, *Vignettes from the Late Ming: A Hsiao-p'in Anthology* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 47.

³ Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–?1689) cites this part of Yuan's record in his description of the pilgrims' market at West Lake in *Taoan mengyi* 陶庵夢憶. See Xia Xianchun 夏咸淳 and Cheng Weirong 程維榮, eds., *Taoan mengyi / Xihu mengxun* 陶庵夢憶 / 西湖夢尋 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 2001), 109.

the Goddess of the River Luo in a dream.⁴ This, then, was where my West Lake travels began, on the fourteenth day of the second month of the *dingyou* year (1597), during the Wanli reign.

That evening, Fang Wenzun and I ferried across to the Temple of Pure Compassion to see if we could find the cell in which my brother Zhongdao once stayed.⁵ On our return, we chose the way via the Six Bridges and the tomb of Yue Fei, but it was all so hurried that I did not have a chance to appreciate them. After several days, Tao Wangling and his brother arrived; so for a short time, I had the lake, the hills, and good friends all gathered together.⁶

RECORD OF AN EVENING TRIP TO SIX BRIDGES TO AWAIT THE MOON 晚遊六橋待月記⁷

West Lake is at its most magnificent during the spring or under the light of the moon. On any given day, it is at its best when shrouded in morning mist or evening haze. This year, the spring snow was especially heavy, and the prunus blossoms were delayed by the cold. They finally came out together with the peaches and apricots, creating a quite exceptional sight. Wangling had told me on more than

⁴ The Goddess Fu Fei 宓妃 is the subject of Cao Zhi's 曹植 (*zi* Zijian; 192–232) famous poem, “Rhapsody on the Luo River Goddess” 洛神賦, for which see *Cao Zijian ji* 曹子建集 (SBBY, ed., 3.1b–3.4a). Yuan employs the same allusion in his “Ballad of My Visit to the [Su] Causeway” 踏堤曲, for which see YHDJJJ, 1:350–352.

⁵ Fang Wenzun 方文僊 (*zi* Zigong 子公; d. 1609), a native of Xin'an 新安, was Yuan's personal secretary from 1594 to 1607. On Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (*zi* Xiaoxiu 小修, *hao* Kexuezhai 珂雪齋; 1570–1624), the youngest of the three brothers from Gong'an 公安, see the entry on Hongdao in DMB, 2:1635–1638. Some translations of Zhongdao's writings can be found in Chaves, *Pilgrim of the Clouds*, 123–134.

⁶ Tao Wangling 陶望齡 (*zi* Zhouwang 周望, *hao* Shikui 石簀; 1562–1609), a native of Kuaiji 會稽, was a disciple of Zhou Rudeng 周汝登 (1547–1629). On Tao's literary theory see Wu Chengxue's 吳承學 *Wan Ming xiaopin yanjiu* 晚明小品研究 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998), 147–150. Wangling's brother is Tao Shiling 陶奭齡 (*zi* Junshi 君奭, *hao* Shiliang 石梁; 1571–1640). In PLJ the Tao brothers arrive with a classmate named Wang 王.

⁷ Following SZT. Alternative translations: Ren Fangqiu, “A Brief Introduction to Yuan Hongdao,” *Chinese Literature* (Feb. 1981), 113–129 (123–124); Richard E. Strassberg, trans., *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 310–312; Martine Vallette-Hémery, trans., *Nuages et Pierres* (Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1982), 30; Ye, *Vignettes from the Late Ming*, 47–48.

one occasion that the prunus blossoms in Commissioner Fu's garden came originally from Zhang Zi's Jade Illumination Hall, and I was anxious to see them for myself.⁸ But now, I found myself transfixed by these peach blossoms and could not tear myself away. On the lake, from Broken Bridge to the end of Master Su's Causeway, the misty glow of greens and reds stretched for over twenty *li*. Voices drifted on the breeze, perfumed drizzle hung in the air, and the splendor of fine silks outshone the willows at the causeway's edge. It was all too enchanting.

The people of Hangzhou visit the lake only during the daytime,⁹ but the exquisite reflections on the lake and the subtle shades of the hills are actually at their most seductive just as the sun is rising or setting. Under the light of the moon, the lake is at its most clear, with the flowers and willows, the hills and streams, all taking on a strangely fascinating countenance. But this pleasure is to be enjoyed by monks and travellers alone; how could it be explained to the vulgar crowds?

BROKEN BRIDGE 斷橋¹⁰

The splendors of West Lake are the Six Bridges causeway and the Broken Bridge causeway.¹¹ Formerly, the pathway at Broken Bridge was extremely narrow, but it was expanded and adorned by a recent palace official, and this exquisite workmanship has now made it superior to the Six Bridges.¹² Peaches of deep red, weeping willows, jade orchids, and over twenty different kinds of wild tea were planted at

⁸ The construction of Zhang Zi's 張鑑 (*zi* Gongfu 功甫, *hao* Yuezhai 約齋; 1153–1212) Jade Illumination Hall 玉照堂, which contained over three hundred prunus trees within its grounds, is described in his *Meipin* 梅品, a brief work on prunus-appreciation (CSJC, vol. 1470).

⁹ Zhang Dai also makes this observation of Hangzhou locals in *Taoan mengyi*, 111–112. The Hangzhou city gates were closed each night at dusk.

¹⁰ Following SZT.

¹¹ That is, the Bai Causeway 白堤 and the Su Causeway 蘇堤.

¹² This official is named as Sun Long 孫隆 (d. 1601) in PLJ. Sun was the powerful eunuch in charge of the imperial textile factories at Hangzhou and Suzhou. Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664) records an interesting anecdote about Sun's persecution of the artist Ju Jie 居節 (fl. 1531–1585) in *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan* 列朝詩集小傳 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1959), 2:483 (丁中).

the sides of the path. The causeway banks are layered in white rocks, as fine as jade, while the path itself is laid with soft sand. Nearby, there is another small causeway, with even more flowers of various kinds, their numbers increasing with every step. It is such a delight that one forgets to turn back, a feeling that does not diminish even after several trips. One hears that in years past when the blossoms on the causeway came out, they would all be picked and carried off within a few days. This spring, strict prohibitions are in place, so the blossoms are out for longer than ever. This is certainly one of the more exceptional sights I have encountered on my wanderings.

WEST MOUND BRIDGE 西陵橋¹³

West Mound Bridge is sometimes called “West Grove” and sometimes “West Coolness.”¹⁴ It is said that this is the bridge at which Little Su and her lover bound their hearts together, so I wrote a poem here to mourn her.¹⁵ Fang Wenzun said:

“In the line ‘Whence come the notes of the fishermen’s flutes? / I fancy from the first bridge at West Coolness’¹⁶ it is ‘Coolness’ not ‘Mound,’ so Little Su probably got the name wrong.”

“It doesn’t matter,” I said. “West Mound is the only name that fits. Besides, doesn’t Bai Juyi’s poem on Broken Bridge have the line ‘Spring willows conceal the

¹³ Following SZT. Parts of this essay are reproduced without attribution in Zhang Dai’s *Xihu mengxun*, 171–173.

¹⁴ The three possibilities are near homophones: West Mound 西陵 (*Xínlíng*), West Grove 西林 (*Xílín*), and West Coolness 西冷 (*Xílíng*).

¹⁵ Little Su 蘇小[小] (?479–?501) was a famous West Lake courtesan whose tomb had become part of the standard itinerary at West Lake, following Li He’s 李賀 (791–817) famous poem. For Yuan’s poem, see YHDJJJ, 1:354.

¹⁶ The line is from the poem “West Coolness Bridge” 西冷橋 by the Yuan poet Zhang Yu 張輿, for which see Chen Zhuo 陳焯 (js. 1652), ed., *Song Yuan shihui* 宋元詩會 (SKQS, ed., 99.6b). The poem is cited in *juan* 2 of Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (js. 1526), comp., *Xihu youlanzhi* 西湖游覽志 of 1547 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1998), 17. It uses similar language, suggesting that Tian’s gazetteer may have been used by Yuan as a guide to the lake.

house of Little Su’?¹⁷ Broken Bridge is not far from here — why not borrow the legend of West Mound?”

RECORD OF MY TRIP TO SIX BRIDGES AFTER RAIN 雨後遊六橋記¹⁸

It rained heavily after the Cold Food Festival.¹⁹ I said that the rain had come to dye West Lake red and that we should hurry to bid adieu to the departing peach blossoms. It cleared up around noon, so my friends and I walked to the third bridge, where the fallen petals were piled up over an inch thick, and where happily there were few people about. Then suddenly, we were passed by a man in white silks on horseback. The reflected light dazzled us with its uncommon elegance, and all of my friends who were wearing white underneath their outer garments shed a layer to show it off.

We were a little weary, so we lay down on the ground to drink and amused ourselves by counting the petals that landed on our faces; those with the most had to drink, and those with the least had to sing. By chance a small boat came out from among the flowers. We called out and found that it was one of the monks from the monastery bringing tea. After each of us had had a cup, we piled into the boat and wobbled and sung our way home.

SOLITARY HILL 孤山²⁰

The Recluse of Solitary Hill had “a *prunus* tree for a wife and cranes for his sons,” and this is truly the

¹⁷ The line is from Bai Juyi’s 白居易 (*zi* Letian 樂天, *hao* Xiangshan jushi 香山居士; 772–846) poem “Viewing Hangzhou in Spring” 杭州春望, for which see Ding Ruming 丁如明 and Nie Shimei 聶世美, eds., *Bai Juyi quanji* 白居易全集 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1999), 299. There is, however, no mention of Broken Bridge in this poem.

¹⁸ Following SZT (this essay does not appear in PLJ). Alternative translations: Vallette-Hémery, *Nuages et Pierres*, 31; Ye, *Vignettes from the Late Ming*, 48.

¹⁹ The Cold Food Festival 寒食 referred to the days, immediately before Qingming 清明, during which tradition prohibited the building of fires.

²⁰ Following PLJ. Alternative translations: Chaves, *Pilgrim of the Clouds*, 98; Vallette-Hémery, *Nuages et Pierres*, 32.

world's most suitable state for a man.²¹ Wives and children seem only to multiply life's troubles for men like me. One can't abandon them, but being near them is detestable, and like thorns grabbing at a tattered cotton coat, with each step they hold one up even more.

These days a man by the name of Yu Chunzhen lives under Thunder Peak, and he also has no family, so perhaps he is a reincarnation of the Recluse of Solitary Hill.²² Yu has written a set of poems called *Fallen Blossoms on a Stream*, and while I do not know how these would compare to the poems of the Recluse, he did compose 150 in a night, which can hardly be called sluggish!²³ As for his eating plain food and practicing Chan meditation, this actually puts him a level above the Recluse. Has there ever been a time without exceptional men?

FLEW HERE PEAK 飛來峯²⁴

Of all the hills around the lake, Flew Here Peak must be considered superior. Although no more than a few hundred *zhang* high, it stands as solid as a mountain of green jade. A thirsty tiger or leaping lion could not match its vitality. A spirit crying or a ghost rising could not match its strange form. Autumn floods or twilight haze could not match its colors. The calligraphy of Lunatic Zhang Xu or the mad brushstrokes of Wu Daozi could not match its ever-changing twists and turns.²⁵ The many strange trees that cover the rocks do not even need soil; their roots grow above ground.

All together there are four or five caves on Flew Here Peak, some large and some small. Each

²¹ The Recluse of Solitary Hill was Lin Bu 林逋 (*zi* Junfu 君復, posthumous *hao* Hejing 和靖; 967–1028). For his poems see *Lin Hejing xiansheng shiji* 林和靖先生詩集 (SBCK, vol. 45).

²² Yu Chunzhen 虞淳貞 (*zi* Sengru 僧孺).

²³ I do not know whether Yu's *Xishang luohua shi* 溪上落花詩 has survived. A preface (題辭) written by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) appears in He Fuzheng 賀復徵 (fl. 1625–1631), comp., *Wenzhang bianti huixuan* 文章辨體彙選 (SKQS, ed., 363.6a–363.7a).

²⁴ Following PLJ (SZT is a conflation of this essay and the next). Alternative translations: Chaves, *Pilgrim of the Clouds*, 99–100; Vallette-Hémery, *Nuages et Pierres*, 33.

²⁵ Zhang Xu 張旭 (*zi* Bogao 伯高; fl. 742–755) and Wu Daozi 吳道子 (alternative names [名] Daoxuan 道玄, Daoyuan 道元; fl. 713–759) were Tang artists renowned for their wild, expressive styles of calligraphy and painting, respectively.

of them admits a faint light, seductively revealing stalactitic flowers that look as if they have been chiselled from the rock. On the cliff face itself are the images of the Buddha that were carved by Bald Yang, but these ugly and detestable marks are like scars on the face of a beautiful woman.²⁶

In all, I have climbed Flew Here Peak some five times. The first time was with Huang Guoxin and Fang Wenzun, and the three of us wore unlined shirts with short backs and made it all the way up to the summit of Lotus Blossom Peak.²⁷ Each time we came across an interesting rock, we would howl with excitement. The next time was with Wang Yusheng, then with Tao Wangling and Zhou Tingcan,²⁸ then with Wang Zanhua and the Tao brothers, and finally I went once with Lu Dian.²⁹ Although on each ascent I wanted to compose a poem, in the end I was never able to complete one.

SOULS' RETREAT 靈隱³⁰

The Temple of Souls' Retreat stands at the foot of Great Northern Peak, and of the temple's most exceptional scenery, the view from the gate is particularly good. From Flew Here Peak to Cold Spring Pavilion there flows a creek of smooth jade, and the ravine walls are painted with vegetation. This is indeed the superior site of this mountain.

Cold Spring Pavilion stands outside the temple gate. I have read Bai Juyi's record of this site, which observes:

²⁶ Bald Yang 楊禿 is a reference to Yang Lianzhenjia 楊璉真加 (fl. 1277–1288). Supervisor of Buddhist Teachings for Jiangnan under the early Yuan, who supervised the carving of the sculptures at Flew Here Peak between 1285 and 1287. See Heather Karmay, *Early Sino-Tibetan Art* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1975), 24. Yang was widely despised for his role in the desecration of the Southern Song imperial tombs, on which, see Paul Demiéville's "Les tombeaux des Song Meridionaux," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 25 (1925): 458–467 and Herbert Franke, "Tibetans in Yüan China" in John D. Langlois, Jr., ed., *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 296–328.

²⁷ Huang Guoxin 黃國信 (*zi* Daoyuan 道元).

²⁸ Wang Yusheng 王禹聲 (*zi* Zunkao 遵考, *hao* Wenxi 聞溪; js. 1589) was the great grandson of Grand Secretary Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450–1524); Zhou Tingcan 周廷參 (*hao* Haining 海寧; js. 1595).

²⁹ Lu Dian 魯點 (*zi* Ziyu 子與, *hao* Letong 樂同; js. 1583).

³⁰ Following PLJ (this essay does not appear independently in SZT).

The pavilion stands in the [center] of a mountain torrent, at the south-west corner of the temple. It is not two *xun* high, or three *zhang* wide, but of the exceptional and of the superb, there is nothing not visible here. In spring, when the plants and the trees flourish, a deep breath can purify the soul. In summer the cool breeze and the trickling spring can wash care away and dissolve the fumes of wine. Here the mountain trees are one's roof, the cliff rocks one's screen. Clouds rise from the rafters, and the water reaches the steps. While sitting, one can bathe one's feet below one's couch, and while reclining, one can dangle a fishhook from one's pillow. So clear is the flow of the stream, so pure and gentle, that even before bathing, the dust from one's eyes and the filth from one's heart and tongue will be swiftly washed away.³¹

From this account, the pavilion ought to stand in the creek; whereas today, it stands to one side. The creek itself is no more than a *zhang* wide and too narrow for any pavilion. Thus the present scene at Cold Spring Pavilion is but seven-tenths of its former self.

Sheathed Light's Hermitage is located halfway up the mountain, one or two *li* behind Souls' Retreat, and the connecting path is extremely attractive.³² The ancient trees dance about in the breeze, while fragrant plants bathe in spring water. The sound of tinkling seems to come from all around as the waters flow into the mountain kitchen. Once inside the hermitage, one can count the waves on the Qiantang River below.

When I first entered Souls' Retreat, I doubted the accuracy of Song Zhiwen's poetic description, thinking that like those of today, the poets of old selected scenes to conform to their rhyming schemes. It was only when I reached Sheathed Light's that I saw that every word in Song's

³¹ For Bai's account, "Record of Cold Spring Pavilion" 冷泉亭記, dated 823, see Ding and Nie, eds., *Bai Juyi quanji*, 637. This version shows significant variation from that given here by Yuan. A partial translation of Bai's account is given in Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i, 772–846 AD* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949), 149.

³² Sheathed Light 韜光 was a Sichuan monk who arrived at West Lake during the Changqing 長慶 reign (821–824) of the Tang dynasty, while Bai Juyi was serving as Governor of Hangzhou.

lines about the sea, the river, the vines, and the hollowed logs was as precise as a painting.³³ How far we are from reaching the heights of the ancients!

I lodged at Sheathed Light's, and the next day Wangling, Wenzun, and I climbed to the summit of the Great Northern Peak.

DRAGON WELL 龍井³⁴

Dragon Well spring is sweet and clear, and its rocks are sleek and elegant. The water gurgles its way up from between the rocks, making a quite delightful sound. We visited the monks' cells which are perched up high, dry and comfortable.

Wangling, Guoxin, Wenzun, and I once drew up some spring water and brewed tea here. Wangling asked which I thought was the superior of Dragon Well and Heaven's Pond tea, and I answered that although Dragon Well is excellent, too few leaves produces a weak brew, while too many brings out a bitterness. Heaven's Pond is not like this. Generally speaking, although early-picked Dragon Well tea is fragrant, its flavor retains a hint of grass. Heaven's Pond has a hint of bean, and Tiger Hill a hint of blossom. Only Luojie tea is entirely free of blossom or plant flavor. At times one can taste a hint of spring rocks,³⁵ and then at other times it has no trace of anything at all, and so is highly valued. Luojie leaves are quite coarse, and a catty of the real stuff can fetch more than 2000 cash. It took me several years of searching before I finally got my hands on a few ounces! Recently I was given

³³ For Song Zhiwen's 宋之問 (*zi Yanqing* 延清; ?656–712) poem, "Temple of Souls' Retreat" 靈隱寺, see *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 2:653–654. Tradition has it that Song was helped in the composition of this poem by an old monk, who turned out to be Luo Binwang 駱賓王 (?640–684). See Tao Min 陶敏 and Yi Shuqiong 易淑瓊, eds., *Shen Quanci Song Zhiwen ji jiaozhu* 沈佺期宋之問集校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 505–507. Qian Bocheng's punctuation in YHDJJJ, 1:430, is incorrect here, grouping the quoted characters in groups of four, rather than groups of two.

³⁴ Following PLJ.

³⁵ Reading 泉石 for 金石 (following SZT).

some Songluo tea by a man from Huizhou, the flavor of which is superior to that of Dragon Well but inferior to that of Heaven's Pond.³⁶

The ridge at Dragon Well is called Windy Bamboo, the peak is called Lions', the rocks are called Wisp of Cloud and Stone sent by the Gods, and each of these is worth viewing. There is an "Account of Dragon Well" written many years ago by Qin Guan.³⁷ His writing is generally straightforward but does not avoid a few pedantic phrases.

HAZY CLOUD AND STONE HOUSE 烟霞石屋³⁸

Hazy Cloud Cave is ancient and secluded, and its chill penetrates to the bone, while milky rain drips from the stalactitic ceiling. Stone House Cave is more open and light. Like Wisp of Cloud Rock, it leans to one side, and as at a tea house there is enough space to lay out banquet tables here. I twice visited Stone House, but the noisy rabble of bondservants made the place seem like a street market. On both occasions, I left unsatisfied.

LOTUS BLOSSOM GROTTTO 蓮花洞³⁹

Before Lotus Blossom Grotto sits the Pavilion of Serene Repose. When one looks down from its open porch the light shimmers on the lake as if it were jade, and one's beard and eyebrows are reflected back as if from a mirror. From here one can see the line of willows that connects the Six Bridges, directing the breeze and channelling the waves into a delightful disorder. Rain or shine, in the morning glow or under the light of the moon, the outlook is never the same; this spot is unsurpassed in the Temple of Pure Compassion area.

³⁶ For a contemporary opinion on the ranking of the various teas available in late-Ming Jiangnan, see Wen Zhenheng's 文震亨 (1585–1645) *Zhangwu zhi* 長物志 (CSJC, ed., 12.83–12.86).

³⁷ For Qin Guan's 秦觀 (*zi* Shaoyou 少游, *hao* Huaihai jushi 淮海居士; 1049–1100) "Record of Dragon Well" 龍井記, see *Qin Huaihai ji* 秦淮海集 (SBCK, ed., 38.139).

³⁸ Following PLJ. Alternative translation: Vallette-Hémery, *Nuages et Pierres*, 34.

³⁹ Ibid., 35.

The grotto's elegant rocks look almost alive and are more exquisite than if they had been sculpted. I once said that hills such as Wu Hill and Southern Screen are bones of rock covered by a skin of earth, extending outward in all directions from their hollow centers, which is why the more their rocks are extracted the more they protrude.⁴⁰ Recently, the rocks for Mr. Song's garden pavilion all came from here, and the eunuch Sun also took a great many for the Palace of Violet Sunlight. If one could only summon the Five Legendary Immortals to use the waters of the Qiantang to rinse the hills of dirt! With the mountain bones fully exposed, what extraordinary forms would not then be revealed?

IMPERIAL TRAINING GROUND 御教場⁴¹

I had long admired Five Clouds Mountain and finally set a date to climb it, meaning to continue on to the Great Southern Peak. One look at the Imperial Training Ground, however, and I lost my traveller's heart. Wangling once mocked me for never having climbed the Pagoda for the Protection of King Qian Chu, but I believe that of all of the views at West Lake, the lower ones are the best. From up high, the trees are sparse and the hills bare, the grass is thin and the rocks bald, and a thousand *qing* of scenery is squeezed into the space of a teacup. This is what the views from the Great Northern Peak and the Imperial Training Ground are like. No matter how grand the prospect before me, I am not six feet tall and can see clearly not even ten *li*. So what can I do with so much landscape? To this, Wangling had no retort.

On the day we drank at the Imperial Training Ground, there was a strong wind. Wangling gulped down three cups of wine and became so intoxicated that he could hardly move, which was strange indeed. As with a field becoming an ocean, as with the Yellow River running clear, how could I not record such a remarkable event?⁴²

⁴⁰ On rocks in Chinese visual culture see John Hay's *Kernels of Energy, Bones of Earth: The Rock in Chinese Art* (New York: Chinese Institute in America, 1985) and Edward H. Schafer, *Tu Wan's Stone Catalogue of Cloudy Forest: A Commentary and Synopsis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).

⁴¹ Following PLJ.

⁴² These are playful allusions to world-changing events. Fields becoming oceans (and vice versa) were occurrences associated with the formation of the world (cf. *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳). In reading 桑田 for 滄田 here I follow Philip

RECORD OF A VISIT TO WU HILL 遊吳山記⁴³

I avoid tourists, so have not entered the city more than a few times. But Wu Hill is within the limits of Hangzhou itself, and for this reason I have never seen it properly, more than hurriedly passing through the Palace of Violet Sunlight, which is really just the garden pavilion of an official.⁴⁴ The gemlike rocks of Violet Sunlight are elegantly seductive in their ever-changing forms, and the lake itself has nothing to compare with them. What an indignity it is for them to be imprisoned within the city walls, beyond the reach of simple mountain hermits. Nearby, there is a yamen, but although it is also within the city walls, there are no tourists there. It is evident that for stones, too, there is such a thing as good and bad fortune!

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES MADE ON THE LAKE 湖上雜記⁴⁵

My idle roaming has now entered its fourth month, and in all I have visited West Lake three times. On the first trip, I spent some time wandering about the lake itself, the second trip was when I returned from Five Falls, and the third was when I returned from White Mount. While on the lake, I spent five nights at the Temple of Manifest Blessings, a night each at the Dharmalaksana and India Temples, and the remaining nights at the monks' cells at the Temple of Pure Compassion. The hills surround and contain India Temple like a wall. I spent the eighteenth night of the second month of spring here, with

Clart's translation of the same line used by one of Yuan's near-contemporaries, Yang Erzeng 楊爾曾 (fl. 1601–1623), in the *Han Xiangzi quanzhuan* 韓湘子全傳. See *The Story of Han Xiangzi: The Alchemical Adventures of a Daoist Immortal* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 7 and 457. The “Yunming lun” 運命論 chapter of the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1986), 6:2295–2306 records the changing color of the Yellow River as signifying the birth of a sage. In fact, the SZT version of the text has this allusion coming from a “fellow traveller” 同行者 (see YHDJJJ, 1:436).

⁴³ Following SZT.

⁴⁴ Liping Wang notes that prior to the Republican period, the Hangzhou city wall “imposed a clear boundary on the urban space, turning the city into a closed space vis-à-vis the surrounding scenery.” See “Tourism and Spatial Change in Hangzhou, 1911–1927” in Joseph W. Esherick, ed., *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 107–120 (108).

⁴⁵ Following SZT.

the pilgrims — men and women — all squeezed in together like savages. Half of them were standing out in the open air until dawn. In both the upper and lower halls, the people were crowded together like a thick smoke, and one could not get near the place. Here, the Long-Eared Monk of Dharmalaksana is well worth a visit,⁴⁶ the whistling bamboos are worth hearing, the springs worth tasting, the shoots worth eating, and the wine worth drinking. Only quiet conversations with solitary monks were in short supply.⁴⁷

The rocks, trees, and huts at the Temple of Pure Compassion are all extremely fine, but the Pavilion of Serene Repose at the Source Mirror Hall is a scene of surpassing quality.⁴⁸ The monks' cells where I was lodged are remote and secluded, with ancient trees winding around the path, which runs about a *li* from the temple gate. Every evening I would take a small boat out from Arrowroot Lodge to watch the evening mists rising among the hills. If the moon was out I might visit the Lake Heart Pavilion, pass by the fourth bridge and the Temple of Water Immortals, and return by foot along the causeway. Or perhaps I would pass by the foot of Thunder Peak for a chat with Yu Chunxi and his brother.⁴⁹ Or perhaps I would ferry across to the Temple of Manifest Blessings and call on the monks and travellers; all of these activities were quite normal during my stay. Temples on the lake like Agate and Great Buddha Head, and in the hills like Jade Spring, Spirits' Peak, Tall Beauty, Running Tiger, and

⁴⁶ See Yuan's corresponding poem (YHDJ, 1:407), rendered into "Paying My Respects to the Mummy of the Monk Ch'ang-erh" in Chaves, *Pilgrim of the Clouds*, 66.

⁴⁷ The annual spring pilgrims' market was a crucial part of the economy of late-imperial Hangzhou, where it was said that "three winters depend on one spring" 三冬靠一春. See Zhou Feng 周峰, ed., *Yuan Ming Qing mingcheng Hangzhou* 元明清名城杭州 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1997), 440. Zhang Dai provides an evocative description of Hangzhou during the pilgrim season in *Taoan mengyi*, 109–110.

⁴⁸ Yanshou 延壽 (904–975), a monk of the Yongming 永明 temple, was said to have compiled the *Zongjinglu* 宗鏡錄 (Records of the Source Mirror) at this site. See Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds., *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (Tōkyō: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932), 48:415–957.

⁴⁹ Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙 (zi Zhangru 長孺, hao Deyuan 德園; 1553–1621) was a lay Buddhist who corresponded with Matteo Ricci 李瑪竇 (1552–1610) on Buddhist doctrine (*Bianxue yidu* 辯學遺牘; see Erik Zürcher, "Xu Guangqi and Buddhism" in Catherine Jami, Peter Engelfriet and Gregory Blue, eds., *Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China: The Cross-Cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi 1562–1633* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 155–169. Chunxi's brother is Yu Chunzhen, on whom see the essay "Solitary Hill" above.

Pure Pearl were the other sites of my comings and goings.

Spirits' Peak is remote from the world of man. It feels particularly silent and still, and the monks' cells here are especially refined. Beside the monastery there was a section of land, not deficient in pine or rock, bamboo or stream, and its price was not particularly high. I thought of buying it as a place to stay in future years, but as my trips are not regular, I decided against it.

There are so many sights that I have not recorded here, but to see properly even one or two of them, you must wait until next time.

[Recorded in Hangzhou during the twenty-fifth year of the Wanli reign (1597)].

“The Last Days of Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610)” by Yuan Zhongdao (1570–1624):
A Translation Offered in Tribute to Jonathan Chaves

Yuan Zhongdao (1570–1624), author

Duncan M. Campbell, translator

Yan Hui died. The Master wailed wildly. His followers said: “Master, such grief is not proper.” The Master said: “In mourning such a man, what sort of grief would be proper?” —*Analects*, XI.x¹

In retrospect, certain books, in their own particular quiet and beneficent way, seem to have exercised an influence of inestimable extent upon one. In my case, one such book has been Jonathan Chaves’s *Pilgrim of the Clouds: Poems and Essays from Ming China* (New York: Weatherhill, 1978) for through this book I could occasionally pretend to myself that I had encountered the objects of Chaves’s labors, the Yuan brothers. I acquired my copy in the late 1970s, shortly after it had been published and soon after I had returned from several year’s study in China. It served then to quicken my interest in the late Ming dynasty, in general, and the writings of the Yuan brothers of Gong’an (公安), in particular. It has also served ever since as a model of both engaged and humanistic scholarship and precise but readable translation from Classical Chinese. Writing in a review of Chih-p’ing Chou’s *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* several decades ago, Jonathan Chaves spoke of a “humanities scholarship both more modest in its claims and more dependable in its conclusions.”² It strikes me that such an aim

¹ Simon Leys, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 50.

² *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 48.1 (1989): 132.

should serve to characterize all our work in the field. In this brief tribute to Jonathan Chaves, I wish to offer some pages of translation of a text that tells of the last days of one of the figures that he served to introduce me to more than thirty years ago now.

In his own lifetime, Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (1570–1624), the youngest of the three famous Yuan brothers of the late Ming period, never quite achieved either the official success of his eldest brother, Yuan Zongdao 袁宗道 (1560–1600), or the literary reputation of the most famous of the three, Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610).³ To the mind of one of his earliest biographers, Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664), the pre-eminent scholarly figure of the age, Zhongdao's problem in the latter respect was certainly not due to any lack of talent. "Both your poetry and your prose," Qian records himself as telling Yuan on one occasion, "suffer from an excess of talent. Your travel records, for instance, if only you were to edit them severely, deleting more than half their text, could well stand alongside those of the ancients." "Excellent advice," Yuan had replied, "but although you may well be able to do this to them, I cannot, and I am myself forever fearful of the extent to which the gush of my inspiration tends to overflow the banks."⁴

Yuan Zhongdao's diary, titled *Youju feilu* 游居柿錄 (Notes Made Whilst Travelling and at Repose) is a remarkable work, affording us a unique glimpse into the material, social, and emotional world of the scholarly elite of late imperial China, as much as do the personal letters of his brother

³ Short English-language biographies of all three Yuan brothers, by C.N. Tay, may be found in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 2:1635–1638. See also Ming-shui Hung's entry on Yuan Hongdao and his brothers in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 955–956. Chih-p'ing Chou includes a discussion of the literary theories of all three brothers in his *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Jonathan Chaves, trans., *Pilgrim of the Clouds: Poems and Essays from Ming China* provides translations of various poems and essays by all three of the Yuan brothers. For a full-length Chinese-language biography of Yuan Hongdao, with shorter accounts of the lives of his two brothers, see Zhou Qun 周群, *Yuan Hongdao pingzhuan* 袁宏道評傳 [A Critical Biography of Yuan Hongdao] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1999).

⁴ Qian Qianyi, *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan* 列朝詩集小傳 [Short Biographies to Accompany the Poetry Collections of the Various Reigns] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), 2:569.

Yuan Hongdao, perhaps in part by virtue of the superfluity spoken of by Qian Qianyi.⁵ Its thirteen books provide a detailed record of the years 1608–1618, a period during which both Yuan Zhongdao's father and his beloved brother Hongdao died, whilst Zhongdao himself belatedly achieved the examination success long expected of him and took up the first of the three official posts he was to hold in his life. Above all, the diary tells of the pleasure Yuan derived from his waterborne travels throughout some of the most scenically beautiful parts of southern China, of the friends he encountered here and there and the private collections of painting and calligraphy that he was given access to along his way.

Whenever I live in town, I become as inflamed as if I am being cauterised with moxa, only finding release when I climb upon my junk. If when studying at home, I can understand not a word of whatever book I happen to be reading, once on board my junk again I become intoxicated with the copiousness of my reading notes. Or, if I haven't written a line of poetry during the course of a year spent on land, my poetic inspiration surges up again like a spring the moment I find myself again enclosed within the cabin of my junk.... Such is the virtue of living upon a junk.⁶

To Yuan Zhongdao it must have seemed that the pain and incomprehensibility of death stalked him throughout the thirty-eighth year of the long reign of the Wanli Emperor, a year that corresponds with 1610 in the Gregorian calendar. In the seventh month of this year, sitting in his junk, he makes copies of some letters lent him by his friend Luo Bosheng 羅伯生 that recall to his mind the circumstances of the sudden death of his eldest brother Yuan Zongdao in the capital a decade earlier,

⁵ Yuan Zhongdao's collected works, titled *Kexuezhai ji* 珂雪齋集 [Collection of the Snowy White Jade Studio] and including his diary, was first published in his own lifetime in 1618. The extracts from Book Five of this diary translated below are based on the text found in Qian Bochong 錢伯城, ed., *Kexuezhai ji* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1989), 3:1203–1222. Reference has also been made to a lightly annotated version of the diary; Bu Wenying 步問影, ed., *Youju feilu* (Shanghai: Yuandong chubanshe, 1996). A partial translation of Book One of this diary is included in Stephen Owen, trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 823–826.

⁶ “Hou fanfu ji” 後泛覺記 [Record of My Second Floating Wild Duck Junk], vol. 2 of *Kexuezhai ji*, 666–667.

and the eventual transportation, two years later, of this brother's coffin back to their native place of Gong'an in Huguang Province. Then, later that same month, another brother, Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610), perhaps the greatest literary figure of his age, develops a fever and on the sixth day of the ninth month dies a painful death. Overwhelmed by his grief, their father, Yuan Shiyu 袁士瑜 (1543–1612), a man hitherto of robust constitution, begins to ail; within two years, he too has died. Throughout the year, as he seeks to deal both with calamities and his own repeated failure to pass the next stage of the Civil Service Examinations, Yuan Zhongdao himself suffers from frequent ill-health such that he and his family fear for his life.

Two years previously, in the ninth month of the *Gengzi* year (1600), my brother Zongdao had died suddenly whilst serving in the capital. As both my brother Hongdao and I had quit the capital to return home in the eighth month, Huang Hui 黃輝 (1559–1621) had undertaken Zongdao's final dispositions on our behalf and had done so both assiduously and to our complete satisfaction. In the middle of the eighth month of the *Renyin* year (1602), as we were discussing the arrangements for having Zongdao's coffin brought back here to the ancestral tomb, Hongdao happened to have a dream in which Zongdao returned home to see our father, saying to him: "If it's not to be Huang Hui who brings me back, then I won't set off." Once awake again, Hongdao told me about his dream, saying: "That's what I dreamt, but at present Huang Hui is lecturing as a Preceptor in the Eastern Palace; how could he possibly come back here?" A few days later, we received news that Huang Hui had asked for leave and before the month was up he had arrived at Jade Spring, sending us a note to inform us of this. All this happened just ten days before the date settled upon for Zongdao's interment. So Hongdao went to Jade Springs to welcome him and to accompany him home. Both Zongdao's soul tablet and his tomb inscription were written by Huang Hui and it seemed that the "plain cart and white horse" scene of antiquity was being restaged. After the interment, I saw Huang Hui off to Xiling and parted from him beside the Spring of the Filial Son, both of us in tears as we locked eyes with each other.

If memories of Zongdao's death continued to haunt him, the death that dominates this year of Yuan Zhongdao's life, however, is that of his brother Yuan Hongdao. The two brothers, always close (they had never spent more than a year apart from each other) seemed to have enjoyed a particularly

close relationship in the last year or so of Hongdao's life.⁷ Having discharged his duties as Chief Examiner for the Shaanxi Provincial Examinations, Hongdao promptly requested leave to return home, and late in the second month of the year, the two brothers departed from the capital together. Gong'an that year had experienced bad flooding and when Hongdao found that his residence there, Willow Wave Lodge (柳浪館), had been rendered uninhabitable, he took up residence in his newly-completed North of the Inkstone Tower (硯北樓) in the nearby town of Shashi 沙市 instead. In order that he remain close to Hongdao, Zhongdao, too, decided to acquire a town residence, which he promptly did when he purchased, cheaply, a garden that had belonged to a family surnamed Wu. This garden he renamed Garden of the Golden Grains (金粟園) as its most notable feature, apart from the expanse of lotus plants that grew in the pond behind it, was the number of sweet olive trees that it contained.⁸

If he had imagined long, leisurely days of conversation and tea for the two of them, however, for Zhongdao, proximity to his brother this year was to serve other purposes altogether. First and critically, it allowed him to oversee the care given to his brother once his fever, first mentioned in the seventh month, begins to worsen. Second, Zhongdao's diary entries describing Hongdao's painful death provide one of the most remarkable death scenes in all traditional Chinese literature.

Whilst sitting in Paper Mulberry Pavilion (楮亭) observing the lotus, a note from Hongdao arrived: "The sweet olive trees in Loaned Garden (賃園) are in full bloom and resemble a golden brocade canopy, and a wonderful new singer has turned up from Suzhou; come quickly." I was prevented from joining him by various matters, and then the chess grandmaster Deng turned up, and so we went for a stroll on the embankment. The flood had inundated the islands in the river and one

⁷ "Separated for a single day, we would both begin to miss each other; as soon as we were together again our joy would know no bounds," Zhongdao wrote to a mutual friend soon after Hongdao's death, for which, see "Ji Su Yunpu" 寄蘇雲浦 [To Su Yunpu], in *Kexuezhai ji*, 2:999.

⁸ After Hongdao's death, Zhongdao decided that the town was not the place to raise his nephews and so, reluctantly, because each plant and tree in the garden seemed to carry memories of his happy days spent within it, he sold it to his friend Su Weilin 蘇惟霖. On the subsequent use of the garden as the site for the formation of a Chanist Society, see He Zongmei 何宗美, *Gong'anpai jieshe kaolun* 公安派結社考論 [A Study of the Gong'an School's Society Forming Activities] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2005).

could see only the tips of the branches of the weeping willow trees. We proceeded, therefore, to Zhou the Third's house to have a drink, in search of the singer, without success. I returned home after the third watch of the night. Loaned Garden is the garden of Liu Yuanding 劉元定 of Yiling.

I oversaw the men working on my Studio of the Vase Hiding Place (瓶隱齋), the work on which has seemed interminable. I have become heartedly sick of the banging of the carpenters. This evening, thinking about a trip to Wu and Yue in order to discharge my melancholia, I spend the entire night sleepless.

In the afternoon, I paid a call on Hongdao only to find that he had again developed a slight fever. I sought to interest him in a distant journey. "Wu and Yue are too far away," he responded, "and a trip of three thousand *li* along the rivers and canals is no easy prospect. It would be a far better idea to visit some of the splendors closer to home." This day too Hongdao heard about the disquieting recent events in Gong'an, and he resolved to retire from his official career and to build a refuge somewhere between Green Stream and Purple Umbrella where he could grow old. "Birth and death are life's great events," he told me, "and if one needs to devote one's first forty years to the affairs of this life, then the next forty should be devoted to one's next life."

I went to Hongdao's residence, to find that as his fever had not abated, he had shifted to Master Li's Newmarket residence, in front of Dragon Hall Temple. In the evening, Sanmu⁹ and I slept outside his chamber. Sanmu had to get up in the middle of the night, and, groping his way back to bed, accidentally grabbed me by the nose with his cold hands. I awoke in shock, and he too got a bit of a fright. When we realized what had happened, we both burst out laughing.

I visited Hongdao's Grand Market residence, and climbed to the top of Swirling Snow Tower (捲雪樓) in order to take a look at the river in full flood. Ten thousand households stood in the glare of the surging waves. The gale meant that I couldn't linger long, and so I went off to North of the Inkstone Tower.

⁹ Gong Zhong'an 龔仲安 (*zi* Weijing 惟靜; *hao* Sanmu 散木) was a maternal uncle. A year younger than Hongdao, he had become a Raised Man in the thirty-first year of the reign of the Wanli Emperor (1603). Earlier in his diary, Yuan Zhongdao tells us that it was this uncle who in 1608 lent him his junk in order that he go off travelling, for which see "Youju feilu" in vol. 3 of *Kexuezhai ji*, 1105. For a translation of this item from the diary, see Duncan Campbell, trans., "Notes Made Whilst Travelling and at Repose (Book One)," *Asian Studies Institute Translation Paper* # 2 (1999), 3.

The rain continues, and firewood has risen to fifty cash for a large bundle. This year, but for seven days of southerlies during the middle of the fifth month, the wind has blown persistently from a northerly direction. The river has inundated its banks, and the firewood boats have not been able to get through — hence this sharp rise in the price of firewood.

The day dawned clear and my friend Wang Shangfu 王尚甫 turned up, saying as he did so: “I became quite intoxicated the moment I walked in your gate and saw the old sweet olive trees swaying in the wind.” Together we went to Paper Mulberry Pavilion from which we looked out over field after field of lotus blossoms amidst the clear flooded water. “A most rustic scene, indeed,” he exclaimed. We went on to Hongdao’s residence to have a chat with him. Speaking of the nourishment of life, he said: “Once one is forty, one should be happy to moor one’s boat, to eschew both music and sex.¹⁰ This is the harbinger of longevity. To think about taking on new concubines, on the other hand, to continue with the pursuit of luxury, is the sure harbinger of a premature death. I have personally observed that every one of our older generations who has died prematurely was sent to his death looking like a skeleton. Once the carpenters have finished their work, I will clean out an upper room in my tower and sit there meditating all day long, devoting myself to the art of breathing.” To this, I responded: “Once one has become enlightened to the truth of Chan one finds therein both the secret of survival and that of the preservation of life.” Hongdao took up on what I had said, saying: “Yes, I have become enlightened to some aspects of the truth of Chan in recent days.... After the age of forty, one really must resolve to pay attention to the ways of preserving life, of being moderate and considered in matters of rest and diet, this being the way of longevity.” I replied, “Yes, I’ve often heard this said and am myself attempting to show greater restraint in life.”

¹⁰ As Martin Huang has pointed out, both Hongdao and Zhongdao were known for their susceptibility to “sensual pleasures” (聲色之樂). Huang cites a section from Zhongdao’s “Xinlü” 心律 (Laws of the Heart) where he describes the symptoms of his own suffering as the result of overindulgence: “I am suffering from a blood disease as a result of my promiscuous life in my youth. Whenever the disease begins to strike, I have problems breathing, and my stomach aches as if there were pieces of stone inside me; I cannot sleep; I am frightened out of my wits when I find myself spitting blood, believing that I am about to die. Repentance sometimes makes me wish that I could completely reform myself. However, I gradually forget about this once the symptoms of the disease begin to recede. I soon again start to indulge myself in sexual pleasures as before (*zongqing siyi* 縱情肆意),” for which, see Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 11.

At Mid-Autumn Festival, sitting in Hongdao's house, he turned to me to say: "Old Heaven seems to have been selfish with the moon this year — what a pity!" A misty rain continued without cease, and so I returned to my Garden of the Golden Grains, and once there, because the work on the garden had recently finished, I put on some clogs and walked up and down inspecting the place. It strikes me as a place tranquil enough now for me to live in.

Eighth month, twenty-second day: I had my bedding moved upstairs at Hongdao's residence. His fever worsens by the day and he has summoned to his bedside an old physic surnamed Li. He's over eighty years old, and when he took Hongdao's pulse and declared that there was nothing wrong with him, I felt somewhat relieved.

Twenty-third day: I decocted some medicine for Hongdao, but when I took it to him he said: "That physic gave me a potion of ginseng yesterday but it made me unbearably hot. My viscera are inflamed already, so I can't take any restorative medicine, nor do I dare take any cooling medicine. It's best that I take no medicine at all."

"Even if you don't take any medicine." I responded, "you had best to try at least to regulate your diet." That evening I dreamed that Qiu Tan¹ had turned up weeping and wailing: "I have nobody that I can rely upon anymore." I awoke to find tears streaming down my face.

Twenty-fourth day: Hongdao's fever has not retreated, and I have become most concerned for him.

¹ Qiu Tan 丘坦 (*zi* Tanzhi 坦之; *hao* Changru 長孺) was a native of Macheng in Huguang Province. Having taken first place in the Provincial Military Examinations of the thirty-fourth year of the reign of the Wanli emperor (1606), he was appointed, some years later, as the Assistant Regional Commander of Haizhou. He was a skilled poet and calligrapher, and contemporaries regarded him as belonging to the Gong'an School. So handsome was he in his youth, Yuan Hongdao tells us that all the singing girls of Wu County took to calling him a "Duke Guan in Monochrome." Yuan Hongdao also tells us that his drinking style was "like a grazing Suzhou water buffalo—not fast but with an enormous capacity." In a letter to him dated 1595, Yuan Hongdao wrote: "I have heard that you have been gravely ill and I have been most worried about you. Were you to die, all the elegance and sophistication of the Southeast would expire with you." For a complete translation of this letter, see Duncan Campbell, "The Epistolary World of a Reluctant 17th Century Chinese Magistrate: Yuan Hongdao in Suzhou," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 4, 1 (2002): 159–193.

Twenty-fifth day: Hongdao's fever has worsened, and I dispatched a man to summon Physic Chen from the county seat.

Twenty-sixth day: Physic Chen arrived, took Hongdao's pulse and declared him not to be sick. Privately, I am worried about him, and it seems that the others think that I am being somewhat hysterical.

Twenty-seventh day: Hongdao took the medicine prescribed him by the physic, but to no effect. I refuse to leave his side for a moment. Suddenly in the middle of the night he called out for me, and when I entered his room he exclaimed: "What are you doing here?" He had called out to me in his dreams, it appeared. After I had left him again, I felt myself become completely disoriented and sat there weeping to myself.

Twenty-eighth day: No sign that Hongdao is getting any better, and he can now no longer walk. He gets through the days well enough, but is unable to sleep at all at night. He excretes congealed chunks of purple blood, and his urine starts out the color of water in which stale rice has been soaked but soon turns the blood-scarlet of strong tea. In private, I have become extremely apprehensive about him.

Twenty-ninth day: Again, Hongdao shows no sign of improvement. He is eating and drinking less and less and now will no longer allow anyone to watch him eating. He excretes nothing but blood. I lay awake all night, my eyes wide open.

Thirtieth day: The monk Baofang 寶方 and others turned up, and Hongdao upbraided them about the fact that neither the Two Sages Temple nor the Three Sages Tower had yet been completed.

Ninth month, first day: Hongdao seems ever so slightly better. Baofang and I prayed for him at the foot of the Bodhisattva Pagoda.

Fourth day: Hongdao's second son was born. I sat on the end of Hongdao's bed chatting with him. It's just that he continues to excrete blood and I remain extremely worried about him.

Fifth day: Yet again, Hongdao shows no sign of improvement. He excretes blood continuously. He forced himself to sit up and hold a brush so that he could write to console our father.

Sixth day: Suddenly Hongdao's old chambermaid called me into his room, saying: "He shat three or four times last night and it was all blood. He almost fainted away. If we could stop him shitting then perhaps there is still some hope." Weeping to myself, I sought to console her, urgently

summoning Physic Li to take his pulse. When he did so, he exclaimed: "I've lost his pulse!" I slumped to the floor. "Try to calm yourself," Physic Li said: "Let's try some ginseng soup." Once we had managed to get some soup down Hongdao's throat, he began to pant for breath again, mumbling to himself that he was more than likely about to die. He rose once more to relieve himself, and having done so, said: "I'll just have a bit of a sleep." He spoke no more and sitting there upright he departed the world. I yelled out to him but he did not awaken! The pain, the pain of it! In the space of a morning, I had lost my beloved brother. May the heavens open up and the earth split asunder, for to have died along with him would have been far better as I no longer wish to live in this world of man. I lay slumped upon the floor, and it was only after a considerable while that I regained consciousness. I forced myself up and started arranging for his coffin. In his purse, I found only fifty *taels*, so I proceeded to beg, to borrow, and to pawn my possessions in order to buy him a coffin. Even I had not realized that so upright was this Director of the Bureau of Honors in the Ministry of Personnel that he was to die quite so poor. In my sorrow, I hastened back to Gong'an in order to console my aged father.

Ninth month, ninth day (Double Ninth): I sat at my father's bedside looking after him. Whenever he thought nobody was looking, I would see him weep, and whenever I came in he would hide his tears, in the fear that his tears would make my grief worse. He was also apprehensive about my state of health. At dawn, he urged me to go to Shashi to make the arrangements for Hongdao's funeral. I remembered that at the Mid-Autumn Festival Hongdao had turned to me to say: "If I make it to Double Ninth and my state of health is up to it then we should have a banquet in my North of the Inkstone Tower." It seems like only yesterday that he said this to me, but so much has happened since then. How frightful are the vicissitudes of life!

Yuan Zhongdao's life was to last another fourteen years after the death of his brother. These were years of some success, of course — in 1616 he finally passes the Metropolitan Examinations, in his forty-seventh year, and the following year he is appointed to the first of his official positions, Instructor in the Prefectural School of Huizhou, a post he takes up in the nineteenth month of that year. The next year, a beautifully produced edition of his collected works is published, to his evident delight, and the following year he is promoted to the first of the various posts he was to hold in the southern capital of Nanjing. For Zhongdao, however, one suspects, nothing is ever quite the same

again after the death of his brother. The last entry in the diary for the year in which Hongdao died reads as follows:

On New Year's Eve, the monk Dumen came to Jade Springs to join me in seeing the old year out. He brought with him five poems to the title "Blue Stream" that he had written. During the course of the evening I too managed to come up with two quatrains, mourning the extent of my loss, the indescribable pain of my sorrow. I turned to Dumen to say: "This year I have experienced in the most extreme form all the various sufferings the living are prone to: with the death of my brother, I experienced the pain of permanent separation; with my failure in the examinations, I have experienced the pain of unfulfilled ambition; ever since I returned home I have had not a moment's peace and quiet, thus also experiencing the pain of having to get along with others; and ever since autumn, I have been sick without relief, thus experiencing also the pain of illness. For me, the whole point and interest of life has disappeared." To this, Dumen responded: "That's not the case at all for I am sure that as in the past, you, layman, will remain willing to devote yourself to fearless progress?"

The Road Not Taken:
A Tenth-Century *Kanshi* Dialogue

Timothy R. Bradstock and Judith N. Rabinovitch

INTRODUCTION

Sometime during the first half of the tenth century, two Heian courtiers named Minamoto no Fusaakira 源英明 (ca. 900–939) and Tachibana no Arisura 橘在列 (893?–953?) exchanged a series of twenty-two poems (*kanshi* 漢詩) composed in literary Sinitic, constituting a rare, if not unique, set of poems that has largely gone unnoticed until fairly recent times. To the general reader, it may seem curious that these poets wrote in Chinese, but Japanese courtiers had adopted this language for their writing relatively early in their history, developing both orthodox and variant hybrid styles of literary Sinitic to serve various purposes. By the mid-Heian period literary Sinitic was being used both in public life, for routine official records, traditional scholarship, laws, Buddhist texts, formal letters, narratives, and poetry, and in the private realm, where it was employed for personal correspondence, diaries, verse, and other genres.¹

The present group of poems, all of which are heptasyllabic octaves, to our knowledge constitute the only surviving extended poetic dialog in the Heian *kanshi* tradition. The series is

¹ On the characteristics of domesticated Chinese forms used in Japan, see Judith N. Rabinovitch, “An Introduction to *Hentai Kanbun* (Variant Chinese),” in *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 24.1 (1996): 98–127. See also the paper by Edith Aldridge, ed. by Bjarke Frellesvig and Peter Sells, “Analysis and Value of *Hentai Kanbun* as Japanese,” in *Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 20 (2011): 1–15.

essentially a debate between a minor court official (Fusaakira) and a Buddhist novice and former courtier (Aritsura) over which man's career represents the correct path for persons of their social class, shedding light on some of the intellectual and spiritual concerns of Heian courtiers. The series also illustrates how Chinese verse was used as a medium for utilitarian and private communication to augment or even replace face-to-face discussion among male aristocrats.

Both Fusaakira and Aritsura were respected in their day as scholar-poets, yet neither enjoyed a particularly successful official career. Had it not been for the preservation of this series and several more of their poems in *Fusōshū* 扶桑集 [(Anthology of Poetry from the Land of Fusang), comp. ca. 995–998],² as well as a few scattered items elsewhere, their names would likely have been long forgotten. Fusaakira was the eldest son of Prince Tokiyo 齊世親王 (886–927) and a descendant of Emperor Uda 宇多天皇 (867–931, r. 887–897). He was born around 900; since the year of his death is known (939), he evidently lived only to about age thirty-nine. The renowned *kanshi* poet and statesman Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903) was Fusaakira's maternal uncle. Fusaakira began his court career at age sixteen when he was appointed to the junior fourth rank. He soon gained various minor posts, including gentleman-in-waiting in the Chamberlain's office and middle captain of the Left Imperial Bodyguards (927). But before long, in the years following the passing of his father and Emperor Uda, his progress through the bureaucracy appears to have stalled. Although Fusaakira remained employed at court, he seems to have become increasingly preoccupied with the pursuit of

² Compiled by Ki no Tadana 紀齊名 (957–999), *Fusōshū* was presented to Emperor Ichijō in 1006 by Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長, who had been entrusted with this task by Tadana's widow in 1000, the year after her husband's death. Only two of the original sixteen *maki* survive, numbers seven and nine, comprising 104 poems by twenty-four poets. Originally, *Fusōshū* had sixteen *maki* (twelve according to some accounts), with verse by seventy-six poets. From early in its history, the text was considered corrupt, with a high incidence of textual errors. Commentaries on the text, as well as a collated edition, do not seem to have been attempted until the late twentieth century. See Judith N. Rabinovitch and Timothy R. Bradstock, *Dance of the Butterflies: Chinese Poetry from the Japanese Court Tradition* [Cornell East Asian Series, 125], (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program, 2005), 141.

Fusō 扶桑 (Ch. Fusang) in the title is a term dating back to the ancient mythic geography *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (The Classic of Mountains and Seas, ca. first century BC). It designated a mythical island said to be east of China and the imagined source of the sun. Later, at least by the early sixth century in China, an identification had been made between Fusang and the Japanese archipelago, with Japan (Nihon, “source of the sun”) sometimes being called Fusōkoku 扶桑國.

pleasure, giving himself over to wine and poetry, making excursions to the countryside, and forging personal friendships.

Besides the present series, Fusaakira has several more items in *Honchō monzui*. A five-volume family verse collection *Genji shōsō* 源氏小草 has been lost, but some ten pieces from this work survive in other collections. He fulfilled his father's last wishes by compiling a biography (titled *Jikaku Daishi-den* 慈覺大師傳) of Priest Ennin 圓仁 (ca. 794–864), also known by his posthumous name, Jikaku Daishi 慈覺大師.

Aritsura was the third son of Tachibana no Namiki 橘秘樹 (b. 874?), who was said to have served as governor of Owari and provisional governor of Yamato. Although from a far less distinguished lineage than Fusaakira, Aritsura was viewed in literary circles as an unusual talent, albeit a late bloomer. In an account of Aritsura's life (found in the latter's posthumous literary collection — see below), the scholar Minamoto no Shitagō 源順 (911–983), who studied under Aritsura for a period, indicates that Aritsura finished his Academy studies at around thirty; he apparently did not proceed to advanced studies and never had an easy time in his career from then on. In the following excerpt from his *kanshi* “Deep Feelings on an Autumn Night: Respectfully Presented to Fujiwara, Supernumerary Middle Captain in the Imperial Bodyguards” (*Honchō monzui* 21, SNKBT 27:133–34), he reflects ruefully on his life as follows:

I gaze at the moon, feeling disheartened and sad.
 Why is it that I feel disheartened and sad?
 A graduate of the Academy am I;
 Began my studies at the age of ten.
 But for all my studying, nothing have I gained,
 And now I am more than thirty years of age.
 I muddled along, then came back empty-handed;
 Now I loll about here in my hut.
 My family is poor, acquaintances and relatives few.
 Down in the world, I've grown distant from old friends.
 The Chang'an moon is all that I have now,

Coming each night to visit me in my idleness.³

Aritsura's official career indeed was fairly undistinguished; he started his career as vice-governor of Aki, then after various switches in posts landed a position as junior assistant director of the Board of Censors, which he held for about a year. He became widely known for the strict, dignified, and proper way in which he performed his duties. One of Aritsura's more significant appointments was as tutor to the aforementioned Shitagō, who was greatly impressed by his mentor's literary acumen. Shitagō also glowingly described Aritsura's character as being "without fault and morally pure." Perhaps in keeping with these traits, Aritsura disliked cliques and social climbing and, having grown tired of the academic factionalism and competitiveness of court life, took Buddhist vows in 944/10 and went to live at Enryakuji, on Mt. Hiei.

Shitagō later edited a memoir by Aritsura, known as *Songyōki* 尊敬記 (Monk Songyō's Diary, non-extant), as well as a collection of his *kanshi* and prose pieces titled *Shamon kyōkō shū* 沙門敬公集 (The Collected Works of Lord Monk [Son] gyō, 7 *maki*, comp. 954), only the preface of which survives. In this piece, Shitagō praises Aritsura as possessing the natural talent of Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong, observing that he "outstripped others in his knowledge." Shitagō notes, however, that many were disappointed to see so fine a scholar as Aritsura take so long to complete his studies. Shitagō further mentions Aritsura's devotion to Buddhism and his antipathy toward the "glories" of court life, observing that he eventually abandoned all worldly attachments and vices apart from his "addiction to poetry."⁴

Concerning the friendship between Aritsura and Fusaakira, Shitagō explains that after Fusaakira learned of Aritsura's literary brilliance, he wanted to meet him and test his knowledge and skills. One day the two men finally became acquainted, and over wine they composed numerous verses, "each writing ten poems before they had drunk three cups." The preface quotes the second

³ For a translation of the entire poem, found originally in *Honchō monzui*, see *Ibid.*, 168–169. A second poem by Aritsura, a palindrome, is on page 173.

⁴ Ōsone Shōsuke 大曾根章介, Kinpara Tadashi 金原理, et al., comp., *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹 [Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei 新古典文学大系, 27] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992), 255–256.

couplet from the first poem in the present series, written by Fusaakira, which Shitagō indicates was composed on this particular occasion. In this couplet, the poet praises his new friend for his skill in versification and knowledge of Buddhism, remarking to the assembled company that Aritsura was “a true genius.”

The present sequence of verses was apparently written during a period when Aritsura was staying at an unidentified temple, possibly Enryakuji, even though he was technically still a student at the Academy. Exactly when and over how long a period this exchange took place is unknown. Nor can it be determined what editorial process the verse may have undergone as *Fusōshū* was being compiled, although all extant texts preserve much the same ordering and essential content.⁵ It is also uncertain whether this group of poems comprises the sum total of the verse exchanged by these men. The series has no title and the poems come without any commentaries apart from the helpful poetic introductions that serve as titles to some compositions. There are a few brief notes supplied by one or two modern commentators, but readers are for the most part on their own. All but five of the poems (*Fusōshū* nos. 48–52) have been included here.

A prominent feature in this series is the high incidence of Chinese historical and literary allusions, a reminder of how deeply the *kanshi* genre was under the sway of China’s textual and cultural heritage. The poets repeatedly buttress their contentions by adducing Chinese precedents and models; Japanese cultural references, by contrast, are almost totally absent. The poems are replete with reworked snatches from canonical Chinese texts and endless literary flourishes. Word order is sometimes irregular, on account (at least in part) of the poets’ steadfast adherence to a set rhyme scheme throughout the series, which inevitably put strictures on their syntax. While the poems are devoid of *recherché* graphs and the diction is often prosy and deceptively plain, it soon becomes clear that more is happening between these two poets than meets the eye. These being private poems,

⁵ We have largely followed Tasaka Junko 田坂順子, ed., *Fusōshū: kōhon to sakuin* 扶桑集: 校本と索引 (Fukuoka: Tōka Shobō 1985, 33–49), a modern collated edition of the text based on the *Kanshō-bon* 簡称本 (known also as *Kanshō-bon* 簡彰本), transcribed in the early Edo period and now held by Shōkōkan Bunko 彰考館文庫. This text has been collated with some seven other extant manuscripts, including the Itamoto 板本 manuscript, upon which the most commonly cited *Gunsho ruijū-bon* 群書類従本 edition is based. See Tasaka, 1–2, 5. In some instances, we have followed *Gunsho ruijū*, where it seems more likely to be correct.

likely written only for the poets themselves, many pieces of information the reader may wish to know are missing. Thus, the full significance of the Chinese allusions is sometimes obscure, and occasionally a poem will end with a comment that has no apparent relevance to what has come before. Moreover, in places the logical flow of ideas both within and between couplets is choppy at best, which would perhaps have mattered less had the poetry been in the descriptive rather than persuasive mode. The two poets often seem to talk past each other: it is unclear whether they were simply ignoring each other's arguments or if certain poems in the original series were lost, creating breaks in the narrative.

The first of the poems reveals that Aritsura and Fusaakira became friends one day after meeting at a mountain temple. Whether or not they had met before is uncertain, but in any event, they were immediately impressed by each other's erudition and poetic skills. What also drew the two men together, we soon learn, was a shared sense of moral and intellectual superiority vis à vis their contemporaries at court. In one poem after another, early in the series in particular, they engage in endless flattery, describing each other's talents in extravagant terms and at the same time making self-abasing comments about their own abilities. Despite these occasional displays of modesty, both men indulge in conspicuous preening, laboring to impress one another with their literary skills and refinement.

The two poets lived in separate worlds: Fusaakira in the capital and Aritsura at a temple somewhere in the mountains. We soon learn that they are not content to live apart, and each begins to coax, even try to shame, the other into leaving his world behind, advancing plausible arguments and rationales. Aritsura has retreated into seclusion in part because his career has stalled, but Fusaakira's own career at court is also in the doldrums. Thus, Aritsura maintains that Fusaakira should recognize the hopelessness of his situation and join him in seclusion. Fusaakira, by contrast, concedes that although their career prospects seem limited, any station in public life is better than none; Aritsura, in his view, is squandering his talents and will never fulfill his destiny if he remains hidden away at the temple. Neither man in the end apparently succeeded in winning the other over.

Hermitage was a popular topos in Heian *kanshi*, following poetic traditions established during China's Han and Six dynasties periods. In various places, Aritsura attempts to identify himself with such revered hermits and men-in-reclusion as Bo Yi and Shu Qi, Bo Luan, and Gao Feng, and yet with

these figures he had rather little in common. “Substantive” recluses (to use Alan Berkowitz’s term⁶), of the sort represented by these four men, fled from public life to preserve themselves in dangerous times or to avoid serving a ruler they considered illegitimate. Still others declined to serve altogether, on account of a principled objection to court service. There were also literati like Tao Yuanming (365–427) who left their posts and withdrew to the countryside because they found themselves temperamentally unsuited for official service. However, none of these criteria applies to Aritsura, who never suggests that his life had been in danger or that he viewed the current ruler unfavorably. Nor does he explicitly state that he has renounced the world for all time or that he finds official service uncongenial. Indeed, in two poems, Aritsura seems to hint that his life in reclusion might just be a temporary phase. In his first poem in the series, poem two, he represents his withdrawal as a process of undergoing a “leopard change,” an expression derived from *Yijing*: at one level, this refers to self-cultivation (in this case likely the practice of Buddhist austerities), but at the same time it means lying low and marking time until one’s fortunes improve. In any event, we are left with the impression that Aritsura’s main reason for withdrawing is his lack of career progress. Rather than a “substantive recluse,” he more resembles one of the “mountebanks of reclusion” often derided in Chinese sources,⁷ in other words, persons practicing reclusion as a temporary expedient to draw attention to themselves and perhaps be called back to court to serve in a higher post.

Aritsura uses a somewhat secular, aesthetic approach to entice Fusaakira to join him in reclusion, employing natural imagery rather than the appeal of religious doctrine and holding out the prospect of a charming bucolic life together as the main inducement. He also reminds Fusaakira that his career is stagnating, likening him to a timid dragon needlessly submerged in a pool (poem seven). Elsewhere, Aritsura appeals to his pride, asserting that his friend is like “a wild crane in with a brood of hens” (poem fifteen), in other words, a giant surrounded by mediocrities. He further suggests that Fusaakira is being eclipsed, even persecuted, at court, likening him to “new foliage that is the first to be destroyed by the wind” and to “the moon that shines and is then obscured by clouds” (poem four).

⁶ Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 7, *et passim*.

⁷ “Mountebanks of reclusion” is a term also introduced by Berkowitz. *Ibid.*, 4.

What better thing for him to do, then, than to forsake the inevitable disappointments of court life and join Aritsura in the countryside?

Refusing to budge, however, Fusaakira redirects the spotlight to Aritsura, whom he sees as being vainly devoted to spiritual and mystical pursuits. In his view, Aritsura is already close enough to Buddhist enlightenment and thus has little reason to remain at the temple any longer (poem ten). He also states in the bluntest of terms that Aritsura's spiritual goal — his wish to “walk among the clouds” — is hardly attainable (poem twelve). Fusaakira also reminds his friend that he has “never found the oars for immortality at Penghu,” which is to say that Aritsura's concurrent quest for Daoist immortality is also illusory.

As the series progresses, we also see an attempt to challenge even more radically the very legitimacy of the pursuit of the eremitic lifestyle, reflecting certain notions concerning the “false” side of eremitism often present in Chinese literature. Apart from verse written in celebration of eremitism, the Six dynasties also produced pieces that ridiculed this lifestyle, accusing adherents of being frauds or depicting them as disloyal for evading public service. Among the best-known examples is Wang Kangju's 王康琚 (fourth century) poem “A Rebuttal to the Call to Reclusion” (Fan zhaoyin shi 反招隱詩).⁸ In a similar vein, Fusaakira proposes at one point that Aritsura devote himself not to his new lifestyle of contemplation but to writing poetry, adding “*that's* the way to lengthen the span of your life” (poem twelve), effectively undermining the validity and the promise of happiness thought to be found in the reclusive lifestyle. In other words, by returning to public life and pursuing traditional scholarship, Aritsura will build a legacy for himself and only then attain the immortality he longs to achieve. Thus, Fusaakira champions the superiority of the scholar's calling over religious idealism.

While earlier eremitic verse had sometimes tried to summon recluses out of seclusion by highlighting the discomforts of living in the wilderness, contrasting these with the luxuries and perquisites to be enjoyed at court, Fusaakira's rhetoric makes no mention of any such privations. Furthermore, he only obliquely suggests that a distinguished public career necessarily lies in store for Aritsura. Instead, his appeal stresses the moral imperative of service, adducing historical examples of

⁸ See *Wen xuan*, 22. A translation by Burton Watson is found in *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry from Early Times to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 175.

famous recluses who came to their senses “as loyal subjects ... of their enlightened lord” (poem sixteen) and heeded the call to return to the capital to render service. Fusaakira’s stance reflects mainstream Confucian thought, which by this time was deeply entrenched in the culture of the Japanese aristocracy: official service was simply the natural calling for men of his and Arisura’s social and intellectual background. Even if one’s career prospects were limited, which was often the fate of persons from lesser lineages, a gentleman had a moral obligation to serve, particularly in an enlightened age when peace reigned and the throne was occupied by virtuous rulers. At one point, Fusaakira declares that although he holds a lowly position, as an “ignorant, worthless nag,” merely being able to participate in court life is its own reward, validating his existence (poem sixteen). For him, there is no room for retreat or compromise: “The garden sunflowers have faith enough to turn toward the sun.... You, my confidant, know that I would never leave my cohorts behind” (poem twelve).

The series thus captures two distinct polarities in the classical philosophical tradition in Japan: on the one side, a sense of duty as a servant of the court, and on the other, a desire to be free of hierarchies in which opportunities for advancement were often restricted. This counterpoint figured prominently in the consciousness of courtiers throughout the Heian period, especially among persons in the lower-to-middle reaches of the aristocracy, and was a constant refrain in Japanese court literature for centuries to come.

In recent times these poems have come to the attention of Chinese critics, who believe that Fusaakira and Arisura were lovers.⁹ Although it is often hard to determine whether the strong friendships depicted in Heian literature are purely platonic or not, it seems plausible to imagine that this series was motivated by romantic impulses, even though specific love imagery is lacking. In Heian

⁹ Awareness of Fusaakira and Arisura is quite prevalent on the Internet, at Chinese websites where homosexuality in premodern Japan is discussed. One example used to be found on the website for Beijing University’s Chinese Literature Forum (Beida zhongwen luntan 北大中文論壇, at www.pkucn.com), an essay titled “A Short Discussion of Japanese Homosexual Literary Traditions” (*Taolun yixia Riben de tongxinglian wenxue chuantong* 討論一下日本的同性戀文學傳統), by Xiang Huangzi 香皇子. Three poems from the present series were included. In most such Internet discussions, several poems in the exchange are quoted and a few biographical facts about the two men are provided, but there is generally little or no treatment beyond this.

literature, there are certainly other *kanshi* possessing overtones of romance, or at least intimate male friendship, an example being one found in the anthology *Honchō reisō* 本朝麗藻 (ca. 1010) by Fujiwara no Kintō 藤原公任 (966–1041), who has apparently been cold-shouldered by a male friend. He complains of this man's neglect, stating in the final couplet, "Thinking of you does nothing to ease my bitterness at being discarded: / The promises we made over the years all have come to nothing."¹⁰

As a final note, all of these poems use the same five rhyme words: *kun* 君, *gun* 群, *bun* 文, *un* 雲, and *bun* 聞, and always in this order. The unwavering adherence to this rhyme scheme suggests an effort by both men to test their skills and flaunt their virtuosity. These rhyme words themselves turn out to be key terms in the context of the emerging discussion: being a gentleman (*kun* 君, the first rhyme) lies at the heart of the courtiers' identity; at the same time, they consider themselves separate from and superior to the collective body (*gun* 群) of courtiers who make up their colleagues and contemporaries. The centrality of literature and learning in the men's lives is symbolically represented by the recurrent use of *bun* 文 (literature, culture) as the third rhyme, while the penultimate rhyme word, *un* 雲 (clouds), points to one pole in the debate over the correct course for a gentleman to follow: freedom (as symbolized by clouds) and life outside the government bureaucracy. *Bun* 聞 (hear, reputation, etc.), the final rhyme word, is used in different ways, sometimes denoting "reputation" and elsewhere referring either to what the gentlemen themselves have *heard* concerning recent or former times or to what the "lesser" persons at court might have heard about them. These and other themes and motifs will be discussed within our commentary on each verse.

THE POEMS

POEM ONE

As noted in the Introduction, the first poem, below, was apparently written on an occasion when the two men met face-to-face, drinking wine and exchanging poems. Fusaakira celebrates his new (or perhaps rediscovered) friend, praising Arisura as a scholarly genius. Gratified to have found a kindred

¹⁰ See poem 130 in Kawaguchi Hisao 川口久雄, annot., *Honchō reisō kanchū* 本朝麗藻簡注 (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1993), 320–322.

spirit, he likens their conversation at the temple to the rarified philosophical discussions (“pure conversation”) that took place among the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢 (third century). In the second couplet, Fusaakira goes even further, implicitly equating Arisura with two of the most renowned figures in the realms of Chinese verse and Mahayana Buddhism. Further blandishments follow. In the final couplet, Fusaakira suggests that Arisura’s late blooming is a sure sign that a distinguished career lies ahead.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. To the talented scholar Tachibana: We recently met at a mountain temple. “Pure conversation” ensued in a relaxed fashion as we discussed poetry and Buddhism. In both fields you are thoroughly knowledgeable; I am not your equal. I found you really delightful, and we returned home together in the same carriage. I admire how you possess divinely-conferred nobility in abundance, but lament that you have not been given a post. I have made an attempt to write an extended poem outlining the situation.

[Noble?] conduct, famed for your talent — you, sir, stand alone.

As soon as we met there was “pure conversation” — I am not in your league.

When Tao Yuanliang came into the world he was able to versify;

When Wugoucheng entered this life he excelled in Dharma texts.

Pure nobility when times are hard: a pine standing in the snow;

Lofty ambitions, soaring alone: a crane alighting on the clouds.

Wearing still a blue-collared garment and carrying yellow books;

But great vessels take years to produce, as we’ve heard since ancient times.

源英明 近曾與橘才子相逢山寺。清談間發，或言詩章，或論釋教，兩道兼通，一不可及。予不堪欣感。同載歸家。嘉天爵之有餘，歎人位之未備。聊題長句，叙其所由。

口行才名獨有君
 清談一接我非群
 陶元亮出能詩句
 無垢稱生長法文
 貞節寒含松立雪
 高情孤聳鶴棲雲
 青衿未改携黃卷
 大器晚成是舊聞

SOURCE: FSS 32, in Tasaka, *Fusōshū: kōhon to sakuin* (hereafter, “Tasaka”), 33–34; see also Hanawa Hokinoichi 塙保己一, comp., with Kawamata Seiichi 川俣馨一, ed. [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 新校群書類從 (Tokyo: Naigai Shoseki Kabushiki Kaisha, 1931) 6:191.

LINE ONE: The first character is missing. From the context, it appears to be an adjective meaning “noble” or something similar, modifying *xing* 行 (conduct), the next word.

LINE THREE: Tao Yuanliang 陶元亮: the poet Tao Yuanming 陶淵明. Fusaakira is implying that like Tao, Arisura was born with an innate talent for verse. By extension, he is placing Arisura’s verse on the same level as Tao’s, a highly extravagant claim. A similar implicit comparison is made in the next line concerning Arisura’s command of Buddhist doctrine.

LINE FOUR: Wugoucheng 無垢稱, “The Unsullied One,” is a kenning for Vimalakīrti, the central figure in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* (ca. first century). This was first translated into Chinese during the third century, by Zhi Qian 支謙, and was titled *Weimojie jing* 維摩詰經 (The Vimalakīrti Sutra). A later Chinese translation of this work, by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), bears the title *Shuo Wugoucheng jing* 說無垢稱經 (Discussion of the *Sutra of the Unsullied One*). Vimalakīrti is represented in the sutra as a profoundly enlightened and accomplished Mahayanist lay practitioner. During the Six dynasties, the sutra was popular among China’s elite. They were particularly attracted to its notion of a middle way between asceticism and materialism, which legitimized keeping one’s possessions and remaining involved in the lay world.

LINE SEVEN: The blue collar was part of the traditional garb of students. Arisura may have been an outstanding talent, but according to Honma Yōichi he did not become a “scholar of literature”

(*monjōshō* 文章生) until he was thirty. See Honma Yōichi 本間洋一, annot., *Nihon kanshi* 日本漢詩 (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 1996), 154. The books were yellow from a dye used to protect the pages from being eaten by insects.

LINE EIGHT: The vessel reference in this line is derived from *Laozi* 41.

POEM TWO

Aritsura returns some of the compliments he received in the previous poem and with *pro forma* modesty marvels that he should be in the company of someone so noble. He explains that he is waiting for his fortunes to improve and expresses confidence that in the meantime his friend will soar in his own career. In the final couplet, Aritsura proposes to recite one of the odes from *Shijing* for his friend's sake, in what is likely a gesture of sympathy: Fusaakira is experiencing adversity at court, which we learn more about later. In the final line, we see the first of several attempts by the pair to establish a sphere of privacy and exclusiveness around themselves, separate from the “vulgar bunch” at court.

Tachibana no Aritsura. Though undeserving, I was presented with a new poem written by you, Middle Captain Minamoto of the Right Imperial Bodyguards, and I could not help bowing twice! I now presume to offer my humble thoughts. [Using the original rhyme words.]

Late one day, among pines and cassias, I chanced to meet up with you.
Who could say that swans and swallows never flock together?
Filled with emotion, you recited your lines about white duckweed on the pond,
As my tears fell and stained the green bamboo texts in my box.

[Recently the Middle Captain wrote a poem titled “The Pavilion by the Pond at Kawara’in.” It contained the lines “Lake Qingcao, like a painting with waves drawn in.
/ White Duckweed Lake, resembling one great spreading shore.” After looking at the

poem reverently and hearing these lines recited, I was overcome with emotion and my tears flowed. Hence this note.]

For a “leopard change” I will hide awhile in the mists of the southern peaks,
While the roc soars high and loses itself in the clouds of the northern abyss.
For your sake I’ll recite again the “Cypresswood Boat Ode,”
But don’t let that vulgar bunch know what I am doing!

橘在列 右親衛源亞將軍忝見賜新詩. 不勝再拜敢獻鄙懷. 本韻

松桂晚陰一遇君

誰言鵠燕不同群

感吟池上白蘋句

泣染箱中綠竹文

近曾將軍有河原院池停之詩. 々中有青草湖圖波寫得.

白蘋湖樣岸相傳之句. 余奉拜之次. 一聞此句感懷交至.

涕泣漣如. 故云.

豹變暫藏南嶺霧

鵬搏空失北溟雲

為君更詠柏舟什

莫使凡流俗客聞

SOURCE: FSS 33, in Tasaka, 34–35; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:191.

LINE TWO: Swans and swallows, i.e., large birds and small birds, are commonplace metaphors for noble and ordinary men.

LINE THREE: The allusion to White Duckweed Lake 白蘋湖 is likely derived from the second in a pair of short lyric poems (*ci* 詞) by Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (ca. 812–870), known by various tune titles including “Yi Jiangnan” 憶江南 (Remembering the Land South of the Yangzi). This is written in the voice of a lonely woman gazing across the water at the sailboats, hoping to see the one that bears her

lover. It ends with the words, “Heartbroken [here by] White Duckweed Islet” 腸斷白蘋洲. The islet was apparently situated on Lake Tai (Taihu 太湖) near Huzhou in Zhejiang province, and was a place where people bade farewell to friends heading north by boat.

LINE FOUR: Green bamboo texts: an anachronistic-sounding reference to works written on bamboo slips. Arisura may be referring to books brought with him on his visit to the temple. Here, and elsewhere in this sequence, the poets allude to the story of Emperor Shun’s wives shedding tears over his grave in the wilderness and upon the bamboo nearby, then throwing themselves into the Xiang 湘 River. Legend tells that the mottled appearance of a variety of bamboo growing in this area was caused by the wives’ tears. Here, Arisura may have created an extended pun in this line involving (1) the two homophones *xiang* 箱 (box) and *xiang* 湘 (the Xiang river/Xiang bamboo) and (2) the word *wen* 文, which means both “texts” and “markings.” Thus, the line could also be read “my tears staining the green bamboo by the Xiang with *markings*.”

While most texts have 箱 in this line, Tasaka has provided a handwritten graph composed of 霜 with the bamboo radical on top, which we have not been able to identify.

POET’S NOTE TO LINES THREE AND FOUR: Kawara’in 河原院 was the personal residence of Prince Minamoto no Tōru 源融 (822–895), son of Emperor Saga. It was bordered by Rokujō 六条 to the south, occupying an area around modern Kiyamachi Gojō 木屋町五条 in Kyoto. It later became the Sentō Gosho 仙洞御所 palace of Retired Emperor Uda. Lake Qingcao 青草湖 is located at the southern extremity of Lake Dongting 洞庭 in Hunan.

LINE FIVE: We have emended 貌, found in Tasaka, to 豹. Arisura is lying low in semi-reclusion (at a Buddhist temple, judging from subsequent textual evidence), undergoing self-cultivation and training, developing his *wen* (culture, refinement), a term that also referred to stripes or spots on the fur of tigers and leopards. The “leopard change” 豹變 reference derives from commentary to hexagram forty-nine (*ge* 革) in the *Yijing* (The Book of Changes), which states: “Whereas the noble man here would do a leopard change, the petty man should radically change his countenance.... To set forth would result in misfortune, but to stay put and practice constancy would result in good fortune.” See Richard John Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 448. The presence of the word

“awhile” (*zan* 暫), taken together with the leopard change reference, suggests that Aritsura might be waiting for the right time to resume his career.

This line also owes a debt to a poem by Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499) titled “Zhi Xuancheng chu Xinlinpu xiang Banqiao” 之宣城出新林浦向板橋 (En Route to Xuancheng, Emerging from Xinlinpu and Heading toward Banqiao). The relevant portion has been translated by Kang-i Sun Chang as follows: “Noise and dust are blocked out from now on, / My heart’s content will here be fulfilled. / Though I lack the beauty of a panther, / At last I can retire into the South Mountain mist” 囂塵自茲隔, 賞心於此遇, 雖無玄豹姿, 終隱南山霧. As Chang explains, “A panther was said to have soaked in heavy mist for seven long days, with complete abstinence from food in order to refine the quality of its hair and patterned skin.... The allusion is especially appropriate here, since Hsieh T’iao wishes to devote himself to moral growth in semi-retirement.” See Kang-i Sun Chang, *Six Dynasties Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 133. The words for leopard and panther are essentially identical, the difference being the addition of the character *xuan* 玄 (dark) added as a modifier in the latter instance.

LINE SIX: The roc (*peng* 鵬) is a gigantic mythical bird described in the “Xiao yao you” 逍遙遊 (Free and Easy Wandering) chapter of *Zhuangzi* and was associated historically with physical power and spiritual independence.

LINE SEVEN: “Cypresswood Boat” 柏舟 is the title of odes twenty-six and forty-five in *Shijing*; it is unclear which one Aritsura had in mind here. Ode twenty-six is in the voice of an official lamenting how little he is understood by his contemporaries and how unkindly he has been treated. We note that this ode features in the climax of “Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery” (Si xuan fu 思玄賦) by Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139); in his final poem, Aritsura pointedly urges Fusaakira to read this rhapsody, perhaps hoping it will inspire him to abandon his career.

In ode forty-five, a widow declares that she will never remarry, swearing undying loyalty to the memory of her deceased husband. This poem seems the less likely alternative but is not unthinkable: Aritsura may have been inspired by the widow’s devotion.

LINE EIGHT: The “vulgar bunch” 凡流 reference may be a homonymic (and orthographic) pun on the phrase 汎[其]流 “floating on the current,” which occurs in the opening couplet of Ode 26. This reads: “It floats, that cypresswood boat, floating about on the river’s flow” 汎比柏舟亦汎其流.

POEM THREE

In language that seems heartfelt, if rather trite, Fusaakira observes that the foundation of his friendship with Aritsura is a “shared devotion to culture” and asserts that their ties are unbreakable. But while acknowledging Aritsura’s wish for them to be together, Fusaakira sidesteps the issue, closing the poem with an evasive truism that leaves his intentions unclear.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. *The talented scholar Tachibana responded to my clumsy poem
and I have written in reply to offer thanks, using the same rhymes.*

I feel regret that for many years I had never encountered you.
Then suddenly we were brought together, chancing to meet in the hills.
Close friends, just as before, from the moment we stopped to talk;
Comrades forever, precisely because of our shared devotion to culture.
Lacquer and glue our relationship, like drinking plain, fresh water;
Fine jade your beauteous verse, halting the clouds in their tracks.
Your plan is for me to follow you to a place with forests and springs,
The clamor of the workaday world no longer fit to be heard.

源英明 橘才子見酬拙詩以本韻答謝

恨我多年未遇君
山頭一旦適成群
知音如舊初傾蓋
會友無期只以文
膠漆交情斟淡水
瓊瑤麗句遏青雲
相携欲結林泉計
塵網誼譁不足聞

SOURCE: FSS 34, in Tasaka, 35; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:191.

LINE THREE: “Close friends,” *zhiyin* 知音 (J. *chiin*), is literally “[he who] understands the music.” This phrase recalls the story of two friends named Bo Ya 伯牙 and Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期, who lived during the Spring and Autumn period (722–486 BC). Bo Ya was a skilled *qin* (zither) player, and Zhong loved his music. After Zhong died, Bo Ya destroyed his instrument and never played again, believing that no one else could fully appreciate his music. This account is found in *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (The Chronicles of Master Lü, sponsored by Lü Buwei 呂不韋, d. 235 BC), *pian* 篇 70 (“Ben wei” 本味).

“Stopped to talk” is literally “inclined our carriage canopies” 傾蓋, a stock reference to intimate conversations between gentlemen, originally when their carriages met on the road. A passage in the “Zunxian” 尊賢 (Honoring the Worthies) chapter in *Shuo Yuan* 說苑 (Garden of Persuasions, by Liu Xiang 劉向, first century BC), reads: “When Confucius was in Tan he met Chengzi on the road. They inclined their carriage canopies and talked all day long” 孔子之郟, 遭程子於塗, 傾蓋而語終日. The phrase also occurs in the expression *qing gai ru gu* 傾蓋如故, “inclining our carriage canopies and behaving like old friends.”

Ru jiu 如舊 “as before, as in former times,” in Fusaakira’s line is an adaptation of the synonymous *ru gu* 如故; both are somewhat ambiguous, meaning not only “as before” but also “as if long acquainted.”

LINE FOUR: This is based on a passage in *Lunyu* 12: 24 which reads: “Zengzi said, ‘The gentleman forms friendships on the basis of shared devotion to culture, and through these friendships he is assisted in developing virtue’” 曾子曰, 君子以文會友, 以友輔仁.

LINE FIVE: Once combined, lacquer and glue cannot be separated. This is a conventional figure describing a state of deep intimacy. A relationship like “[a drink of] plain, fresh water” 斟淡水 is one that is pure and noble: see the “Biao ji” 表記 chapter of *Liji*, which states, “[Hence,] the gentleman in his dealings is like water, the petty man like sweet wine. The gentleman through this blandness achieves perfection; the petty man through this ‘sweetness’ does harm” 故君子之接如水, 小人之接如醴. 君子淡以成, 小人甘以壞.

LINE SIX: The notion of halting the clouds in their tracks 遏青雲 derives from *Liezi* 5: 11. A man named Xue Tan 薛譚 studied singing with Qin Qing 秦青, but after a while he decided to end his lessons and return home. At a farewell banquet for Xue, Qin Qing performed music that was so

mournfully beautiful the clouds above stopped to listen. Deeply moved, Xue decided to remain with his teacher.

LINE SEVEN: The phrase *xiang xie* 相携 can mean either to follow someone to a place or to go there hand-in-hand.

LINE EIGHT: “Workaday world” (*chen wang* 塵網) is literally “dusty net,” a Buddhist-inspired phrase calling to mind the entanglements and corrupting influence of the material world. The locus classicus is Tao Yuanming’s “Returning to My Gardens and Fields” (*Gui yuan tian ju* 歸園田居), which has the following lines: “By mistake I fell into the dusty net / And went away for thirteen years” 誤落塵網中，一去三十年. (“Thirty” 三十 in the second line is generally regarded as an error for “thirteen” 十三.)

POEM FOUR

Aritsura praises Fusaakira’s refinement and scholarly acumen, in what has now become a conventional gesture in their exchanges. The “new foliage” in the third couplet refers to flourishing youthful talent that is so often undermined by jealous peers, just as the moon is soon eclipsed by clouds. Through these images, Aritsura is striving to portray Fusaakira as a victim, perhaps hoping to alienate him from court society and arouse his interest in the pleasures of life in rural seclusion. As becomes clear in poem five, the hint that they should live together, seen in the last couplet, seems to fall on deaf ears.

Tachibana no Aritsura. *A further poem offered to match the one I was presented by you, Middle Captain Minamoto of the Right Imperial Bodyguards. [Using the original rhyme words.]*

The Confucian classics, your “general’s axe,” have been handed down to you.
Further, there are your poetic writings, which surpass all the rest.
Whenever I read your divine creations I marvel at their brilliance,
And realize that this culture has not yet “fallen to the ground.”
In the forest it’s the new foliage that is first destroyed by the wind;

Above the peaks the moon shines and is then obscured by clouds.
 If I had a house in the mountains and you were to follow me there,
 We could listen to the pines and springs — surely to our hearts' content!

橘在列 繼奉和右親衛源亞將見酬之詩 本韻

儒書將鉞共傳君
 況是篇章別絕群
 每見天然詞自妙
 便知地未墜斯文
 林中木秀先摧吹
 嶺上月明更遇雲
 若占山居相從去
 泉聲松響飽應聞

SOURCE: FSS 35, in Tasaka, 36; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:191.

LINE ONE: Aritsura sees his friend as the scholarly counterpart of a military leader, implying that for Fusaakira, the classical texts are the intellectual equivalent of a mighty axe wielded by a general in battle. This military analogy is echoed in line three of Fusaakira's response (poem 5), where he demurs at the suggestion that he is worthy of being viewed as a warrior, even in a figurative sense.

LINE FOUR: This line is a hyperbolic piece of flattery: Aritsura is endeavoring to depict Fusaakira as a guardian and transmitter of ancient values in the same mold as Confucius himself. The words "... this culture has not yet 'fallen to the ground'" 地未墜斯文 are derived from two separate passages in *Lunyu*. The first, from *Lunyu* 9: 5, reads: "When the Master encountered danger in Kuang he said, 'King Wen having died, doesn't this culture lie with me? If Heaven had wanted *this culture* to perish, then it would not have given this culture to a later decedent like me. Heaven has not allowed this culture to perish, so what can the people of Kuang do to me?'" 子畏於匡。曰：文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也，天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予何？

The second excerpt, from *Lunyu* 19: 22, reads: "Gongsun Zhao of Wei asked Zi Gong, saying,

‘Where did Zhong Ni [Confucius] acquire his learning?’ Zi Gong replied, ‘The doctrines of Wen and Wu have not yet fallen to the ground. They are to be found among men. The worthy are familiar with the greater principles, while lesser men know the lesser principles. None among them is unaware of the doctrines of Wen and Wu’ 衛公孫朝問於子貢曰：仲尼焉學？子貢曰：文武之道，未墜於地，在人。賢者識其大者，不賢者識其小者，莫不有文武之道焉。 Translation adapted from James Legge, trans. and annot., *Confucius: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean* (rpt. Dover Publications: New York, 1971); orig. *The Chinese Classics* 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1893), 346.

LINE FIVE: This is based on a passage from “Yunming lun” (Discussion on Fate 運命論) by Li Kang 李康 (ca. 196–ca. 264), which reads: “When a tree is growing flourishingly in a forest, the wind is sure to ravage it. When earth is mounded up on a riverbank, the flow is sure to erode and wash it away. If your conduct is nobler than that of others, they are sure to disparage you” 木秀於林，風必摧之，堆出於岸，流必湍之，行高於人，衆必非之。 The extant portion of this text is preserved in *Wenxuan*, 53.

POEM FIVE

Responding to the “general’s axe” metaphor in poem four, Fusaakira notes that he lacks military skills; the one realm where he possesses competence is traditional scholarship, as he suggests in line four. Fusaakira then alludes to Xie Lingyun and Yang Xiong, hinting that he himself might become as famous, despite his personal disadvantages. Xie was a renowned poet but, like Fusaakira, had no military proclivities, even though he was the grandnephew of a renowned general. Yang became a great scholar, overcoming a physical handicap.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. *To the talented scholar Tachibana: you’ve presented me with another poem. The first of your two verses lamented the stagnation of my career; the second one praised my poetry. In the course of all this praise and lamentation, we have written five poems using the original rhyme words.*

Each day when I use my inkstone and brush you make me feel so ashamed.

Pearls and jade are so often strung beside broken pottery shards.

I've never had any military stratagems and am poor at the warrior arts,
 But I have studied the Confucian texts, encountering splendid works.
 It's surprising to think that the Xie clan produced Anshi.
 I'm well aware that the Yang family begat Ziyun.
 Compared to them, in talent and fame I'm a hundred miles apart;
 I remain afraid that others will hear your words of praise for me.

源英明 橘才子重見寄. 初二篇歎余之沉滯, 後一章褒余之詩章. 褒歎之間五綴
 本韻.

日尋筆硯甚慙君
 珠玉頻連瓦礫群
 兵略素無猶拙武
 儒書曾學適飛文
 應驚謝氏生安石
 自識揚家有子雲
 比較才名程百里
 褒詞還恐外人聞

SOURCE: FSS 36, in Tasaka, 36–37; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:191–192.

TITLE: The text has 初二篇, “the first two poems,” but here it seems to mean “the first *of* [your] two verses.”

LINE TWO: Fusaakira's metaphor depicts Aritsura as an outstanding talent (“pearls and jade”) and himself as a “broken pottery shard,” a worthless nonentity.

LINE FIVE: Anshi is Xie Anshi 謝安石 (320–385), the great grand-uncle of the poet Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433). He was renowned as a military commander and strategist. Xie Lingyun, on the other hand, while a distinguished poet, had no martial proclivities and his political career was unsuccessful. Fusaakira is impressed by the fact that even though Xie did not inherit his great grand-uncle's military talents, he managed to achieve fame in another realm of endeavor.

LINE SIX: The Tasaka and *Gunsho ruijū* texts have both written 揚 as 楊, which we have emended. Yang Ziyun 揚子雲 is Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BC–18 AD), one of the Han dynasty's most prominent intellectuals. Yang had a speech impediment but overcame this disadvantage and went on to become a famous poet and philosopher. Fusaakira is implying that he and Aritsura will likewise transcend their present circumstances and eventually be recognized for their talents.

LINE SEVEN: For the character 比, we have followed *Gunsho ruijū*; the Tasaka text has 此, a less likely alternative. The second graph, 校 is a variant for both 較 and 校 (to compare); *Gunsho ruijū* has the latter orthography here in the text.

POEM SIX

Fusaakira's earlier plea that Aritsura moderate his praise has been ignored: after a hyperbolic introduction, Aritsura once more places Fusaakira in the same league as Confucius, in the first line, proceeding next to rank him above six renowned scholars, whom he dismisses one after another. Again his goal is to evoke indignation in Fusaakira and maneuver him into abandoning his official career by depicting him as a genius deprived of proper recognition.

Tachibana no Aritsura. Middle Captain Minamoto: you keep turning out poetic masterpieces! These stunningly magnificent and rare jewels are unparalleled in the world. Giving no thought to my mediocrity and vacuousness, I have presumed to offer up my own clumsy poems, with rhymes matching yours. My urge to versify has not yet run its course, and the impulse to compose continues to spur me on! Your literary gems dazzle my eyes, and I find my face frozen in an expression of grave severity. Overcome by feelings and emotions, I have once more stitched together the following piece of chaff. [Using the original rhyme words.]

Heaven indeed has endowed you with an unlimited measure of talent.

The Two Bans and the Two Lus — surely not in your league!

And consider Scholar Yang — why would anyone take fine quality gold

And seek to buy his writings, which have the value of Kunshan jade?

Chen Kongzhang's verse is empty, just good for curing ills;
 Sima Xiangru's rhapsodies are simply off in the clouds.
 Who would imagine your verse could display a brilliance so rare?
 It inspires the spirits, moves the gods, and the birds and beasts all listen.

橘在列 源亞將軍頻投瓊章. 絕妙奇珍, 無比於世. 余不顧庸虛, 敢獻拙和. 而餘
 興未盡, 感吟更催. 冰霜在口, 黼黻昭目. 不堪情感, 重綴蕪詞. 本韻

應是以才天縱君
 二班二陸豈同群
 還將揚士兼金價
 欲買崑山片玉文
 陳孔璋詞空愈病
 馬相如賦只凌雲
 誰知亞將詩奇絕
 鬼感神憐鳥獸聞

SOURCE: FSS 37, in Tasaka, 37–38; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192.

TITLE: The expression *bing shuang zai kou* 冰霜在口, “having ice and frost in one’s mouth,” is somewhat puzzling. Aritsura is likely drawing a parallel between the dazzling effect of Fusaakira’s verse upon his eyes and the paralyzing effect it has upon his face, rendering it frozen (with awe and envy?).

The phrase “offer up my own clumsy poems” follows *Gunsho ruijū*. Tasaka has 戲 (play or jest), which we have emended to 獻 (offer).

LINE ONE: Aritsura has reworked a passage in *Lunyu* 9.6. Confucius’ disciple Zi Gong 子貢 is being questioned about his master’s abilities, and Zi Gong replies: “Heaven certainly endowed him with unlimited talent, and he is virtually a sage” 固天縱之將聖.

LINE TWO: The “Two Bans” are Ban Biao 班彪 (3–54) and Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), father and son.

Ban Biao began the task of compiling *Han shu* 漢書, a history of the Former Han dynasty but died before it was completed. The project was continued by Ban Gu, aided by his sister Ban Zhao 班昭. The “Two Lus” are the brothers Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) and Lu Yun 陸雲 (262–303). Both were scholars, military leaders, and statesmen. Lu Ji is best known for his “Rhapsody on Literature” (*Wen fu* 文賦), a landmark piece of original literary criticism.

LINES THREE AND FOUR: We have provisionally emended the fourth character in line three (*tu* 土 “earth,” found in both texts) to *shi* 士, “scholar, gentleman.” This challenging couplet may be alluding to an anecdote about a wealthy man who was willing to pay a vast sum of money just to receive a mention in Yang Xiong’s essay “Model Sayings” (*Fa yan* 法言), “buying” Yang’s writings, in effect. See Wang Chong 王充 (27–91), *Lun heng* 論衡, 20.

LINE FOUR: Kunshan 崑山 is a mountain in China’s Jiangsu province, northwest of modern Shanghai. Nearby was the ancestral home of the Lu brothers (see note to line two), who at one stage returned to reside here, producing works which were praised as “pieces of jade from Kunshan” 崑山片玉. More commonly, however, Kunshan refers to Kunlunshan 崑崙山, a mountain range in the northwest of China; jade was abundant here, and much of it had little value. Aritsura appears to be referring here to the low-value jade of Kunlunshan, to belittle Yang Xiong’s works and perhaps those of the Lu brothers also.

LINE FIVE: Chen Kongzhang 陳孔璋 (Chen Lin 陳琳, d. 217), was one of the great prose writers and poets of his time, ranked among the Seven Masters of the Jian’an Era 建安七子 (196–220). The military leader and statesman Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) is said to have once recovered from a headache after reading Chen’s writings. Aritsura’s reference to curing illness appears to hark back to this anecdote.

LINE SIX: The phrase “off in the clouds” (*lingyun* 凌雲) is often associated with Sima Xiangru’s poetic style, referring to its extravagant flights of fancy. Sima Qian’s biography of this poet in *Shiji* relates that after reading Xiangru’s “Rhapsody on the Great Man” (*Daren fu* 大人賦), Emperor Wu said he experienced a light and transcendent feeling, as if he were “fluttering about, off in the clouds, wandering languidly between Heaven and earth” 飄飄有凌雲之氣，似遊天地之間意. While Xiangru’s poetic skills have generally been admired, Aritsura, by contrast, is being dismissive, in keeping with his overall contention that Fusaakira was superior to many of China’s foremost literary

figures.

POEM SEVEN

This is another poem by Arisura — an unexplained variation from the usual pattern of alternation between the two poets. Perhaps the reply poem to poem six was lost. In the first four lines, he shows his intention to let the world know of his unending admiration for his friend's virtues, yet places some of the blame for Fusaakira's lack of recognition on the man himself, seeming to chide him for being diffident and unambitious. Arisura goes on to acknowledge his own loneliness and misery, perhaps in order to tug on Fusaakira's heartstrings and convince him to leave his life at court behind. He seems to acknowledge in the last couplet, however, that he is still feeling twinges of nostalgia for his past life at court.

Tachibana no Arisura. Middle Captain Minamoto: you're like a dragon hesitating to leap and remaining in the depths. In our poetic exchanges I have often lamented this. But you are modest in your ambitions and have indicated at every turn that your career has gone as far as you would desire. Thus, I have written the following poem, with the original rhyme words, presuming to offer my humble opinions.

The entire court, if they knew about you, would all feel sympathy.
 For those unaware I present these words without omission to all.
 Don't demur if I loudly praise you for having a phoenix's virtue;
 Alas, you are so timid despite the tortoise marks on your feet!
 I remain here at Xiliu, lonely camp in the moonlight;
 Shedding tears at Cangwu, just a single cloud.
 Though I cannot bear to look back in time and ponder past events,
 The words and decrees of the former emperors still resound in my ears.

橘在列 源亞將軍或躍在淵。唱和之間，余常歎之。而亞將獨秉謙虛之志，動陳止足之詞。因綴本韻，敢獻鄙懷。

滿朝有識盡悲君
 無識人言自備群
 莫謝放聲歌鳳德
 猶憐累足履龜文
 身留細柳孤營月
 淚灑蒼梧一片雲
 不耐迴頭思往事
 先皇綸旨耳中聞

SOURCE: FSS 38, in Tasaka, 38–39; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192.

TITLE: Tasaka has 詩 (poem[s]) which we have emended to 詞 (words), following *Gunsho ruijū*. “[Like a dragon] hesitating to leap and remaining in the depths” 或躍在淵 is derived from the Fourth Yang of Hexagram One in *Yijing*. This translation is adapted from Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 136, where the passage in question reads, “Hesitating to leap, it still stays in the depths, so suffers no blame.” The commentary states, “The noble man fosters his virtue, cultivates his task, and wishes to be ready when the moment arrives. Therefore he suffers no blame.” Whereas the *Yijing* depicts patience as a virtue and a sign of wisdom, Arisura sees it as a manifestation of a passive nature and a factor in Fusaakira’s lack of career success.

LINE FOUR: In Chinese physiognomy, markings on the soles of the feet resembling those on a tortoise’s carapace were seen as portending future greatness. The primary reference to this phenomenon occurs in the biography of Li Gu 李固 (d. 147) in *Hou Han shu* (History of the Later Han), 63. Li is described as having “strange marks on his face, a head which was pointed like a rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shell marks on the soles of his feet” 固貌狀有奇表, 鼎角匿犀, 足履龜文. The Li Xian 李賢 (654–684) commentary states that according to works on physiognomy, possessing such features meant that one was destined to become an official with a two-thousand picul salary 足履龜文者, 二千石, 見相書. Arisura appears to have created a minor piece of word play here by overlapping the phrases 累足 (rendered here as “timid,” literally “having one’s legs crossed”) with 足履龜文, “tortoise marking on the soles of one’s feet,” the character 足 serving as a pivot word.

LINE FIVE: The phrase *gu ying* 孤營 (lonely camp) in certain contexts means “lonely grave,”

although when the latter meaning is intended, the second graph is more commonly written as 塋. It seems plausible that the poet intended to evoke the notion of “lonely grave” here, in order to create a parallel with a well-known grave site alluded to in line six. Xiliuying 細柳營 (Xiliu Camp) was a military encampment near Xianyang, once under the command of the distinguished general Zhou Yafu 周亞父 (d. 152 BC). By referencing both this camp (Aritsura himself is living just outside the capital, like General Zhou) and the “lonely grave,” he is creating an atmosphere of forlornness to play upon Fusaakira’s emotions by drawing attention to his own isolation.

LINE SIX: Cangwu 蒼梧, in modern Hunan, was a place in the remote countryside where the semi-legendary sage-emperor Shun is said to have died and been buried while on an inspection tour of the south. See the notes to FSS 33 (poem two). Aritsura is doubtless drawing a parallel between his sense of loss (over being apart from Fusaakira) and the grief of Shun’s wives.

This line is based upon lines from two quatrains by the Tang poet Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (d. 712): see *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 53:60–61. Song had a close friendship with the poet Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 (ca. 650–713); Aritsura may have wished to remind Fusaakira of this friendship, perhaps seeing it as a model for themselves.

LINES SEVEN AND EIGHT: These lines follow *Gunsho ruijū*. The Tasaka text reads 不耐□廻思往事, with a lacuna in the third position. It is unclear whether the “former emperors” refers to Yao and Shun and the founders of China’s earliest three dynasties or to the emperors who ruled while Aritsura was still at court. If we are to follow the latter interpretation, then Aritsura seems to be sounding a curious note of nostalgia for his earlier career. The phrase *bu nai* 不耐 in line seven, rendered as “cannot bear,” could instead be construed as “cannot help.” In the next poem, Fusaakira seems to have perceived that Aritsura may be wavering and tries to play upon these sentiments.

POEM EIGHT

Fusaakira reminds Aritsura about his previous service at court, perhaps following up on his friend’s confession in the final couplet of the last poem and using it to his own advantage. Fusaakira’s allusion to Shun’s weeping wives is surely meant to suggest that Aritsura’s tears (seen in the previous poem) will be no more effective in drawing him to the mountains than were the tears of these women in restoring the king to life. He takes the “hesitant dragon” simile in the introduction to poem seven and

now transforms it into a dragon soaring into the skies. Fusaakira could be implying that, just as the dragon in the famous legend left the world (see the note to line six, below), he, too, may eventually leave the court when the time is right. While conceding in the last couplet that his time for glory may have passed, Fusaakira evidently is unmoved by his friend's observation that his career is stagnating. His tone suggests that he is growing tired of Arisura's self-serving remarks.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. *To the talented scholar Tachibana: you believe that I have let slip the opportunity to advance, and your response poems often mention this. I beg to differ, explaining my reasons in a reply that once again uses our original rhyme words.*

Although you have withdrawn, you too once served Emperor Yao.
Early on, you belonged to that group of cranes and simurghs.
At sunrise you entered the Purple Palace, delivering imperial edicts;
At dawn you hastened to the palace gates, the stars still in the sky.
On the banks of the Xiang the bamboo grieved, tears shed in vain;
At Tripod Lake the dragon felt resentful and vanished into the clouds.
Times come and times go — of this I am not unaware:
You, my boon companion, should pay heed to what I say.

源英明 橘才子以予為失時。贈答之中屢有此句。余乃不然。故述來由，復次本韻。

抽身也昔侍堯君
便是當初鸞鶴群
晨入紫微傳鳳詔
曉趨青瑣戴星文
竹悲湘浦空留淚
龍怨鼎湖遂隔雲
時去時來非不識

吾教知己一言聞

SOURCE: FSS 39, in Tasaka, 39; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192.

LINE ONE: The mention of China's semi-historical sage emperor Yao is a reference to Emperor Daigo, whom Arisura served at court before withdrawing (Honma, 155).

LINE TWO: Cranes and simurghs: auspicious and noble birds in Chinese mythology but here a metaphorical reference to palace aristocrats.

LINE THREE: Purple Palace: normally this designates the inner palace (*dairi* 内裏), which contained the Throne Hall (Shishinden 紫宸殿) and the emperor's residential quarters, within the larger Greater Palace. This may instead be the Secretariat (more commonly written 紫薇, "purple myrtle," i.e. crepe myrtle), where scholars drafted documents for the emperor. During the Tang dynasty, many of whose institutions became the model for the Heian court, the building where this office was housed had crepe myrtle growing beside it.

LINE FOUR: The second character is a variant for *qu* 趨.

LINE FIVE: The character 留 is a variant for 流, "to flow." This line contains yet another allusion to the tears shed by Emperor Shun's wives over his grave near the Xiang 湘 River. Here, the bamboo stands for the women.

LINE SIX: Tripod (or Cauldron) Lake (Dinghu 鼎湖) in Henan is where the Yellow Emperor is said to have mined copper and cast tripods (a symbol of imperial authority), then rose to heaven on a dragon's back with seventy of his high officials. Some of them tried to cling onto the dragon but fell off as it ascended. A translation of the *Lunheng* account of this story is found in Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Taoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 42.

POEM NINE

Rather than risk offending Fusaakira further by harping on his stalled career, Arisura now appears to have changed tactics. He outlines his own spiritual aspirations, maybe hoping that Fusaakira will follow his example. Arisura declines to respond to Fusaakira's observations concerning the former's past service at court seen in poem eight.

Tachibana no Aritsura. *Another Matching Poem*

East of the walls I fled the world, exactly like Wang Jun,
 Wishing to head to a Buddhist temple and be among the *arhats*.
 My lifelong profession: the learning of the three thousand disciples,
 The “abstruse discussions,” and the eighty thousand texts in the canon.
 Regarding our lifespan, Wang Chong’s writings make reference to ice;
 Concerning the body, the *Yuima* sutra likens it to clouds.
 Once the laws of non-duality have all been fully discussed,
 I will go beyond mere self-enlightenment and the level of the *śrāvaka*.

橘在列 重奉和

牆東避世似王君
 欲逐浮圖羅什群
 素業三千人外學
 玄談八萬藏中文
 王充因命還論凍
 摩詰將身更喻雲
 不二法門皆話盡
 應超獨覺與聲聞

SOURCE: FSS 40, in Tasaka, 40; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192.

LINE ONE: Wang Jun 王君 (Wang Jungong 王君公), was Wang Zun 王尊, a Daoist scholar who lived during the Han dynasty. Refusing to serve Wang Mang (r. 9–23), he feigned madness and went into reclusion by the eastern walls of the capital, becoming a cattle-dealer.

LINE TWO: *Arhat* (*arakan* 阿羅漢, Ch. *luohan*) here denotes Buddhist priests. Originally one of the ten appellations of the Buddha, the term later came to designate his five hundred disciples. One source defines an *arhat* as one who is “free from all craving and rebirth ... a saint who has already

freed himself from all defilements [and] has achieved perfect knowledge....” See Iwano Masao, ed., *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary* (Daitō Shuppansha, Tokyo, 1965), 10.

LINE THREE: Aritsura is referring to his study of the Confucian classics: Confucius is said to have had some three thousand disciples over the course of his lifetime. “Learning” is more literally “outside learning” (*wai xue* 外學), a Buddhist term for doctrines outside of Buddhism.

LINE FOUR: “Abstruse discussions” 玄談 is an expression typically associated with the Daoism of the Later Han and Wei-Jin periods. It also occurs commonly in Buddhist contexts and, in this instance, may refer to Buddhist learning instead. The figure 80,000 is an approximation of the number of sutras, traditionally said to have numbered around 84,000, compiled during the lifetime of the historical Buddha.

LINE FIVE: In the “Lun si” 論死 (Discussion of Death) section of *Lunheng*, Wang Chong 王充 writes, “People are born between heaven and earth as though they are upon ice,” as noted in Honma, 155. Wang again uses ice metaphorically in the “Dao xu” 道虛 (Daoist Untruths) chapter of the same work, which has the following passage: “Human life is like water. Water frozen gives ice, and the vital force concentrated forms the human being. Ice lasts one winter, then it melts; man lives a hundred years then he dies. Bid a man not to die, can you bid ice not to melt?” [Orig. trans. by Alfred Forke, reproduced in Victor Mair, ed., *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 77.]

LINE SIX: *Yuima-kyō* 維摩經 (Skt. *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*) was an influential Mahayana text. See notes to poem one. The “Hōben-bon” 方便品 (Expedient Means) chapter of this sutra contains the following passage, the apparent inspiration for this line: “This body is like floating clouds. Very soon it will change and be extinguished” 是身如浮雲, 須臾變滅. See Honma, 155.

LINE SEVEN: “Non-duality” 不二 (Skt. *advaita*) is the core Buddhist concept of a oneness that links everything. It holds that all things in their intrinsic nature are connected, creating a basic equality and unity despite the superficial differences and seeming separateness inherent in matter.

LINE EIGHT: Aritsura aspires to achieve the highest form of Buddhist perfection, that of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* said to be capable of selflessly conveying Buddhist truth to others. The crux of his declaration is that he is far from completing his training and is not ready to leave the temple. Fusaakira was evidently not happy to hear this, making his dissatisfaction clear in the next poem.

The term “self-enlightenment” (*dokkaku* 獨覺, Skt. *pratyeka-buddha*), follows *Gunsho ruijū* (Tasaka has 獨學 “self-study”). *Dokkaku* harks back to the Hīnayāna notion of finding spiritual liberation on one’s own, instead of listening to Buddhist teachings. The term *śrāvaka* (J. *shōmon* 聲聞) in the same line denotes a disciple who has heard the teachings and achieved nirvana. It may also refer to a high priest who has gained perfect knowledge and *arhat* status, comprehending the Four Truths of Buddhism.

POEM TEN

Following Arisura’s digression on Buddhist doctrine, Fusaakira attempts to redirect the discourse. Half the poem is taken up with praise for Arisura’s talents: Fusaakira likens him to six of China’s most distinguished poets and scholars, in a manner reminiscent of Arisura’s own comparisons involving Fusaakira in poem six. The poet seems to be attempting to impress upon Arisura that he should not keep hiding his light under a bushel. In the second half of the poem, Fusaakira asserts that Arisura has already acquired all the Buddhist knowledge he needs.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. *Another Poem in the Series, with “Group” as a Rhyme Word*

Rhapsodizing on mysteries, writing impromptu — no one as skilled as you.
 You’re like a descendant of Jia and Ma, to be grouped with Yuan and Bai.
 Even better than Master Mao with his collection of three hundred odes,
 And more noble than Mister Lao with his classic of five thousand words.
 For Buddhahood, what need is there for *arhats* as one’s teachers?
 Enlightened, at last you know that you have reached the *hōun* realm.
 Seldom has a student mastered the teachings of Buddhism so well;
 I suspect you met the Sixteen Disciples and from them learned what you know!

源英明 重次群字

賦玄吟興不如君

賈馬後身元白群
 過自毛公三百首
 貴於老氏五千文
 空門何必師羅漢
 證地終知至法雲
 少有書生通法教
 疑逢十六會中聞

SOURCE: FSS 41, in Tasaka, 40–41; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192.

LINE ONE: “Rhapsodizing on mysteries” (*fu xuan* 賦玄) is an allusion to Zhang Heng’s “Si xuan fu” (see notes to poem two). See David R. Knechtges, trans. and ed., *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 3, 105–139 for a translation. Note that in poem seventeen, Arisura enjoins Fusaakira to read this piece.

The phrase *bu ru jun* 不如君 (no one as skilled as you) could instead mean “I’m not as skilled as you.”

LINE TWO: Jia and Ma are Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BC) and Sima Xiangru. Sima is referred to earlier in poem six, where Arisura insinuates that he (Sima) was less talented than Fusaakira.

Yuan and Bo are the Tang poets Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) and Bai Juyi, mentioned together because they were fellow students and close friends. Fusaakira may also be drawing a parallel between their relationship and his friendship with Arisura.

LINE THREE: Master Mao (Han dynasty; identity uncertain) reconstructed and added commentaries to *Shijing*, producing what came to be recognized as the standard edition, which is commonly known as *Mao shi* 毛詩 (The Mao Odes). The actual number of poems in this anthology is 305.

LINE FOUR: The “classic of five thousand words” is *Laozi* 老子, known also as *Daode jing* 道德經 (The Classic of the Way and Its Power).

LINE SIX: *Hōun* 法雲, “*dharma* [Buddhist law] clouds,” is a term used in the sutra *Kegon-kyō* 華嚴經. It refers to the highest of ten stages of a bodhisattva, so-called *hōun-ji* 法雲地 (*dharma-meghā bhūmi*), “the stage of the *dharma* clouds,” wherein transcendent truth, wisdom, and compassion are

said to rain down on all the people.

LINE EIGHT: The poet is referring to the legendary sixteen *arhats* (*jūroku-rakan* 十六羅漢), who were the original disciples of Buddha, as seen in the sutra *Amida-kyō* 阿彌陀經.

POEM ELEVEN

Aritsura offers no response to Fusaakira's volley of blandishments or to the suggestion that his spiritual training should be considered complete. Letting his silence speak for itself, he continues to rhapsodize on the priestly life, reaffirming his commitment to the pursuit of Buddhist enlightenment and the pleasures of a quasi-Daoist existence.

Tachibana no Aritsura. *Another Poem, Using "Hear" as a Rhyme Word*

[I am no] different from Cassia Man or the Masters Mao.
I wander freely by the Yi and Luo rivers, far away from the crowd.
After [...], I begin by reading *gāthās* beside the lotuses;
When the mood strikes, I compose verse, writing on bamboo slips.
In the Western Paradise, I shall tread the earth in the land of lapis lazuli;
In the Upper Realm, I will surely behold the clouds of carnelian hue.
On the path between Existence and the Void lies the doctrine of the Middle Way:
I would not lament if I died at night, after hearing it in the morning.

橘在列 重押聞字

□殊桂父與茅君
伊洛逍遙自出群
□後蓮花先展偈
興來竹簡更排文
西方欲蹈瑠璃地
上界應看碼碯雲

空有道中々道理
不憂夕死為朝聞

SOURCE: FSS 42, in Tasaka, 41–42; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192.

LINE ONE: The first character (perhaps *he* 何 or *qi* 豈) is missing; thus our translation is tentative. The sixth character 茅 follows *Gunsho ruijū*, which appears to be correct. Tasaka's text has 第, an apparent error.

“Cassia Man” 桂父 was an ancient immortal who dwelt in the wilds, subsisting on cassia leaves and mallows. He had the complexion of a child, and the color of his skin was variously black, white, brown, and red. A brief account of him is given in *Lie xian zhuan* 列仙傳 (Biographies of Immortals; authorship uncertain, ca. first century BC), a collection of seventy short sketches of Daoist adepts said to have attained immortality.

“The Masters Mao” 茅君, or “The Three Masters Mao” 三茅君 (second century BC), were three brothers who lived as Daoist adepts and who, according to legend, became immortals. They resided on Mt. Juqu 句曲 (later renamed Sanmaoshan 三茅山 or Maoshan 茅山, after the brothers) in modern Jiangsu province.

LINE TWO: The Yi 伊 and Luo 洛 were two of three rivers that converged at the ancient capital of Luoyang. The Yi and Luo rivers being mentioned together calls to mind Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247–300) masterpiece “Rhapsody on the Idle Life” (Xian ju fu 閒居賦), where in the second stanza Pan states that he has withdrawn from the city to live on the banks of the Luo, gazing toward the Yi. See Knechtges, *Wen xuan* 3:149. The Yi river is also mentioned in poem fifteen, below, again because of its association with detachment from worldly cares.

“Wander[ing] freely” (*xiaoyao* 逍遙) recalls the title of the first chapter of *Zhuangzi*, “Xiayao you” 逍遙遊. In this couplet, Aritsura is attempting to create for himself the persona of a Daoist immortal.

LINE THREE: The first character is missing. *Gāthās* 偈 were hymns sung to praise the Buddha and reinforce points of Buddhist doctrine.

LINE FOUR: “Bamboo slips” is fanciful here, a deliberate anachronism for the sake of rhetorical elegance.

LINE FIVE: Lapis lazuli was one of the Seven Treasures (*qi bao* 七寶) of Buddhism. The other gems and precious metals among the seven vary, but typically include gold, silver, amber, coral, and carnelian.

In Mahayana Buddhism, the “Western Paradise” is the Pure Land (*Sukhavati*) where the Buddha Amitabha dwells. Here and in the next line, Arisura is rhapsodizing about his anticipated ascent to higher levels of Buddhist consciousness and eventual rebirth in *Sukhavati*.

LINE SIX: The graphs 碼瑙 are variants for 瑪瑙, “agate” or “carnelian.”

LINE SEVEN: “The path” (*michi* 道) is the way to true wisdom or nirvana in Buddhism. “The Middle Way” refers to the principle of non-duality, positing a reality lying beyond the two extremes of existence and non-existence. It also refers to a path of moderation between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

LINE EIGHT: This line, an almost jarring reminder of the intellectual eclecticism seen in this series, is a reworking of a well-known comment attributed to Confucius, *Lunyu* 4.8, which reads “[The Master said:] ‘If a man hears The Way in the morning, he will be content if he dies in the evening’” 子曰朝聞道夕死可矣.

POEM TWELVE

Fusaakira reaffirms his dedication to serving the emperor, implying that anyone who possesses moral integrity would follow the same path. He seems to chide Arisura for failing to realize this truth. With regard to his colleagues in the “pagoda tree grove,” Fusaakira sees himself as the sole “tree” producing foliage: in other words, the only scholar at court engaged in worthwhile literary activity. Going on, Fusaakira tartly informs Arisura that his abundant leisure should not be wasted on pursuing the chimerical goal of “walking among the clouds.” Having failed with the gentler approach seen in poem ten, Fusaakira is no longer mincing words. He concludes the poem by reminding Arisura that their court contemporaries, the “summer insects,” should be allowed no place in their personal lives.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. *Another Poem, with “Literature” as a Rhyme Word*

The garden sunflowers have faith enough to turn toward the sun.

You, my confidant, know I would never leave my cohorts behind.
 My golden armor hangs unused, I've set aside my arms;
 In the pagoda tree grove I flourish alone, cultivating the arts of peace.
 A man of leisure with much free time should be versifying in the moonlight.
 My talented one, just when do you expect to walk among the clouds?
 Painsstaking study is surely better than the wasteful neglect of learning.
 Let's not allow those summer insects to hear about winter's ice!
 [At this time, learned people are stagnating in obscurity, while those
 with shallow wisdom are advancing. Hence, this remark.]

源英明 重賦文字

園葵有信向東君
 鮑叔知吾不棄群
 金甲空懸依偃武
 槐林獨茂為修文
 閑人多暇宜吟月
 才子何年欲躡雲
 苦學寧如奢不學
 冬冰莫使夏蟲聞
 于時學者沉滯. 淺智昇進, 故云.

SOURCE: FSS 43, in Tasaka, 42; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192.

LINE ONE: Sunflowers turning to face the sun symbolizes the devotion of scholar-officials to serving the emperor. The sun (literally, “Lord of the East” 東君) is a metaphor for the emperor.

LINE TWO: Fusaakira is reminding Aritsura that however close their relationship may be, he has no intention of abandoning his office.

“You, my confidant” is simply “Bao Shu” 鮑叔 in the original. This is a reference to Bao Shuya 鮑叔牙 (d. 644 BC), an intimate friend of the great statesman Guan Zhong 管仲. It was on Bao's

recommendation that Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 employed Guan as his prime minister. Guan Zhong, in a famous comment, summed up his respect and affection for Bao by saying, “It was my parents who gave birth to me, but the one who knows me is Master Bao” 生我者, 父與母, 知我者, 鮑子也.

LINE THREE: Fusaakira once served in the Imperial Bodyguards but now devotes himself to literary activity and his clerical duties within the court. “Set aside my arms” 偃武 is derived from the expression 偃武修文, meaning “to set aside one’s arms and cultivate the arts of peace.” The second half of this phrase occurs in line four. The locus classicus is the “Wu cheng” 武成 (Successful Completion of the War) section of *Shujing* 書經 (The Book of Documents).

LINE FOUR: The “pagoda tree grove” 槐林 is likely a reference to Fusaakira’s fellow-officials at court. The pagoda tree (*Sophora japonica*), also known as the locust tree, was a symbol in Japan for courtier families that produced influential ministers. More generally, it was a metonym for the imperial palace.

LINE FIVE: Fusaakira believes that Aritsura should redirect his efforts to more traditional pursuits, such as writing nature poems, and overcome his preoccupation with the search for enlightenment.

LINE SIX: “Walking among the clouds” harks back to Aritsura’s previous poem and his anticipation of being among the “carnelian clouds” of the Pure Land. Fusaakira is pouring cold water on the idea that this dream will ever come true.

LINE EIGHT: The reference to summer insects and winter ice derives from the “Qiu shui” 秋水 (Autumn Floods) chapter in *Zhuangzi*: “Ruo (Spirit-lord) of the Northern Sea said, ‘You cannot talk to a frog in a well about the ocean — he is limited to the confines of his hole. You cannot talk with a summer insect about ice — it knows nothing outside of its own season. You cannot enter into a discussion about the Dao with a scholar who has narrow views — he is restricted by the teachings he has received’” 北海若曰, 井蛙不可以語於海者, 拘於虛也. 夏蟲不可以語於冰者, 篤於時也. 曲士不可以語於道者, 束於教也. Just as summer insects have no experience of “winter ice,” these possessors of “shallow wisdom” cannot possibly comprehend the intellectual world that he and Aritsura inhabit.

POEM THIRTEEN

This time, Aritsura goes several steps further toward re-imagining himself as a hermit from deep antiquity, conjuring up a series of time-honored practitioners of reclusion whose integrity Fusaakira would doubtless have admired. Aritsura is still hoping to nudge his friend toward taking the same path.

Tachibana no Aritsura. *Another Poem, Using "Literature" as a Rhyme Word*

Ever since I left the palace and our sacred lord behind,
 I've buried all traces, wishing to seek out those who hide from the world.
 Bo Luan had long desired to be a hermit in the mountains;
 Gao Feng continued to read his literature in the rain.
 Clad in straw, drinking water in the lane where Yan resided;
 Gathering thornferns, searching everywhere, in the clouds on Mount Shouyang.
 A word to all you cold cicadas, your voices echoing in these grottos:
 You are worlds apart from what I used to hear in the pagoda tree grove.

橘在列 復賦文字

一自漢宮辭聖君
 晦蹤欲逐隱倫群
 伯鸞久抱山中志
 高鳳猶看雨裏文
 披草飲來顏巷水
 採薇搜盡首陽雲
 寄言巖戶寒蟬響
 應異槐林昔日聞

SOURCE: FSS 44, in Tasaka, 43; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:192–193.

LINE THREE: Bo Luan 伯鸞 was the style-name of Liang Hong 梁鴻 (first century), one of China's best-known recluses. A poor scholar who once worked as a herder of swine, he is remembered for his honesty, erudition, and determination to live a simple life. After marrying Meng Guang 孟光, a woman of similarly high moral caliber, the two of them moved to the hills east of the capital, where they supported themselves by farming and weaving. They always lived frugally, and Liang himself never held office. An account of his life is found in the “Yimin liezhuan” 逸民列傳 (Biographies of Disengaged Persons) chapter of *Hou Han shu* 後漢書. For a comprehensive discussion of Liang Hong, including his relationship with his wife and his place in the eremitic tradition, see Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, 106–112.

LINE FOUR: The Tasaka text has *du* 獨 “alone” for the third character; we have followed *Gunsho ruijū*, which has *you* 猶.

Gao Feng 高鳳 (first century) was from a peasant background and is remembered for his scholarly dedication. One day his wife entrusted him with keeping the hens away from wheat spread out on the ground to dry. While keeping watch, Gao read a book, becoming so absorbed that he did not notice it had started to rain, soaking the grain. Gao's devotion to study was rewarded, for he eventually became a distinguished scholar and teacher. He later went into hiding, never taking an official post, and spent his final years fishing. For his biography, see the aforementioned “Yimin liezhuan” chapter of *Hou Han shu*. Liang Hong and Gao Feng reappear in FSS 54, which is also by Aritsura but not in the present series.

LINE FIVE: Aritsura appears to be describing himself here, using the trope of happiness amidst poverty to convey his contentment with the monastic life. “The lane where Yan resided” refers to the humble living circumstances of Yan Hui 顏回, Confucius' favorite disciple, which he accepted willingly, as related in *Lunyu* 6.11. This reads, “The Master said, ‘Admirable indeed was the virtue of Hui! With a single bamboo dish of rice, a single gourd dish of drink, and living in his mean narrow lane, while others could not have endured the distress, he did not allow his joy to be affected by it’” 子曰：賢哉回也。一簞食，一瓢飲，在陋巷。人不堪其憂，回也不改其樂。 Trans. by Legge, *Confucius: Confucian Analects*, 188.

LINE SIX: The plant *wei* (J. *zenmai*) 薇 is the royal fern, *Osmunda japonica*, also sometimes translated as “thornfern.” “Gathering ferns” 採薇 calls to mind the two hermits Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊 (eleventh century BC). Disenchanted by the future King Wu’s overthrow of the last Shang king, despite the fact that he had been a tyrant, the two of them refused to serve the new Zhou dynasty. They remained in seclusion on Mount Shouyang, subsisting on ferns and eventually starving to death. “Gathering ferns” is also the name of a song attributed to Bo Yi, expressing righteous indignation and despair. At least two versions of it are preserved in ancient texts, including *Shi ji*. Arisura also refers to the song in FSS 54.

LINES SEVEN AND EIGHT: The “cold cicadas” are the monks practicing Buddhist asceticism at the temple where the poet now resides. This expression seems to resonate with Fusaakira’s “summer insects” in the preceding poem. The chanting of the monks brings Arisura more pleasure than the empty talk he used to hear at court.

POEM FOURTEEN

Fusaakira’s next poem repeats some of the themes introduced earlier, including the desire to join forces with Arisura against the “sickly bunch” at court and overcome his sense of isolation. He further reiterates the notion that Arisura is wasting his time at the temple. Only by returning to court life and pursuing traditional scholarship will Arisura find the true path to immortality, which lies, in Fusaakira’s view, in leaving a name to posterity.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. *Another Poem, Using “Clouds” as a Rhyme Word*

Those who are skilled at refining elixirs: there’s me and there is you.
 If you and I could join forces, we’d outstrip that sickly bunch.
 You’ve never found the oars you need for immortality at Penghu;
 Hard to glimpse works fine as “cultured jade” here in the Purple Palace.
 Your mind has left the world of dust, you sport about by the streams.
 But how can you possibly “lick the mortars” and fly up to the clouds?
 Composing verse — now *that’s* the way to lengthen the span of your life.

Consider the fame of Yuan and Bai, if you don't believe what I say!

源英明 復賦雲字

鍊藥有臣又有君
君臣和合拔痾群
蓬壺未得求仙棹
紫府難窺種玉文
心只辭塵行樂水
身何舐臼上飛雲
吟詩便是長生計
不信應尋元白聞

SOURCE: FSS 45, in Tasaka, 43–44; in [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:193.

LINES ONE AND TWO: The expression “refining elixirs” 鍊藥 is associated with Daoist alchemy and the quest for immortality through the use of magic potions. Here, however, Fusaakira seems to be referring to the creation of immortal works of literature. His point is that the two of them stand alone among their contemporaries in possessing the stuff of literary greatness.

Line three: Penghu 蓬壺 (The pot of Peng) is a reference to Penglai 蓬萊 (J. Hōrai), a mythical island said to be the dwelling place of immortals and a fairyland of great beauty. See Knechtges, *Wen xuan* 3:74, note to line five. To lack the oars necessary to reach Penghu means to have no way of achieving immortality.

LINE FOUR: In other words, with Aritsura gone there is no one left at court capable of writing fine verse. The notion of “cultured jade” 種玉 is derived from a fable in *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (In Search of the Supernatural, by Gan Bao 干寶, d. 336) titled “Boyong Grows Jade” 伯雍種玉. A virtuous man named Yang Boyong 陽伯雍 provided water to travelers crossing the Wuzhong Mountains 無終山 (near Lantian 藍田, southwest of modern Xi'an), where he lived, tending his parents' graves. One day a grateful traveler gave him some stone seeds, saying they would grow into a plant producing jade. Yang planted them and harvested jade discs, which he used as a dowry to secure himself a wife. For a

translation, see Kenneth DeWoskin and J. I. Crump, Jr., trans., *In Search of the Supernatural: The Written Record* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 133–134.

Line six: The expression *shi jiu* 舐臼, “lick the mortars,” is likely an allusion to the mythical account of how Liu An 劉安 (King of Huainan 淮南王, d. 122 BC) concocted an immortality elixir and ascended to heaven. This legend relates that his hens and dogs licked the medicine vessel and rose to heaven as well. This account is contained in *Shen xian zhua* 神仙傳 (Biographies of Divine Immortals), attributed to Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343); see chap. six, the “Huainan wang” entry.

COMMENT: Fusaakira’s manifest contempt for reclusion echoes a politico-literary debate that had occurred in China some five or six centuries earlier. Poems celebrating eremitism were challenged by ones that belittled this lifestyle and accused its adherents of disloyalty for refusing to serve as officials: perhaps the best-known example is Wang Kangju’s 王康琚 (fourth century) “Fan zhaoyin shi” 反招隱詩 (A Rebuttal to the Call to Reclusion), *Wen xuan* 22. For a translation, see Burton Watson, *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*, 175. Several examples of *kanshi* in the anti-reclusion mode are found in *Fusōshū*, including one by Ki no Haseo, titled “No Recluses in the Mountains.” See *Dance of the Butterflies*, 150–151.

POEM FIFTEEN

With neither man yielding ground, Aritsura voices frustration over his friend’s determination to remain at court, where, like a noble “wild crane” amidst a “brood of hens,” he is surrounded by mediocrities. Aritsura continues to tempt Fusaakira into abandoning his career for the leisured lifestyle that he goes on to describe.

Tachibana no Aritsura. *Another Poem, Using “Group” as a Rhyme Word*

[You?] along with those common types together serve our lord.

Such a shame that a wild crane should be in with a brood of hens!

Now at leisure, I’m always pouring myself wine from a jug;

If *you* retired, you could quickly discard the papers that litter your desk!

Announcing the dawn the ripples on the Yi, here as I lie on my pillow;

Entering my blinds a scene of clear skies, clouds above Mt. Hua.
While I prefer to hide my talents from those in the mundane world,
The music of Shao, responding to my idleness, I hear all around.

橘在列 復賦群字

□與凡庸共事君
但憐野鶴在鷄群
閑來時酌樽中酒
衙退暫棄案上文
報枕曉聲伊水浪
入簾晴色華山雲
雖懷塵土和光意
韶樂應慵處々聞

SOURCE: FSS 46, in Tasaka, 44; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:193.

LINE ONE: The first character is missing: the original word was perhaps a second-person pronoun.

LINE FOUR: This line instead could mean, “Since leaving office, I’ve for now set aside the papers on my desk.”

LINE FIVE: The Yi 伊 entered the Luo 洛 southeast of Luoyang. Aritsura is alluding again to Pan Yue’s “Rhapsody on the Idle Life” 閒居賦, in which Pan states that he has retired to a place on the banks of the Luo River and gazes toward the Yi. Aritsura has mentioned these two rivers earlier in poem 11, associating them with carefree retirement.

LINE SIX: Mt. Hua 華山, in Shaanxi province, was one of China’s Five Sacred Peaks 五嶽. Here, it is likely a fanciful designation for Mt. Hiei in Heian-kyō, site of the great monastery Enryakuji 延暦寺, where Aritsura later retired to live as a monk in 944.

LINE SEVEN: This line contains a reformulation of the idiomatic expression *he guang tong chen* 和光同塵, whose approximate meaning is “to drift with the current and refrain from showing one’s

abilities.” The loci classici are *Laozi* 4 and 56, where the relevant passages both read *he qi guang, tong qi chen* 和其光同其塵, “to blend with the light and be like the dust.”

LINE EIGHT: Aritsura is indicating that to hear beautiful music he does not need to be at the court; the sounds of nature in the mountains are equally pleasurable. *Shao yue* 韶樂, the elegant, courtly music associated with the legendary sage-emperor Shun, was performed to celebrate the virtue of Emperor Yao. After listening to this music Confucius was said to have been so moved by its beauty that he refrained from eating meat for three months.

POEM SIXTEEN

Unmoved by Aritsura’s enthusiasm for the eremitic lifestyle, Fusaakira responds with a verse that owes a conspicuous debt to the anti-reclusion compositions of the Six Dynasties. He enjoins Aritsura to recognize the merits of service, especially when an “enlightened lord” is on the throne, and he urges him to come out of seclusion. At the end, Fusaakira reminds Aritsura of the satisfaction he himself experiences at court, even though he only occupies a lowly station.

Minamoto no Fusaakira. *Another Poem, Using “Hear” as a Rhyme Word*

Loyal subjects, those below, look up to their enlightened lord.
 Why do you need to follow those who are hiding from the world?
 On the Southern Peaks, Lu and Qi were enjoined to comb their frost.
 On Northern Mountain they refused the moon upon seeing the proclamation.
 Shake off your cap and leave behind those lonely cliffs and streams;
 Discard your staff, do not remain in those ancient cloudy grottos.
 What drives this ignorant worthless nag to stand beside the throne
 Is the sound of auspicious memorials and edicts entering my ears.

源英明 復賦聞字

忠臣在下仰明君

何必追從遁世群
 南嶺梳霜煩用綺
 北山罷月見移文
 彈冠有別孤巖水
 拋杖無留古洞雲
 爭勵愚鴛朝右立
 表祥奏瑞耳根聞

SOURCE: FSS 47, in Tasaka, 45; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:193.

LINE THREE: The graph 用 is a variant for 角, read *Lu* here. Lu and Qi are “The Master of Lu Hamlet” (Luli xiansheng 用里先生) and “Ji of Qi Hamlet” (Qili Ji 綺里季), two of the “Four Hoaryheads” (*si hao* 四皓), a group of very old men who became hermits on Mt. Shang 商山 (in Shaanxi) during the Qin dynasty, to escape the oppressive governance of the time. The first Han emperor (r. 206–195 BC) invited them to come out of hiding and serve the court, but they refused. Later they were coaxed out of reclusion for a short period to assist in preventing the emperor from setting aside the heir-designate and selecting someone else.

The Four Hoaryheads were combing their hair in preparation for returning to the court; Fusaakira hopes that Aritsura will be inspired to learn from their example. For an excellent treatment of the Four Hoaryheads and the associated lore, see Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, 64–80.

LINE FOUR: “Northern Mountain” 北山 and “proclamation” 移文 are derived from the title of a parallel prose composition called “Proclamation on North Mountain” (Beishan yiwen 北山移文) by Kong Zhigui 孔稚珪 (447–501), preserved in *Wen xuan* 43. In this piece, Kong satirizes the inauthentic behavior of a man who pretends to be a high-minded recluse but is following this lifestyle simply to gain attention and office. This was aimed at a friend of Kong’s named Zhou Yong 周顒 (d. 485), who had a hermitage on the outskirts of Jiankang (modern Nanjing). See Berkowitz, 137. The notion of “refusing the moon” 罷月 comes from the following passage in the same piece: “Autumn cassia sends away the wind. / Spring wisteria refuses the moon.” See James Robert Hightower, trans., “Some Characteristics of Parallel Prose,” in John L. Bishop, ed., *Studies in Chinese Literature* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965], rpt., 74. In Kong’s piece, Nature seems to reject the prospect of the

would-be hermit tainting the countryside with his presence. Here, however, Fusaakira is twisting the original sense slightly to suggest that any hermit with a sense of duty would “refuse” the moon (i.e., leave his eremitic lifestyle behind) when summoned by the court.

LINE SEVEN: Officials sometimes modestly likened themselves to worthless old horses.

At this point in the series there are five poems that are not included among our translations: FSS nos. 48–52. In the first of these, Aritsura reiterates his disaffection with court life and the pursuit of fame; these feelings apparently did not run very deep, for he eventually returned to service prior to going back into monastic seclusion permanently. In the next poem, Fusaakira acknowledges the truth of certain Buddhist ideals while seeming to suggest that his friend probably is more than sufficiently familiar with them. In FSS 50, Aritsura goes off on a curious tangent, writing a poem about Wang Zhaojun, a well-known tragic figure sent from China to become the consort of a barbarian chieftain. Aritsura may be attempting to create an implicit parallel between himself and Wang Zhaojun in order to manipulate Fusaakira into taking pity on him. FSS 51, also by Aritsura, alludes to various historical figures (military generals this time) and the ineffability of their achievements. Some deeper meaning may be hidden between the lines in this rather empty-seeming piece: Aritsura may have been trying to steer the conversation toward a less contentious topic. FSS 52, by Fusaakira, brings up two of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, citing them as exemplars of underachievement, men who squandered their talents by withdrawing from public life and giving themselves over to hedonism. This is Fusaakira’s final attempt to help Aritsura draw a lesson from history and return to court while he still has time.

POEM SEVENTEEN

In this last poem in the series, Aritsura has seemingly resigned himself to the idea that Fusaakira will not join him in rural seclusion. He reminds his friend that he can still achieve a measure of spiritual freedom by detaching himself psychologically from worldly concerns and studying appropriate literary works.

By way of epilogue, we note that in the next poem in *Fusōshū*, which is not part of this series, Aritsura seems to have moved on and found a new acquaintance, whom he is also attempting to

entice into reclusion. The poem stands alone and is not part of any extant series; whether or not Aritsura was successful in drawing *this* friend into his plans is unfortunately a fact lost to history.

Tachibana no Aritsura. *Yet Another*

The rivers, rocks, mists, and clouds are all a part of you.
Your family fortunes are meager, yet in learning you're above the crowd.
Put down your cup, read awhile the "Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery."
Lie on your pillow, keep on chanting those "Beckoning the Recluse" poems.
The piping of the pines when the wind comes up will sound like rain to your ears;
The caps and canopies in the world of dust will all just seem like clouds.
Even if you stay in the capital, it can seem like the wooded hills:
In your back lane, the sounds of carriages you'll soon no longer hear.

橘在列 又

水石煙霞一屬君
家資疎薄業殊群
停杯暫讀思玄賦
敲枕長吟招隱文
風後松篁聽似雨
塵中冠蓋望如雲
雖留朝市同林麓
深巷車聲漸不聞

SOURCE: FSS 53, in Tasaka, 49; [*Shinkō*] *Gunsho ruijū* 6:193.

LINE ONE: In other words, Fusaakira has a true affinity with nature. "[A]re all a part of you" could instead be "all *belong* to you."

LINE THREE: For notes on this rhapsody see poem ten. Note that the epilogue to the rhapsody includes a prominent reference to “Cypresswood Boat,” ode twenty-six, which has featured already in this series: see notes to poem two. Knechtges points out that the boat in this ode “stands for the good man who is not used and must consort with petty men,” which is exactly how Arisura has depicted Fusaakira from the beginning. See Knechtges, *Wen xuan* 3:138.

LINE FOUR: “Poems Beckoning the Recluse” (*zhaoyin shi* 招隱詩) constituted a sub-genre popular in China during the third and fourth centuries. The tradition can be traced back to the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu), where we find a poem titled “Zhao yinshi” 招隱士 (Beckoning the Recluse), attributed to Liu An 劉安 (179–122 BC). This is addressed to a hermit, whom the poet attempts to summon back from the wilderness by drawing attention to the perils and discomforts of life there. During the Six Dynasties, by contrast, *zhaoyin* verse celebrated the purity and freedom of life as a recluse, liberated from the duties and dangers of public service. The principal poets associated with this tradition are Zuo Si 左思 (d. 303) and Lu Ji.

LINE SIX: “Caps and [carriage] canopies” is metonymy for officialdom. All worldly aspirations and cares will evaporate “like clouds” if Fusaakira can devote more attention to enjoying nature and focus less upon his professional life.

LINES SEVEN AND EIGHT: The first character in line seven follows *Gunsho ruijū*; Tasaka has 難 (difficult), which is less plausible.

Arisura appears to be conceding that it is possible to achieve spiritual liberation even in the city simply by adopting an attitude of detachment from one’s duties. This option, known as *chaoyin* 朝隱 (reclusion within the court), represented a form of compromise between two opposing lifestyles and had been a topic of discussion as early as the Former Han. Its earliest exponent is said to have been Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (153–93 BC), although traces of this idea can be found in the writings of Zhuangzi. Yang Xiong and Wang Chong are associated with the tradition as well. For more on the *chaoyin* phenomenon and its lore, see Aat Vervoorn, *Men of the Cliffs and Caves* (Hongkong: The Chinese University Press, 1990) 4, “Eremitism at Court,” and Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement*, 140–145. “Reclusion within the court” was still a subject of discussion during the fourth century, its most prominent advocates including Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314–371) and Deng Can 鄧粲 (fl. ca. 377).

A Review of
The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry: Yuan, Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties,
by Jonathan Chaves

Chen Cheng
(translated by David K. Schneider)

Offered with respect in honor of Professor Jonathan Chaves

“The stones of those hills, / May be used to polish gems.”

—Shi jing 詩經 184¹

A GENERAL READING

“Among Ten Thousand Copses of Green, a Single dot of Red”

—Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086),

“On the Pomegranate” 石榴

American sinologist Jonathan Chaves has become renowned in the world of international sinology for his translations and research in Chinese poetry. His field of research is primarily concentrated in

¹ The translation is James Legge's. See Chinese Text Project <http://ctext.org/book-of-poetry/he-ming>.

classical Chinese poetry and its translation into English. He also has distinctive insights into the relationship between classical poetry and painting. He has translated and introduced readers of English to poets who occupy important positions in the history of Chinese literature, but who have been forgotten gradually over time, poets such as Zhang Ji 張籍 (766–830), Weng Juan 翁卷 (d. after 1214), Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206), and Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002–1060). His representative works include: *Cloud Gate Song, the Verse of Tang Poet Zhang Ji*, *West Cliff Poems: The Poetry of Weng Chuan*, *Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow: Poems from Sung Dynasty China by Yang Wan-Li*, and *Mei Yao-chen and the Development of Early Sung Poetry*.² At the same time, he has produced in-depth research on the relationship between poetry and painting and on poet-painters in the Chinese tradition. Especially strong in this regard is his work on the late-Ming, early-Qing painter Wu Li 吳曆 (1632–1718). Among all of Chaves' many works, this writer believes there is one volume which deserves special attention. This is the book he both edited and translated, *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry: Yuan, Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties*.³ The book was published in 1986 by Columbia University Press. In it, he selects and translates poems from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. This book has become not only a regular item on the reading lists of East Asian and Chinese studies departments of Western universities, it has also become one of the most influential books in the study of classical Chinese literature in the English-speaking world. Chaves' book brings to light long neglected poetic works from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, thereby filling a large gap in the field. Among the many selections and translations of Chinese poetry into English, this volume may truly be said to be unique among the crowd.

The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry is yet another publication from Columbia University Press' "Translations from the Asian Classics." Prior to the publication of Chaves' book, this series had already published the famous collection edited and translated by Burton Watson, *The Columbia book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century*. It can be said that Chaves'

² *Cloud Gate Song, the Verse of Tang Poet Zhang Ji* (Warren, CT: Floating World Editions, 2006); *West Cliff Poems: The Poetry of Weng Chuan*, (Toronto: Ahadada Books, 2010); Yang Wan-Li, *Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow: Poems from Sung Dynasty China* (New York: Weatherhill, 1975, new edition: (Buffalo, NY: White Pine Press, 2004); and *Mei Yao-chen and the Development of Early Sung Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

³ *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry: Yüan, Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

anthology is the ideal successor to Watson's anthology. In terms of time, the anthology covers the period from the late thirteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. So, by way of these two anthologies, readers can systematically achieve a deep understanding of the whole of the development of classical Chinese poetry. Columbia University is one of America's most important centers of research in Asian studies and sinology. Since the 1960s, Columbia University Press has released several book series in Asian studies as well as its series of English translations from the Asian classics. In a Western world long dominated by American and Eurocentrism, the fact that Columbia University has issued these series of anthologies shows not only that Chinese literature has become a component of the classics of the world, but also demonstrates that Western scholarship has broken out of its Eurocentrist consciousness and has realized the high value of Chinese culture and the pluralism of cultures.

Where *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* is especially different from all the rest is in the fact that it is selected, edited, and translated by just one scholar, Jonathan Chaves. In most cases, the editing and translating are divided among different people because the quantity of work is so great. Usually, an editor collects the works of various translators and puts them together to form a complete anthology. The fact that Chaves alone carries out both the editing and the translating gives the highest guarantee of the completeness of the scope of the anthology and, to the highest degree, embodies the main function that can be fulfilled by a translator-editor in the reconstruction of traditional Chinese poetry. Through both the large-scale categories of thought and structure and the small-scale decisions regarding translation, this anthology offers an alternative point of view concerning a reconstruction of the tradition of classical Chinese poetry.

Because of Chaves' literary editing and translation, his anthology of classical Chinese poetry has itself become a classic of literature in translation. His selection decisions, editing and translation, and the helpful organization of the book, are all intimately connected to the reader's experience. A classic of literature in translation must become a literary classic in the eyes of readers in another country with a different culture. It therefore necessarily faces a historical process that involves a

“double measure of recognition.”⁴ When editing and translating a book, the editor-translator also takes on the responsibility for the reconstruction of a literary canon. Through the design and type of organization, the selection of authors and poems and use of certain techniques of translation, this anthology, from its general conception to its specific ideas, carries out a reconstruction of the tradition of Chinese classical poetry. Thus, this anthology not only gives expression to the richness of Yuan, Ming, and Qing poetry, it moreover reflects Chaves’ concept of the editing and translating of an anthology, and at the same time, offers the benefit to Chinese scholars of a way of thinking about the organization of poetic anthologies, the writing of literary history, and the translation of poetic works.

M I C R O - A N A L Y S I S

“The scene is not the same as in the other seasons.”

—Yang Wanli, “At Dawn Coming out of the Jingci Temple to Send Lin Zifang” 曉出淨慈寺送林子方

Although *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* is not a work of literary history, it offers a positive example regarding the writing of literary history. Literary history in the past occupied a prominent place in literary research. But in recent decades, the development of literary theory has largely replaced the position of literary history, and, up to the end of the 1980s, in the field of literary research in China, there arose a movement to “rewrite literary history,” such that literary history was subject to a new (revisionist) criticism. Chaves organically melds together literary history, literary criticism, and literary translation and carries out a richly valuable re-creation that far exceeds the scope achieved in the traditional conception of the poetic anthology. He thereby presents to readers of English a history of later classical Chinese poetry as a “scene not the same as in the other seasons.” In a Chinese poetic tradition in which “Lotus leaves meet the sky with boundless green,” those

⁴Tong Qingbing 童慶炳 and Tao Dongfeng 陶東風, eds., *The Construction, Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Literary Canons* 文學經典的建構,解構和重構, (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2007), 148.

previously neglected poets and poetic works show forth like the sun on the lotus blossoms as they break out with a graceful bearing of a different kind.⁵

As all know, when selecting post-Tang literature, the editor's attention will always undergo certain shifts: from the orthodox tradition of *shi* 詩 poetry and prose, toward the casual and vulgar subjects of later literature, such as in drama, *huaben* 話本, and prose fiction. This shift reflects the perspective of Chinese traditional literary historians who were guided by the idea that each dynasty had its distinctive literature. The most typical expression of this orthodoxy is the idea that there was the succession from the Zhou classics to Warring States philosophy to the poetic essay (賦) in the Han, *shi* poetry in the Tang, *ci* 詞 lyrics in the Song, drama in the Yuan, and finally the novel in the Ming and Qing. This means that Western readers saw many translations of Tang *shi* poems, Song dynasty lyrics, or Yuan drama, but knew very little about the *shi* poetic tradition after the Tang. With his *Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry*, Chaves courageously challenges the traditional idea that there was "no *shi* poetry after the Tang dynasty" and supplies the gap of Yuan, Ming and Qing *shi* poetry previously absent in translation in the Western world. Even more important, this anthology stands out in that it introduces a body of poetry of cultivated accomplishment, by authors that remain unknown, writers such as Yang Weizhen 楊維禎 (1296–1370), a leading poet of the Yuan, whose poetry and prose is delicate, rich and free, having a style all its own. He was especially skilled at *Yuefu* 樂府 poetry. The anthology includes such lively and fresh works as "Bamboo Branch Song of West Lake" 西湖竹枝詞 and "Song of the Waterfall at Mount Lu" 廬山瀑布謠.

Another special feature of this anthology is that it includes works by a large number of literati who were both poets and painters, and a healthy quantity of poems about or relating to painting. Chaves' chief research fields of interest have emphasized poets and painters, the relationship between poetry, calligraphy and painting, especially the relationship between poetry and painting. These interests no doubt influenced the selections included in the volume, and this is also one of the defining characteristics of the book. Chaves selected not only literati with outstanding achievements

⁵ Translator's Note: The author here draws on imagery contained in a poem by Yang Wanli, a line from which adorns the title of this section. Here is a translation of the complete poem: "After all, at West Lake in the sixth month, / The scene is not the same as in the other seasons. / Lotus leaves meet the sky with boundless green, and / In reflected sunlight the blossoms are all the more red."

in both poetry and painting — such as works by Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1523) and Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470–1559) — but also included a good number of poems inscribed on paintings — such as works by Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–1374) and Wu Zhen 吳鎮 (1280–1354). Especially outstanding is the twenty pages of the anthology devoted to ten illustrations of paintings and calligraphy, along with translations of their texts. Chaves thereby takes the most direct method of displaying Chinese painting and calligraphy to Western readers. It is always the case in the Chinese tradition that in poetry there is painting and in painting there is poetry — naturally blended together. Chinese painting emphasizes “depicting spirit by means of form.” This is the same as the ideal of traditional classical poetry that says, “poetry is not penetrated by explication.” Poetry and painting achieve the same marvelous result by different means. After the Yuan dynasty literati painting flourished increasingly with time. For this reason, when introducing readers to translations of Yuan, Ming, and Qing poetry, to use painting as a way of entry not only allows readers to feel the close connection between poetry and painting, it also allows readers to fathom the rich and profound artistic conception of classical Chinese poetry. By taking a careful new look at what already has the status of “classics” and by uncovering new factors that can make a work a classic, this anthology has allowed Chaves to realize “a ‘free and easy wandering’ through the six hundred years of Chinese verse,”⁶ and at the same time offer a contribution to the rewriting of the history of Chinese poetry.

Besides the body of translations, the anthology also contains an introduction, critical notes, titles, a dedication, and illustrations — all these elements I would call the “paratext.” A “paratext” is intermediary between the translation and the reader and “serve[s] to present the work.”⁷ In *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry*, the paratext plays a significant role. For example, the introduction, in a general and yet detailed discussion, unfolds for readers the process of development and change that occurred in the long period between the end of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. In all, the anthology includes representative works from the Yuan

⁶ Stephen Owen, “Review: The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry: Yüan, Ming, and Ch’ing Dynasties (1279–1911) by Jonathan Chaves,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48, no. 1 (1988): 265.

⁷ Sehnaz Tahir-Gurcaglar, “What Texts Don’t Tell: The Uses of Paratexts in Translation Research,” in Theo Hermans, ed., *Crosscultural Transgressions: Research Models in Translation Studies II Historical and Ideological Issues* (Northampton, MA: St. Jerome Publishing, 2007), 44.

to the time of Liu E 劉鶚 (1857–1909), 750 poems by forty-three poets. Moreover, for each poet there is a clear and concise introduction to provide guidance for the reader. In addition to the original annotations, Chaves often adds his own explanatory notes to assist readers in their understanding of the original works. In adding explanatory notes, he employs three methods: First, he introduces the perspective of comparative literature, comparing the originals to analogous examples from Western literature. For example, in his note on the poem “The Pavilion for Listening to Fragrance,” by Zhang Yu 張羽 (1333–1385), one of the “Four Great Ones of Suzhou” 吳中四傑, Chaves points out that this is “[a]n amusing anticipation of Baudelaire (1821–67) and his *Correspondences*, with its conception of synaesthesia.”⁸ Second, he points out interesting anecdotes related to the poets and their works and adds commentary. For example, in his translation of Tang Yin’s 唐寅 “Inscribed on a Painting (one poem from a group of three),” Chaves brings in an interesting story relating to Tang Yin’s composition of this poem as contained in the *Yilaotang shihua* 逸老堂詩話. He then discusses an important question raised by the story concerning traditional Chinese poetry: the question of how versification in regulated verse might change with the changes in tones of individual words. This allows readers to get a more direct feel for the artistry of traditional Chinese poetry.⁹ Third, in explicating literary allusions, Chaves provides enough background knowledge such that his readers can understand the original poem. For example, in his translation of Qian Qianyi’s 錢謙益 (1582–1664) series of poems titled “Miscellaneous Feelings at West Lake,” Chaves provides detailed explanations of the specific names, such as Yue Fei 嶽飛 (1103–1141) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), and places (Wu 吳 and Yue 越 and West Mountain 西山), and literary allusions (“the cuckoo cries blood” 杜鵑啼血 and Kunming Lake 昆明湖), among others encountered in the poem.¹⁰ These paratextual methods follow these both accurate and skillful translations as the shadow follows the body, thereby step-by-step drawing readers into the interior of the poems from the outside.

The review and reconstruction of a literary canon is one of the central tasks of a rewriting of literary history. By means of these new perspectives, and on a foundation that balances “canonization”

⁸ Chaves, *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry*, 80.

⁹ Chaves, *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry*, 211.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 359.

and “subverting the canon,” Chaves’ anthology uncovers some elements of a new canonization of new works and of pre-existing works. Traditional literary history always emphasized “canonization.” Often a literary history became a collection of outstanding literary heroes.¹¹ However, as Andre Lefevere points out, “Once a certain degree of early canonization has been attained, ... new anthologies can accept that emerging canon, try to subvert it, or try to enlarge it.”¹² *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* has truly found a balance point between “canonization” and “subverting the canon.” Thus, it occupies a distinguished position among the many anthologies of Chinese literature in English translation.

SOME CONTRARY THOUGHTS

“Slight flaws in white jade do not obscure its virtues”

In its function as a reference for literary history, *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* is both realistic and replete with new thinking. The anthology’s selections very clearly reveal the interests and points of emphasis of Jonathan Chaves, a first-class sinologist working in the field of poetry research. Nonetheless, in the view of this writer, since the anthology relies too much on the editor’s artistic taste and aesthetic judgment, there are “still a few slight flaws in the white jade.”

First, the book’s neglect of the lyric (詞) and aria (曲) is regrettable. What the anthology attempts to cover is “poetry” in a general sense, including *shi* poetry, in a narrower sense, and the lyric and the aria. But, concerning the balance of distribution between *shi* poetry, lyrics, and arias, the emphasis of the vast bulk of the book is on “poetry” in the narrower sense of *shi* poetry. There are very few selections of Yuan dynasty arias and Ming and Qing period lyrics, making it difficult to show the process of change and development of the important genres of the aria and the lyric in the history of Chinese poetry. This also renders it difficult to show a complete picture of the tradition of Chinese poetry in these later periods. At the same time, the anthology gives too much attention to authors

¹¹ Sun Kangyi 孫康宜, “Is a New History of Literature Possible?” 新的文學史可能嗎, (Beijing: Qinghua University Journal of Philosophy and Social Science, 2005), 4:102

¹² Andre Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 126–127.

whose achievement in the realms of poetry is not outstanding. One example is Ni Zan, who is viewed as one of the four great masters of Yuan painting. But the editor says himself of his poetic works that “Ni’s achievement as a poet is not on the same level.”¹³ Yet, the anthology devotes a total of ten pages and includes seventeen poems, the quality of which is average. Besides this, among nineteenth-century Chinese poets, the anthology includes only the single individual Liu E, which makes for a greatly flawed view of the poetry of this period. Actually, a good number of outstanding poets and lyricists appeared in the late Qing period, writers such as Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848–1905), Gong Zizhen 龔自珍 (1792–1841), Nalan Xingde 納蘭性德 (1655–1685), and Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), among others. Chaves’ view of Liu E “as possibly the last truly great practitioner of traditional *shi* poetry” is a rather large exaggeration, which moreover obscures the richness and variety of the poetry of the period.¹⁴ When speaking of a book that focuses on the late period poetry of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing, we cannot but think the neglect of such an important period as the late Qing as regrettable.

Second, the neglect of women poets is another of the anthology’s shortcomings, as it does not give them enough emphasis, and thus is unable to show new perspectives and developments related to the literature of the female poets. There is only one female author, Huang E 黃娥 (1498–1569), with only one poem included, and that is appended after the poems of her husband, Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559). Following the rise of Eastern and Western feminism and Women’s Studies, the results of recent scholarship have placed increasing emphasis on the position of women in the history of Chinese literature and has newly discovered many “hidden” female poets and their works, such as Zheng Yunduan 鄭允端 (1327–1356), Wang Duan 汪端 (1793–1838), and He Shuangqing 賀雙卿 (b. 1712), among other famous women poets in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods. Writing by Chinese women since the Han dynasty was extremely distinguished and rich. Thus, it would have been reasonable to accord women poets a more important place in the anthology. Nonetheless, these are “slight flaws in the white jade,” not enough to obscure the great beauty of this anthology.

¹³ Chaves, *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry*, 66.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 466.

REMAINING THOUGHTS

"The stones of those hills, / May be used to polish gems."

It is not possible to deny Jonathan Chaves' contribution to Chinese literature, especially to the internationalization of Chinese poetry. *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* offers readers accurate and beautiful translations that allow readers to achieve a direct understanding of Yuan, Ming, and Qing period poetry, and to a significant degree change the perception of Western readers that Chinese poetry consists of only "Tang poetry." It is just as University of Cambridge sinologist Anne Birrell has said, Chaves displays "unobtrusive scholarship, poetic sensitivity, literary panache, unerring good taste, and a humanitarian cultural outlook."¹⁵ His anthology is a "pioneering work, not only the first substantial and serious anthology of its kind, a true pathfinder, but also as an introduction to specialists and the poetry reading public of unfamiliar, but great and notable poets of the modern era."¹⁶

By means of the introductory function of this anthology, Chinese literature in English translation has become a distinctive form of literature in translation. It is not completely the same as classical Chinese literature, and it moreover certainly has differences from Western literature; it is not a product of the "colonialization" of Chinese culture, and it is not a result of Western cultural "hegemony." On the contrary, it is the product of a mutual collision and blending of Chinese and Western cultures, the fruit of a cross-cultural mixing and blending of characteristics. *The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry* is of great significance in the history of the translation and introduction of classical Chinese poetry to the West. It superlatively embodies the role an editor can play in the reconstruction of the tradition of Chinese literature. And in this effort Chaves has indeed achieved great success. With this anthology, he has opened up the canon and has shown readers of English an

¹⁵ "The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry: Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing Dynasties (1279–1911) by Jonathan Chaves,"

review by Anne Birrell, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, vol. 53, no. 2 (1990): 371–373, esp. 371.

¹⁶ Ibid., 373.

aspect of Chinese poetry that is both vast and unfamiliar and reminds us that we must take a pluralist rather than a singular perspective to our view of Chinese literature.

In the present globalization of languages, understanding and acceptance among Western readers has followed the systematic introduction of traditional Chinese literature to the English-speaking world and has served to build a platform for a Sino-Western cultural dialog. “The stones of those hills, / May be used to polish gems” — Western readers by means of this Chinese “Other” recognize themselves.¹⁷ Alternatively, reading Western works of literature helps Chinese scholars working in translation and criticism to see and evaluate their own tradition from a broader perspective and, thus, actively participate in the conversation between world cultures. On this point, China will not again be merely the imagined “Other,” but will even more pursue the valuable aim of self-understanding. Only when foreign sinologists and Chinese native scholars engage in a dialog, will we be able to investigate the true meaning of Chinese culture; only when Chinese scholars open themselves to the world will they be able to make progress toward unlocking the inner secrets of ancient traditions and thought. It is precisely when we have the type of sinologist exemplified by Jonathan Chaves that we have reason to be confident that the image of Chinese culture in the global discussion will be even more accurate and complete, and that equal and mutually beneficial Sino-Western cultural exchange will open a new pathway.

POSTSCRIPT

My acquaintance with Jonathan Chaves began completely by chance. A particularly large earthquake in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province, in May 2005 had shocked each and every Chinese person. I was at the time at Sichuan University working day and night on my doctoral dissertation. As I was writing, I came across a translation by Chaves of a poem by the Ming writer Li Kaixian 李開先 (1502–1568) about an earthquake. In discussing the earthquake on my blog, I quoted this poem. To my immense surprise, the next day I discovered a message to my blog from none other than Jonathan Chaves. I was

¹⁷ Translator’s note: The author is playing here with the words 他山之石, which Legge translates as “The stones of those hills,” to make a point about cultural exchange with the “cultural Other.” An alternative translation of this line from the *Shi jing* that would perhaps capture the pun is: “Stones from the mountains of the Other....”

both surprised and pleased. From then on, we have been in communication. My primary research interest is in the translation of classical Chinese literature, especially the translation of poetry. So, I was already familiar with Chaves' name and major works and had long admired them. As a leading figure in Western sinology, Chaves is tireless in his effort to translate and propagate Chinese literature in the English speaking world. As a junior scholar, I have been very fortunate to have close communication with such a great scholar and to experience his love for translation, his persistence in learning, and his encouragement of a junior scholar such as myself. In the course of our correspondence, he wrote me a poem in the Chinese classical style. In it, I could see the depth and richness of his achievements in Chinese literature. This junior scholar is unworthy of the praise he expresses in the poem. Unequal to such an honor, I nonetheless drafted a seven-character regulated poem in reply, though I feel shame, as my poem does not match the natural perfection of Professor Chaves' poem — simple, unadorned, and moving. Finally, I append here the two poems, as a record of our past exchanges:

Jonathan Chaves to Chen Cheng:¹⁸ Presented to Woman Scholar Chen Cheng — In the manner of the Drinking Wine poems of Tao Yuanming

The sweet orange grows in the land of Shu,
 Praised by Fangweng as the most fragrant bloom.
 Beneath frosty skies is when it first blossoms,
 With sweet flavored fruit, limitlessly rich.
 And there is a Woman Scholar of the clan of Chen:
 Threefold Ba boasts of being her homeland.
 In comparative study of poetry East and West,
 She translates writings, secures them in a mountain.
 I send word to those pedantic scholars:
 How can you take in this scintillating brilliance?

¹⁸ Translator's note: The translation of this poem and the following note is by Jonathan Chaves himself.

Note: Fangweng is Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210) of the Southern Song dynasty. In 1170, he traveled by boat into Sichuan (Shu, Threefold Ba), and wrote his *Diary of My Journey to Shu*. In chapter three of this book, fourth day of the ninth book, he says,

Together with my friends and two monks, I disembarked on shore, and visited the temple, Broad Blessings Eternally Stable. It was utterly quiet, with not one person there. Towards the eastern portion of the grounds, in front of the White Cloud Pavilion, there were orange trees which had just put forth fruit. Although these were small, they were exceedingly sweet; together, we brewed some tea and peeled oranges....

Chen Cheng to Jonathan Chaves: Presented to Eminent Sinologist Jonathan Chaves

His studies link East and West; his spirit is boundless;
 His mind embraces the universe, worthy of the title Great Master.
 He sails upon vast seas, as he transmits the divine brush;
 Gazing through gathered mist, his thoughts span 10,000 years.
 He chants the millennium-old Cloud Gate Song,
 As he ferries among poems past and present, Chinese and English.
 All look up to this one bright-moon disc.
 Together we'll archive for a thousand Autumns his translated poems.

PART III

CLASSICAL CHINESE POETRY AND LITERARY CRITICISM

Yang Shen as a Literary Critic¹

Kang-I Sun Chang

Yang Shen was beyond doubt one of the most truly individual figures in Ming culture.... Yang's *shih* poetry and poetic criticism are of high caliber, but he excelled in *tz'u* and *ch' ü* as well. His *tz'u* and *ch' ü* ... are among the freshest, most expressive poems in these genres from the later period.

—Jonathan Chaves,

The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry (1986)

In his own time, Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559?) was known as the greatest of the literary scholars.² In *shi* poetry, *ci* songs, and *qu* lyrics alike, his innovations were all exceptional, prompting Li Zhi 李贄 (also known as Li Zhuowu 李卓吾, 1573–1620) to praise him, saying, “there is no type of literature he cannot do.”³ The Qing dynasty critic, Li Diaoyuan, described Yang Shen’s specific encyclopedic style as the work of “an erudite scholar and superb essayist, the most prolific writer of all times.”⁴ In particular, Yang Shen’s critical works greatly impacted Ming dynasty literary circles as well as later generations. However, in today’s sinological field of study, Yang Shen has not received the attention he deserves as

¹ I wish to give thanks to Victoria Wu for her help in translation during the preparation of this paper.

² In the past, most scholars agreed that 1559 was the year that Yang Shen died. But new evidence has suggested that Yang Shen probably died in either 1561 or 1562. However, modern scholars have not yet come to a consensus about the year of Yang Shen’s death.

³ Li Zhi 李贄, *Fenshu* (焚书), *juan* 5 卷 5, in *Fenshu, xu Fenshu* (焚书、续焚书) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 207.

⁴ Li Diaoyuan 李调元, preface to *Han Hai* (函海). See also Chen Tingle 陈廷乐, “Jian Ji Yang Sheng’an zhushu pingxuan shumu” (简辑杨升庵著述评选书目), in *Kunming Shiyuan xuebao* (昆明师院学报), (Nov. 1, 1882): 25–28.

a ground-breaking critic in the history of Chinese literary criticism; thus, it is necessary to re-examine the importance of his critical ideas. The reasons that his works in literary criticism have been thus far ignored can be discussed later; for now, I would like to first point out Yang Shen's major contributions toward Ming literary thought.

THE FORTHRIGHT CRITIC

In the lively literary world of the Ming dynasty, Yang Shen was the first person to courageously step forth and criticize the views on poetry and lyrics held by the Archaists (*fugu pai* 復古派), also known as the Seven Early Masters 前七子, who raucously advocated a return to the High Tang (盛唐).⁵ Yet Yang Shen had always had close relations with Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1473–1530) and He Jingming 何景明 (1483–1521), two of the most prominent members of the Seven Early Masters, and often discussed poetry and music with them. The death of He Jingming especially saddened him, and he even wrote a very personal poem in memoriam.⁶ Yang Shen's criticism of such scholars as Li and He was never personal; his purpose in criticism was in discussing poetry and was irrelevant to his relationship with his friends. Unfortunately, Yang Shen enjoyed "criticism" so much that he earned the censure of later generations, who would often say that "he particularly enjoyed criticizing people" or that he enjoyed "attacking people," etc.⁷

Even so, Yang Shen's voice of literary criticism still greatly influenced the Ming literary world. His saying that "each person has his poetry, each generation has its poetry" (人人有詩, 代代有詩)

⁵ In modern times, people commonly called the major Archaists in Early and mid-Ming the "Seven" Early Masters. But this is not entirely correct; some Ming people only recognized "Six" Masters. For example, He Jingming once wrote a poem, titled "Poems on the Six Masters (六子詩)". See He Jingming 何景明, *Dafu ji* (大復集), *juan* 8, *Siku quanshu zhenben* (四庫全書珍本), vol. 243, 1. See also Chen Guoqiu 陳國球, *Mingdai fugu pai Tangshi lun yanjiu* (明代復古派唐詩論研究) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), 9–10.

⁶ *Sheng'an ji* (升庵集), by Yang Shen 楊慎, edited by Zhang Shiwei 張士佩, *juan* 32, in *Wenyuange sikuquanshu* (文淵閣四庫全書) (rpt., Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1986), 1270:234.

⁷ Wu Guoping 鄒國平, "Yang Shen de wenxue piping" (楊慎的文学批评), in *Wenxue Yichang* (文学遗产), vol. 3 (1985): 86. It can be found in Lin Qingzhang 林慶彰 and Jia Shunxian 賈順先, eds., *Yang Shen Yanjiu ziliao huibian* (楊慎研究資料汇编) (Nangang, Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiusuo, 1992), 2:913.

was particularly persuasive at the time — at least it served as a strong rebuttal to the Seven Early Masters' belief that poetry should be modeled on the patterns established during the High Tang. Unlike the Seven Early Masters, Yang Shen advocated instead that each dynasty should have its own particular flavor of literature and that all could be good poetry; there was no need to remain fixated on the High Tang model. At the same time, he energetically resisted the “imitation” (*moni* 模擬) viewpoint of the Archaists; since “each person has his poetry,” there was no need to “imitate” the High Tang poetry. Yet Yang Shen saw that the poets of his time had a bad habit of imitating in the name of learning: “I am tired of those poets who imitate others, who thought they are making their style more elegant, but in fact their writings have become awkward, which are inferior to the natural and simple.” To mock the trend for imitation, he even wrote a poem titled “Inscription on a Painting of a Washing Girl” (題浣女圖) mimicking Li Po's “Washing Girl Poem” (浣紗女詩) and “Song on the Yue Girl” (越女詞):⁸

The rosy-cheeked, white-footed girl,
 Her two feet are white as frost.
 She does not wear the raven's head stockings,
 Mountain flowers leave fragrance in her clogs.
 She is natural and unadorned,
 Wearing water and moon at Mt. Meiling.
 But she is willing to imitate the Handan Walk,
 Crawling along the young boy of Shouling.⁹

红颜素足女，
 两足白如霜。

⁸ *Sheng'an ji* (升庵集), *juan* 68, under “Su zu nv” (素足女), *Wenyuange sikuquanshu* (文淵閣四庫全書), 1270: 671.

⁹ The allusion comes from “Autumn Floods” in *Zhuangzi*: “Or perhaps you've never heard about the young boy of Shouling who went to learn the Handan Walk. He hadn't mastered what the Handan people had to teach him when he forgot his old way of walking, so he had to crawl all the way back home.” See Burton Watson, trans., *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 110.

不着鴉頭襪，
 山花屐齒香。
 天然去雕飾，
 梅嶺水月妝。
 肯學邯鄲步，
 匍匐壽陵旁。

Yang Shen believed that if a poet wanted to correct the bad habit of imitation, the best method would be to read widely, broadly adopting the strengths of every literary tradition. Thus, he emphasized: “Du Fu said, ‘If you thoroughly read ten thousand scrolls, you will write like a spirit when you put your pen to paper.’ This is the wisdom that Du Fu gained. Though reading is not merely a preparation for writing poetry, if there are ten thousand scrolls in your heart, there will be no dust when you put your pen to paper.”¹⁰ In Yang Shen’s view, as long as a person had read enough, developing interests in many areas, he could naturally write great poetry, and would not need to imitate Du Fu. But Early Seven Masters such as Li and He insisted that in writing poetry, one must imitate Du Fu. Thus, Yang Shen specially warned his readers, “Poetry peaked with Du Fu, but poetry’s eventual decline also began with Du Fu.” The root of the problem, however, could not be blamed on Du Fu, but was instead the fault of later poets, because imitation is like “playing with the peony in the vase, viewing the peaches and pears on a carrying pole, it’s all the problem of the imitator.”¹¹ Yang Shen’s belief that imitation negatively impacted literature seems to anticipate T. S. Eliot’s famous line, “A man may be a great artist, and yet have a bad influence.”¹²

In short, Yang Shen’s notion that “each person has his poetry, each generation has its poetry” developed in reaction to the bad habit of imitation and rigid literary traditions that the literati of his time, particularly the Seven Early Masters, espoused. I believe that Yang Shen’s greatest contribution

¹⁰ *Danqian zonglu* 丹鉛總錄, chapter 19, under “Dushu wanjuan” 讀書萬卷, in *Wenyuange sikuquanshu*, (文淵閣四庫全書), 855:563.

¹¹ *Sheng’an ji*, juan 6, in *Wenyuange sikuquanshu*, 文淵閣四庫全書, 1270:74.

¹² T. S. Eliot, “Milton, Part 1,” in his *On Poetry and Poets* (1943; rpt. New York: The Noonday Press, 1961), 156.

in literary criticism is that, while the Ming literary world was regressing, he was able to use a flexible literary outlook to awaken his contemporaries, in the hopes of stirring up a literary revolution. Most importantly, Yang Shen advocated respect for the historical meaning of “literary history,” proposing that the study of literature should return to the origins of poetry, and that the inheritance of poetry from the Six Dynasties period and earlier times could not be ignored; moreover, history could not be carelessly severed, and scholars ought not blindly worship the High Tang. Thus, he wrote, “The poetry of the Six Dynasties was mostly *yuefu*, so the *jueju* had not fully developed, but what was written in the *jueju* form was already wondrous and lovely, and no one could surpass it. Why move against the waters if you do not seek the source?”¹³ At the same time, Yang Shen collated and edited such books as the *Wuyan lvzu* 五言律祖 (Antecedents to Five-Character Line *lvshi*), *Qiyang lvzu* 七言律祖 (Antecedents to Seven-Character Line *lvshi*),¹⁴ and the *Jueju yanyi* 絕句衍義 (The Evolution of *Jueju*), with the purpose of explaining that Tang poetry came from the Six Dynasties and earlier periods, in order to encourage poets to go up the stream and “seek the source.” In addition, Yang Shen also believed that “change” motivated the development of literature in each period; if change is not sought, and only imitation is used, tradition would only build upon tradition, endlessly recycling old ideas, and creating the degeneration of literary culture. The modern scholar Chen Guoqiu (Leonard Chan) sums up this historical viewpoint of Yang Shen’s most succinctly:

In other words, [to Yang Shen], poetry of all ages all flowed from the same source, and yet each had its own uniqueness. The relation between them all is: the antecedent “changed” into the descendant, and hidden before and after the change was the factor that instigated change.¹⁵

¹³ *Sheng'an shihua* (升庵诗话) · juan 2, in *Sheng'an shihua jianzheng* (升庵詩話箋証), annotated by Wang Zhongyong 王仲鏞 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 79.

¹⁴ Wang Zhongyong 王仲鏞 and Wang Dahou 王大厚, annotated, *Jueju yanyi jianzhu* (絕句衍義箋注) (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1084). (成都: 四川人民出版社, 1984).

¹⁵ Chen Guoqiu 陈国球, *Mingdai fugu pai Tangshi lun yanjiu* (明代复古派唐诗论研究), 75.

“FLEXIBILITY” AS A LITERARY CRITICISM

Yang Shen’s view of change in literature reminds us of the notion of change Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465–522) described in his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons).¹⁶ Like Yang Shen, Liu Xie initially proposed the writing principle of change to correct the literary atmosphere during the Six Dynasties — especially that of the problem of imitation. In the chapter “Continuity and Mutation” (*Tong bian* 通變, chapter twenty-nine), Liu Xie explained the two most important standards that a writer must possess — on the one hand, he must thoroughly understand the spirit of the ancients’ work, and on the other hand, he must also be able to adapt to new changes in literary developments (as well as new melodies).¹⁷ The factor of permanence in the literary forms of the past is certainly worth learning, but when a person lifts his brush to write, he must also innovate and adapt, which is the only way he can travel the path of creativity smoothly and, thereby, draw endlessly from a well of originality that would never run dry. Otherwise, as Liu Xie warns us, “the person whose well-rope is too short will suffer thirst; the person whose feet tire will stop on the road.”¹⁸

It would be unfair to say that the Seven Early Masters of the Ming did not understand Liu Xie’s principle of flexibility. On the issue of changing the Ming literary atmosphere, Li Mengyang, He Jingming, and Yang Shen all shared a similar concern — especially in the criticism of the Neo-Confucian poetry (*liqi shi* 理氣詩) popular at the time.¹⁹ The important thing is they all opposed

¹⁶ This English title is taken from Vincent Yu-chung Shih, trans. and annot., *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons: A Study of Thought and Pattern in Chinese Literature* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1983).

¹⁷ Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992), 223–230.

¹⁸ The translation is taken from Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 224. For the original Chinese passage, see Liu Xie 劉勰, *Wenxin diaolong* (文心雕龍), *juan* 6, chapter 29, “Tongbian” (通變第二十九), annot. by Fan Wenlan 范文瀾 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1978), 3:519.

¹⁹ Wu Guoping 鄒國平, “Yang Shen de wenxue piping” (楊慎的文学批评), in Lin Qingzhang 林庆彰 and Jia Shunxian 贾顺先, eds., *Yang Shen yanjiu ziliao huibian* (杨慎研究资料汇编), 2:914–917.

poetry that focused on *li*, principle, and not *qing*, or emotion, and they were all interested in correcting various unhealthy literary trends. It was only their methods of change that were different.

Due to the influence of Song dynasty Neo-Confucian scholars, Ming poets were producing great quantities of *liqi shi* at the time. Neither the Archaists nor Yang Shen could endure this because they all emphasized that poetry must have *qing*, emotion. Li Mengyang believed that his contemporaries favored *li* simply because Song poets preferred to write in that style. He also blamed Song philosophers, such as Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), for disliking Du Fu's imagistic and lyrical verse, which he assumed was the main reason many of his contemporaries considered *liqi* poetry superior:

The Song people loved *li* (principle) and loved to write about *li*, and so they despised the wind and clouds and moon and dew, and discarded them all.... People now prefer to write *xingqi* 性氣 [i.e., *liqi* 理氣] poetry, always claiming that their verses are superior to such lines as [Du Fu's] "butterflies weaving through flowers" (穿花蛺蝶) and "dragonflies flitting on the water" (點水蜻蜓);²⁰ but this is like idiots discussing dreams.²¹

This argument from Li Mengyang is worthy of our attention. For Li Mengyang, the problems of the Ming literary world came mostly from the negative influence of Song Neo-Confucian scholars. Thus, Li Mengyang concluded, "the Song dynasty did not have poetry."²² At the same time, He Jingming also commented: "The Qin dynasty had no classics, the Han had no *sao* poetry, the Tang had no *fu* poetry, the Song had no *shi* poetry."²³

²⁰ These lines are from Du Fu's poem, "Qu Jiang" 曲江.

²¹ "Fou yin xu" (缶音序), in Li Mengyang 李梦阳, *Kongtong ji* (空同集), *juan* 52, in *Sikuquanshu zhenben* (四库全书珍本), 190:6. See also Chen Guoqi 陈国球, *Mingdai fugu pai Tangshi lun yanjiu* (明代复古派唐诗论研究), 24.

²² From "Qian qiu shan ren ji" 潛虬山人記 in Li Mengyan 李梦阳, *Kongtong ji* (空同集), *juan* 48. See *Sikuquanshu zhenben* (四库全书珍本), 189 冊:12.

²³ No. 5 of "Za yan shi shou" 雜言十首. See Chen Guoqi 陈国球, *Mingdai fugu pai Tangshi lun yanjiu* (明代复古派唐诗论研究), 35.

Yang Shen also opposed the *liqi* poetry of the time — his criticism of *liqi* poetry was actually even more severe than Li's and He's. But he turned the arrow's head toward Ming writers themselves because the "poems" they wrote were not poetry at all, but merely expressions of the smug sense of satisfaction they felt. In a passage in "False Poetry" (*Jia shi* 假詩) of *Shengan shihua* (升庵詩話), Yang Shen explains:

The commonplace idiots writing poetry nowadays ... all say that their poetry must follow the [Neo-Confucian] "quotations" (语录) style, and so you can see words like *wuji* (無極), *xiantian* (先天), *xingwo* (行窩), and *nongwan* (弄丸), all used repetitively. Then they say, poetry must include Zen vocabulary, such as *daguai* (打乖), *dashui* (打睡), *dazuo* (打坐), *yangzi* (樣子) ... etc. They read their poetry aloud with self-satisfaction, writing quickly without apology. But the poetry's quality sweeps the floor.²⁴

Yang Shen believed that so much poetry of the time merely "swept the floor" because the writers themselves lacked basic aesthetic training in poetry. In his commentary on Yang Shen's collection of poetry criticism, *Sheng'an shihua* 升庵詩話, the modern scholar Wang Zhongyong said:

There is a reason for Yang Shen to criticize [his contemporary poets]. At the time, such people as Chen Xianzhang and Zhuang Chang liked to use vulgar phrases and Zen words in their poetry. Although Yang Shen generally respected these people and praised the good poems they had written, he nonetheless criticized their *liqi shi* as false poetry. That's why he said he wanted to correct the poetic style (正詩風) of the time.²⁵

²⁴ Yang Shen 杨慎, *Sheng'an shihua* (升庵詩話), *juan* 11, entry 516. See Wang Zhongyong 王仲鏞, annot., *Sheng'an shihua jianzheng* (升庵詩話箋證) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 418.

²⁵ Wang Zhongyong 王仲鏞, annot., *Sheng'an shihua jianzheng* (升庵詩話箋證), 419.

Thus, while he was trying to “correct the poetic style of the time,” Yang Shen did not repudiate Song poetry because he believed in the principle that “each person has his poetry, each generation has its poetry.” Though the *qing*-oriented Tang poetry might be in general superior to the *li*-oriented Song poetry, Yang Shen did not reject Song poetry, and so he did not agree with Li’s and He’s statement that the “Song dynasty has no poetry.” In his poetry criticism, Yang Shen repeatedly emphasized this point; once he said, “Song poetry may be inferior to Tang, but how can there be nothing that is commensurate? It is dependent on one’s ability to identify good poetry.”²⁶

Generally speaking, Yang Shen had both criticism and praise for the poetry of every generation, which is his unique spirit of criticism. As is recorded in his *Sheng’an shihua*, Yang Shen was once discussing poetry with the Archaist He Jingming, and he made a copy of the Song poet Zhang Wenqian’s 張文潛 (1054–1114) “Lotus Poem” (Lianhua shi 蓮花詩) as well as the poems of several other poets such as Du Yan 杜衍 (978–1057) to show to He Jingming. When Yang Shen asked: “Whose poetry is this?” He Jingming saw that the poetry was good and instantly responded, “It is Tang poetry.” He did not think that Yang Shen would laughingly respond, “This is the poetry of the Song dynasty that you do not care for.”²⁷ It was sufficient to affirm that the Song produced good poetry and could not be totally rejected. In the same vein, there was a great deal of bad poetry from the Tang dynasty. In an entry on “Bad poetry from the Tang” (Lie Tang shi 劣唐詩) in *Sheng’an shihua*, Yang Shen once warned, “Poets often bring up Tang poetry, discussing its merits, without thinking about the possible demerits.”²⁸

As previously discussed, Yang Shen’s generation was when the voice of the Seven Early Masters reached its pinnacle. At the time, the Archaists’ notions that “poetry must follow the High Tang” and that “Song has no poetry” occupied the heart of the world of literary criticism. In terms of age, Yang Shen was younger than the Archaists — he was fifteen years younger than Li Mengyang, fourteen years younger than Wang Ting-xiang 王廷相 (1474–1544), thirteen years younger than Kang

²⁶ *Sheng’an shihua* (升庵诗话), juan 2, in Ding Fubao 丁福保, ed., *Lidai shihua xubian* (历代诗话续编) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 2:717.

²⁷ *Sheng’an ji* (升庵集), juan 57, “Lianhua shi” (莲花诗), in *Wenyuange sikuquanshu* (文渊阁四库全书), 1270:518.

²⁸ *Sheng’an shihua* (升庵诗话), juan 4, in Ding Fubao 丁福保, ed., *Lidai shihua xubian* (历代诗话续编), 2:700.

Hai 康海 (1475–1540), and five years younger than He Jingming. Thus, in comparison, Yang Shen was of a later generation, as though he were standing on the borderlands of the literary world.

But in fact, Yang Shen occupied a position in the heart of the literary world from the very beginning. As early as the Hongzhi reign, when Yang Shen was still a youth of fourteen, he wrote a poem “On Yellow Leaves” (Huangye shi) that elicited the attention of Li Dongyang 李東陽 (1447–1516), the highest official in the Hanlin Academy, who then accepted Yang as a student. Later, Li Dongyang became the chief arbiter of literature during the period;²⁹ it can be imagined that Yang Shen’s future would become even smoother. In the sixth year of the Zhengde reign (1511), twenty-four-year-old Yang Shen topped the lists in the civil service examination and instantly became a distinguished Hanlin academician. Thus, in the literary world, Yang Shen occupied a formidable position from the very beginning of his career. Later, his ability to step forth and criticize such Archaists as Li and He naturally also caused others to look at him with new eyes. With regard to this point, Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664) had very high regard for Yang Shen. In his *Liechao shiji xiaochuan*, Qian Qian-yi wrote:

When Li Mengyang talked of returning to the past, vigorously rejecting Li Dongyang, everyone sided with Li Mengyang. Yang Shen was enamored of the Six Dynasties, embracing the Late Tang (晚唐), creating a style that was erudite and elegant. Perhaps [Yang Shen] meant to crush the style of Li and He, so that he could build a new base for Li Dongyang; he did not need to argue with them to win.”³⁰

What Qian Qianyi said about Yang Shen’s ability to win without arguing with the Archaists Li Mengyang and He Jingming is a very valid point. However, Yang Shen wasn’t trying to help his mentor Li Dongyang “build a new base” because Yang Shen was always exceedingly independent, disliking party politics; his only intention was to clarify his own opinions on poetry. If anything, he cared most about creating his own voice in his literary works.

²⁹ Jian Jingsong 简锦松, *Mingdai wenxue piping yanjiu* (明代文学批评研究), (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1989), 21.

³⁰ Qian Qianyi 钱谦益, *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan* (列朝诗集小传) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), 2:354.

Even though in later years (in 1524, when he was thirty-seven years old), Yang Shen was banished for life to Yunnan (for offending Emperor Jiajing in the so-called “Great Rites Controversy”), he continued to study, learn, and write diligently. In over thirty-five years of exile, he wrote over four hundred pieces (currently about two hundred still exist). There are over a hundred kinds of miscellaneous writings alone; the consistent production of so many pieces is awe-inspiring.³¹ Though his body had gone to the “borderland,” he often produced new work that spread like wildfire — the aforementioned *Sheng'an shihua* and *Danqian zonglu* 丹铅总录, and the *Ci pin* 词品 mentioned below were all written while in exile. At the time, he had many sympathizers and admirers, and many booksellers fought to publish his books first. He had become a legend in the world of Ming publishing.³²

However, the excessive enthusiasm of booksellers and publishers for Yang Shen's work also produced negative results. Lacking an editorial system for compilation and differentiation, Yang Shen's published works seem both too numerous and too disorganized.³³ In the preface to his edited version of Yang Shen's *Sheng'an shihua*, the modern scholar Ding Fubao laments:

There has not been a good edition of *Shen'an shihua* since the Ming dynasty.... Some of his works were edited into *Shen'an waiji* 生菴外集, with a total of twelve *juan*.... Some were edited into *Danqian zonglu*, with a total of four *juan*.... *Han hai* 函海 also records 12 *juan* with an additional three *juan*. Some are extremely detailed, some are fairly sketchy, the contents are exceedingly disordered; the number of *juan* are also disputed....³⁴

³¹ Feng jiahua 丰家骅, *Yang Shen pingzhuan* (杨慎评传) (Nanjing: Nanking University Press, 1998), 342.

³² See also Kang-i Sun Chang, “Literature of the Early Ming to Mid-Ming (1375–1572),” *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, edited by Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), *Volume 2: From 1375* (edited by Kang-i Sun Chang), 43–46.

³³ See Liang Rongruo 梁容若, “Tan Yang Sheng'an de zuopin” (谈杨升庵的作品), in *Guoyu ribao, shu he ren* (国语日报, 书和人), no. 131 (April 18, 1970): 1.

³⁴ Ding Fubao 丁福保, ed., *Lidai shihua xubian* (历代诗话续编), 2:634.

We can imagine that in his long exile in Yunnan, Yang Shen naturally was unable to consult many books, and so in his poetry criticism he sometimes committed some errors — such as occasionally attributing some previous poems to wrong authors. I believe this is the reason that later generations have largely ignored Yang Shen's many contributions to literary criticism.

Yet the criticism that Yang Shen has endured is somewhat unfair. To be exiled for so many years, as Yang Shen was, meant he could only write from memory; it was fortunate that his knowledge was so extensive and his memory so strong, which was the only way he could produce so much work. It is understandable that he occasionally misremembered. As Ding Fubao pointed out, “Yang Shen's talent was indeed far superior to most of the Ming authors; though his defects were many, his sterling qualities were many as well.” Thus, Ding Fubao concluded, “In reading *Sheng'an ji*, I greatly admire Yang Shen as a person.”³⁵

WALKING TOWARD THE BORDERLANDS AND CASTING OFF THE ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE

Yang Shen's exile was indeed the greatest misfortune of his life; he eventually died in Yunnan, and in the sickness of his old age he wrote such sorrowful lines as “in my travels my temples grow balder year by year / my wandering soul grows more startled night by night.”³⁶ But with regard to the breadth of his literary knowledge and life experience, in the cloud of his long-term exile there was a silver lining. From an early age, Yang Shen desired to immerse himself in his studies and was always disinterested in politics, unlike his father Yang Tinghe 楊廷和, who had once served as Chief Grand Secretary. Thus, the young Yang Shen said to a friend, “I am returning home; I dislike the pursuit of political power.”³⁷ His grandfather Yang Chun 楊春 also once said that Yang Shen was “the Jia Yi of our family.”³⁸ Jia Yi

³⁵ Ibid., 635.

³⁶ The original lines in Chinese read: “旅鬢年年禿，羈魂夜夜驚。” See Yang Shen 楊慎, (升庵集), *juan* 18, in *Wenyuange sikuquanshu*, 1270:151.

³⁷ See Yang Shen's letter to Liu Songyang 劉嵩陽, in *Sheng'an ji* (升庵集), *juan* 6. It can be found in Ibid., 74.

³⁸ See Zhang Yide 張義德, *Yang Shen* (楊慎) (Shandong: Qilu shushe, 1982), 4:187–232. It can be found in Ling Qingzhang 林慶彰 and Jia Shunxian 賈順先, eds., *Yang Shen yanjiu ziliao huibian*, 2:473.

賈誼 (200–168 BC) is the famous Han official who was sent into exile for offending his emperor. Unfortunately, the words of Yang Shen's grandfather were a self-fulfilling prophecy. But Yang Shen was able to take advantage of his existing knowledge and spirit to transform his misfortune into fortune, although his circumstances worsened drastically (especially because the Jiajing Emperor continuously sent spies to Yunnan to monitor and pursue him). Fortunately, Yang Shen was an individual of unusual talent. He continued to use the knowledge of canonical texts stored in his brain as a fount to create his new works, and from then on he transformed the scholar-official's life he had once had into a new space in his life. Thus, that long, slow period of exile (from the time he was 37 to when he was 72) became the time in which Yang Shen could study, write, and travel. Because Yang Shen had been sent to society's "borderlands," he was instead given a chance for "resurrection."

In addition, because he had already achieved literary fame before exile, his work always received attention from contemporary readers, and thus he was able to remain within the literary world. The fact that his book of criticism, *Sheng'an shihua*, was written while he was in Yunnan also proves that his discussions (and debates) with the Seven Early Masters continued into that period. At the same time, because he was physically in the "borderlands," he was able to extricate himself from the anxieties of influence, allowing him to boldly raise opposing viewpoints.

In another aspect, Yang Shen transformed from an "exile" into a "traveler" by exploring the natural world. Most importantly, he had the fortune of meeting several scholars from Yunnan (his contemporaries called these friends the Six Scholars of the House of Yang, and their ranks included Li Yuanyang 李元陽 and Dong Nan 董難, who were also scholars who had lost interest in politics), and these friends often traveled and discussed poetry with him. Thus, in his travels, Yang Shen unwittingly wrote many poems and travel journals. One of the most famous was written after he traveled, along with such friends as Li Yuanyang and Dong Nan, to Dali's famous scenic point Diancang Mountain, in the spring of 1530. Later, he wrote about that thirty-nine-day experience into "Traveling to Diancang Mountain" (You Diancangshan ji 遊點蒼山記). In the introduction to his travel journal, Yang Shen wrote, "Ever since I became a banished person, the roads I have traveled have exceeded ten thousand *li* ... whatever scenic mountains and rivers, I have traveled them all." Yet he expressed that it was not until he saw Diancang Mountain that it was "as though I awoke from a drunken stupor, or a dream ... and then I realized that I had never seen mountains and rivers before, but had only seen them from

that day on.”³⁹ It is evident that Dianchang Mountain deeply impressed him. And so, at the end of this travel journal he wrote, “I never knew that after my exile I could have such splendid travels, as though it belonged to another life.”⁴⁰

The greatest benefit of traveling was that it brought Yang Shen from his earlier ivory tower life at the Hanlin Academy out into the world, allowing him to begin to experience popular customs. He once wrote a book called *My Journey in Yunnan* (Dian cheng ji 滇程記) in order to “remember the mountains and rivers, express the native customs, and gather folk songs.”⁴¹ In his writing styles, Yang Shen also became open and unrestrained; for example, he utilized subjects from oral literature to write his famous *Ballad of Twenty-One Histories* (Ershiyi shi tanci 二十一史彈詞). At the same time, he especially emphasized the collection of folksongs and proverbs, and the books of popular songs he collected in *Gujin feng yao* 古今風謠, *Gujin yan* 古今諺, and *Feng ya yi pian* 風雅逸篇 all remind us of his idea that “every person has his poetry.” His collections and anthologies also reveal his political orientations; in these proverbs and songs, he cleverly expressed his criticisms toward the policies of the Ming court during his time.⁴² As the modern scholar Zhang Zuyong says, Yang Shen very “boldly ... utilized folksongs and proverbs to explain the classics,” allowing the “sagely *Odes* and *Book of Documents* to spread in the vernacular.”⁴³

Yang Shen’s engrossment with vernacular literature naturally enriched his literary accomplishments. Scholars have generally agreed that Yang Shen’s *shi* poetry is great, but his *ci* poetry and *qu* songs are especially superb. This is mainly because when he was exiled in Yunnan, he

³⁹ Yang Shen 杨慎, “You Dianchang shan ji” (游点苍山记), *Sheng’an shiwen buyi* (升庵詩文補遺), *juan 1*, in *Yang Sheng’an congshu* (楊升庵叢書) (Chengdu: Tiandi chubanshe, 2002), 4:65.

⁴⁰ Yang Shen 杨慎, “You Dianchang shan ji” (游点苍山记), 68.

⁴¹ See Ji Yun 纪昀, et. al., eds., *Qinding sikuquanshu* (钦定四库全书) (rpt. Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1983 年), *juan 64*, 116.

⁴² See the four songs from “*Jiaqing chu tong yao*” 嘉靖初童謠 in *Gujin fenyao* 古今風謠. See Zhang Zuyong 张祖涌, “Yang Sheng’an dui suwenxue de gongxian” (杨升庵对俗文学的贡献), in Ling Qingzhang 林庆彰 and Jia Shunxian 贾顺先, eds., *Yang Shen yanjiu ziliao huibian* (杨慎研究资料汇编), 1:213–219.

⁴³ Zhang Zuyong 张祖涌, “Yang Sheng’an dui suwenxue de gongxian” (杨升庵对俗文学的贡献), in Ling Qingzhang 林庆彰 and Jia Shunxian 贾顺先, eds., *Yang Shen yanjiu ziliao huibian* (杨慎研究资料汇编), 1:215.

gradually turned from the “elegant and scholarly style” toward the “vernacular and new” innovations in poetry and songs.⁴⁴ He also had a talented wife, Huang E 黃峨 (1498–1569), who wrote poetic responses to his work. (As early as 1529, after the death of Yang Shen’s father Yang Tinghe, the couple began living apart; Yang Shen was often in Yunnan, while Huang E remained in their native Sichuan to care for the household; the two thus often exchanged poems to indicate their longing for each other. Readers have always enjoyed and admired their *ci* and *qu* songs.)⁴⁵ At the time, Yang Shen’s work was widely circulated. In the Jiajing years, one of Yang Shen’s contemporaries Yang Nanjin 楊南金 (*jinshi* degree 1499) once said in his preface to Yang Shen’s *Collected Works in ci* (Sheng’an chang duan ju 升菴長短句):

The Grand Historian (Taishi gong 太史公) Yang Shen lives in Yunnan, relegating his interests next to wine, tempering his passion in *ci* and songs, passing around his poetry in Yunnan, and gushing forth from that barbaric frontier. Someone once said: “As long as there is well-water, Liu Yong’s [987–1053] *ci* will be sung,” but now, even where there is no well-water [in Yunnan] Yang Shen’s *ci* are still sung.⁴⁶

To call Yang Shen “Taishi gong” 太史公 (the Grand Historian) is no doubt the greatest expression of respect someone has ever shown to Yang Shen. Similarly, in his preface to Yang Shen’s *Taoqing yuefu* 陶情樂府, one of Yang Shen’s close friends Zhang Yuguang 張愈光 called Yang Shen’s *ci* and his vernacular *sanqu* verses “songs of history” (*qushi* 曲史).⁴⁷ It should be noted that such high praises were based on Yang Shen’s achievement in the “popular” forms of *ci* poetry and *qu* songs.

⁴⁴ See Liang Rongruo 梁容若, “Yang Shen de shengping yu zhuzuo” (杨慎的生平与著作), in *Guoyu ribao, shu he ren* (国语日报, 书和人), no. 131 (April 18, 1970): 1.

⁴⁵ Some scholars argued that some of Huang E’s poems and songs might have been written by her husband Yang Shen. See Ch’en Hsiao-lan and F. W. Mote, “Yang Shen and Huang O: Husband and Wife as Lovers, Poets, and Historical Figures” in *Excursions in Chinese Culture: Festschrift in Honor of William R. Schultz* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2002), 1–32.

⁴⁶ Wang Zicai 王文才, ed., *Yang Shen ciquji* (杨慎词曲集) (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1984), 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

Thus, in reaffirming and re-examining Yang Shen's position in Chinese literary history, modern scholar Zhang Hongsheng does not forget to mention the importance of the common (*su* 俗) in Yang Shen's work:

The common (*su*) in Yang Shen's work does not necessarily mean a negative quality. As for the so called common *ci*, some are common in moral quality, some are common in language, some are common in temperament — they all come from different standards of measuring beauty, and they also have different implications. Such as in Yang Shen's most famous "Lin jiang xian" (The rolling waters of the Yangtze flow east 滾滾長江東逝水),⁴⁸ the language is fairly simple, but it gained the deep love of later generations.... What is meant by "common" refers primarily to something which both the erudite and common can enjoy.⁴⁹

The "something which both the erudite and common can enjoy" reminds us of Liu Xie's theory of flexibility. Actually, Yang Shen certainly did not only seek the common. He did indeed once journey from the center of literature to its borderlands, and then created new developments in his pursuit of the common, and pushed that commonness from the borderlands to the center, ultimately achieving "something which both the erudite and common can enjoy." He not only added a new element of change to the conventional forms of *shi*, *ci*, and *qu*, but he also, through the medium of literary criticism, transmitted ideas generally considered countrified to the empire's capital, as well as to major cities north and south of the great river, bringing the flavor of the distant borderlands to the newly flourishing publishing industry. In other words, Yang Shen used the resources of traditional elite literature to discuss common topics, and he indeed gained a certain kind of success,

⁴⁸ Yang Shen's "Lin Jiang xian" 臨江仙 *ci* first appeared in his *Ballad of Twenty-One History* (Ershiyi shi tanci). It later became extremely popular after the Qing commentator Mao Zonggang 毛宗崗 (1632–after 1709) added it to the beginning of chapter 1 of the novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (San'guo yanyi 三國演義).

⁴⁹ Zhang Hongsheng 张宏生, "Yang Shen cixue yu 'Caotang shiyu'" 楊慎詞學與 (草堂詩餘), *Nanjing Shifan Daxue xuebao* (南京师范大学学报), vol. 2 (2008): 132.

appropriately popularizing (or vernacularizing) traditional literary formats into a widely-enjoyed form of literature for the reading public.

Both ancient and modern, Eastern and Western literature have all undergone this process, in which the common is made refined. (Western writers such as Dante and Shakespeare are the best examples because they began among the common people and then refined the literature of the common people, ultimately creating a new kind of classical literature.) This is the rule of literary development in the world, which is what Liu Xie describes when he says, “relying on his affections, one will achieve continuity; depending on *qi* one will move to mutation” (憑情以會通, 負氣以適變).⁵⁰

This is also what Yang Shen so often told his friends Li Mengyang and He Jingming, the famous Archaists of his time:

Every person has his poetry,
Every generation has its poetry.

人人有诗,
代代有诗.

⁵⁰ The translation is taken from Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 229.

Wang Shizhen's Theory of Spirit-Resonance:
 Evidence from the *Shenyun ji*
 (Spirit-Resonance Collection of Tang Verse)
 and *Tangxian sanmei ji*
 (Collection of *Samādhi* [Enlightened] Poetry by *Bhadrās*
 [Virtuous Sages] of the Tang)

Richard John Lynn 林理彰

Speculation about the exact meaning of *shenyun* 神韻 (spirit-resonance), the most salient term in the poetics of Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711), began in Wang's own day and has continued through the next three hundred years up to today. Although I shall address some of the more noteworthy interpretations and misinterpretations of *shenyun* that occurred during all this time, this essay will focus on the content of and ancillary statements connected with two poetry anthologies Wang compiled, the *Shenyun ji* 神韻集 (Collection of Spirit-Resonance Poetry) and the *Tangxian sanmei ji* 唐賢三昧集 (Collection of *Samādhi* [Enlightened] Poetry by *Bhadrās* [Virtuous Sages] of the Tang), for both seem particularly valuable sources for what Wang himself meant by the term.

TANGXIAN SANMEI JI 唐賢三昧集 (COLLECTION OF SAMĀDHI
 [ENLIGHTENED] POETRY BY BHADRAS [VIRTUOUS SAGES] OF THE
 TANG)

Since it is by far the better known, I shall first discuss the *Tangxian sanmei ji*, of which the best edition for our purposes is the *Tangxian sanmei ji jianzhu* 箋註 (first edition, 1787; re-carved wood block

edition of 1883; reprint Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1968), which contains critical notes by Huang Peifang 黃培芳 (Xiangshi 香石) and annotations edited by Wu Xuan 吳煊 (Tuian 退庵, the original publisher) and Hu Tang 胡棠 (Ganting 甘亭). Although “enlightened” appears to have been the way the secular tradition of poetry seems to have understood *sanmei/samādhi*, the term in Buddhist thought itself refers to a stage of meditation and mind cultivation or state of perfect contemplation and complete absorption in which unification of mind and object occurs. This state or stage may lead to enlightenment but is not enlightenment itself, which lies, of course, beyond the reach of any form of words.¹ Wang states his reasons for compiling the collection and the theoretical principles that guided the selection in his own preface:

When Yan Canglang 嚴滄浪 (Yan Yu 嚴羽 ca. 1195–ca. 1245) discussed poetry, he said such things as: “Poets of the High Tang were only concerned with inspired interest (*xingqu* 興趣).” “As antelopes that hung by their horns, they left behind no tracks by which they could be found.”² “As utterly transparent crystals, their poems defy rational analysis (*buke coubo* 不可湊泊).”³ “Like a sound in the air, the play of color in the

¹ I am grateful to Charles Egan, San Francisco State University, for clarifying this important distinction between *samādhi* and enlightenment in his remarks following the presentation of this paper at the Premodern Chinese Literature and Culture Workshop, Center for Chinese Studies, University of California at Berkeley, April 26, 2014.

² Tang era Chan masters often alluded to the antelope that could jump up and escape its enemies by hanging by its horns from tree branches. For example, Master Daoying 道膺 (Embodiment of the Way) (d. 902) addressed his disciples: “You are like good hunting dogs which only know how to find animals that leave tracks but which now have come across an antelope that hangs by its horns. Not only are there no tracks, you do not even recognize its scent!” See *Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Record of Transmission of the Lamp Published During the Jingde Era [1004–1007]), 17, quoted in Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi* 滄浪詩話校釋 (Canglang’s Discussions of Poetry, Collated and Annotated), Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, ed. (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1987 reprint of the Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1961 edition), 28n4.

³ The exact meaning of *coubo* 湊泊 is unclear; cf. James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 151nn11. It sometimes seems to mean “join/piece together” as, for example, in a statement made by Shanzhao 善昭 (Shining with Goodness) Chan Master (ca. 950–ca. 1027): “When nirvāna illumination (*zhao* 照) and its function (*yong* 用) come at the same time, how can one ever set one off from the other? But when *nirvāna* illumination and function do not come at the same time, how can one ever join/piece them together (*coubo*)?” See *Jingde chuan deng lu*

appearance of things, the moon reflected in water, or an image in a mirror, the words come to an end, but the thought (*yi* 意) is infinite.”⁴ [Critical notes of Huang Peifang: “In the past, when people theorized about the composition of characters in calligraphy, they regarded thought (*yi* 意) as the most important, arrangement (*li* 理) as next important, and technique (*fa* 法) third, which also applies to how the aim (*zhi* 旨) of inspired interest (*xingqu* 興趣) is achieved.] When Sikong Biaosheng 司空表聖 [Sikong Tu 司空圖 (837–908)] discussed poetry he also said that the marvelousness (*miao* 妙) of poetry “lies beyond sourness and saltiness.”⁵ [Huang Peifang: “This section explains the basis for selection. Some fault those who use the principles of Chan 禪 to discuss poetry for failing to understand that poetry is rooted in the sounds of nature (*tianlai* 天籟), embodies mildness and gentility (*wenrou* 溫柔),⁶ and also is a bequest from the poets of the Airs (*fengren* 風人) [*Classic of Poetry*].

景德傳燈錄 13, quoted in Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi*, 28n6. *Coubo* is understood in its literal sense of “pool together and moor” or “moor in calm waters” by certain traditional Japanese commentators on Chan texts, who interpret it to refer to reflective, rational thought: the mind pools together thoughts and fixes them in place, something condemned in Chan. See Paul Demiéville’s review of Günther Debon, *Ts’ang-lang’s Gespräche über die Dichtung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1962, in *T’oung Pao* 49 (1961–1962), 471. As such, *buke coubo* could be rendered “does not allow one to keep a calm mooring (rational bearings).” However, *coubo* is apparently the same expression as *zoubo* 擗泊 or *zoubo* 擗拍, which suggests that “pooling and mooring” may have nothing to do with what appears to have been a vernacular expression that was written with at least three different sets of characters. One such example appears in Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130–1200) “*Da Fu Hanqing* 答輔漢卿 (A Letter in Reply to Fu Hanqing)”: “I also do not have any friends with whom I can discuss things, and, when I occasionally do have one or two, since the dull-witted have difficulty in *zoubo* 擗拍 (piecing together what is said/rationally analyzing), the clever continually lose patience.” See *Zhuzi wenji* 朱子文集 (Collected Works of Master Zhu), 1, quoted in Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi*, 28n6.

4 Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi*, 26.

5 Sikong Tu, “*Yu Li sheng lun shi shu* 與李生論詩書 (Letter to Scholar Li Discussing Poetry),” quoted as the first item of Appendix 1 in Guo Shaoyu, ed., *Shipin jijie* 詩品集解 (Collected Commentaries on [Sikong Tu’s *Twenty-four*] *Categories of Poetry*), printed together with Guo’s annotated edition of Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–98), *Xu shipin zhu* 續詩品注 (A Sequel to [Sikong Tu’s] *Categories of Poetry*, with Annotations) (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1965), 47.

6 *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), *Jingjie pian* 經解篇 (Explicating the Classics Section): “When a person is mild, gentle, honest, and magnanimous (*wen rou dun hou* 溫柔敦厚), it is due to the teaching of the *Odes* 詩 [i.e. *Shijing* 詩經].” See Zheng

Even so, one need not keep to just this one side of the analogy to invalidate the analogy as such.”] It was toward the end of the spring of the *maozhen* year of Kangxi (1688), when I returned home from the capital to stay in the Chenhan tang 宸翰堂 (Hall of the Imperial Writing Brush), where, selecting poetry by various masters of the Kaiyuan (713–741) and Tianbao (713–755) eras (the High Tang) to read each day, I had a distinct flash of insight of my own into what these two (Yan Yu and Sikong Tu) had said. I then set down poems that particularly possess delicious lingering flavor and transcendent profundity (*junyong chaoyi* 雋永超詣), which, beginning with those of Assistant Director of the Right (*youcheng* 右丞) Wang 王 [Wang Wei 王維 (701–761)], include the works of forty-two poets in all, the *Tangxian sanmei ji* 唐賢三昧集 (Collection of *Samādhi* [Enlightened] Poetry by *Bhadrās* [Virtuous Sages]⁷ of the Tang), which I edited as a work in three fascicles (*juan* 卷). This collection I joined to anthologies of poetry such as the *Tangwen cui* 唐文粹 (Essence of Tang Literary Art) [ed. Yao Xuan 姚鉉 (968–1020)], the *Heyue yingling ji* 河嶽英靈集 (Collection of Verse That Reflects the Spirits of Rivers and Mountains) [ed. Yin Fan 殷璠 (753)], and the *Zhongxing jianqi ji* 中興閒氣集 (Collection of Verse That Reflects the Ministerial Atmosphere of an Age of Revival) [ed. Gao Zhongwu 高仲武, compiled probably in 788], which together form the *Tangshi shixuan* 唐詩十選 (Ten Anthologies of Tang Verse).⁸ My not including poetry by the two masters Li Bai 李白 and Du Fu 杜甫 follows the example of Wang Jiefu’s 王介甫 [Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086)] *Tang*

Xuan 鄭玄 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Liji zhushu* 禮記注疏 (Record of Rites with Commentary and Subcommentary), RuanYuan 阮元, ed., *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Commentaries and Subcommentaries on the Thirteen Classics) (1815 wood block edition reprinted Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1955), 50:1a.

⁷ The Sanskrit *bhadra*, which means “worthy” (賢), as also the name Bhadra, is one of the sixteen *arhats* (*luohans*) who vowed to stay in this world to ensure the transmission of the correct dharma.

⁸ The collection of anthologies that Wang calls the *Tangshi shixuan* was published under the title *Shizhong Tangshi xuan* 十種唐詩選 (Ten Anthologies of Tang Verse) in 17 fascicles, to which was appended the *Tangxian sanmei ji*, shortly after 1688 by the Nanzhitang 南芝堂. It is also included in Wang’s complete works, published as the *Wang Yuyang yishu* 王漁洋遺書 (Works Bequeathed by Wang Yuyang) or *Yuyang sanshiliuzhong* 漁洋三十六種 (Thirty-Six Works of Yuyang) (early eighteenth century).

baijia shixuan 唐百家詩選 (Anthology of One Hundred Masters of the Tang).⁹ Zhang Qujiang 張曲江 [Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678–740) initiates the poetry of the High Tang, and Wei Suzhou 韋蘇州 [Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737–ca. 792)] concludes it, but I do not include the poetry of either of these two masters since I have already done so in my anthology of five-syllabic verse¹⁰ and do not wish to duplicate that selection here. [Huang Peifang: “The four masters, Li, Du, Zhang, and Wei, verily are the four pillars of poetry, so the student must not fail to refer to other selections of their works and apply himself wholeheartedly to their study.”]

Composed by Wang Shizheng 王士正,¹¹ Ruanting 阮亭, the day after the Seventh Night of the Seventh Month [Cowherd and Weaver Maid Stars Festival], twenty-seventh year of the Kangxi era [August 3, 1688]. [Critical notes by Huang Peifang, Xiangshi shanren 香石山人 (Fragrant Stones Mountain Recluse), dated during the three months of winter during the *yichou* or tenth year of the Jiaqing era (November 21, 1805–February 17, 1806)].

A first postscript (*ba* 跋) by Huang Peifang states:

At another time, Yuyang [Wang Shizhen] used painting theory to explain the aim of poetry theory: “In my opinion, paintings that you regard as *gudan xianyuan* 古澹閑遠

⁹ Wang explained what he means by this elsewhere in a question and answer exchange (*wenda* 問答) with his disciples. The following question comes from Liu Daqin 劉大勤. Question: “You explained why you did not include Li and Du in the *Tangxian sanmei ji* in your original preface to that anthology, but I have never understood what you meant by it.” Answer: “The reason why Wang Jiefu [Wang Anshi] did not include the three masters, Li, Du, and Han [Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824)] was both because their poems are so very numerous and because they commonly circulate in individual collections of their own.” See Wang, *Daijingtang shihua*, 29:11a.

¹⁰ See Wang Shizhen, *Gushi xuan* 古詩選 (An Anthology of Ancient-Style Verse) (*Sibu beiyao* ed.), *Wuyan gushi* 五言古詩 (Five-Syllabic Ancient-Style Verse), fascicles 16 and 17.

¹¹ After 1722, the third character in Wang Shizhen's name 禎 was written 正 to avoid the personal name of the Yongzheng emperor, Yinzhen 胤禎, but in 1775 the Qianlong emperor ordered it to be written with the character 禎.

(antique-and-placid and serene-and-distant) still contain *chenzhuo tongkuai* 沉着痛快 (powerful expressiveness). But this is not something that those caught up in vulgar trends can understand.” He also said that “powerful expressiveness was not something that only Li Bai, Du Fu, and Changli [Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824)] had but that Tao [Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427)], Xie [Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433)], Wang Wei, and Meng Haoran, as well as their followers, also all had without exception.” Those who read this collection of poetry ought to understand what this means.

This is followed immediately by a second short postscript also by Huang:

Reading the *Collection of Samādhi* [Enlightened] *Poetry* will admit you into the realm where one has a perfect grasp of the undifferentiated marvelous (*hunmiao zhi jing* 渾妙之境).

However, when we look at the original passage in Wang Shizhen’s critical writings from which Huang quotes, we discover that the first passage quoted is actually something said not by Wang but by the famous contemporary painter, Wang Yuanqi 王原祁 (1642–1715):

Mr. Zhichan 芝廬先生 [Wang Kui 王揆] had his poetry printed, and when the printing was complete, he sent a letter from the South to order his honor, the executive assistant (*jishi* 給事) [Wang Kui’s son-in-law, Wang Yuanqi], to have me write a preface to it.¹² Executive Assistant Wang himself came by to see me and brought with him eight scrolls of paintings which he had done. Therefore, we thoroughly discussed the principles of painting (*huali* 畫理). He thought that we

¹² Most of this preface consists of the following exchange between Wang Shizhen and Wang Yuanqi; for the entire preface see Wang Shizhen, *Daijingtang ji* 帶經堂集 (Collected Literary Works From the Hall of the Classics Vade Mecum Scholar), Cheng Zhe 程哲, ed. (Shanghai: Jinwentang 錦文堂, 1921 reprint of the 1710 wood block edition), 65:2a–2b, or Yuan Shishuo 袁世碩 et al., ed., *Wang Shizhen quanji* 王士禎全集 (Complete Works of Wang Shizhen) (Ji’nan: Jilu shushe, 2007), 3:1779–1780.

should call those painters beginning with Dong Yuan 董源 (active Southern Tang era 937–75)] and Juran 巨然 (active ca. 960–985) the “Southern School” (*nanzong* 南宗), just as there is a Southern School in the Chan sect of Buddhism. He said that the heirs of this tradition were the Four Masters of the Yuan, of whom Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301–74) and Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1358) were the best. During the 270 years of the Ming, of those who achieved fame, he praised painters such as Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1524) and Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427–1509) for their thoroughly accomplished styles, and he thought that board president Dong [Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636)] was the best of them. If it were not this tradition, it had to be heterodoxy and devilish deviancy (*pangmen mowai* 旁門魔外). He also said, “Whoever would be a painter, at the beginning, makes it his priority to be able to enter (*nengru* 能入) and, later on, makes it his priority to be able to get out (*nengchu* 能出). He must consider *chenzhuo tongkuai* 沉着痛快 (powerful expressiveness) as the ultimate perfection (*jizhi* 極至). For the sake of argument, I said, “My dear sir, in the Yuan you advocate Yunlin [Ni Zan] and in the Ming you promote Wenmin [Dong Qichang], but these two painters belong to what is called the “untrammelled category” (*yipin* 逸品), so the “powerful expressiveness” of which you speak, where is it in regard to them? Executive Assistant Wang smiled and said, “Wrong! Wrong! In my opinion, paintings that you regard as *gudan xianyuan* 古澹閑遠 (antique-and-placid and serene-and-distant) still contain *chenzhuo tongkuai* 沉着痛快 (powerful expressiveness). But this is not something that the vulgar can understand.” I then said, “Your discussion of painting is indeed superb. Nevertheless, it does not just apply to painting. Throughout ancient and modern times, the ramifications of the Dao of poetry, which began with the *Feng* 風 [Airs of the States, *Classic of Poetry*] and *Sao* 騷 [the *Chuci* 楚辭 (Elegies of Chu) (3rd century BC – 2nd century AD), traditionally attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BC)], certainly do not go beyond this. From the Tang and Song eras on, is not the development that took place from Youcheng [Wang Wei 王維] to Huayuan [Dong Yuan 董源], Yingqiu 營丘 [Li Cheng 李成 (919–967)], Honggu 洪谷 [Jing Hao 荆浩 (ca. 855–915)], and Heyang 河陽 [Guo Xi 郭熙 (ca. 1001–ca. 1090)] the equivalent of

what happened in poetry with Tao [Qian], Xie [Lingyun], Shen [沈佺期 (ca. 650–713)], Song [Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (d. 712), Shehong 射洪 [Chen Ziang 陳子昂 (661–702)], Li [Bai], and Du [Fu]? Moreover, are not Wang [Wei], Meng [Haoran], Gao [Gao Shi 高適 (716–765)], and Cen [Cen Shen 岑參 (715–770)] the Dong Yuan and Juran of the Kaiyuan era? Coming down in time to Ni Zan, Huang Gongwang and the other Four Masters of the Yuan era and carrying on to board president Dong [Dong Qichang] of the modern era, does this not correspond to the poetry of the Dali and Yuanhe era [the Middle Tang? If it is not this, then it is heterodox development (*pangchu* 旁出), for is there not a system of legal progeny and an orthodox patriarchy (*dizi zhengzong* 嫡子正宗) among the poets? “Entering and getting out of it” (*ru zhi chu zhi* 入之出之), is this not the “discarding the raft and climbing the bank” (*she fa deng an* 捨筏登岸) of the poets?¹³ As for “powerful expressiveness,” this was not something that only Li Bai, Du Fu, and Changli [Han Yu] had but that Tao Qian, Xie Lingyun, Wang Wei, and Meng Haoran, as well as their followers, also all had without exception. Although your discussion was concerned with painting, it applies equally well to poetry.¹⁴

In agreeing with Wang Yuanqi’s view of painting, Wang Shizhen clearly asserts that *chenzhuo tongkuai* 沉着痛快 (powerful expressiveness) is to be found in poetry characterized as “untrammelled” (*yi* 逸) and “antique-and-placid and serene-and-distant” (*gudan xianyuan* 古澹閑遠). Huang Peifang suggests that Wang’s assertion can be extended to include the poetry in the *Tangxian sanmei ji*, that is, poetry that possesses “delicious lingering flavor and transcendent profundity,” (*junyong chaoyi* 雋永

¹³ Wang compares Chan and poetry elsewhere: “ ‘ “Abandon the raft and climb the bank,” the Chan Buddhists use this to indicate the realm of enlightenment (*wujing* 悟境), and poets use this to indicate the realm of creativity/intuitive control (*huajing* 化境). Poetry and Chan ultimately come to the same thing (*yizhi* 一至), and there is not the least bit of difference between them.’ Dafu 大復 [He Jingming 何景明 (1483–1521)] brought this up in a letter he wrote to Kongtong 空同 [Li Mengyang 李夢陽 (1473–1529)].” Wang Shizhen, *Daijingtang shihua* 帶經堂詩話 (Discussions of Poetry From the Hall of the Classics Vade Mecum Scholar), Zhang Zongnan 張宗楠, ed. (1872 reprint of the 1760 wood block edition), 3:11a; Dai Hongsen 戴鴻森, ed., (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998), 3:83.

¹⁴ *Daijingtang shihua*, 3:13a–13b, or (Beijing 1998 edition), 3:86–87.

超詣), “thought that is infinite” (*yi wuqiong* 意無窮), and “marvelousness” (*miao* 妙), which Huang understands in terms of “the realm where one has a perfect grasp of the undifferentiated marvelous” (*hunmiao zhi jing* 渾妙之境). This last refers to “enlightenment” itself, *samādhi* (*sanmei* 三昧). However, the realm of enlightenment (*wujing* 悟境) of the Chan Buddhists is also supposed to be equivalent to the realm of creativity/intuitive control (*huajing* 化境) of the poets. And this brings us directly to the question of how to interpret He Jingming’s dictum, which Wang Shizhen quotes with approval, that “poetry and Chan ultimately come to the same thing (*yizhi* 一至), and there is not the least bit of difference between them.”

It is likely that both He Jingming and Wang Shizhen identified poetry with Chan in terms of the Chan-poetry analogy formulated by Yan Yu, with whose theory of poetry both were largely in agreement. As I have described elsewhere, Yan’s analogy seems to operate in three different ways: (1) in organizational terms, (2) in operational terms, and (3) in substantive terms.¹⁵

When the analogy expresses itself in *organizational* terms, it expresses the idea that the truth of Chan and the truth of poetry are organized in similar ways. Each has a method or way (*fa* 法) which the student must assimilate and internalize, and the transmission of this *fa* and its preservation are accomplished through a succession of masters or patriarchs in both organizations or systems. The masters, of course, are those who have achieved enlightenment (*wu* 悟): in Chan there are Chan masters, and in poetry there are masters of poetry. The substances of the respective *fa* may or may not have anything in common; what matters is that their organizations are similar. Within each, truth is one and immutable, and each organization has a tradition that both defines its truth and protects it against the snares and delusions of heterodoxy. When the analogy expresses itself in *operational* terms, it expresses the idea that the truth of Chan and the truth of poetry are learned or acquired in similar ways. This is concerned with *how* truth is transmitted but not with truth per se. The way the student of poetry learns poetry is just like the way the student of Chan learns Chan; their respective organizations offer similar programs or operations for the student to follow. The operation of acquiring enlightenment in poetry, where enlightenment is understood as *spontaneous* control over

¹⁵ See Richard John Lynn, “The Sudden and the Gradual in Chinese Poetry Criticism; An Examination of the Ch’an-Poetry Analogy,” Peter Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1987), 381–427; especially 405–407, from which the following section on the analogy is adapted.

the *correct* poetic medium, is the same kind of operation of acquiring enlightenment in Chan, where enlightenment is understood as the achievement of pure consciousness, self-transcendence, mystical experience, and so forth. The ends of these two operations may or may not have anything in common, but that does not matter here; what does matter is that the operations are similar, since the student in both is advised to go through the same stages: conscious learning to assimilation and internalization to transcendence and sudden enlightenment. When the analogy expresses itself in *substantive* terms, it expresses the idea that the truth of Chan, Chan enlightenment, and the truth of poetry, poetic enlightenment, are in some way or ways similar: In formal terms enlightenment (*wu*) in poetry meant the achievement of perfect intuitive control over the poetic medium, but in psychological or spiritual terms it meant the attainment of a state of being where subjective self, medium of communication, and objective reality all become one. As such, intuitive control and intuitive cognition are the opposite sides of the same coin, the “coin” being the poem *in toto*, the fusion of a spontaneous and effortless poetic act within a poetic medium that perfectly articulates “pure experience.” It is here that poetry and Chan exhibit substantive or ontological similarity. Effortlessness or spontaneous naturalness and the transcendence of all discriminations, perceptual and conceptual, between the absolute and phenomena, between *nirvāna* and empirical existence, are the two principal and inseparable dimensions of Chan enlightenment.¹⁶ Thus, intuitive control in poetry is analogous to effortlessness in Chan, and intuitive cognition as it is articulated in poetry is analogous to the transcendence of discriminations in Chan enlightenment.

However, in poetry the objects of cognition do not necessarily extend to the absolute or *nirvāna*. It might be argued that the “transcendental” landscape poetry of a poet such as Wang Wei attempts to do just this, but Yan Yu does not limit his view of poetic enlightenment to this kind of poetry alone but includes in it all poetry that he regards as having incorporated the true *fa* of poetry, poetry often far removed in subject matter from the landscape poetry of a Wang Wei, that of Li Bai and Du Fu, for instance, which he declared was the very best poetry ever produced. Yan characterized the highest attainment in poetry as to “enter spirit” (*ru shen* 入神):

¹⁶ A perceptive critique of D. T. Suzuki’s characterization of Chan (Zen) enlightenment, comparing it to William James’s understanding of the mystic state and to C. G. Jung’s psychology of the unconscious, appears in Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 276–281.

There is one ultimate attainment (*jizhi* 極至) in poetry: to enter spirit. When poetry enters spirit, it is perfect and complete, and nothing more can be added to it. Only Li and Du managed to do this, and if others ever do, they will be very few indeed!¹⁷

The term *ru shen* occurs often in art and literary criticism — before, after, and during Yan Yu's own time — and seems to occur with two different but related meanings: (1) to enter the numinously inspired realm of perfect, intuitive artistry where effortless and spontaneous control over the mediums of painting, calligraphy, poetry, or prose allow the artist to transcend mortal limitations of articulation and technique and commune with the very processes of nature itself (intuitive control) and (2) to enter into the spirit of things and so intuitively apprehend their essences, penetrate the appearances of the material world to reach the Dao that lies immanent in all things (intuitive cognition).

However, Dao in this sense is not necessarily equated with the Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa*, for while some Chan-oriented theorists and critics made this equation, others, including Yan Yu and Wang Shizhen, did not. Essential to understanding this distinction is the fact that Yan says that only Li Bai and Du Fu achieved *ru shen* in poetry and that he never equated it exclusively with the transcendent landscape tradition of Wang Wei — a tradition of poetry that tries to combine flashes of insight into the Dao of the natural world with metaphoric expressions of Chan enlightenment. Many readers of the *Canglang shihua* — both sympathetic and unsympathetic — actually read it as a manifesto that poetry is a vehicle for Chan and a celebration of the serene landscape poetry of the Wang Wei “school,”¹⁸ but the more astute, alert to Yan's according preeminent status only to Li Bai and Du Fu, know that to read the *Canglang shihua* this way is to misunderstand it completely.

Two such astute readers are Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞 (1893–1984) and Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998). Both appreciate that for Yan *ru shen* is the highest attainment in all modes of poetry and

¹⁷ Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi*, 8.

¹⁸ See Richard John Lynn, “The Talent-Learning Polarity in Chinese Poetics: Yan Yu (ca. 1195–ca. 1245) and the Later Tradition,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 4:2 (1983), 157–184.

not something associated exclusively with serene and placid landscape poetry. They understand that the *Canglang shihua* is concerned with all modes of poetry, and, while Yan admires the poetry of poets such as Wang Wei, Wei Yingwu, and Meng Haoran, he never grants it preeminent status above that of Li Bai and Du Fu, for flashes of insight into the Dao of the human world are more important for him than success in “pure” landscape poetry.

Guo quotes with approval a passage in Tao Mingjun's 陶明濬 (1894–1960), *Shishuo zaji* 詩說雜記 (Random Notes for Critiques of Poetry) that explains the difference between Yan's two essential characteristics (*dagai* 大概) of poetry: “Poetry must either flow freely without restriction (*youyou bupo* 優遊不迫) or be powerfully expressive (*chenzhuo tongkuai* 沉着痛快).”¹⁹ Tao's passage reads:

From ancient times on there have indeed been many poets, and all possible forms (*ti* 體) of poetry have occurred, but the two realms (*jingxian* 境限) of which Mr. Yan speaks really suffice to cover them all without exception.... “Freely flowing without restriction” characterizes the form associated with Tao Qian and Wei Yingwu, which is calm (*congrong* 從容), easy going (*xianshi* 閑適), and moves freely (*judong ziru* 舉動自如).... As for “powerful expressiveness,”... it is like grain spilling out from an overfilled granary, words without forethought come forth on impulse.... When one writes in this form, he must make it gallop along with enthusiasm ... and must make the reader's mind be moved by it and his emotions stirred by it, so that he cannot help but clap his hands in rhythm and sing it at the top of his voice. The poetry of Du Shaoling [Du Fu] is profound and forceful, a perfect marvel the likes of which no one has ever managed to achieve since time began. If you ask how he did this, the answer can only be found in the words “powerful expressiveness.”²⁰

Since Du Fu's poetry is indisputably oriented toward the human world with all its pain and ecstasy, Tao Mingjun clearly believes that Yan Yu, by placing Du's poetry at the pinnacle of all poetic

¹⁹ Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi*, 8.

²⁰ Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi*, 8n5.

achievement, accords poetry characterized by “powerful expressiveness” first place as well. Qian Zhongshu agrees that Yan Yu never equated *ru shen* exclusively with serene landscape poetry but, on the other hand, believes (wrongly, as I shall attempt to demonstrate) that Wang Shizhen did just that:

I once wrote an essay on the distinguishing characteristics of Chinese literary criticism in which I said that it was possible to find nearby in the body the means to compare literary art to a human being. If one compared literary art to a human being, just as the physical form and the spirit formed one consistent entity, so artistry (*wen* 文) and substance (*zhi* 質) should fit each other perfectly. And I provided much detailed evidence in support of this view. A friend said to me, “It has never been possible to find serious fault with the theory of *shenyun* 神韻 (spirit-resonance) that Yuyang [Wang Shizhen] advocated, for *shenyun* is the most exalted realm (*jingjie* 境界) in poetry.” But I replied, “In my essay I clarify my argument by citing various sources.... Flesh and bones may provide a tall, pleasing figure, and the system of blood vessels may work in perfect harmony, yet a person’s personality can be utterly vulgar and his character as common as can be. Such a person may supply labor on demand and exert all his strength in fulfilling some physical task yet will not damage that which makes him a really strong fellow. But if the hundred joints and the six organs that come together here [as the body] did not exist,²¹ where would “spirit-resonance” have a place to lodge? Would this not result in the life force (*jingqi* 精氣) become a wandering spirit (*youhun* 遊魂), which, abandoning its abode, would be transformed into something else? Therefore, lack of “spirit-resonance” means that it will not be good poetry, but “spirit-resonance” alone, I fear, cannot possibly make a poem. This is what Yin Fan 殷璠 meant in his discussion of literary art in the preface to *Heyue yingling* 河岳英靈集 (*Collection of Verse That Reflects the Spirits of Rivers and*

²¹ This paraphrases the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Qi wu lun* 齊物論 (On Regarding All Things Equal); see Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, comp., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Collected Explanations of the *Zhuangzi*), Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚, ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961; reprint 1997), 3:55–56.

Mountains, 753) when he said that it had its origin in “spirit” (*shen* 神), in “life force” (*qi* 氣), and in “emotion” (*qing* 情), for all three of which had to be there together.²²

Although Yuyang’s notion of *sanmei* (*samādhi* [enlightenment]) has its basis in the poetics of Yan Canglang, he just hems and haws and never actually says what he means by it. However, it means nothing other than the “purity and distance” (*qingyuan* 清遠) that Wang cites from the writings of Kong Wengu 孔文谷 (Kong Tianyun 孔天允 [*jins*hi of 1533]), a native of Fenyang 汾陽, in his *Chibei outan* 池北偶談 (Random Chats North of the Lake).²³

Nevertheless, according to Canglang’s *shibian* 詩辯 (An Analysis of Poetry), “There are five aspects to the Dharma (*fa* 法) of poetry: formal structure (*tizhi* 體製), power of formal style (*geli* 格力), personal style (*qixiang* 氣象), inspired feeling (*xingqu* 興趣), and intonation and rhythm (*yinjie* 音節). There are nine modes in poetry: the lofty (*gao* 高), the antique (*gu* 古), the profound (*shen* 深), the remote (*yuan* 遠), the ever-flowing (*chang* 長), the heroic-and-powerful (*xionghun* 雄渾), the elated-and-transcendent (*piaoyi* 飄逸), the sad-yet-resolute (*beizhuang* 悲壯), and the forlorn-yet-gracious (*qiwan* 淒婉).... There are two essential characteristics (*dagai* 大概) of poetry: Poetry must either flow freely without being forced (*youyou bupo* 優遊不迫) or be powerfully expressive (*chenzhuo tongkuai* 沉着痛快). There is one ultimate attainment (*jizhi* 極至) in poetry: to enter spirit (*ru shen* 入神). When poetry enters spirit, it is perfect and complete, and nothing more can be added to it. Only Li and Du managed to do this....”²⁴

From this we can see that “spirit-resonance” (*shenyun*) is not one of the modes of poetry but refers to the perfect realization of each and every mode.... So “spirit” here is a metaphor for beauty that inspires infinite appreciation. “Modes of cooking”

²² See Yuan Jie 元結, Yin Fan 殷璠, et al., ed., *Tangren xuan Tangshi* 唐人選唐詩 (Anthologies of Tang Verse Compiled by Tang Era Figures) (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuzu, 1958), 40.

²³ *Daijingtang shihua*, 3:4b, or Beijing 1998 edition, 3:73.

²⁴ Yan Yu, Canglang shihua jiaoshi, 7–8.

(*pinpao* 品庖) involve different methods of preparation that can result in the rich dishes of Shu [Sichuan] or the clear and simple dishes of Zhejiang. So “spirit” here is a metaphor for delicious flavors and unending nuances. One must first perfectly realize the five aspects of the Dharma of poetry before finding one’s place among the modes of poetry, and one must first find one’s place among the modes of poetry before “entering spirit.” “Flowing freely” (*youyou*) and “powerful expressiveness” (*tongkuai*) both contain “spirit-resonance.”... Canglang only allowed that Li Bai and Du Fu had “spirit-resonance,” so, although Yuyang declared that he was guided by the poetics of Canglang, he just knew that Wang Wei and Wei Yingwu had it, and, when he compiled the *Tangxian sanmei ji*, he did not include any poetry by Li Bai and Du Fu, which completely misconstrues Canglang’s intention!

[Qian here provides a brief summary of the conversation between Wang Shizhen and Wang Yuanqi recorded in Wang’s preface to the works of Wang Kui translated above, about which he comments.] However, although Yuyang might have understood that the “powerfully expressive” could exist in the “bland-and-remote” (*danyuan* 淡遠), he still did not understand that “remote spirit” (*yuanshen* 遠神) and “bland flavor” (*danwei* 淡味) could exist in the “powerfully expressive.” So, after all, his power of perception is a world apart from that of Canglang.²⁵

Qian’s first accusation against Wang Shizhen is that he simplistically and wrongly equated *sanmei* 三昧 (*samādhi* [enlightenment]) with “purity and distance” (*qingyuan* 清遠), citing a comment Wang made by Kong Tianyun. Let us look at the passage involved:

Kong Wengu from Fenyang [Tianyun] said that poetry is for expressing personal nature (*shi yi da xing* 詩以達性) but to be the best it had to be pure and distant (*qingyuan* 清遠). When Xue Xiyuan 薛西園 [Xue Hui 薛蕙 (1489–1541)] discussed poetry, he only promoted the works of poets such as Xie Kangle (Xie Lingyun), Wang

²⁵ Qian Zhongsu, *Tan yi lu* 談藝錄 (Record of Discussions of Literary Art) (Hong Kong: Longmen shudian, 1965), 48–49.

Mojie (Wang Wei), Meng Haoran, and Wei Yingwu. He said: “While white clouds embrace hidden rocks, / Green bamboo form eyebrows over a clear brook.”²⁶ exemplifies ‘purity.’ ‘The magic revealed no one appreciates, / The immortals hidden who tells their tale?’²⁷ exemplifies ‘distance.’ ‘Why must one have strings and woodwinds? / Mountains and waters provide their own pure notes.’²⁸ and ‘Setting sun start flocks of birds singing, / Water and trees add depth to exquisite beauty.’²⁹ exemplifies the conjoining of ‘purity’ and ‘distance.’ All the marvelousness of this can be summed up in the one expression ‘spirit-resonance’ (*shenyun* 神韻).” In the past, when I began to use the term *shenyun* while discussing poetry with students, I did not realize that it first had appeared here.³⁰

Whereas Wang Shizhen *here* equates “purity and distance” (*qingyuan*) with “spirit-resonance” (*shenyun*), he makes no mention of *sanmei* (*samādhi* [enlightenment]). Actually, Wang *never* seems to have equated *shenyun* with *sanmei* anywhere in his writings. *Shenyun* for him has a wide range of meaning, which differs with context, and, whereas it sometimes refers to “purity and distance,” at other times it means something quite different. I once explained *shenyun* this way:

... the term signifies three essential concepts ... *yun* surely refers to personal tone — the interior world of individual poetic consciousness. *Shen*, on the other hand, refers

26 From *Guo Shiningshu* 過始寧墅 (A Visit to Initiating Repose Lodge) by Xie Lingyun.

27 From *Deng Jiangzhong Guyu* 登江中孤嶼 (On Climbing Solitary Isle in the River) by Xie Lingyun.

28 From the first of two poems titled *Zhao yin* 招隱 (Summons to Reclusion) by Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 253–ca. 307).

29 From *You Xichi* 游西池 (An Outing to West Pond) by Xie Hun 謝混 (d. ca. 412).

30 Wang Shizhen, *Chibei outan*, quoted in *Daijingtang shihua*, 3:4b, or Beijing 1998 edition, 3:73. For a slightly different translation of this passage, see Richard John Lynn, “Orthodoxy and Enlightenment: Wang Shih-chen’s Theory of Poetry and Its Antecedents,” W. T. de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 248.

not to just one but two things: the poet's intuitive vision, his cognition of the world around him, and his intuitive control over the poetic medium.³¹

I used to think that Wang only associated *shenyun* with the tradition of serene landscape poetry of such poets as Xie Lingyun and Wang Wei, which is the conventional view of his poetics for the last three hundred years and maintained by Qian Zhongshu and others in the twentieth century,³² but after a more recent re-examination of Wang's critical writings and his compilation of anthologies, especially the *Tangxian sanmei ji*, I have come to the conclusion that this is an oversimplification and that Wang had much wider tastes and a far more sophisticated theory of poetry than most critics and historians of Chinese poetry and poetics have been willing to grant him. Whereas some occurrences of the term *sanmei* in Wang's critical writings are obviously directed toward serene landscape poetry, others are not and refer instead to the poet's powers of intuitive cognition and intuitive control, for example:

The Maiden of Yue, when discussing the art of swordsmanship with Goujian, said, "I did not receive it from anyone; I just suddenly got it." Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 BC), when asked about the art of writing the rhapsody (*fu* 賦), replied, "The mind of a *fu* 賦 writer can be achieved from within but cannot be conveyed in words." The Chan master Yunmen 雲門禪師 (d. 949) said to his disciples, "You do not try to remember your own words but try to remember mine. Are you going to sell me in the future?" All these remarks have hit the *sanmei* (*samādhi*) of poetry.³³

Or, *sanmei* can refer to the facile and suggestive power of great writers and painters:

³¹ Lynn, "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment," 248.

³² Ibid., 248–254.

³³ Wang, *Daijingtang shihua*, 3:10b, or Beijing 1998 edition, 3:81.

I was once enlightened about what *sanmei* for poets meant when I read Jing Hao's discussion of painting, in which he said, "Distant men have no eyes; distant water has no ripples, distant mountains have no texture to their rocks." Also, in Wang Mao's 王楙 (1151–1213) *Yeke congshu* 野客叢書 (Collectanea of the Rustic Traveler) there occurs the saying, "The Grand Historian [Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145 – ca. 85 BC)] was like Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (ca. 930–77), who when he painted several peaks that rose from beyond the horizon just used a couple of strokes of ink, for here the thought (*yi* 意) exists outside brush and ink. The Dao of poetry and prose is for the most part exactly the same."³⁴

However, the best evidence that Wang Shizhen did not restrict his application of *sanmei* to serene landscape poetry comes from the evidence of the *Tangxian sanmei ji* itself, for this anthology does not consist exclusively of this kind of poetry but actually contains a wide range, including many poems that are direct expressions of strongly felt emotion. Critics who categorize the *Tangxian sanmei ji* simply as a collection of "bland-and-remote" (*danyuan* 淡遠) landscape poetry, as does Qian Zhongshu, apparently have not read the entire anthology and have allowed themselves to be misled both by the fact that of the 446 poems it contains, the first 111 are by Wang Wei and another forty-eight are by Meng Haoran, and because Wang did not include any poetry by Li Bai and Du Fu. Wang explained why he left Li and Du out in his preface: not because he thought them unworthy of inclusion but because they left behind so many excellent poems that it was impossible to choose among them and that their poetry already widely circulated in popular editions. If one suspects that this is mere disingenuousness, he should note that Wang also excluded the poetry of two other poets of whom he was very fond, Zhang Jiuling and Wei Yingwu, since he had already included them in his *Gushi xuan* (An Anthology of Ancient-Style Verse). Also significant is the fact that Wang did include considerable poetry by Li Bai, Du Fu, and Han Yu in the *Gushi xuan*,³⁵ so any assertion that he did not rank their poetry among the best is indefensible.

³⁴ Wang, *Daijingtang shihua*, 3:12b, or or Beijing 1998 edition, 3:86.

³⁵ See Wang Shizhen, *Gushi xuan* 古詩選 (An Anthology of Ancient-Style Verse) (*Sibu beiyao* ed.), *Wuyan gushi* 五言古詩

Moreover, many poems by Wang Wei and his “school” included in the *Tangxian sanmei ji* are not examples of “bland and remote” landscape poetry but poems of parting that overflow with the grief of separation and longing for absent friends, such as Chang Jian’s 常建 (fl. ca. 749) “*Song Chu Shi* 送楚十少府 (Sending Off District Defender Chu the Tenth),”³⁶ an extreme example in fact, for it likens the bonds of friendship to those of husband and wife:

微風吹霜氣 寒影流前除
 落日未能別 蕭蕭林木虛
 愁烟閉千里 仙尉其何如
 因送別鶴操 贈之雙鯉魚
 鯉魚在金盤 別鶴哀有餘
 心事則如此 請君開素書

A faint breeze blowing its frosty breath,
 Our cold shadows flowing on frontage steps,
 And sun setting, but we still can't part.
Xiaoxiao, murmurs the forest void,
 As sad mists shut tight thousands of miles.
 But the “immortal defender,” what choice for him?
 Thus I send him off with the “Song of the Bereft Crane,”
 And present him with a “double carp,”
 A “double carp” on a golden plate.
 The grief of this bereft crane is excessive,
 But in matters of the heart I am like this,
 So I beg you, sir, do open my letters!

(Five-Syllabic Ancient-Style Verse), *juan* 16, and *Qiyān gushi* 七言古詩 (Seven-Syllabic Ancient-Style Verse), *juan* 4, 5, and 6.

³⁶ Wang, *Tangxian sanmei ji*, B:36a.

“Immortal defender” alludes to Mei Fu 梅福, who while serving as the defender (*wei* 尉) of Nanchang 南昌 in Jiangxi, retired to his native place, Shouchun 壽春 in Jiujiang 九江, Anhui, from which he continued to send in memorials advising emperors Cheng (r. 140–101 BC) and Ai (r. 100–91 BC). Legend has it that he eventually left home and became an immortal (*xian* 仙).³⁷ The “Song of the Bereft Crane” (*Biehe cao* 別鶴操) is a *yuefu* 樂府 (music bureau) melody for the *qin* 琴 (zither). According to Cui Bao’s 崔豹 (fl. ca. 300) *Gujin zhu* 古今注 (Glosses on Ancient and Modern Matters), “The ‘Song of the Bereft Crane’ was composed by Shangling Muzi 商陵牧子 sometime in antiquity during the Zhou era. The composer had been married for five years, but his wife was still without child, so his father and elder brothers forced him to put aside his wife and re-marry. When his wife discovered this, she got up in the middle of the night, leaned against the door and sadly started to sing. Shangling Muzi heard her and, himself struck with grief, picked up his zither and accompanied her. Consequently, people made it into a musical composition.”³⁸ “The Song of the Bereft Crane” became an archetypal expression for the parting of husband and wife. The *locus classicus* of “double carp,” a wooden letter case the two halves of which are carved in the shapes of paired carp, is the anonymous “*Yin ma changchengku xing* 飲馬長城窟行 (Ballad of Watering My Horse at a Hole in the Great Wall),” part of which reads:

A visitor who came from afar
 Gave me a “double carp.”
 I called to the boy to “cook” the carp,
 And inside the carp there was a letter.³⁹

³⁷ See the biography of Mei Fu in *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975 reprint of the 1962 edition), 67:2917–2927.

³⁸ Quoted in *Tangxian sanmei ji*, B:36b.

³⁹ The “Ballad of Watering My Horse” is traditionally attributed to Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192); see Xiao Tong 蕭統, ed., *Wenxuan Li Shan zhu* 文選李善注 (Selections of Refined Literature, with the Commentary of Li Shan) (*Sibu beiyao* ed.), 27:10b.

The carp is a prolific fish, and the “double carp” was a symbol of conjugal loyalty and fertility, so the “double carp” letter box was probably used principally for correspondence between husband and wife.

“A double carp on a golden plate” alludes to an old ballad attributed to Xin Yannian 辛延年 (second century BC) titled *Yulin lang* 羽林郎 (Gentleman of the Palace Guard), in which a pretty tavern keeper's wife rejects the advances of an officer of the imperial guard, who, when visiting the tavern, is served “a golden plate of minced carp.”⁴⁰

Many poems actually have little to do with landscape at all and instead celebrate aspects of human existence far removed from serenity, blandness, and remoteness — as does the following poem by Cui Hao 崔顥 (d. 753), “*Guyouxia cheng junzhong zhujiang* 古遊俠呈軍中諸將 (An Ancient Knight Errant — Presented to Generals in the Army)”:⁴¹

少年負膽氣 好勇復知機
 仗劍出門去 孤城逢合圍
 殺人遼水上 走馬漁陽歸
 錯落金鎖甲 蒙茸貂鼠衣
 還家行且獵 弓矢速如飛
 地迴鷹犬疾 草深狐兔肥
 腰間帶兩綬 轉眄生光輝
 顧謂今日戰 何如隨建威

As a young man filled with courage,
 Appreciated for valor, wise in strategic skill,
 He grasped a sword and so left his gate behind.

⁴⁰ See the *Quan Hanshi* 全漢詩 (Complete Poetry of the Han Era) section of the *Quan Han Sanguo Jin Nanbeichao shi* 全漢三國晉南北朝詩 (Complete Poetry of the Han, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties), ed. Ding Fubao 丁福保 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1969 reprint of the 1916 edition), 2:15b; Lu Qinli 逯欽立, ed., *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Poetry of the Pre-Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 1:198.

⁴¹ Wang, *Tangxian sanmei ji*, C:31b.

Encountering a siege in an isolated fort,
 Killing enemies on the Liao River,
 He galloped back to Yuyang.
 His golden mail in disarray,
 Sable jacket worn out,
 He returned home to roam and hunt.
 There, arrows from his bow fly faster than flight,
 Land stretches endlessly, hawks and dogs quick,
 Grass deep, and foxes and hares fat.
 At his waist still hang two cords for official seals,
 And his sidelong glances flash forth a brilliant gleam.
 Now he turns and says, "If there were war today,
 What about following this 'Establish Martial Awe' general?"

The Liao River in western Liaoning lies to the north of the Great Wall on the edge of what was then the Tang empire. Yuyang, the home of the poem's hero, was located in what is present-day Jing district 薊縣, Hebei, southwest of Beijing.

Even poems that focus on landscape often contain a strong undercurrent of human feeling, as does this poem by Cui Shu 崔曙 (*jinshi* of 738) that tells of the bleak and painful winter journey of a poor traveler, his "Zaofa Jiaoyashan huan Taishi zuo" 早發交崖山還太室作 (I Set Out Early from Interlocking Cliffs Mountain to Return to Great House):⁴²

東林氣微白
 寒鳥忽高翔
 吾亦自茲去
 北山歸草堂
 仲冬正三五

⁴² Wang, *Tangxian sanmeiji*, C:46b–47a.

日月遙相望
 肅肅過潁上
 矍矍辨少陽
 川冰生積雪
 野火出枯桑
 獨往路難盡
 窮陰人易傷
 傷此無衣客
 如何蒙雪霜

When the air above the eastern forest had a faint white light,
 Cold birds suddenly soared up high,
 And I too quit this place
 To return to my thatched hut at the mountain to the north.
 It's the end of winter, just at the fifteenth of the month,
 So sun and moon face each other from afar.
 Quick, quick I pass the Ying River,
 Dim, dim I make out the meager sun.
 River ice is born of piled up snow,
 And will-o'-the-wisps appear from withered mulberries.
 When one travels alone the road never ends;
 And when the yin force is exhausted one is easily wounded.
 Wounded is this traveler without proper clothes,
 For how can he endure such snow and frost?

Interlocking Cliffs Mountain (*Jiaoyashan* 交崖山) is unknown in the sources so perhaps should not be translated as a proper name but substantively as “mountains with interlocking cliffs.” “Great House” is the principal peak of Mount Song 嵩山, one of the Five Sacred Mountains of China and located south of Luoyang in Henan. The Ying River starts south of Mount Song and flows to the

southeast. “When the yin force is exhausted” refers to the end of winter, the yin season, just before yang spring begins.

These are just three examples from the *Tangxian sanmei ji* that provide clear evidence that the *sanmei* in the title does not refer exclusively — or even primarily — to serene landscape poetry. We should take Wang Shizhen at his word when he tells us in his preface that the principles of selection lay elsewhere: he chose poems by the High Tang masters that contain “inspired interest,” transcend rational analysis, and suggest limitless connotation, or, as he put it, poems in which “the words come to an end, but the thought is infinite.”

Wang’s anthology also reveals his great fondness for landscape poetry in general, and many other poems do tend to the serene and placid. For example, Wang Wei’s *Wangchuan ji* 輞川集 (Wang River Collection) quatrains are included, as are eleven of Pei Di’s response poems. I do not try to argue that the *Tangxian sanmei ji* does not contain such poetry or, even, that Wang did not prefer it to all other modes, for it is quite possible that he did. What this essay attempts to show is that the anthology contains a wide range of poetry, from the “serene and placid” to the “powerfully expressive,” and that this range reflects Wang’s literary tastes in general: he was not so enamored of serene and placid landscape poetry that he shaped his whole creative and critical career around it. This popular misconception needs correction, for it distorts understanding of his theory of poetry and what *shenyun* meant for him. It cannot, as I have attempted to prove, be reduced to the simplistic mode of “purity and distance” that Qian Zhongshu and other scholars of Chinese literary criticism take it to be. The later so-called “*Shenyun*” School of poetry that regarded Wang Shizhen as its founder may have reduced his “teachings” to a formula of detachment and indirect expression of mood and sensibility in poetry through the vehicle of landscape, but this development should not be confused with Wang’s own far more catholic and sophisticated views.

TANGSHI SHENYUN JI 唐詩神韻集 (SPIRIT-RESONANCE COLLECTION OF TANG VERSE)

In support of this broader interpretation of Wang’s “spirit-resonance” (*shenyun*) theory of poetry, we now can draw on some new evidence. About ten years ago, in the rare book collection of the Nanjing

Library 南京圖書館善本書庫, a *Tangshi shenyun ji* 唐詩神韻集 (Spirit-Resonance Collection of Tang Verse) in six fascicles was discovered, whose original compilation is attributed to Wang Shizhen and which was edited and published by a certain Yu Rengshi 俞仍實, whose sobriquet was Yizhai 益齋 (Studio Devoted to Ever More Benefit), in 1767, probably in the Yunjian 雲間 (present day Shanghai) area.⁴³ Yu's preface reads as follows:

余向讀國初諸大家詩。每服漁洋山人之詩。其神韻殆不可及。蓋調音宮羽之先。別味酸鹹之外。會心不遠而妙契無言。余蘊所流。孰窺元緒。繼得其原選唐詩神韻集。益悠然于宗尚之不苟。而嘉惠承學者靡窮也。詩不拘初盛中晚。第協于神韻者。則登是選。後賢或廣其所訂。便失廬山面目。概從舍旃。往年侍先子于錦江官署。課餘多暇。輒憶舊文。標注成帙。惜行笈無全書。不免貽譏掛漏。歸訂胡君竹堂。相與竣事。今秋寓谷水西偏。兼質之周君二禪。王君條山。謬蒙褒許。因付剞劂氏。便子弟誦習而已。行遠云乎哉。昨晤條山先生。謂近閱漁洋翁感舊集序。知尚有本朝詩神韻一選。至今未見刊播。異日當訪諸同志。倘得如延平之劍。一時合并。尤足慰余私淑漁洋之願也夫。乾隆丁亥秋日。益齋俞仍實書于楓溪之淡遠軒。

Whenever I read poems by the great masters of the first years of our present dynasty, I am always convinced that those by the Man of Yuyang Mountain [Wang Shizhen] are the very best — its spirit-resonance (*shenyun*) can probably never be matched. Before harmonizing the tonal features of prosody, he already had transcended the simple distinctions between sour and salty. The meeting of minds never far away, their

43 Controversy over attribution to Wang Shizhen is on-going; for confirmation see Gen Yunbo 葛云波, "*Tangshi shenyunji banben yiji yanjiu jiazhi* (唐詩神韻集) 版本以及研究价值 (The wood block edition of the *Spirit-Resonance Collection of Tang Verse* and its research value)," *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 中国典籍与文化 4 (2001), 55–59, and for refutation see Wu Guoping 邬国平, "*Wang Shizhen Tangshi shenyun ji kaobian* 王士禎 (唐詩神韻集) 考辨兼论: (唐詩神韻集): 非王士禎原选 (Examination and Authentication of Wang Shizhen's *Spirit-Resonance Collection of Tang Verse*: The *Spirit-Resonance Collection of Tang Verse* was not originally compiled by Wang Shizhen)," *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 中国典籍与文化 4 (2002), 49–55.

marvelous match is effected here without words. I might try to reach the source from which this flows, but who could ever spy out how it all happens! Later when I got a copy of the *Spirit-Resonance Collection of Tang Verse* which he had originally compiled, I became even more happy with how perfect his cardinal principles are and how they, without limit, could assist later students. It did not matter whether a poem belonged to Early, High, Middle, or Late Tang, as long as it worked together with spirit-resonance, he included it in this collection. If later worthies were to expand upon his selections, the collection would lose the “real appearance of Mount Lu,” and these additions would have to be eliminated. Some years ago, I served my father when he took up an official post in Jinjiang [Chengdu]. I had much spare time then after lessons, so I always remembered this old work, to which I kept adding annotations to form a book. It was a pity that I did not have a complete version in my traveling case, so I could not help being criticized for leaving things out. When we returned home, I discussed this with Mr. Hu Zhutang, and we finished the task together. This Autumn at the same time that I took up residence on the west side of the Gushui, I asked Mr. Zhou Erchan and Mr. Wang Tiaoshan for their opinions, and they both praised and approved what had been done. As a result, I gave it to a block engraver for printing — just so that it could serve to assist the younger generation to learn poetry, which does not mean that I expect it would travel far! Yesterday, I met Mr. Tiaoshan, who told me that he had recently read Old Father Yuyang’s preface to his *Ganjiu ji* (Moved by Old Times Collection), so now I know that a “Spirit-Resonance Anthology of Verse from Our Own Dynasty” might still exist that yet remains unpublished.⁴⁴ At some other time I shall inquire about this among friends and associates. If I were to find a copy, it would allow me to join together this sword of Yanping all at once, which would be an especially great comfort, for it would allow me, indirect disciple though I may be, to

⁴⁴ The *Ganjiu ji* had actually already been published in Qianlong 17 (1752) by Lu Jianzeng 盧見曾 (1690–1768) at his Yayutang 雅雨堂 in Yangzhou; see Zhou Yuan 周園, “*Yidai keshu chou zhiyin*—Wang Shizhen yu Lu Jianzeng 異代刻書酬知音—王士禎與盧見曾 [Publishing a book in a later age in thanks to a kindred spirit—Wang Shizhen and Lu Jianzeng],” *Shuwu* 書屋 1 (2015), 82–85.

carry out Yuyang's wishes. Dated an Autumn Day during the *dinghai* year of the Qianlong reign era [1767]. Yu Rengshi, Yizhai, has written this at the Danyuanxian (Bland and Distant Studio) on Maple Stream.

Only one mention occurs in Wang Shizhen's voluminous writings that he once had compiled an anthology of Tang verse called the *Shenyun ji*:

廣陵所刻唐詩七言律神韻集. 是予三十年前在揚州. 啟涑兄弟初入家塾. 暇日偶摘取唐律絕句五七言授之者. 頗約而精. 如臯冒丹書青若見而好之. 手鈔七律一卷攜歸. 其後二十年. 泰州繆肇甲. 黃泰來刻之. 非完書也. 集中有陳太史其年及二子曾入數十篇. 亦非本來面目矣.

The *Tangshi qilü shenyun ji* (Spirit-Resonance Collection of Seven-Syllable Regulated Tang Verse) published at Guangling is taken from the five- and seven-syllable regulated verse and quatrains that I had casually made a selection of during spare time thirty years ago while in Yangzhou to teach [my sons] Qisu and his younger brother when they first began family schooling — a rather succinct but essential collection. Mao Danshu, Qingruo, from Rugao saw and liked it, so he copied out by hand one section of seven-syllabic regulated verse and took it home with him. Twenty years after that, Miao Zhaojia and Huang Tailai from Taizhou published it, but it was not the complete work. Into this collection were added several tens of poems by Court Historian Chen Qinian [Chen Weisong 陳維崧 (1625–1682)] and his two sons, so it did not look at all like what I had originally done.⁴⁵

However, reference is made again to such a work in a note added to Wang's chronological biography by its editor, Wang's disciple Hui Dong 惠棟 (1697–1758):

⁴⁵ *Daijingtang shihua* (1972), 4:6b; (1998), 4:98.

順治十八年辛丑. 二十八歲. 在揚州.... 秋七月.....又嘗摘取唐律. 絕句. 五七言若干卷. 授嗣君清遠兄弟讀之. 名為神韻集. 今廣陵所刻止七律一卷. 非全書也.

Eighteenth year of Shunzhi, the cycle *xinchou* [1661], twenty-eight *sui*, located at Yangzhou.... Autumn, seventh month.... He also made a selection of Tang regulated verse, consisting of a few fascicles of quatrains and five- and seven-syllabic poems, in order to teach his honor's sons clarity and profundity, which he had the brothers chant, this titled the *Shenyun ji* (Spirit-Resonance Collection). The edition now published in Guangling consists of only one fascicle, so it is not the whole work.⁴⁶

It is very possible that Yu Rengshi's *Tangshi shenyun ji* 唐詩神韻集 is some truncated version of Wang's original anthology compiled for the instruction of his sons, perhaps derived from the Miao and Huang Taizhou edition, which now appears to have been long lost, for Yu's version does consist entirely of seven-syllable regulated verse 七言律詩, just as Wang described the part that Mao Danshu had copied and which Miao and Huang published later. Yu Rengshi's edition consists only of Tang verse — with no inclusion or reference of Chen Weisong's poetry in it. Wang's mention of Chen's poetry in connection with the *Tangshi qilü shenyun ji* (Spirit-Resonance Collection of Seven-Syllable Regulated Tang Verse) is puzzling and may instead have something to do with what Wang Tiaoshan referred to as Wang Shizhen's *Benchao shenyun yixuan* 本朝詩神韻一選 (Spirit-Resonance Collection of Verse of Our Own Dynasty) in Yu Rengshi's preface. Wang Tiaoshan said that he read about this selection of poetry from Wang Shizhen's preface to *Ganjiu ji* 感舊集 (Moved by Old Times Collection); the pertinent section of that preface is as follows:

取篋衍所藏平生師友作. 為之論次. 都為一集. 自虞山而下凡若干人. 詩若干首. 又取向所撰錄神韻集一編. 芟其什七附焉. 通為八卷. 存歿悉載. 竊取篋中收季川. 中州登敏之之例. 以考功終焉.

46 *Yuyang shanren zijuan nianpu* 漁洋山人自撰年譜 (Self-Authored Chronological Biography of the Recluse of Mount Yuyang), *Wang Shizhen quanji* 王士禛全集 (Ji'nan: Ji-Lu shushe, 2007), 6:5065–5067.

I made a selection of works by teachers and friends from throughout my lifetime, which I had preserved in my bamboo box, for which I provided discussions in order of entry — thus forming an entire anthology. Beginning with Yushan [Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1562–1664)], I included a certain number of poets and a 王 certain number of poems, and I also took poems from the *Shenyun ji* (Spirit-Resonance Collection) which I had previously compiled, eliminating seven out of ten, and adding what remained as supplements, so that the whole anthology totaled eight sections. That I included all poets, whether living or dead, follows the example of the *Qiezhong ji* 篋中集 (Collection of Verse Kept in the Trunk), which included Jichuan [Yuan Jichuan 元季川], younger brother of Yuan Jie 元結 (719–772), the compiler], and the *Zhongzhou ji*, which included Minzhi [Yuan Haogu 元好古 (1186–1214), elder brother of Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257), the compiler]. I have the anthology end with Kaogong [Wang's elder brother Wang Shilu 王士祿 (1626–1673)].⁴⁷

Since this *Shenyun ji* consisted of verse by friends and associates from Wang's own past, it seems that poetry by Chen Weisong, a Qing era poet, should have been appended to some version of it and not to the Guangling edition of the *Tangshi qilü shenyun ji* (Spirit-Resonance Collection of Seven-Syllable Regulated Tang Verse). Wang Shizhen must have objected to the appending of a Qing poet's works to an anthology of Tang era verse that he had originally compiled — but he surely did not object to Chen Weisong's poetry as such, for he later included thirty-six poems by Chen in his *Ganjiu ji*. However, since Wang's *Shenyun ji* of contemporary Qing poets is lost and we have no further descriptions of it, we shall probably never know if he included Chen's poetry in that collection.

CONCLUSION

In any event, Yu Rengshi's edition of the *Tangshi shenyun ji*, whatever its origin and relation to Wang Shizhen's original selection of Tang era verse for his sons, reveals an interesting spread of poets and

⁴⁷ *Daijingtang shihua* (1872), 4:8b–9a; (1998), 4:101.

kinds of poetry — like the *Tangxian sanmei ji* much serene landscape poetry but also a wide variety of verse including many poems that can only be described as *chenzhuo tongkua* 沉着痛快 (powerful expressive), which, again, reinforces the assertion that Wang's *shenyun* theory was not limited to serene and distant landscape poetry but had a far wider scope of application. The *Tangshi shenyun ji* is an extremely rare work, apparently now extant only in copies held by the Nanjing Library and the Shanghai Library. Therefore, to conclude this essay, I include its table of contents here. Note the many poems included by Du Fu and Li Shangyin, for example, certainly *chenzhuo tongkua* 沉着痛快 (powerful expressive) poets:

唐詩神韻集卷一目錄 numbers inside () indicate the number of poems for each poet included in the anthology.

沈佺期 (1): 古意

宋之問 (1): 和趙員外桂陽橋遇佳人

崔顥 (1): 黃鶴樓

王維 (11): 和太常韋主簿五郎溫湯寓目; 奉和聖製從蓬萊向興慶閣道中留春雨中春望之作應制; 敕借岐王九成宮避暑應教; 敕賜百官櫻桃; 酬郭給事; 酌酒與裴迪; 積雨輞川莊作; 春日與裴迪過新昌里訪呂逸人不遇; 送楊少府貶郴州; 過乘如禪師蕭居士嵩丘蘭若; 早秋山中作

李頎 (5): 送魏萬之京; 寄盧司勳員外; 題璿公山池; 寄綦毋三; 宿瑩公禪房聞梵

高適 (3): 送李少府貶峽中王少府貶長沙; 夜別韋司士; 東平別前衛縣李案少府

岑參 (3): 首春渭西郊行呈藍田張二主簿; 暮春虢州東亭送李司馬歸扶風別廬; 使君席夜送嚴河南赴長水

崔曙 (1): 九日登望仙臺呈劉明府容

張渭[調] (2): 別韋郎中; 杜侍御送貢物戲贈

陶岷 (1): 游勸敘懷 [全唐詩: 西塞山下迴舟作]

劉方平 (1): 秋夜寄皇甫冉鄭豐

唐詩神韻集卷二目錄

杜甫 (36): 題張氏隱居; 贈田九判官梁丘; 送鄭十八虔貶台州司戶傷其臨老陷賊之故闕為面別情見於詩題省中院壁; 曲江陪鄭八丈南史飲; 曲江對雨; 因許八奉寄江寧旻上人; 九日藍田崔氏莊; 賓至; 蜀相; 野老; 南鄰; 和裴迪登蜀州東亭送客逢早梅相憶見寄; 夜; 秋興 (8); 詠懷古跡 (4); 返照; 登高; 暮歸; 簡吳郎司法; 小寒食舟中作; 送韓十四江東觀省; 登樓; 院中晚晴懷西郭茅舍; 宿府; 奉寄高常侍

唐詩神韻集卷三目錄

劉長卿 (13): 送陸澧倉曹西上; 青溪口送人歸岳州; 送耿拾遺歸上都; 送靈澈上人還越中; 獻淮寧軍節度使李相公; 送李錄事兄歸襄鄧; 長沙過賈誼宅; 登餘干古縣城; 北歸入至德州界偶逢洛陽鄰家李光宰; 使次安陸寄友人; 自夏口至鸚鵡洲夕望岳陽寄源中丞; 別嚴士元; 送馬秀才落第歸江南

李嘉祐 (1): 送皇甫冉往安宜

韓翃 (6): 送故人赴江陵尋庾牧; 送丹陽劉太真; 送康洗馬歸滑州; 送端州馮使君; 送王少府歸杭州; 送襄垣王君歸南陽別墅

唐詩神韻集卷四目錄

皇甫冉 (4): 送李錄事赴饒州; 同溫丹徒登萬歲樓; 秋日東郊作; 三月三日義與李明府後亭泛舟郎士元 (1)

贈錢起秋夜宿靈臺寺見寄題 [全唐詩: 精舍寺 (一作酬王季友秋夜宿露臺寺見寄)]

盧綸 (2): 晚次鄂州; 長安春望

耿湋 (1)

送友人游江南

司空曙 (1): 南原望漢宮

李益 (2)

送賈校書東歸寄振上人; [同崔邠] 登鶴雀樓

崔峒 (1): 題 [贈] 同官李明府 [書舍]

竇常 (1): 寒食日途次松滋渡先寄劉 [禹錫] 員外之任 [武陵]

戴叔倫 (2): 贈徐山人; 宮詞

劉禹錫 (3): 西塞山懷古; 松滋渡望峽中; 荊門道懷古

王表 (1): 清明日登城春望

唐詩神韻集卷五目錄

李商隱 (25)

錦瑟; 無題 (6); 碧城 (3); 銀河吹笙; 富平少候; 促漏; 馬嵬; 聖女祠; 重過聖女祠; 潭州; 南朝; 少年; 隋宮; 藥轉; 籌筆驛; 即日; 可嘆; 對贈任秀才 [全唐詩: 題二首後重有戲贈任秀才]

溫庭筠 (6): 蘇武廟; 春日偶作; 春暮宴罷寄宋壽先輩; 池塘七夕; 經李徵君故居; 贈知音

唐詩神韻集卷六目錄

杜牧 (4): 潤州; 自宣城赴官上京; 九日齊安登高; 題宣州開元寺水閣

許渾 (3): 凌歊台; 咸陽城東樓; 送蕭處士歸緱山別業

趙嘏 (3): 長安月下與友人話歸 [全唐詩: 長安月夜與友人話故山]; 曲江春望懷江南故人; 長安秋望

劉滄 (2): 咸陽懷古; 經煬帝行宮

李郢 (2): 江上逢王將軍; 江亭春霽

張喬 (1): 題河中鸛雀樓

李頻 (1): 湘口送友人

李群玉 (1): 黃陵廟

韓偓 (5): 春盡; 橫塘; 閨情; 有憶; 代小玉家為蕃騎所虜後寄故集賢裴公相國

韋莊 (4): 思歸; 漢州; 江臯贈別; 情昔

張泌 (1): 秋晚過洞庭

羅隱 (1): 綿谷迴寄蔡氏昆仲

殷文圭 (1): 江邊秋夕

PART IV
ART, LITERATI CULTURE, AND AESTHETICS

The Aesthetics of Paradox:
Poetry and Image in Ma Yuan's *Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path*¹

Li-ling Hsiao

INTRODUCTION

The intimate relation between image and word is longstanding in the history of Chinese painting. It has been commonly accepted for centuries that *word* (calligraphy) and *image* (picture) share the same origin, a notion enshrined in the adage “shu hua tong yuan” 書畫同源. It is equally commonplace that poetry and painting embody the same creative principle, a notion enshrined in the saying “shi hua ben yi lü” 詩畫本一律.² The best writers and painters, as for example Wang Wei 王維 (701–761), perfectly conflate the media of poetry and painting. This ideal of conflation is best

¹ This article is a revision and significant extension of my Chinese article titled “Ye tan Ma Yuan ‘Shanjing chunxing’ de shihua guanxi,” 也談馬遠 (山徑春行) 的詩畫關係 published in *The National Palace Museum Monthly of Chinese Art* 288 (2007): 88–92. The new discussions that are added to the original Chinese article include those on: the academic approach and subject of inquiries that inspired this paper; the study of Ma Yuan's painting; the authentication of the calligraphic inscription on the painting; and an extended discussion on how the painting and the theme of sound reflect the painter Ma Yuan's attitude toward art and nature

² Su Shi 蘇軾, the first poem of the “Two Poems to Inscribe on the Flower Painting by Wang zhubu of Yanling” 書鄢陵王主簿所畫折枝二首 in Wang Wengao, ed., *Su Shi shiji* (The Poetry Anthology of Su Shi), 1525–1526, vol. 5 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982). This poem also contains Su Shi's famous painting theory: “To discuss painting in likeness terms is to show it to the children of your neighbors / To recite poetry must be certain poetry / Then one definitely does not know about poetry.”

summarized in the common dicta: “*shizhong youhua*” 詩中有畫 (painting within poetry) and “*huazhong youshi*” 畫中有詩 (poetry within painting)—phrases Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) first used in praise of Wang Wei.³ Commenting on an ink-painting of bamboo by Wen Tong, Su Shi elaborates on the relation between poetry, calligraphy, and painting: “Unexhausted by poetry, expression pours forth as calligraphy and transforms into painting.”⁴ This comment suggests that poetry, calligraphy, and painting are equivalent forms of the same expressive impulse and creative sensibility. This explains why Chinese painting has always been considered a sister art to poetry and calligraphy, and why the three have always been wed under the term “*san jue*” 三絕 (three perfections). Naturally enough, the relation between painting and poetry/calligraphy has always been an essential line of academic inquiry,⁵ as exemplified in works like Hans Frankel, “Poetry and Painting: Chinese and Western Views of Their Convertibility” (1957);⁶ Michael Sullivan’s monograph *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry, and Calligraphy* (1974);⁷ Henry Wells’ “Chinese Poetry and Landscape Painting” (1975);⁸ Jonathan Chaves’ “Some Relationships between Poetry and Painting in China” (1976);⁹ and the anthology *The Translation of Art: Essays on Chinese Painting and Poetry*, edited by

³ In his comments titled “To Inscribe on Wang Wei’s *Picture of Mist and Rain over the Blue Fields*” 書摩詰藍田煙雨圖, Su Shi writes: “Savoring Wang Wei’s poem, there is painting within the poetry, while watching Wang Wei’s painting there is poetry within the painting.” Su Shi, *Dongpo tiba*, 東坡題跋 *juan* 5, Jigu Ge edition, in *Song ershi mingjia tiba huibian* 宋廿名家題跋彙編, 5.1a (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1971).

⁴ Su Shi, “To Assess on the Ink Bamboo Screen Painted by Wen Yuke” 文與可畫墨竹屏風贊, in Yan Qizhong, 顏其中 *Su Shi lun wenyi* 苏轼论文艺, 217 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1985).

⁵ It is not my intention to have a comprehensive review of the academic studies on this topic due to the space limitations of an article. The introduction to an unpublished book temporarily titled *Beyond Word: Pictorial Metaphor in Ten Bamboo Studio Stationery Catalogue* will feature a more comprehensive discussion of the academic studies on this topic.

⁶ Hans Frankel, “Poetry and Painting: Chinese and Western Views of Their Convertibility,” *Comparative Literature* 9, no. 4 (Fall 1957): 289–307.

⁷ Michael Sullivan, *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry, and Calligraphy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974).

⁸ Henry W. Wells, “Chinese Poetry and Landscape Painting,” *Literary Half-Yearly* (Mysore) 16, no. 2 (July 1975): 3–25.

⁹ Jonathan Chaves, “Some Relationships Between Poetry and Painting in China,” *Renditions* no. 6 (Spring 1976): 85–91.

James Watt (1976).¹⁰ These pioneering works laid the foundation for the studies of the relationship between poetry and painting in the cultural tradition of China.

The scholar and translator of Chinese traditional poetry Jonathan Chaves has always explored Chinese painting along these lines. He has published many articles that share the fruits of his exploration.¹¹ In 2000, with the sponsorship of the China Institute in New York, he organized a painting exhibition focused on the integration of painting and poetry titled *Chinese Painter as Poet*. The exhibition catalogue included a valuable discussion of the relation between the two media.¹² This paper attempts to affirm Chaves' conception of the Chinese painter as poet by exploring the interaction of poetry and image in a landscape painting titled *Shanjin chunxing* 山徑春行 (Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path, fig. 1) by the famous Southern Song court painter Ma Yuan 馬遠 (active 1180–1224).¹³ This paper supports Chaves' position that the "poetry-painting relationship played a role in 'professional and court painting' as well as in 'literati' painting, and that in fact the distinctions between the two 'schools' are often quite vague indeed."¹⁴ This study also draws on Chaves' insistence on the linkage between art, nature, music, poetry, and landscape painting, as exemplified in his discussion of paintings by Wu School masters like Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427–1509) and Wen Zhengming

¹⁰ James C. Y. Watt, ed., *The Translation of Art: Essays on Chinese Painting and Poetry* (Hong Kong: Centre for Translation Projects, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1976).

¹¹ Jonathan Chaves, "Reading the Painting: Levels of Poetic Meaning in Chinese Pictorial Art," *Asian Art* 1, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 1987–88): 6–29; "The Sister Arts in China: Poetry and Painting," *Orientalism* (Hong Kong) 31, no. 7 (Sep. 2000): 129–130.

¹² Jonathan Chaves, *Chinese Painter as Poet* (New York: China Institute in America, 2000).

¹³ Yuan Yougen 袁有根 and Wen Jianjiao 温建娇 proposed that Ma Yuan was born circa 1165 and died after 1242. See their joint-authored article, "Yelun Ma Yuan de shixi yu shengzu," 也论马远的世系与生卒 *Guohuajia*, no. 4 (2008): 39–42. Fu Boxing 傅伯星 proposed that Ma was born in 1170 and died in 1260. See his discussion about Ma's biography in "Rang Ma Yuan zouchu lishi: Lun Ma Yuan shengzu nian de queren jiqi zhuyao chuanguo de dongyin yu zhenyi" 让马远走出历史: 论马远生卒年的确认及其主要创作的动因与真意, *Xinmeishu* 新美术, no. 3 (1996): 57–66. For a biography of Ma Yuan, see Yu Yang 于洋, "Xiqi jingneng, zaoyu jianlue: Nan Song Ma Yuan de shengping yu huafeng yanjiu" 悉其精能 造于简略-南宋马远的生平与画风研究, *Rongbao zhai* 荣宝斋, no. 1 (2009): 5–21.

¹⁴ Chaves, *Chinese Painter as Poet*, 54.

文徵明 (1470–1559) in the Ming dynasty,¹⁵ bringing Chaves' insights to bear on Ma Yuan's painting. This study also takes Jerome Silbergeld's study of the painting *Hou Chibi fu tu* 後赤壁圖 (Picture of the Later Prose-Poem on Red Cliff) by Qiao Zhongchang 喬仲常 (active twelfth century) as a model to explore how poetry guides and inspires the design of images.¹⁶ This study also follows Andrew Plaks,¹⁷ Fu Shen,¹⁸ and Bai Qianshen,¹⁹ who have examined the way literary tropes like irony equally inform poetry and painting.²⁰ In this study, I will take a similar approach, focusing on the trope of paradox.

¹⁵ 沈周 (1427–1509) and Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470–1559).

¹⁶ Jerome Silbergeld, "Back to the Red Cliff: Reflections on the Narrative Mode in Early Literati Landscape Painting," *Ars Orientalis* 25 (1995): 19–38. Silbergeld proposed concerning Qiao Zhongchang's picture of Su Shi's "Latter Prose-Poem of Red Cliff" that the painting closely follows the events of the text. The primacy of figures and the archaic organization of landscape are means to that end" (23). Qiao Zhongchang's picture insists on a literal presentation of the prose-poem.

¹⁷ Andrew H. Plaks, "The Aesthetics of Irony in Late Ming Literature and Painting," in Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong, ed., *Words and Images*, 487–500.

¹⁸ Fu Shen, "Puns and Playfulness in Chinese Painting," translated and adapted by Stephen D. Allee, *Asian Art and Culture* (New York) 7, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 47–65. Li Wai-yee, "Dream Visions of Transcendence in Chinese Literature and Painting," *Asian Art* (New York) 3, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 53–78.

¹⁹ Qianshen Bai, "Image as Word: A Study of Rubes Play in Song Painting (960–1279)," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 34 (1999): 57–72. Bai Qianshen explores the capacity of image functioning as word to play rubes, which essentially is utilizing the writing technique of punning and turning painting into a spoken picture.

²⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary* online: <http://dictionary.oed.com/> (accessed May 19, 2010).



Figure 1. Ma Yuan 馬遠 (active 1180–1224), *Shanjing chunxing* 山徑春行 (Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path). Color on silk, 27.4 × 43.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

STUDIES OF MA YUAN'S PAINTINGS

Studies have focused on many individual paintings by Ma Yuan, including *Tage tu* 踏歌圖 (Picture of a Folk Dance);²¹ *Hanjiang dudiao tu* 寒江獨釣圖 (Picture of a Lonely Fisherman on a Cold River); *Huadeng shiyan* 華燈侍宴 (Serving at the Night Banquet);²² *Chenglong tu* 乘龍圖 (Riding a Dragon);²³

²¹ See Tao Linna 陶琳娜, "Lun Ma Yuan *Tage tu* de yijing mei" 论马远 (踏歌图) 的意境美, *Meishu guancha*, 美术观察 7 (2006): 114. Zhao Yibao 赵以保 and Zhao Meiling 赵美玲, "Chongdu *Tage tu*: touxi Zhongguo shanshui renwu hua zhimei" 重读 (踏歌图) - 透析中国山水人物画之美, *Tianfu xinlun*, 天府新论 (Dec. 2008): 331–332.

²² Richard Edwards, "Emperor Ningzong's *Night Banquet*," *Ars Orientalis* (Ann Arbor, MI) 29 (1999): 55–67.

²³ Wang Yaoting, "Ma Yuan's *Riding a Dragon*: Taoist Beliefs and Physiognomy of Emperor Ning-tsung (r. 1194–1224)," trans. Jeffrey Moser, *National Palace Museum Bulletin* (Taipei) 33, no. 5 (Nov.–Dec. 2000): 1–16.

the album titled *Shui tu* 水圖 (Pictures of Water);²⁴ the fan painting titled *Hanxiang shixi tu* 寒香詩思圖 (Picture of Poetic Reflections on the Cold Fragrant Plum Blossoms);²⁵ and *Meishi xifu tu* 梅石溪鳧圖 (Picture of Plum Blossoms, Rocks, and Ducks on the River).²⁶ One of the recurring considerations is Ma's use of empty space to create a poetic quality, the best example of which is the Tokyo Museum's *Picture of a Lonely Fisherman*, which attempts to illustrate the famous poem "Jiangxue" 江雪 (River Snow) by Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) (fig. 2). These discussions acknowledge that the "emptiness" in Ma's landscape paintings is somehow "poetic,"²⁷ but how the specific image and specific poetry interact with each other to produce meaning has not been fully considered. This paper attempts to fill this gap in the study of Ma Yuan's painting.

²⁴ Huang Yiping 黄怡平, "Ma Yuan *Shuitu tanyou*" 马远 (水图) 探幽, *Yihai* 艺海 6 (2008): 82–83.

²⁵ Zhang Lili 张丽丽, "Ma Yuan shanshui hua de cong 'shi' dao 'si'" 马远山水画的从 "诗"到"思," *Xinshijue yishu* 新视觉艺术, no. 1 (2009): 36–37.

²⁶ Per-Olov Leijon, "Shooting Orioles, a Painting Signed by Ma Yuan," *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities Bulletin* (Stockholm) 49 (1977): 17–29.

²⁷ See Chu Yanan 褚亚男, "Cong 'Jiangxue' dao *Hanjiang dudiao tu*: lun Ma Yuan shanshui hua zhong de shihua ronghe xianxiang" 从 (江雪) 到 (寒江独钓图) -论马远山水画中的诗画融合现象, *Hebei jianzhu keji xueyuan xuebao* (Sheke ban) 25, no. 3 (Sep. 2005): 53–54. Zheng Jiaojiao 郑娇娇, "Quhui Feng Sao zhiyi, ben hu tiandi zhixin: xi Ma Yuan *Hanjiang dudiao tu* de shenmei jingjie" 取会风骚之意, 本乎天地之心-析马远 (寒江独钓图) 的审美境界, *Yishu tansuo* 艺术探索 22, no. 5 (Oct. 2008): 86, 88.



Figure 2. Ma Yuan, *Hanjiang dudiao* (Fishing Alone on a Cold River). Color on silk, 26.8 × 50.3 cm. Tokyo Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

Judged on aesthetic merit and historical significance, *Spring Saunter* is one of the treasures of the National Palace Museum in Taipei. The painting bears the signature “Ma Yuan,” but it lacks the painter’s seal, and it has aroused a good deal of controversy on the score of both its meaning and authenticity. Doubts concerning its authenticity explain the meager discussion of the painting in the scholarly literature of Song art.²⁸ The Japanese scholar Suzuki Kei 鈴木敬, for example, completely

²⁸ The Internet materials on this painting have exploded after I published my Chinese account of the painting in 2007. Before that, the entry on this painting was as meager as the scholarly discussion. Per-Olov Leijon discussed a painting signed with Ma Yuan’s name: “‘Shooting Orioles,’ a Painting Signed by Ma Yuan,” *Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities Bulletin* (Stockholm) 49 (1977): 17–29 + plates. Wang Yao-t’ing, Jeffrey Moser, trans., “Ma Yuan’s Riding a Dragon: Taoist Beliefs and

neglects this painting in his volume on Li Tang 李唐, Ma Yuan 馬遠, and Xia Gui 夏珪, the three chief masters of the Southern Song. This omission indicates that Suzuki, the cautious art historian, doubts that Ma Yuan produced this painting.²⁹ The two most important anthologies of paintings held in the National Palace Museum—*Gugong shuhua tulu* 故宮書畫圖錄 (Catalogue of Painting and Calligraphy in the National Palace Museum) and *Gugong canghua daxi* 故宮藏畫大系 (A Panorama of Paintings in the Collection of the National Palace Museum), are published by the museum itself, and yet likewise exclude this painting. This lapse implies that the editors, on behalf of the museum, either doubt its authenticity or its quality; the former is obviously more likely than the latter.³⁰ *Zhongguo meishu quanji* 中國美術全集 (The Complete Anthology of Chinese Arts), a major anthology of Chinese arts published in 1989, likewise ignores this *tour de force*. In his discussion of the styles and originality of Ma Yuan's landscape paintings, Yang Chuanxi 楊傳喜 likewise fails to mention *Spring Saunter*.³¹ In his recent survey of Ma Yuan's life and work, Yu Yang 于洋 includes a reproduction of *Spring Saunter*, but his discussion does not touch upon the painting.³² The scanty attention paid to *Spring Saunter* is indicated by the paucity of on-line references prior to 2007. Since 2007, however, there has been an explosion of on-line references, and on December 24, 2008, the Taiwanese government announced that Ma Yuan's *Spring Saunter* had been designated a *guobao* 國寶, or "national treasure," and hailed it as the best example of the conflation of painting and poetry in

Physiognomy of Emperor Ning-tsung (r. 1194–1224),” *National Palace Museum Bulletin* (Taipei) 33, no. 5 (Nov.-Dec. 2000): 1–16.

²⁹ Suzuki Kei, *Ri Tō, Ba En, Ka Kei*, in *Suiboku bijutsu taikei*, dai 2-kan (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1975), 49–51.

³⁰ This doubt of its authenticity and its status as a masterwork is eliminated by my discussion of this particular painting in my Chinese article “Ye tan Ma Yuan ‘Shanjing chunxing’ de shihua guanxi,” published in 2007. Since the publication of this article, the mention of this painting as Ma Yuan's work on the Internet has increased by about eighty percent.

³¹ Yang Chuanxi 楊傳喜, “Pinping Ma Yuan shanshui hua zhong yunhan de shenmei tezheng” 品評馬遠山水畫中的审美特征, *Fujian Luntan: Renwen shenhui kexue ban* 福建论坛: 人文社会科学版, Special Issue (2005): 229–230.

³² Yu Yang 于洋, “Xiqi jingneng, zaoyu jianlue: Nan Song Ma Yuan de shengping yu huafeng yanjiu” 悉其精能 造于简略—南宋马远的生平与画风研究, 5–21.

extant Southern Song art.³³ I would like to think that this about-turn was in part due to the publication of my brief discussion of *Spring Saunter* in *The National Palace Museum Monthly on Chinese Art* in March 2007.

The renowned Chinese art historian Michael Sullivan indicates in his study *The Three Perfections* that several American experts in the field of Chinese art likewise doubt the authenticity of *Spring Saunter*. According to Sullivan, these experts seize on the allegedly unnatural detail of the sauntering scholar gazing at the inscription in the upper right-hand corner rather than at the bird flying overhead and conclude that the painting was forged, most likely during the Ming dynasty.³⁴ The inscription that the scholar gazes at reads: “Brushed by a sleeve, the wild flowers dance mostly on their own / Avoiding the human, the hidden birds cannot even cry” or “chu xiu ye hua duo zi wu / bi ren you niao bu cheng ti” 觸袖野花多自舞/避人幽鳥不成啼.³⁵ While acknowledging the opinions of these experts, Sullivan shares the view expressed by Professor Jiang Zhaoshen 江兆申 in his discussion of Yang *meizi* 楊妹子 (1162–1233), calligrapher and wife of the Southern Song Emperor Ningzong 寧宗 (r. 1195–1224).³⁶ Both Sullivan and Jiang consider this painting a *magnum opus* of Song art.³⁷ Sullivan speculates that this painting was an entry—in all probability, the winning entry—in a competition designed to recruit candidates for the imperial painting academy. The assigned theme was presumably the two-line poem by an unknown poet inscribed on the upper right-hand corner of

³³ The announcement was made by the 行政院文化建設委員會文化資產總管理處籌備處, and the document number of this announcement is 會授資籌二字第 0972115965 號, which is accessible at the official website of the 管理處籌備處 (accessed on March 13, 2010).

³⁴ Michael Sullivan, *The Three Perfections: Chinese Painting, Poetry and Calligraphy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 30.

³⁵ Fu Boxing thinks these two lines of poetry conveyed a mood of happiness and, considering this together with the running manner of the servant at the lower left-hand corner of the painting, he proposed that this painting was painted in 1208 when the new reign title Jiading was established after Emperor Ningzong punished the evil Prime Minister Han Tuozhou with death. See “Rang Ma Yuan zouchu lishi,” 62. To read these two lines of poetry as reflecting a happy mood seems dubious and thus the dating is questionable.

³⁶ Chiang Chao-shen, “The Identity of Yang Mei-tzu and the Paintings of Ma Yuan,” *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 2 (Taipei, 1967): 4.

³⁷ Sullivan, *The Three Perfections*, 29–35.

the painting. The idea of a competition involving interpretation of poetic prompts had been invented by the emperor's own ancestor Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101–1125) of the Northern Song dynasty.



Figure 3. Li Song 李嵩 (active 1190–1220), *Yueye guanchao* 月夜觀潮 (Watching the Waves at Night). Color on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

THE MYSTERIOUS CALLIGRAPHER OF *SPRING SAUNTER*

Scholars dispute who was responsible for the inscription on *Spring Saunter*, which reminds us the similar dispute concerning the authenticity of the painting. The scholars who have attempted to authenticate the hand of the inscription include Jiang Zhoshen, Michael Sullivan, Zhu Huiliang 朱惠良, Li Hui-shu, and Fu Boxing 傅伯星. Sullivan compares the calligraphy of *Spring Saunter* with the calligraphy of *Huadeng shiyan* (fig. 3), *Yueye guanchao* 月夜觀潮 (Watching the Waves at Night, fig. 3) by Li Song 李嵩 (active 1190–1220), and *Fangchun yuji* 芳春雨霽 (Rain in the Spring, fig. 4) by Ma Yuan's son Ma Lin 馬麟 (active 1220–1250). Sullivan identifies *Spring Saunter* as a Southern Song painting, and he argues that the calligraphy of all of these paintings is from the hand of Yang *meizi*, whom Suzuki Kei, Qi Gong 啟功, Jiang Zhaoshen, and Lee Hui-shu all identify as Empress Yang³⁸ who became empress in 1202.



Figure 4. Ma Lin 馬麟 (active 1220–1250), *Fangchun yuji* 芳春雨霽 (Rain in the Spring). Color on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

³⁸ Professor Suzuki Kei indicates that the Emperor Ningzong's inscription was inscribed by Yang *meizi* who was the Empress Yang herself rather than her sister. See his edited volume titled: *Ri Tō, Ba En, Ka Kei*, 49. Professor Jiang Zhaoshen accepted *Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path* as by Ma Yuan's own hand and explored in general terms the influence of Yang *meizi* on Ma's painting style. But he did not discuss the inscription on this particular painting. According to Professor Jiang's article published in 1967, all the calligraphy pieces that were inscribed by Yang *meizi* should be by the hand of Empress Yang ("The Identity of Yang Mei-tzu and the Painting of Ma Yuan," 8–14). The PhD dissertation by Professor Lee Hui-shu at UCLA focused on Empress Yang's role in shaping the painting academy of the Southern Song. See "Domain of Empress Yang 1162–1233," PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1994.

The Chinese scholar Fu Boxing also observes that the calligraphy of this painting resembles the handwriting of Empress Yang.³⁹ But Jiang Zhaoshen and Zhu Huiliang maintain that the inscription was from the hand of Emperor Ningzong, as the calligraphy seems to them masculine. Lee Hui-shu disagrees and proposes that the style of the inscription is closer to that of Emperor Lizong 理宗 (r. 1225–1264), who succeeded to the throne. Lizong's calligraphy appears in two works by Ma Lin: *Jingting songfeng* 靜聽松風 (Listening Quietly to the Wind in the Pine, 1246, fig. 5) and *Zuokan yunqi* 坐看雲起 (Sitting and Watching the Rising Clouds, 1256).⁴⁰ This disagreement about the inscription arises from the similar calligraphic styles belonging to these members of the royal family and from the ghostwriting that was a commonplace in the Southern Song court.⁴¹ Whoever was responsible for the inscription, scholars at least agree that he or she was a member of the imperial family, either an emperor or empress.

³⁹ Fu Boxing 傅伯星, "Rang Ma Yuan zouchu lishi: Lun Ma Yuan shengzu nian de queren jiqi zhuyao chuanguo de dongyin yu zhenyi" 让马远走出历史: 论马远生卒年的确认及其主要创作的动因与真意, *Xinmeishu* 新美术, no. 3 (1996): 59 (57–66).

⁴⁰ Lee Hui-shu, "The Domain of Empress Yang (1162–1233): Art, Gender, and Politics at the Southern Court," 171. PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1994.

⁴¹ Lee Hui-shu has a close study of this ghostwriting practice at the Southern Song court within the Imperial family in her "The Emperor's Lady Ghostwriters in the Song-dynasty China," *Artibus Asia*, 61–101.

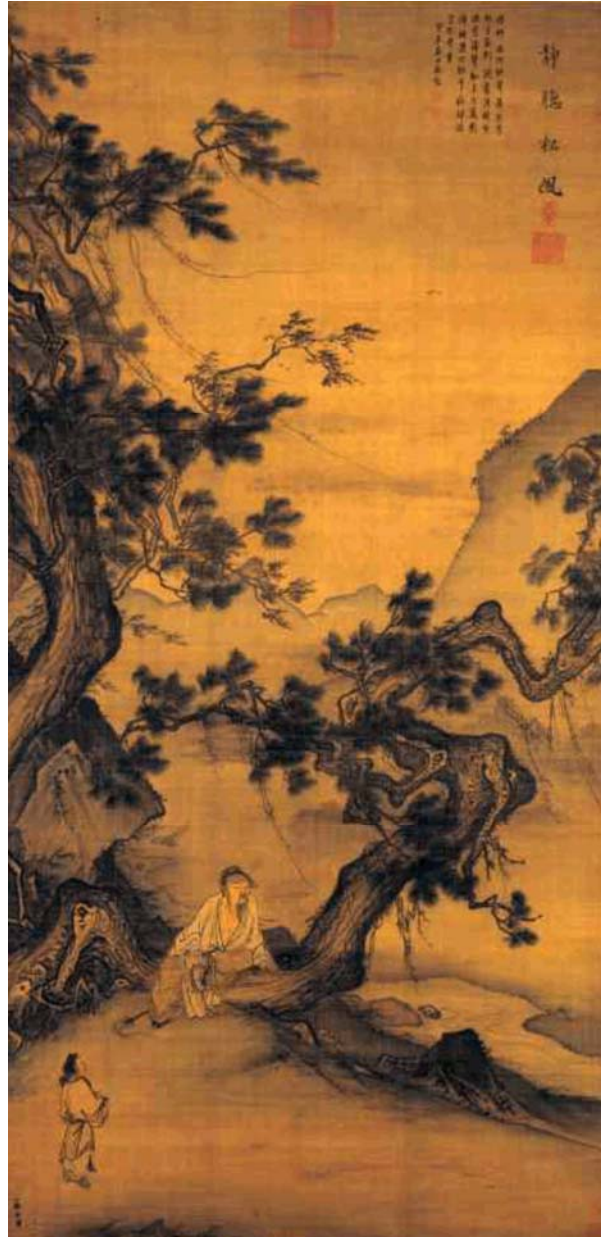


Figure 5. Ma Lin 馬麟 (active 1220–1250), *Jingting songfeng* 靜聽松風 (Listening Quietly to the Wind in the Pine). 1246. National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.

In this debate, only Lee Hui-shu proposes that this inscription was from Emperor Lizong's hand. She postulates that this inscription reflects the earlier style of Emperor Lizong and was possibly written in the 1220s. However, juxtaposing the calligraphy of *Spring Saunter* and Lizong's inscriptions on the two paintings by Ma Lin mentioned above, it becomes immediately clear that they are from different hands. *Spring Saunter* shows rounder strokes, while Lizong's style tends to feature sharp

edges and boxier patterns. The structure of the characters also differ dramatically, as Lizong's calligraphy tends to feature vigorous upstrokes that give way to sudden downstrokes, forming a sharp corner or angle that can be seen clearly in the inscriptions attached to Ma Lin's painting; the calligraphy of *Spring Saunter*, by contrast, shows a less vigorous upstroke and a rounder corner. This stylistic penchant is evident in both Emperor Ninzong's and Empress Yang's calligraphy, and it is clearly displayed in Empress Yang's inscriptions to Ma Yuan's album *Water Pictures* and in the birthday poem that Emperor Ninzong wrote for Empress Yang in 1216, which is currently in the Beishantang Collection in Hong Kong. Lee Hui-shu proposes this poem as the only reliable example of Emperor Ninzong's calligraphy (fig. 7).⁴² I find that the calligraphy of *Spring Saunter* is inconsistent with Lizong's calligraphy, but roughly consistent with the calligraphy of Emperor Ninzong and Empress Yang. The question remains whether the calligraphy is by the emperor or empress. Jiang Zhaoshen and Zhu Huiliang propose the former, while Sullivan and Fu Boxing propose the latter.



Figure 6. Emperor Li of the Southern Song. Calligraphy.

⁴² According to Lee Hui-shu, this calligraphy is the most creditable piece attributed to Emperor Ninzong's own hand; see her "The Emperor's Lady Ghostwriters," 91–92.

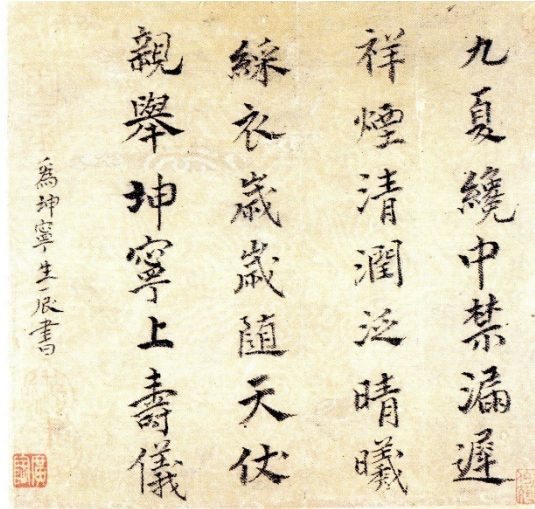


Figure 7. Zhao Kuo 趙擴 (1168-1224) aka. Emperor Ninzong of the Southern Song dynasty, *Celebrating the Birthday of Empress Yang*. Dated 1216. Album leaf, ink on silk, 19.5x20.2 cm. Beishantang Collection, Hong Kong.

Rain in the Spring may provide an answer. Jiang Zhaosen and Zhu Huiliang perceive the calligraphy as characteristically masculine and infer that the inscription, like the inscription of *Spring Saunter*, is the work of Ninzong.⁴³ Lee Hui-shu disagrees, citing the fact that *Rain in the Spring* displays a seal with the trigram symbol for woman (*kun*), from which she infers that the inscription is by Empress Yang. As the two paintings seem to exhibit calligraphy from the same hand (a point that Michael Sullivan makes), we can deduce that the calligraphy of *Spring Saunter* is likewise by Empress Yang. I agree with Jiang and Zhu that the two inscriptions are from the same hand, but I also agree with Lee Hui-shu that the inscription on *Rain in the Spring*, while rendered in Ninzong's style, was written by Empress Yang.

⁴³ For Zhu Huiliang's discussion of Emperor Ninzong and Empress Yang's calligraphies, see Zhu Huiliang, 朱惠良 "Nan Song huangshi shufa," 南宋皇室書法 故宮學術季刊, 2.4 (Summer, 1985): 17-52.

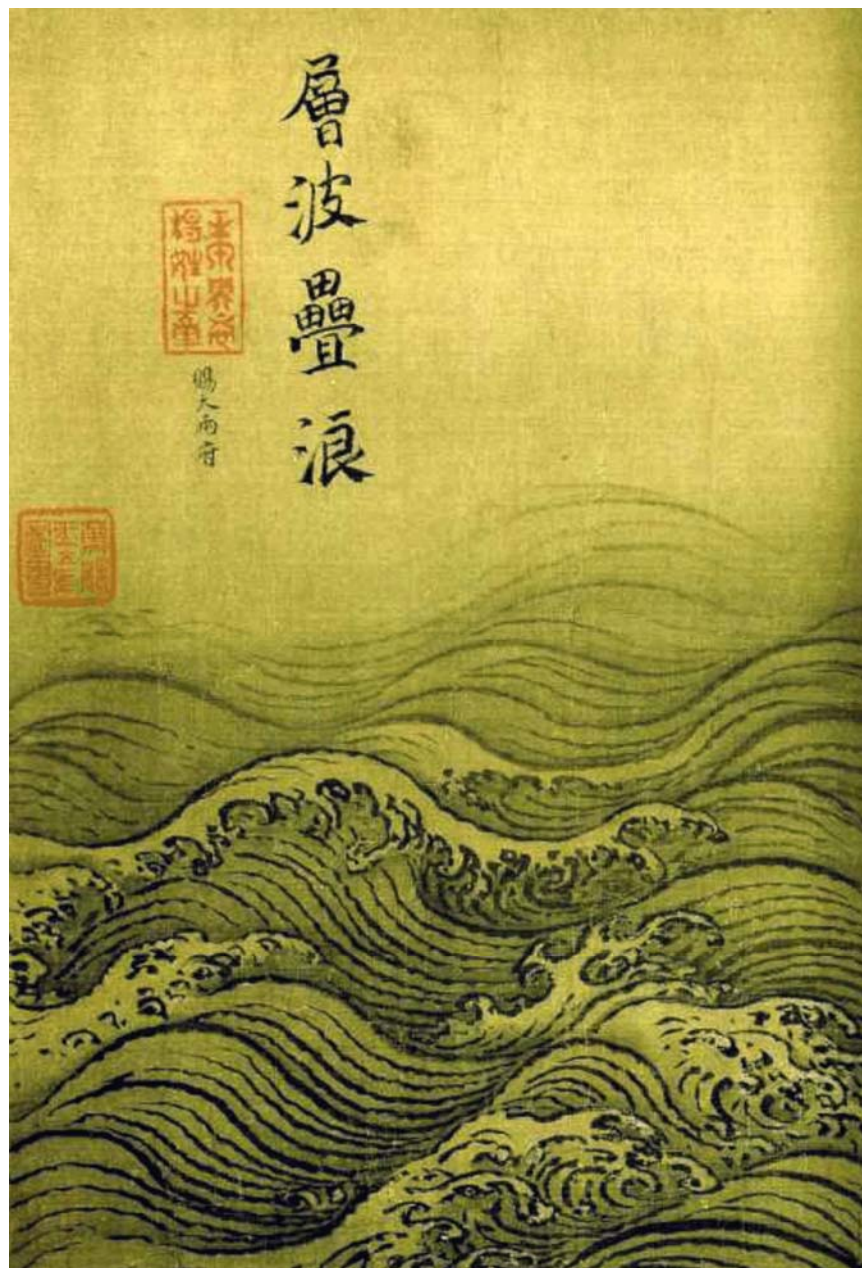


Figure 8. Ma Yuan, “Cengpo dielang” 層波疊浪 (Layers of Waves), picture 3 of the album titled *Shui tu* 水圖 (Pictures of Water).

The calligraphic styles of Emperor Ninzong and Empress Yang have much in common. They are notable for rounded corners and wavy, slightly inclined horizontal strokes. Their characters generally tend to be flat and wide. The calligraphy on Ma Yuan’s twelve water pictures and the two fans in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum highlight two features of Empress Yang’s

calligraphy that are not shared by Ninzong's poem celebrating Empress Yang's birthday (fig. 7). First, Empress Yang tends to render her characters with a slight leftward tilt, as demonstrated by the four characters “ceng po die lang” 層波疊浪 (Layers of Waves, fig. 8) that appear in the third of Ma Yuan's water pictures. Second, the vertical line formed by the four characters is slightly bowed. Both the left-leaning characters and the bowed alignment are evident in the two fan poems (fig. 9), as well as inscription on *Rain in the Spring* (fig. 4). Empress Yang's inscription on Li Song's *Watching the Waves at Night* exhibits the same features (fig. 3). The inscription on the *Spring Saunter* shares both features. Note the leftward tilt of the characters “xiu” 袖 and “ye” 野, and the bowed vertical alignment of the first four characters “chu xiu ye yua” 觸袖野花. I agree with Sullivan and Fu Boxing that Empress Yang was the calligrapher of *Spring Saunter*.



Figure 9. Empress Yang of the Southern Song dynasty. Calligraphy. Silk, 23.2 × 24.4 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York, New York.

THE PARADOXES IN THE POEM AND THE PAINTING IN *SPRING SAUNTER*

This essay applauds and shares Sullivan's evaluation of *Spring Saunter* as a masterpiece that importantly embodies the dynamic relation between painting and poetry, one of the issues that dominate the development of Chinese painting in both its theory and its practice. This essay attempts to resolve the controversy concerning the painting's authenticity by investigating its interrelationship of image and word. The painting, indeed, serves as a perfect case study in the kind of internal dialogue between word and image specific to Chinese painting of the highest order. The sophistication of this internal dialogue, in turn, strongly suggests the authenticity of this painting.

The poem inscribed on this painting consists of only two lines, but suggests multiple layers of meaning. At a superficial level of meaning, the three images—human, flower, and bird—have a cause and effect relationship. The phrase “brushed by a sleeve” seems to convey that the dance of the wild flowers is caused by the long sleeves of the traveler; in other words, the flowers are set in motion by the physical disturbance of the human being. In the same manner, the term “avoiding the human” suggests that the appearance of the traveler stirs the birds and suddenly startles them into the air. The traveler, then, initiates the movement of the poem, implying that in the absence of human disturbance the wild flowers and the hidden birds would remain still. The two poetic lines contrast the static and the kinetic and capture perfectly the brief moment when the one becomes the other.

The question is whether the image similarly depicts this contrast and equally captures this brief moment. If we want to explore the relation between poetry and painting, we have to investigate whether the painter understands the meaning of the poem and conveys the meaning in images, successfully creating a painting that is a *youxing shi* 有形詩 (poem with shapes) and a *wusheng shi* 無聲詩 (poem without sound), two important terms that represent the artistic ideal advocated by the famous literati and artist Su Shi. In order to create the contrast between the static and kinetic, Ma paints two birds: one has just flown from the branch on which it perched, while the other still perches on the branch ready to take off. This arrangement conscientiously responds to the contrast of static and kinetic and the moment of transformation implied in the poetic lines. Moreover, the slender, soft, and elastic willow branch sways slightly forward due to the released weight of the flown bird,

evidencing the brief moment of equipoise between rest and flight. This slightly swaying willow branch allows Ma a chance to utilize his elegant signature motif of the *tuozhi* 拖技, or the “elongated branch.” Here, the branch is completely natural; it does not in any way have the feel of stylized painting technique. The branch is not only a compositional necessity of the painting and a chance to demonstrate real skill, but a confirmation of the meaning of the poem. The poem and painting thus become perfectly complementary, which was the whole idea of the kind of competition with which Sullivan associates the painting.

The painter very successfully mirrors the rhetorical device of analogy: just as the bird sets the branch swaying, so the sleeves set the flowers swaying. We do not actually witness the flowers set in motion by the human sleeve, but we infer their motion from the precedent of the swaying branch. The swaying branch, we might say, becomes a metaphor for the swaying flowers and allows the painter to avoid the inelegancy of his scholar tangled in the underbrush. This subtlety of execution suggests the highest standard of Chinese art and makes it difficult to accept the notion that the painting was forged by an anonymous hand.

The deeper meaning of the poem emerges in the paradoxical relation among the three images—human, flower, and bird. In the second half of the first poetic line, the poet uses the phrase “*duo zi wu*” 多自舞 (dance mostly on their own) to create an immediate paradoxical contrast with the first half of the line “*chuxiu*” 觸袖 (brushed by a sleeve). The phrase “dance mostly on their own” emphasizes that the movement of the wild flowers is somehow autonomous, mysteriously separable from the physical influence of the sleeve. This line thus creates a paradoxical tension between activity and passivity, and the poetic quality of the line exists in the imaginative space created by the conflict between the two. The birds of the second line of the poem are autonomous creatures, and yet they lack the autonomy of the flowers. Superficially understood, the phrases “*bi ren*” 避人 (avoiding the human) and “*bu cheng ti*” 不成啼 (cannot even cry) suggest the active nature of the birds, but these actions are reflexive; they are initiated and determined by the appearance of the traveler, and the bird’s active movements are actually passive. In this sense, the two lines of the poem form a dramatic contrast: the flowers are not autonomous but “dance mostly on their own,” while the birds are autonomous but “cannot even cry” in the sense that they are too startled and rushed to exercise their freedom. This active/passive paradox is the essence of the two-line poem.

The paradox of activity and passivity is paralleled by a larger spatial paradox involving the boundless and the bounded in the painting, both paradoxes probing, with Confucian morality ultimately in mind, the point of equipoise between freedom and discipline.⁴⁴ The painting shows a lightly shaded mountain range in the background that is parallel to the river bank in the foreground. The distant mountain scene and the near river bank form a wide open space that seems unlimited but at the same time strictly bounded, as the mountain and the river form what seem insurmountable barriers and enclose the traveler. Moreover, on the right and left margins of the painting, this seemingly unlimited open space is bounded again by another set of parallel lines: two intertwined trees on the left and the two inscribed poetic lines on the right. Furthermore, the two poetic lines serve another important function, echoing and balancing the two tree trunks and thus rescuing the painting from lopsidedness, especially important in light of Ma's tendency—which earned him the nickname “*Ma yi jiao*” 馬一角 (One Corner Ma)⁴⁵—to de-center his compositions. The intertwined pattern of the trees may also echo the paradoxical interrelation of the poem's two lines.

The parallelism of mountain and shore on the one hand, tree and calligraphy on the other, create a spatial paradox: the space of the painting is both open and closed, unlimited and limited. The two intertwined trees seem to form a gate serving as passage into this space, and we see the servant entering with a zither. But Ma Yuan bends the trunk of the closest tree toward the space outside of the painting; at the same time, the tree crosses with the trunk behind it. This arrangement makes the passage extremely narrow, and the servant has to bend to pass through. This narrow passage is further blocked by the wild flower branches. To enter this enclosed space, therefore, the travelers have to

⁴⁴ Professor Richard Edwards also indicates in his study of Ma Yuan's picture of *Huadeng siyan* that Ma Yuan enlivens the composition with contrasted and conflicted elements: “Indeed the ordering of interior space provides a contrast to Ma Yuan's dominant angularity” (60). See “Emperor Ningzong's *Night Banquet*,” *Ars Orientalis* (Ann Arbor, MI) 29 (1999): 55–67.

⁴⁵ Professor Charles Hartman at SUNY-Albany also notices the balance of the composition of this painting: “Ma Yuan was noted for the asymmetry of his compositions. The focus of these paintings is often off to one corner or side (rather than at the center), where a large tree often predominates and threatens to destroy the balance of the composition. In the above slide (see website reference below), for example (no. 25 [*Shanjin chunxing*]), only the couplet of poetry in the upper right corner precariously balances the weight of the willow tree and figures to the left.” EAC 280 Chinese Painting course website, SUNY-Albany, accessed April 16, 2009): <http://www.albany.edu/faculty/hartman/eac280/26.html>.

create their own passage to break the natural barrier of this enclosure. The painter's intention to render the intertwined trees as both a passage and barrier is quite clear. This arrangement again creates another spatial paradox: the passage is open and simultaneously closed. Having entered this enclosed space, the traveler is subjected to a further paradox of the limited and unlimited. The tangent of his eyesight and the direction of the flying birds suggest the leap into infinity, but the calligraphy once again functions as a limiting boundary, having the character almost of a wall.

Word and image are bound up in one further complexity. The poem suggests that the traveler disturbs the stillness of nature, while nature in turn stirs his artistic inspiration: it is not certain which is the passive and which the active, which the dominant and which the subservient. This careful balance between art and nature is inscribed in the distinction between the dancing flower and the silent birds. The poem does not seem to privilege one or the other; both have their place in a rich tension. The image, on the other hand, seems to respond to what amounts to an internal debate within the poem, subtly privileging art as an ultimate rationale and value—as it were siding with the flowers over the birds. The diagonal movement of the painting—the servant entering the space from left to right in the lower left-hand corner, the line of the traveler's gaze from the middle ground to the upper right corner, the birds' flight toward the upper right in an extension of the traveler's gaze—points toward the poetic lines inscribed in the upper right corner of the painting which becomes a kind of final statement toward which all else leads. The suggestion seems to be that the complexities and paradoxes of nature have their culmination and justification in the artistic expression of the poem. In keeping with this understanding, nature pays a kind of homage, not exactly bowing before the poem, but looking toward it with subservient respect and perhaps wonderment. The image thus propounds an aestheticism to which a painter might naturally feel drawn; more practically, it flatters the achievement of the empress. This aestheticism explains, perhaps, one of the painting's most subtle details: the physical analogy between the shape of the bird in flight and the shape of the character designating the human (*ren* 人), which, not incidentally, are placed upon precisely the same horizontal tangent. As the bird flees the human traveler, it both physically recalls and moves toward the emblem of human art in the form of the calligraphic character. The suggestion seems to be that even as the traveler is bound by nature, nature is bound by human art.

It might be objected that this reads too much into the placement of the calligraphy, especially

as it was the work of Yang *meizi* rather than Ma Yuan himself; presumably she placed calligraphy as she saw fit. The composition of the painting, however, clearly suggests a coherent spatial scheme. It's unlikely that Ma Yuan directed Yang *meizi*, she being the empress; it's a little more likely that she consciously or unconsciously grasped his implicit scheme. The likeliest possibility, it seems to me, is that the calligraphy preceded the painting and that Ma Yuan cleverly incorporated its placement into the scheme of his composition. Whatever the case, the composition suggests that the images are subservient to the words both spatially and thematically, which in turn suggests that the words precede the creation of the image. All of this lends credence to Sullivan's theory that the painting was an entrant in the imperial competition. It may be that all of the competitors received the same inscribed but otherwise blank scroll of silk. Sullivan's idea that the traveler's gaze rests on the calligraphy as a gesture of respect for the imperial family makes additional sense in this light.⁴⁶ Sullivan suggests that any other arrangement would be disrespectful and illogical.⁴⁷



Figure 10. Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427–1509), *Zhangli yuantiao* 杖藜遠眺 (Poet on the Mountain Top). Album leaf, ink on paper, 38.7 × 60.3 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴⁶ Professor Lee Hui-shu has the same conclusion in her study of the Empress Yang's contribution to the Painting Academy of the Southern Song: "Confirmation of the Imperial Honor That Is Specifically Directed Towards the Clan of the Empress." See "The Domain of Empress Yang," 251.

⁴⁷ Sullivan, *The Three Perfections*, 30–31.

The paradoxical relation between art and nature in *Spring Saunter* is not unique in the history of Chinese painting. The motif of figures gazing, as it seems, at calligraphy above their heads is also evident in two Ming paintings featured in Chaves' exhibition catalogue: *Poet on the Mountain Top* (fig. 10) by Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427–1509) and the fan painting titled *Scholar Playing a Qin* (i.e., zither; fig. 11) by Cheng Jiasui 程嘉遂 (1565–1643).⁴⁸ Both paintings perfectly integrate poetry, painting, music, and nature, in which art (i.e., the calligraphic inscription) figuratively draws human attention while placing art within the context of nature. Both Robert Harris and Suzan Nelson indicate that around the mid-twelfth century there arises a new anthropocentric view of nature reflected in landscape painting. Harris further indicates that Ma Yuan is the supreme master of representing “figures contemplating nature,” and that paintings of this sort were “so common that they seem to constitute a new genre....”⁴⁹ Ma Yuan's *Spring Saunter*, I would argue, takes the anthropocentric perspective a step further, slightly privileging the aesthetic over the natural. The figure's gaze seems to fix on the calligraphy rather than the natural surroundings in token of this reversal.

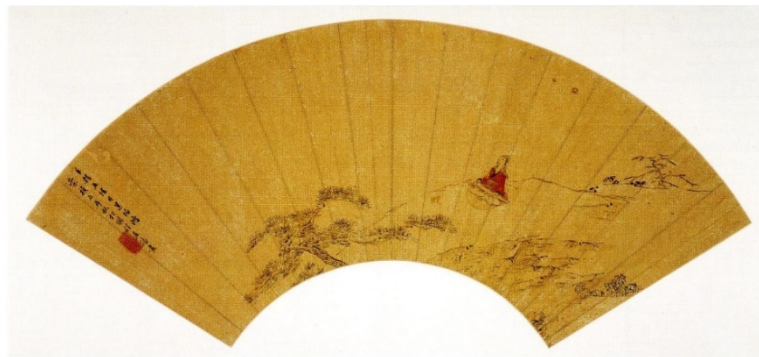


Figure 11. Cheng Jiasui 程嘉遂 (1565–1643), *Scholar Playing a Qin*. Fan mounted as an album leaf, ink and light color on gold flecked paper. Art Institute of Chicago, Samuel M. Nickerson Endowment; 1941.1031.Art as Nature.

⁴⁸ Chaves, *Chinese Painter as Poet*, 29, 47.

⁴⁹ Susan Nelson, “Picturing Listening: The Sight of Sound in Chinese Painting,” *Archives of Asian Art*, 51 (1998/1999), 30–55. Robert E. Harrist, Jr., “Watching Clouds Rise: A Tang Dynasty Couplet and Its Illustration in Song Painting,” *The Bulletin of Cleveland Museum of Art* 78.7 (November 1991): 319 (301–323).

To complicate further the paradoxical relation between art and nature, the servant enters with a zither. Thus, the three artistic media most closely related to the representation of nature are represented: calligraphy, landscape painting, and the music of the *qin* or zither. Calligraphy as a force of nature is clearly demonstrated in the most influential theoretical treatise on calligraphy “Bizhen tu” 筆陣圖 (Mapping the Brush) allegedly written in the fourth century by Wei Shuo 衛鑠 (272–349), who is more popularly known as Wei Furen 衛夫人, the teacher of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361 or 321–379), one of China’s most celebrated calligraphers and perhaps the figure most responsible for elevating calligraphy to the status of art.⁵⁰ Wei was perhaps the first to define the different strokes of calligraphy in terms of natural forces. Wei writes in “Bizhen tu”:

[The horizontal stroke] is like a cloud extending for a thousand miles, illusory yet real. [The point] is like a rock falling from a high mountain, smashing below and breaking into pieces. [The back-slanting stroke] is like a stabbing blow delivered against a rhinoceros or elephant. [The pinched stroke] is like the shot of a four-hundred-pound arrow. [The vertical stroke] is like a dry rattan ten thousand years old. [The forward-slanting stroke] is like the broken waves which sound of thunder. [The bent stroke] is like the joints and tendon of a strung bow.⁵¹

The metaphors obviously borrow from the most powerful natural forces known at the time. Wei Furen thus suggests that calligraphy must amass and release a similarly enormous force of energy. In this aesthetic scheme, calligraphy becomes a medium that gives visible form to the abstract natural force. There is also an implicit suggestion that the calligrapher becomes a medium for this force, soliciting it, channeling it, and releasing it through the slender shaft of the brush. The pictographic

⁵⁰ For a discussion of Wei Furen’s “Bizhen tu,” see Richard Barnhart’s “Wei Fu-jen’s Pi-chen Tu,” *Archives of the Chinese Art Society in America* 18 (1964): 13–25.

⁵¹ The piece has been attributed to Wei Shuo since that was written on it. Some scholars think that it is an attribution rather than written by Wei Shuo herself.

character records the shape of nature, but the calligraphic stroke attempts to reproduce the roiling energies of nature and bring these energies within the bounds of human culture.

Both landscape painting and music similarly inscribe nature. *Shanshui* 山水 (mountain and water) is the term to designate the natural landscape. Van Gulik notes that this is also “the name by which in artistic treatises the Chinese designate a landscape,” for example, landscape painting.⁵² The common language implies the continuity between nature and art. The images that symbolize the landscape are also associated with *guqin* 古琴 (zither) music, which attempts to evoke mountain and stream in many of the most famous songs of the *qin* repertoire. Mountains and streams, indeed, have come to define the aesthetic of *qin* music through the legends of Yu Boya 俞伯牙 and his *zhiyin* 知音 (“knower of the music,” i.e., friend), Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期, which will be discussed later. The *qin* is thus considered an instrument that expresses nature. Kenneth J. DeWoskin indicates in his essay “The Chinese *Qin*” that “the *guqin*’s aesthetic language is the language of nature.... The underlying notion was that *qin* music was not an ‘art,’ in the sense that art is ‘artificial.’ Rather it was an act of intimacy with nature itself, a kind of communion.”⁵³

Zong Bing 宗炳 (375–443) instituted landscape painting as an artistic genre and established the close association between nature, painting, and *qin* music. As recorded in Zhang Yanyuan’s 張彥遠 (812–877) *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Famous Paintings through History), Zong Bing painted the walls of his house with mountains when he became old and ill and could no longer travel among the mountains in order to “empty his mind and contemplate the Way, and to recline and wander among them.”⁵⁴ Zong Bing’s conflation of art and nature⁵⁵ was the impetus behind the long-standing

⁵² R. H. van Gulik, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute: An Essay in Ch’in Ideology* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1940), 56.

⁵³ Kenneth J. DeWoskin, “The Chinese *Qin*,” in Stephen Addiss, ed., *The Resonance of the *Qin* in East Asian Art* (New York: China Institute, 1999), 24 (21–34).

⁵⁴ Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai Minghua ji*, in vol. 1 of *Huashi congshu* (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1983), 83.

⁵⁵ Miranda Shaw, “Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Landscape Painting,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49, no. 2 (Apr.–Jun., 1988): 183–206. In this article, Shaw connects the rise of the landscape painting genre to the Taoist attitude toward nature, where mountains become a location for self-cultivation; traces the landscape elements in art prior to Zong Bing; and then connects the source of Zong Bing’s theory on landscape painting to the founder of Chan Buddhism, Huiyuan.

theoretical tradition in Chinese landscape painting called “*woyou*” 臥遊 (reclining and wandering), according to which the painted landscape becomes a space of voyage: the viewer enters the painting and journeys through the world that it embeds.⁵⁶ This conflation implies that art is not merely a satisfactory substitute for nature but a perfect natural equivalent. The achievement of this conflation became the measure of artistic success and the highest artistic ideal, and recognizing this conflation became the essence of connoisseurship, all of which subordinated nature to human perception. In her discussion of the emergence of the landscape genre, Susan Nelson mentions the emergence of an anthropocentric conception of nature in the eleventh century, as exemplified in Li Gonglin’s 李公麟 (1049–1106) illustration of *Guiqu lai ci* 歸去來辭 (Returning Home) by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (c. 365–427). The painting focuses on the poet’s response to nature rather than on nature itself.⁵⁷ This new trend evoked a strong reaction from Guo Xi 郭熙 (1023–c. 1085), who affirmed the supreme status of nature over human agency. He asks in *Linquan gaozhi* 林泉高致 (The Lofty Message of the Forests and Streams), “how can the enjoyment of the humane and the wise be represented merely by a figure’s pose?”⁵⁸ Guo questions art’s ability to supplant nature and insists on art’s inferiority to nature, thus rejecting Zong Bing’s ideal conflation of art and nature.

Apart from touring in the painted landscape as a replacement of touring in nature, Zong Bing further drew music into this issue of art and nature: “he often played zither and let the mountains reverberate.”⁵⁹ In Zong Bing’s view, it is the resonance between two art forms—music and painting—that functions as a conduit to bring forth the presence of nature. Susan Nelson indicates in her study titled “Picturing Listening” that “sound closely relates to nature—the ultimate truth of nature

⁵⁶ For a further discussion of the conflation between the real and unreal in Chinese visual culture, see chapter five: “Image as an Interaction with the Past” of my book titled *The Eternal Present of the Past: Illustration, Theater, and Reading in the Wanli Period, 1573–1619* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 202–250.

⁵⁷ Susan Nelson, “Picturing Listening: The Sight of Sound in Chinese Painting,” *Archives of Asian Art* 51 (1998/1999): 30–31 (30–55).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁹ Chen Deyuan, “Introduction to *Hainei qiguan*,” 2a, in Yang Erceng, ed., *Hainei qiguan*, Yibai tang 1610 edition, in *Zhongguo gudai banhua congkan*, 2nd series, 2b–3a (8:4–5).

conveyed through the sound and obtained by human through listening,”⁶⁰ in which nature makes the sound and the human subject is the passive receiver and the reactive agent of the sound. In Zong Bing’s case, the human subject is the active agent that produces the sound that summons nature forward through another artistic medium. Nature and art blend perfectly together in the painting of Zong Bing and in his mind.

Calligraphy, painting, and *qin* music thus form a tripartite relation that respectively embodies the force, captures the shape, and denotes the sound of nature. Ma Yuan presents these three aspects in an orderly and hierarchical manner in *Spring Saunter*: the calligraphy is placed at the upper right hand corner, the *qin* at the lower hand corner, while the painted landscape stretches between them. This arrangement seems to place the calligraphy and the *qin* as the encompassing elements that form the circumference of the natural scene, but at the same time also privileges calligraphy over painting, and the *qin* as the movement and focus of the painting is drawn gradually toward the calligraphy placed at the upper right hand corner. Ma seems to suggest that calligraphy, the most abstract of the three art forms, paradoxically triumphs in manifesting the essence of nature. The idea that calligraphy inscribes the shapes of nature is not strange, as it is commonly accepted that the Chinese characters were created according to the patterns of the nature. However, the idea that calligraphy, a silent medium, triumphs over the *qin*, the conduit of sound, seems eclectic and unfounded. Hence, a discussion of the “sound” element in *Spring Saunter* is necessary in order to unravel Ma’s unorthodox position.

THE PARADOX OF SOUND

The presence of musical instrument and music in *Spring Saunter* reminds its viewers of two allusions that connect nature, music, and art that are crucial in the reflections of the relation between art and nature. The first allusion is the legend of “gaoshan liushui” 高山流水 (mountains and streams) describing the friendship of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi through zither music, while the comments of Gu Kaizhi 顧凱之 (c. 345–406) concerning what is easy and what is hard to represent through the painting medium serves as the second allusion. The combination of zither, mountain, and stream

⁶⁰ Nelson, “Picturing Listening,” 32–34

immediately recalls the legendary story of the famous zither musician Yu Boya and his music connoisseur and companion Zhong Ziqi as told in *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (The Annals by the Lü) by Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (?–235 BC).

Boya played the zither, and Zhong Ziqi listened. He was thinking about Mountain Tai while playing the zither. Zhong Ziqi commented: “How good you are at the zither! The majestic quality [of your music] is like the Mountain Tai.” Later on, he was thinking about a stream while he continued playing. Zhong Ziqi commented: “How good you are at the zither! The flowing quality [of your music] is like the streams.” After Zhong Ziqi died, Boya broke the strings and discarded his zither, and never played again for the rest of his life, as he thought that there was no one left in the world to play the music for.⁶¹

This story culminates in the term “knowing the music” as the most truthful friendship in Chinese culture. The highest achievement in the aestheticism of Chinese zither music is the perfect conflation between art and nature, studied by Mitchell Clark in an article titled “The Wind Enters the Strings: Poetry and Poetics of Aeolian Qin.”⁶² Nature conceived by the musician and expressed through music is understood by the other mind perfectly in sync with the mind of the musician. Nature and the music blend perfectly together in the minds that truly know the music. The music allusion also invokes the relationship between art and nature as the focus of *Spring Saunter*, featuring as it does both the distant mountain and the near stream with the *guqin* instrument. This allusion associates the intimate understanding of the artistic achievements of both the calligrapher and the painter, as the painting demonstrates the ultimate homage to the artistic skill of the calligrapher. Sullivan suggests

⁶¹ Lü Buwei 呂不韋, *Lüshi chunqiu jishi* 呂氏春秋集釋, annotated by Xu Weiju 許維通, in vol. 11 of series 5 of *Guomin congshu* 國民叢書 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996), 14.6a.

⁶² Mitchell Clark, “The Wind Enters the Strings: Poetry and Poetics of Aeolian Qin,” *Experimental Musical Instruments* 10, no.3 (March 1995): 16–19.

that that is why the painting won the appreciation of the calligrapher and the emperor and became the winning piece of the competition,



Figure 12. Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1523), *Qinshi tu* 琴仕圖 (Portrait of the Zither Musician [Yang Jijing]), detail. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

This musical allusion appears quite frequently in Chinese painting, as, for example, with the famous Ming painter Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1523), who employed the images of mountain and stream to allude to his musician friend Yang Jijing 楊季靜 (c. 1477–1530) as Boya, and himself as the “knowing music” friend Ziqi in his portrait of Yang Jijing currently in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 12). The musician is framed by nature—mountain and stream—which is brought into presence in the listener’s mind by the best music. This formal arrangement is shared by *Spring Saunter*, in which the musician scholar is placed right in the middle between the distant mountain and the near stream. This arrangement alludes simultaneously to Zong Bing, who plays music to reverberate the painted mountain, and to the Boya and Ziqi’s legend of mountain and stream, which thus shows Ma Yuan’s intimate knowledge about the tradition of the perfect integration of art and nature.

However, rather than depicting the scholar playing the music like most of the paintings that allude to these stories, Ma arranges the musician's instrument lagging behind carried by the servant who is about to enter this space. This arrangement brings into focus a temporal sequence: the sound of nature is silenced by the intrusion of the human—birds “cannot cry,” while the entering instrument, temporarily silent, is going to replace the sound of nature to fill this space with music. Nature is about to be superseded by human arts through the progression of different sounds that represent the progression of time: birds cry (sound of nature) is replaced by birds cannot cry (silence of nature) which in turn is going to be replaced by the zither music (the sound of human art). In this temporal progression, what is captured by the still frame is the middle of the progression—birds cannot cry, which echoes in the procession of movements of the painting: the birds' flight toward the right whose original central place is replaced by the scholar, while the zither instrument carried by the servant is progressing toward the center. Moreover, the destination of this procession is the ultimate form of human creation—the calligraphy, eventually the whole space would be defined by human art rather than by nature, which, paradoxically, is the element that defines the essence of music and landscape painting.

This perception of nature becoming a space for human arts is best exemplified in a poem by the Northern Song's famous poet Su Che 蘇轍 (1039–1112) that accompanies the scene “Lingling Gorge” in Li Gonglin's painting of *Shanzhuang tu* 山莊圖 (Mountain Villa):

From the layered cliffs falls a flying stream,
 A breeze floats through the tall trees.
 Men sit in forgetfulness in the gorge,
 As if surrounded by lutes and harps.⁶³

Nature is the music here, while in Boya's story the music is nature. Art and nature are still perfectly blended and carefully balanced, but the status of priority is reversed: it is not art that resembles nature,

⁶³ Robert E. Harrist, *Painting and Private Life in Eleventh-Century China: Mountain Villa by Li Gonglin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 39–40.

but nature now resembles art. Nature is in service to art rather than vice versa, which is also shown in *Spring Saunter*.

The combination of the image of the zither, the flying bird, and the human gaze in *Spring Saunter* also reminds us of an allusion in the history of Chinese painting. The earliest acclaimed master Gu Kaizhi once said, as told by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) in *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, that “to paint ‘The hand sweeps over the five strings’ [instrument] is easy, but to paint ‘The eye escorts the homing geese’ is hard.”⁶⁴ This challenge has been taken up by numerous painters throughout history. One example is Cheng Jiasui’s fan painting, mentioned above. The gazing, likewise mentioned above, is not targeted at any bird but at the words of a couplet, derived from the fourteenth poem in a series of eighteen poems by Ji Kang 嵇康 (223–262) written for his elder brother, Ji Xi 嵇喜, that Gu attempts to illustrate. Ma Yuan retains the motif of flying bird in the original legend, which shows clearly his attempt to draw the viewer’s attention to this allusion, but realigns the gaze toward the calligraphy situated right next to the flying bird. This painting allusion is intertwined in a complex way: Ma and Cheng’s paintings both allude to Gu’s comments which in turn alludes to Ji Kang, who also in turn is associated with the zither music, as Ji’s *Qinfu* 琴賦 (Ode to Zither) is the most important piece that establishes the aesthetics of zither music.⁶⁵ In both Ma and Cheng’s paintings, art has supplanted nature to be the target of the gaze.

To further complicate the implication of this realignment, sound has played an unexpected role. In Gu’s original story, the depiction of music is through the appearance of the musician’s movement in making the music—“hand sweeps the five strings”—which shows that Gu understands the impossibility to picture the sound of music, while in his conception it is easy to paint the gesture of music making. To Gu, the difficulty of pictorial presentation lies in the “gaze” —a human-oriented perspective—that encompasses complicated human emotions by witnessing homing geese while the perceiver is on his journey away from home. This emotional gaze is accompanied by music that sings the perceiver’s deep thoughts caused by these emotions, while music in its ultimate form exists as

⁶⁴ Liu Yiqin 劉義慶, vol. 3 of *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏, annotated by Yu Jiayi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 839. Jonathan Chaves has a more detailed discussion on this legend in *Chinese Painter as Poet*, 26–29.

⁶⁵ For a translation and a study of Ji Kang’s *Ode of Qin*, see R. H. van Gulik, *Hsi K’ang and His Poetical Essay on the Lute* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1941).

poetry. Nature serves as the inspiration of human art in which to capture the movements of nature is easy while to capture the human emotion is hard. In a sense, Gu's comments show that the music/poetry could express complicated emotions while painting is difficult and the success of which really lies in the depiction of the gaze, which culminates in his painting theory—"to transmit the spirit all lies in the eye" or as in Gu's own words, "chuan shen e du jian" 傳神阿睹間.⁶⁶ In this allusion, nature serves as the passive agent that stimulates the active human agent's emotional response expressed through human arts—music and painting, while the balanced relation between art and nature is still carefully preserved as nature and art—the flying bird and the music are unified in the movements of gazing and hand-sweeping. Alluding to Gu's comments, Ma Yuan intends to lend the complex emotion to the gaze of his painted scholar who is situated right in the center of nature. The stimulant of his emotion, however, is not the nature represented by the flying bird but by human art represented by the calligraphy, which marks the essential difference between Gu and Ma. One more difference between them is that Gu, following the poet Ji Kang, gives the first emotional response through music, while Ma through painting first, as the musical instrument is still lagging behind. The third difference lies in Ma's clear arrangement of placing the flying bird right next to the calligraphy while directing the scholar's gaze to the calligraphy rather than the bird. His attempt to subvert the careful balance between art and nature in the painted figure's gaze is clear as that subtle balance is broken by the human agent who abandons the natural bird and favors the human art—the calligraphy. Undoubtedly, Ma triumphs the human arts—calligraphy and painting—over nature. Ma's position is understandable as he derives his inspiration of the *Spring Saunter* from the poetry.

This privilege of art over nature can be further detected by the pose of the painted scholar. What we see in *Spring Saunter* is the side and the back of the human subject gazing. According to Susan Nelson, who studies how the gesture and action of "listening" is presented in painting, the depiction of the back of the scholar is a picture of listening. Hence, this depicted gesture suggests that the human agent's "gaze" was drawn through the "sound"; however, the flying bird "cannot cry" and thus it is not the sound of the bird that draws the human's attention. Instead, the attention of the human is drawn to the calligraphy to which the bird is flying. The "sound" of the calligraphy is thus

⁶⁶ Liu Yiqin 劉義慶, vol. 3 of *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏, 849.

obvious as the human's gaze and the flying bird are both answering to its call. A paradox of sound is created by the cleverly juxtaposed bird and calligraphy—the silence of the supposedly sound-ridden nature versus the noise of the supposedly silent human art. The “sound” of the calligraphy triumphs over the sound of nature to draw human attention. The “sound” of the calligraphy could be understood as two-fold. First, the “sound” could come from the poetry of the two calligraphic lines: Su Shi has advocated that calligraphy, like poetry, is a form of poetic expression. This poetic “sound” is demonstrated clearly in Su's praise of Li Gonglin's painting that illustrates Wang Wei's famous poem “Weicheng qu” 渭城曲 (The Song of Weicheng):

He Kan's singing of “Weicheng” is not seen,
 The old men recounted emptily the singing of Mi Jiarong.
 Only Longmian recognizes the true enthusiasm
 And painted the sound beyond the meaning of Yang Pass.⁶⁷

Second, this “sound” of calligraphy also recalls Wei *furen's* “Map of the Brush” (quoted above) in which she compares the slanting stroke to the sound of nature: “[The forward-slanting stroke] is like the broken waves which sound of thunder.” The silent stroke not only is not silent, but makes a sound as loud as the thunder which traditionally is conceived of as a sound that brings enlightenment through shock. This implication of the calligraphic “sound” enhances Ma Yuan's intention to privilege calligraphy over both painting and music as the all-encompassing medium of nature, while, like the bird, the zither in *Spring Saunter* is enclosed in a bag and thus has yet to make a sound. Nature is depicted to form a big hollow—the echo chamber—for the sound of art to vibrate, as advocated by Zong Bing. However, in Zong's case, the human art (music) brings alive the other form of human art (landscape painting) and thus results in the perfect blending of art and nature—to reach nature through art, and nature and art have become one. The differences between Ma Yuan and Zong Bing show that Ma Yuan attempts to create a pictorial paradox that advocates the autonomous nature of

⁶⁷ Su Shi, “Writing after Lin Cizhong Acquired *Picture of Return* and *Picture of Yang Pass* by Li Boshi” 書林次中所得李伯時(歸去來(陽關)二圖後, in Yan Qizhong, *Su Shi lun wenyi*, 231.

art which is the source of sound that is the reversal of Zhuanzi's concept of the Pipe of Heaven in which nature is the source of sound. What the empty hollow in the middle ground in *Spring Saunter*, functioning as the acoustic chamber, has resonated is the "sound" of the calligraphy rather than the sound of nature or the sound of music. And the calligraphy, like its creator, resides majestically and overlooks the space defined both by art and nature that is dominated and disciplined by its sound.

The wandering scholar in *Spring Saunter* will eventually sit down and play his zither in between the mountain and the stream as in Tang Yin's portrait of Yang Jijing. The zither music will fill this immense but limited space, and nature will reverberate under this human-created art. As Chinese poetry is music and Chinese music is the sound of poetry, the sounding arts—calligraphy, poetry, and music—sing and harmonize with each other in *Spring Saunter*, and bring nature into their harmonic sphere. Through these allusions in Chinese music and art, Ma Yuan declares that art triumphs over nature, while the human agencies, including the empress and the painter himself, as artists, recreate nature in their triumphant media and, as connoisseurs, understand perfectly each other's artistic skills.

CONCLUSION

Within this space of the order and hierarchy of Confucian discipline, *Spring Saunter* is also packed with paradoxes that recall the paradoxes inherent in Daoist aesthetics. The paradoxes emerge from the pictorial designs and the interaction between the image and the word—the paradox of cause and effect, of space, and of sound. All remind us of the paradoxes that define the Daoist aesthetics of painting and music—"da yin xi sheng" 大音稀聲 (the great music lies in spare notes) and "da xiang wu xing" 大象無形 (the great image lies in no form).⁶⁸ In the case of *Spring Saunter*, the seemingly silent art manifests sound, while sounding nature and the instrument are silent. These paradoxes correspond to the Daoist concept that the great exists in the minimal and the without exists in the within. In *Spring Saunter*, the seemingly natural space is emptied of natural and musical sound so that it can be filled with the sound of art, which is the manifestation of the Daoist idea of the fullness existing in the ultimate emptiness. The paradoxes of cause and effect in the painting echo the Daoist

⁶⁸ Laozi 老子, *Laozi jixun* 老子集訓, ed. Chen Zhu 陳柱, in vol. 5 of series 5 of *Guomin congshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1996), 2.73.

concept of knowing one end by abiding in the opposite end as demonstrated in chapter twenty-eight of *Daodejing*, which advocates “knowing the strong but abiding in the weak is to be the streams of the world. To be the streams of the world, then the permanent virtue would not be lost.... Knowing the glory but abiding in humility is to be the valley of the world. To be the valley of the world, then the permanent virtue will be full.”⁶⁹ The stream and the valley in *Spring Saunter* echo the stream and the valley in the above passage of *Daodejing* that enhance the fullness and the permanency of human art, which will not be lost as testified by the survival of the painting itself. In *Spring Saunter*, Ma Yuan presents a perfect vision of a world governed by the Confucian order that is defined with Daoist aesthetics.

This highly controversial painting is actually a very successful example of painting as poetry: word and image not only form a holistic organic entity, but the interrelation between the two clearly becomes the key to unlocking the meaning of the painting. As a court painter, Ma Yuan was classified by Dong Qichang (1555–1639) as a professional artist of the Northern School, but *Spring Saunter* shows that this putatively unsophisticated professional has the same degree of poetic sophistication as the literati masters of the Southern School—the same subtle expression, the same poetic sensitivity.⁷⁰ The effort to conflate poetry and painting unites all Chinese artists of the highest stamp. Regardless in which painting traditions an artist is trained, a master painter is comparable to a poet in the field of visual arts.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 145.

⁷⁰ The Chinese scholar Li Dongfeng 李东风 has a brief discussion on how literati's taste influenced the style of court painting in the Southern Song dynasty. See “Wenren yiqu dui Nan Song yuanti shanshui hua de yinxiang” 文人意趣对南宋院体山水画的影响, *Nanjing yishu xueyuan xuebao* 南京艺术学院学报, no. 3 (2007): 65–67.

Research Notes on Seals in Late Qing Artistic and Intellectual Life

Qianshen Bai

Wu Dacheng 吳大澂 (1835–1902),¹ the central figure of this study, was a native of Suzhou, a city about fifty miles west of Shanghai. In 1860, his hometown, Suzhou, had been occupied by the army of the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864), so his family fled to Shanghai for refuge. By this time, several cities in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces had fallen to the Taiping Rebellion, and the situation had grown dangerous. Shanghai, however, was protected as an important treaty city and commercial center by the armies of both the Qing government and armed forces led by Westerners.² While in Shanghai, Wu Dacheng wrote daily in his diary, leaving brief, accurate records of the cultural and artistic activities of the Shanghai literati that show that carving seals was one of his routine activities.³ For instance, (on the eighth day of the first month), “I carved two seals for Yu Zimei 郁子梅.” (On the ninth day), “I made a seal ‘Fisherman of Lake Jade’ (Yuhu diaotu 玉湖釣徒) for Zimei using the thin red seal characters of the Yuan dynasty.” (On the eighteenth day), “I carved two stone seals for Jin Fangyu 金

¹ English biographies of several late Qing collector-officials mentioned in this article, including Wu Dacheng, are in Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1944). Also, Shana Julia Brown's new book *Pastimes: From Art and Antiquarianism to Modern Chinese Historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), is particularly relevant to this article. She discusses several collectors mentioned here.

² See Yu Xingmin 于醒民, *Shanghai, 1862 nian* 上海, 1862 年 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1991), 48–91.

³ Wu Dacheng (吳大澂), *Kezhai riji* 愙齋日記, in Qi Junzao, Wen Tingshi, Wu Dacheng 祁寯藻, 文廷式, 吳大澂, et al., *Qinghe biji jiuzhong* 青鶴筆記九種 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 124.

方輿 and Jin Runfang 金潤方.” (On the nineteenth day), “under the lamp, I made a thin red character seal for Fang Dingwen 方鼎文.” (On the twenty-ninth day), “My landlord [Wu Yun 吳雲] asked me to carve an ivory seal of four thin red characters that read ‘The Same Principle Appears in Different Matters’ (Litong shiyi 理同事異).” (On the tenth day [of the second month]), “I carved a courtesy name seal for Zhou Cunbo 周存伯 in the style of Han seals.” (On the eleventh day), “My landlord prepared an excellent Tianhuang 田黃 stone and asked me to carve in eight thin red characters ‘The Life-Long Treasure of Wu Yun from Guian’ (Guian Wu Yun pingsheng zhenbi 歸安吳雲平生珍秘).” (On the eighth day [of the third month]), “I made a six-character seal in thin red characters that reads ‘Left Over from the War in the Year of Gengshen’ (Gengshen jiehuo zhiyu 庚申劫火之餘), for Pan Jiaopo 潘椒坡.” (On the ninth day), “Weiqiao 維喬 left me two stones and asked me to carve name and style name seals for Wang Yushan 王雨山, Director-general of Grain Transport. Since my cousin Zhao Jiru 趙吉如 is going to return to his parents in Taizhou 泰州 tomorrow and I want him to deliver the seals, I hurried their carving. Dai Liting 戴禮庭 came to ask me to carve two name seals for Chen Xinfu 陳新甫.”⁴

In this short diary covering only seventy-two days (from New Year’s Day to the third day of the third month of 1861), Wu Dacheng carved as many as twenty seals from different materials, including ivory and various types of stone. Among these seals, some had texts in the style of Han seals, others imitated seals of the Song and Yuan dynasties carved with thin red lines. Most people requesting seals from Wu belonged to the gentry of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces who had sought refuge in Shanghai during the Taiping Rebellion and were fond of art. Among this gentry, Zhou Xian 周閑 (courtesy name Cunbo 存伯, 1820–1875), a painter who also excelled at seal carving, and Pan Jiaopo (Pan Jiefan 潘介繁, 1828–1893), a cousin of the great collector Pan Zuyin 潘祖蔭 (1830–1890), asked Wu to carve their collection seals, as did the famous collector Wu Yun 吳雲 (1811–1883), mentioned above as Wu Dacheng’s landlord. Not only did Wu Yun ask Wu Dacheng to carve seals several times, but he also offered precious Tianhuang stones for his collection seals, which showed his great confidence in and full respect for Wu Dacheng’s artistry. From these instances, we realize that by this time Wu Dacheng

⁴ Wu Dacheng, *Kezhai riji*, 126, 128–129, 132, 137, 143–144.

had reached such a high level of seal carving and thus earned a high reputation that it is reasonable to infer that he began to carve seals at an early age.

About three hundred years before Wu Dacheng carved seals in Shanghai, Chinese literatus seal carving entered its heyday in the second half of the sixteenth century; subsequently, it remained a major form of artistic expression for the educated. In Wu Dacheng's era, seals not only were indispensable adjuncts to literati art production, especially in the making of calligraphies and paintings, but many of the elite made their own seals. For instance, Wu's friend Zeng Jize 曾纪泽 (1839–1890) so loved carving seals that he made a number of them for his European friends while serving as China's ambassador to England. In Wu Dacheng's hometown of Suzhou, a center of literati art, seal carving was more popular than in most other areas of China. What interests us most, however, is that, while Shanghai was under the threat of the Taiping Rebellion and the future of the city was uncertain, Wu Dacheng diligently carved seals, regardless — even war could not deter his passion for this art.

However, several years later, when Wu had passed the *jinshi* examination in 1868 and became a government official, his seal production fell significantly. By then, the Taiping Rebellion had been over for several years, and the political situation of the Qing was more stable than ten years earlier. From Wu's diaries of that period, we find that he carved seals only occasionally. It is likely that, although Wu Dacheng found himself a competent seal carver, he was not the best among his contemporaries. In a letter to his close friend Wang Yirong 王懿榮 (1845–1900) in the early 1870s in Beijing, Wu writes: "You asked me to make a seal for you, the stone seems to be *tianhai*, the nob atop is also very refined. I am afraid that my awkward carving will not match it. What can I do?! I will imitate seven characters from bronze inscriptions [when making this seal]. I will finish it within a few days. It is you, my brother, who asked me to carve it, I dare not decline. But my carving is far inferior to Shicha's carving."⁵ Shicha was the courtesy name of Hu Yizan 胡義贊 (1831–after 1904), a distinguished seal carver who then was also in Beijing. In the same time, there was also Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829–1884), who was one of the best seal carvers of the late Qing. The reason Wu Dache did not carve as many seals as he did before becoming an official is also probably because, in comparison

⁵ In *Jilinsheng tushuguan cang mingren shouzha*, 5: 190.

to calligraphy, this art is more complicated and time-consuming. As a result, after Wu Dacheng began his official career, he seldom carved seals as gifts and instead wrote specimens of calligraphy.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a trend among seal carvers to use great seal script in making seals. Wu Dacheng was an authority on paleography and skillful at great seal script, so, even after becoming an official, he was sometimes asked to draft designs of seals for others. In a letter to his friend Wang Yirong, Wu mentioned that Pan Zuyin asked him to write out a draft for a seal.⁶ Wu also occasionally carved seals for others of his best friends. For instance, around 1873, he carved a small seal for Wu Yun.⁷ Wu Dacheng also made seals for Chen Jieqi 陳介祺 (1813–1884). In a letter to Chen in 1876, Wu writes: “The red character seal ‘Mirror in the Collection of the Studio of Two Hundred Mirrors’ (Er bai jing zhai cang jing 二百鏡齋藏鏡) requested by you will be sent out as soon as I finish it, but I am afraid that it will not be as classic and elegant as seals made by Xiquan 西泉 [Wang Shijing 王石經, 1833–1918].”⁸

In the letters between Wu Dacheng and Chen Jieqi, there is occasional mention of the art of seal carving. For instance, Chen Jieqi referred to seal carving in a letter to Wu on the fifteenth of the eleventh month of 1873: “Seal carving should exclude the habits of contemporary seal carvers and imitate the brush method of inscriptions on ancient bronze vessels and ancient seals; only then can one surpass ancient precedents.” In the same letter, Chen succinctly outlined chisel techniques in carving seals.⁹ On the fifth day of the first month of the following year, Wu replied that: “You mentioned that imitating the brush method of inscriptions on ancient bronze vessels and ancient

⁶ Wu Dacheng, *Wu kezhai chidu* 吳憲齋尺牘 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1919), unpaginated.

⁷ A letter to Wu Dacheng from Wu Yun included in *Liangleixuan chidu* 兩疊軒尺牘 reads: “Your reply had a small seal reading ‘ji xiang 吉羊,’ which is quite fine. I hope you can make me an identical one. The two characters ‘ji xiang’ look good arranged horizontally, but the size of *xiang* should be shrunk to 80%. I have collected two jade sheep, one red, one white, and I will reward you with one of them in the future. What do you think?” See *juan* 10, 4b. In the same letter, Wu Yun mentions that he had received a letter from Wu Dacheng in which Wu says that he had been appointed to oversee the provincial examinations. This dates the letter to 1873, when Wu Dacheng served as Provincial Education Commissioner of Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

⁸ Wu Dacheng, *Wu kezhai chidu*, 112.

⁹ Chen Jieqi, *Fuzhai chidu* 簠齋尺牘 (Taipei: Guting shuwu, 1969), 13.

seals could change the bad habits of contemporary seal carvers. I understand this idea in my heart, but the practice of my hands is still insufficient to achieve this goal. Besides, I have many avocations that prevent me from concentrating on this. Though seal carving is something a literatus does only in his leisure, it requires much hard work to achieve profound understanding."¹⁰

Though Wu might not have had enough time to carve as many seals as he wanted, he frequently befriended those excellent at seal carving. Thus, when in Suzhou and Shanghai in the 1860s–1870s, he kept close relationships with Weng Danian 翁大年 (1911–1891) and Zhou Xian. When he was an official at the Hanlin Academy in Beijing in the early 1870s, he met several distinguished seal carvers, including Shi Zhongchen 史仲辰, Hu Yizan 胡義贊 (1831–ca. 1904), and Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829–1884). Later, introduced by Chen Jieqi, he got to know the famous seal carver Wang Shijing from Shandong.

In the Qing dynasty, government officials holding provincial posts typically hired private secretaries to assist them with everyday government affairs. From 1873 to 1895, Wu Dacheng was appointed to several posts in the provinces, and seal carvers often numbered among his private secretaries. From 1876 to 1879, Chen Peigang 陳佩綱 (d. 1879), a seal carver from Shandong, worked for Wu Dacheng. Chen, assisting Wu on routine matters, carved seals and made rubbings for Wu and Wu's friends in his free time. From 1885 to 1890, Yin Yuannai 尹元鼐 (d. 1894), another Shandong seal carver, worked as Wu Dacheng's secretary. From 1888 to 1889, Huang Shiling 黃士陵 (1849–1908) from Anhui became Wu's secretary. About 1893 to 1895, the seal carver Wu Changshuo 吳昌碩 (1844–1927) worked for him. Both Huang Shiling and Wu Changshuo were regarded as the most accomplished and influential seal carvers of the late Qing after the death of Zhao Zhiqian; both carved seals for Wu Dacheng. One may view Wu as a patron of these seal carvers, but in the context of nineteenth-century China, the relationship between them and Wu meant that they were also his artist friends and intellectual companions.

If Wu Dacheng hardly carved seals after becoming a government official, he became actively engaged in collecting ancient seals after improvements in his financial situation. His increased economic means made him an important collector of ancient seals in a century that was a golden age

¹⁰ Wu Dacheng, *Wu kezhai chidu*, 16.

for excavating, collecting, and studying ancient seals. The large-scale collecting and researching of ancient seals began in the Daoguang reign,¹¹ developed further in Wu Dacheng's era, and has been much studied in recent times. Below are selected passages on collecting ancient seals taken from letters between Wu and his friends.

While serving as Provincial Education Commissioner of Shaanxi and Gansu, on the seventh month, thirtieth day of 1875, Wu Dacheng wrote to the scholar-collector Wang Yirong 王懿榮, a native of Shandong then living in Beijing, to inform him that he had bought ten bronze seals.¹² On the twelfth month, ninth day of the same year, in another letter to Wang, Wu notes that “the jade seal of Wang Cheng 王暹 is the best ... and he has acquired another twenty ancient seal impressions in clay (*fengni* 封泥).”¹³ In a letter to Wang Yirong of the fifth day of the second month, 1887, Wu mentions that “I recently acquired four ancient jade seals from Zhao Qianshi's 趙謙士 collection. As I have some free time, I will have Boyuan 伯元 make impressions for you.”¹⁴

Antique dealers lent major assistance to Wu Dacheng's acquisition of seal stones. We know at least three dealers who played this role. Xu Xi 徐熙 (courtesy name Hanqing 翰卿) was a dealer from Wu Dacheng's hometown, Suzhou. With his great knowledge of southern collections, Xu Xi often assisted Wu Dacheng in purchasing seals from collectors in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. In early 1887, Wu wrote to Xu Xi: “In the year before last, Yi Yuan 怡園 gave me a seal book that contains impressions of seals in his collection. Now, I am wondering whether the seals in the present purchase [from the Yi Yuan collection] are included in his seal book. Could you please lend me impressions [of the seals to be purchased] so I may check on this, and then we can negotiate prices?”¹⁵ Yi Yuan was a

¹¹ Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) does not appear to have made a compilation of seal impressions, although he was the pivotal figure in the study of ancient metal and stone objects during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns (1736–1820). However, Ruan Yuan's student Zhang Tingji 張廷濟 (1768–1848) collected ancient seals; his collection later came into Wu Yun's hands.

¹² *Qingdai mingren shouzha* 清代名人手箴 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2004), vol. 2: 109.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

garden that belonged to the renowned collector Gu Wenbin 顧文彬 (1811–1889) and thus is a reference to Gu: that is, Wu Dacheng and Xu Xi are discussing the purchase of Gu Wenbin's seal collection. This exchange occurred in 1887, two years before Gu's death, who perhaps wanted to sell his seal collection because of advancing age.

Another letter concerns price negotiations:

From the seal impressions in the volume you showed me the other day, I have carefully selected forty more seals. As for the seals “Junsima 軍司馬,” “Buqujiang 部曲將” (Division Commander), and “*manyi* 蠻夷” (barbarian), all are easy to acquire. I offer only four hundred *jin* 金 for them not because I want to haggle over every ounce but because a higher price is unaffordable for me. I would appreciate it if you could inquire about the price of the jade seal “*Wang Tong* 王童” (which I had seen before) for me. I am returning the volume of seal impressions.¹⁶

During the 1880s, Wu often mentioned new acquisitions of ancient seals in his letters to Xu Xi. “[I purchased] from [a collector in the county of] Weixian 濰縣 five hundred or so bronze seals and one hundred or so ancient seals; all are fine works and cost one thousand taels of silver, not too high a price. Owing to the purchase of such a large number of seals, my recent economic situation has become difficult.”¹⁷ “This autumn, I gained nine hundred and forty or so seals from Weixian. It is not easy for me to make this many seal impressions.”¹⁸

I obtained a gold seal that weighs nine *qian* 錢. The half price is less than twenty taels of silver, so obviously it is not a fake. According to the dealer in Weixian, he paid ten taels for it, and its degree of purity is the same as the money of Ying 郢 (Ying *yuan* 郢爰). I also acquired a silver seal “Tiger Teeth General” (Huya jiangjun 虎牙將軍) with

¹⁶ Ibid., 65–66.

¹⁷ *Wu Dacheng shouzha* 吳大澂手劄 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2007), 7–8.

¹⁸ Ibid., 151.

a turtle knob; it is quite finely made. However, I have not seen other seals of generals made from silver. Recently, I thoroughly checked in *People Mentioned in Official Histories Arranged by Family Name and Rhyme Order* (Shi xing yunbian 史姓韻編), which I acquired recently,¹⁹ and found one hundred and thirty-eight seals bearing the names of well-known people from the Han to Sui dynasties. I plan to have blocks carved to print a book of those seals. Among the people listed, Zhang Cang 張蒼, Ji Xin 紀信, Gongsun He 公孫賀, Li Guang 李廣, Zhao Chongguo 趙充國, Gongsun Hong 公孫弘, Wang Yang 王陽, and Wang Cheng 王成 are most famous.²⁰

It appears from Wu's letters that Weixian County in Shandong province was a major source for Wu Dacheng's ancient seals. In a letter to Sheng Xuanhuai 盛宣懷 (1845–1900), a government official who often helped Wu Dacheng in antiques transactions, Wu mention that “The Gao family in Weixian has a collection of six hundred and thirty ancient bronze seals, and I have already ordered them for a hundred taels of silver.”²¹ There were at least two dealers in Weixian who helped Wu purchase seals. The first one was Pei Yiqing 裴儀卿. A few surviving letters from Wu Dacheng to Pei Yiqing show us that Wu purchased ancient seals from Pei. For instance, in a letter written to Pei on New Year's Eve, 1889, Wu haggled over the prices of 119 pre-Qin seals and 220 Han seals. Seventeen days later, in a letter written on the seventeenth day of the first month of 1890, Wu told Pei that he had decided to purchase eighty Qin-Han seals and a jade seal from him.²²

Wang Shijing, a distinguished seal carver mentioned above, was the second of Wu Dacheng's known dealers. In a letter to Sheng Xuanhuai, Wu writes: “Wang Xiquan 王西泉, who is Chen

¹⁹ This reference book was compiled by Bao Tingbo and Wang Huizu in the Qing dynasty. It classifies figures who appear in the twenty-four official dynastic histories, first by family name, then by rhyme order. A short biography is attached to each person's entry.

²⁰ Ibid., 53.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Wu Dacheng, *Wu Dacheng shuzha* 吳大澂書札 (manuscript in the collection of the National Library, Beijing), call number 17737, album 4.

Shjieqi's relative and friend, came to Bian 汴 [modern Kaifeng 開封] last winter and told me about one hundred and two fine ancient bronze and jade seals. I have offered eight hundred taels of silver for these seals. If this is not sufficient, I will not pursue them."²³

Although the documents concerning seal collecting that we have discussed are a small portion of the letters between Wu Dacheng and his friends, it is clear he was industrious in collecting ancient seals. In the late 1880s, his seal collection had over two thousand pieces, and some of his studio names related to his seal collection, including "Studio of Three Hundred Ancient Seals" (*Sanbai guxi zhai* 三百古鈐齋), "Studio of One Thousand Seals" (*Qiansi zhai* 千鈐齋), "Studio of Ten Seals of Military Generals" (*Shi jiangjunyin zhai* 十將軍印齋), and "Studio of Twenty-Eight Seals of Military Generals" (*Ershiba jiangjunyin zhai* 二十八將軍印齋).

Wu Dacheng's enthusiasm in collecting ancient seals was not an isolated case in the second half of the nineteenth century. Quite a few of Wu's friends had large collections of seals. Learning from each other, Wu and his friends exchanged information about seals. Wu Dacheng's mentor Wu Yun was a member of this network. Wu Yun had served as Prefect of Suzhou, settling in Suzhou after retirement. In 1861, Wu Dacheng had served as Wu Yun's secretary when he took refuge in Shanghai. Wu Yun was an important collector in the late Qing dynasty, the main part of whose collection came from Zhang Tingji 張廷濟 (1768–1848), a disciple of Ruan Yuan 阮元.

In the letters above, Wu Dacheng often mentioned seal collections from Weixian. Weixian was undoubtedly the most important center of seal-collecting activities in the late Qing dynasty; for one thing, the foremost late Qing collector Chen Jieqi was a native there. Chen Jieqi gained his *jinshi* degree in 1845, and, after serving briefly in the capital, he returned to his hometown for the rest of his life, spending most of his time collecting and studying antiques.²⁴ Whether judged by quantity or quality, Chen Jieqi was undoubtedly the greatest collector of ancient seals of his time or even in

²³ Wang Ermin 王爾敏, Chen Shanwei 陳善偉, ed., *Jindai mingren shouzha zhenji* 近代名人手劄真跡, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1991).

²⁴ There are a number of recent studies of Chen Jieqi. See Lu Mingjun 陸明君, *Fuzhai yanjiu* 簠齋研究 (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 2004); see also Chen Zhenlian et al., eds., *Chen Jieqi xueshu sixiang ji chengjiu yantaohui lunwenji* 陳介祺學術思想及成就研討會論文集 (Hangzhou: Xiling yinshe chubanshe, 2005).

Chinese history. One of his studio names, “House of Ten Thousand Seals” (Wanyin lou 萬印樓), boasts of the richness of its owner’s seal collection.

Chen Jieqi not only collected ancient seals but amassed clay impressions (*fengni* 封泥) of them. In ancient times, one of the major functions of official seals was to secure government documents by pressing a seal into a pat of wet clay that lay across the cord with which a document was tied up. Once its sealing clay had dried, a document could not be accessed without breaking its clay seal, signaling that its security had been breached. Seal impressions in clay were first discovered in recent times in the 1840s. About the 1860s and 1870s, a huge quantity of clay seal impressions was discovered in Shandong, Chen Jieqi’s home province. Chen Jieqi immediately realized their historical and artistic value and began to collect them, quickly becoming a major collector of these items.²⁵

Chen Jieqi was a friend of Wu Dacheng’s grandfather Han Chong 韓崇 (1873–1860), who once served as an official in Shandong. Although Wu Dacheng and Chen Jieqi never met, they communicated and discussed academic issues via correspondence for many years, viewing each other as a good friend. Most of the letters between them survive to today and contain many discussions of ancient seals.²⁶ Late Qing scholar-collectors advocated large-scale research into ancient seals. Although they tried to collect as many research materials as possible, no one had the financial means and social network to become dominant in this field. For this reason, to obtain seal materials from other scholar-collectors’ collections, they frequently exchanged seal impressions. Because Chen Jieqi had the largest seal collection, many friends urged him to compile seal books. However, the quantity of his seals was large, and painstaking care was needed to press each seal on paper using oil-based seal paste, a process that had to be repeated for each of the copies needed for distributing a multi-volume seal book to each of his seal-collecting friends. Thus, even though Chen was willing to make seal books based on his collection for distribution among his friends and even received money from them to do so, he never produced a complete set of manuals for his seal collection.

²⁵ For a scholarly discussion of the discovery and research history of clay seal impressions, see Su Weizu 孫慰祖, *Fengni: Faxian yu yanjiu* 封泥：發現與研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2002).

²⁶ For instance, in several letters of 1875 to Chen Jieqi, Wu Dachen discusses the identification and meaning of characters on ancient seals. See Wu Dachen, *Wu kezhai chidu*, 56–57, 61–63.

But Wu Dacheng did not give up the idea of producing a comprehensive set of seal books for Chen Jieqi's collection, especially as he had already paid Chen three hundred silver taels to do this. In the eighth month of the eleventh year of the Guangxu reign (1885), a year after Chen Jieqi's death, Wu Dacheng wrote to Chen Jieqi's grandson Chen Huzeng 陈祜曾:

The incomplete state of the compilation of the seals in your family collection is an unfortunate aspect of your grandfather's life. I received a letter from a relative, the Education Commissioner Wang Liumen 汪柳门 [Wang Mingluan 汪鸣銓, 1839–1907], who mentioned that you are continuing the pursuits of your grandfather and thinking about completing his unfinished work. Because I had sent your grandfather three hundred taels of silver, you plan to send me a few sets of the seal books when they are completed. I am grateful and admire what you are doing. But because the seal books will contain more than eight thousand impressions compiled into many volumes, it is not easy to check and count them. So, I am sending Yin Boyuan to Qingji to help you with this matter and make it easier for you to finish. If your grandfather made a complete table of contents when he was alive, you could use the order of this table to divide the impressions into different periods and into official and private seals to arrive at an accurate classification of the collection.²⁷

Younger, energetic, and assisted by secretaries good at seal carving, Wu Dacheng was able to complete his most comprehensive seal book, *Seal Book of the Studio of Sixteen Golden Commander's Tallies* (Shiliu Jinfuzhai Yincun 十六金符齋印存), during his tenure as Governor of Guangdong province. On the completion of this seal book in the seventh month of 1888, Wu Dacheng wrote a poem on its cover:

After collecting seals for sixteen years, I have accumulated two thousand seals. The precious treasure of ancient seals I have received bear words earlier even than the

²⁷ Wu Dacheng, *Wu Dacheng shuzha* (manuscript in the collection of the National Library), call number 17773, album 3.

texts burned by the First Emperor of the Qin. These seals are official or private seals from the Han to Wei dynasties whose material of metal or jade are fine and firm. These seals are categorized by their types of knob, with similar knobs classified together, but they are not carefully arranged chronologically. There are twenty seal books whose contents were compiled at random. Who was responsible for this work? [Huang] Mufu 黃穆父 and [Yin] Bohuan 尹伯圜.²⁸

Wang Tongyu 王同愈 (1856–1941), who served as Wu Dacheng's secretary in Guangzhou at this time, prepared a detailed description:

In the fourteenth year of the Guangxu reign, I was at Kezhai's [Wu Dacheng] office in Guangzhou, and, there not being much work in the office, Master Wu [Dacheng] showed us two thousand or so seals, including ancient seals from the Zhou and Qin dynasties as well as official and private seals from the Han and the Wei from his collection. He asked each of us (me, Tao Zhongping 陶仲平 of Yuanhe 元和, Huang Mufu of Yixian 黟縣, and Yin Bohuan of Zhucheng 諸城) to make five sets of impressions of these seals, keeping one set for ourselves. Cherishing the idea that we will have impressions of these seals for a long time to come, we happily accepted the assignment and completed the work in three months. Each set contains twenty-six volumes. Both Mufu and Bohuan, who are good at seal carving, said that acquiring one set of these volumes was the equivalent of a farmer getting the best fertile land. I inscribed a list of contents at the beginning of each volume for convenience in looking up entries.²⁹

According to Wang Tongyu, Wu Dacheng gifted the seal books to those of his friends who shared his interest in this subject.

²⁸ See Gu Tinglong, *Wu Kezhai xianaheng nianpu*, 264.

²⁹ Gu Tinglong ed., *Wang Tongyu ji* 王同愈集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), 28–29.

Extensive, large-scale searches for ancient seals in the later nineteenth century were accompanied by systematic and sophisticated research into the history of these seals and related cultural and institutional phenomena. About 1831, Qu Zhongrong 瞿中溶 (1769–1842) completed the manuscript *Studies of Ancient Official Seals* (Jigu guanyin kao 集古官印考).³⁰ Qu's work has been regarded by scholars as a turning point in the research history of Chinese seals because of its exclusive focus on ancient officials. In studying these seals, Qu drew extensively on textual information about government institutions and geography found in official histories. For instance, Qu illustrates a seal that reads "Pingjin hou yin" 平津侯印 (Seal of the Marquis of Pingjin). After this seal, Qu attaches a research entry in which he discusses when this honorific title was established and to whom it was granted, the geographical location of Pingjin, and the textual sources of this information.

Qu Zhongrong's research methods had a profound influence on later scholars. For instance, Wu Yun published three studies on ancient seals, all of them modeled on Qu's approach, in which each seal impression is followed by a research entry. Wu Yun's three seal studies are the four-volume *Studies of the Ancient Seals in the Collection of the Studio of Two Hundred Versions of Lanting xu* (Erbai Lantingzhai Guyin Kaocang 二百蘭亭齋古印考藏, 1864), which included seventy-eight official seals; the twelve-volume *Ancient Bronze Seals in the Collection of the Studio of Two Hundred Versions of Lanting xu* (Erbai Lantingzhai gutongyin cun 二百蘭亭齋古銅印存, 1876), which added private seals to the seal book made in 1864 mentioned above; and the nine-volume *Studies of the Seals in the Collection of Lianglei Studio* (Liangleixuan Yinkao Mancun 兩壘軒印考漫, 1881). The format of these three works is slightly different from Qu's: in Wu Yun's books, each page has only one seal impression with a drawing of that seal's knob beneath; annotations and identification are on the following page.

Wu Dacheng joined this scholarly trend, too, but using an interesting research approach in his two published books on seals. One, *Studies of Seals of Eminent People of the Zhou, Qin, and Han* (Zhou Qin Lianghan Mingrenyin Kao 周秦兩漢名人印考) identifies seals that may have belonged to famous figures appearing in the histories of the Zhou, Qin, and Han. The other of Wu Dacheng's books

³⁰ For a discussion of the life and scholarly works of Qu Zhongrong, see Sun Xun 孫洵, "Lun Qingdai xuezhe Qu Zhongrong zhu Jigu Guanyin Kaozheng de shidai beijing, xueshu yuanyuan yu yiyi" 論清代學者瞿中溶著 集古官印考證的時代背景、學術淵源與意義, in *Gushan zhengyin: Xiling yinshe guoji yinxue fenghui lunwenji* 孤山證印: 西泠印社國際印學峰會論文集 (Hangzhou: Xiling yinshe chubanshe, 2005), 166–174.

on seal research is *Seal Book Sequel to One Hundred Family Names* (Xu Baijiaxing yinpu 續百家姓印譜). In this book, Wu uses family names found on ancient seals that are not included in the so-called *Book of Family Names* (Baijia xing 百家姓).

As was mentioned previously, nineteenth-century collectors also collected clay seal impressions. Wu Shifen 吳式芬 (1796–1856) studied clay seal impressions, an effort in which he was later joined by his in-law Chen Jieqi. Their incomplete research was published in 1903 as *Brief Study of Clay Seal Impressions* (Fengni kaolue 封泥考略). This book contains research entries for rubbings of 849 clay seal impressions using Qu Zhongrong's research method.

In the 1870s, Chen Jieqi, the greatest collector of clay seal impressions, sent Wu Dacheng hundreds of rubbings of the impressions in his collection. In 1880, based on these rubbings, Wu wrote the unpublished "Studies of Clay Seal Impressions in the Collection of Fuzhai" (Fuzhai Zangfengni Kaoshi 簠齋臧封泥考釋). Wu Dacheng's manuscript is incomplete. But in the finished entries, one finds Wu Dacheng's research method is the same as that of Wu Shifen and Chen Jieqi. Because Wu obtained the rubbings from Chen Jieqi, many impressions Wu Dacheng studied are also included in the book written by Wu Shifen and Chen Jieqi. Comparing Wu Dacheng's research with that by Wu Shifen and Chen Jieqi, one finds that the basic sources of information in both works are almost the same. They are mainly from the two books on Han history: *Records of the Grand Historian* (Shi ji, 史記) and *History of the Former Han* (Han shu 漢書).

The study of ancient seal texts made significant contributions to another important field of scholarship — paleography — in the late Qing period. Through collecting antiques and studying writings on various pre-Qin objects that had escaped the destruction of the First Emperor of the Qin, scholar-collectors found that many writings (and their characters) had not been recorded in Xu Shen's dictionary *Analysis of Characters as an Explanation of Writing* (Shuowen jiezi 說文解字) of the Han dynasty. During the 1870s, a significant quantity of ancient ceramics was unearthed in Shandong, some with inscriptions. Chen Jieqi, among the earliest to collect them, sent Wu Dacheng rubbings of their inscriptions and asked for his help in deciphering them. By 1876, Wu Dacheng had nearly completed a four-juan work analyzing these inscriptions.³¹

³¹ See Chen Jieqi's letter to Wu Dacheng of 1876. Chen Jieqi, *Fuzhai chidu*, 236.

Inscriptions on seals, ceramics, and coins are usually brief, often no more than a few characters, but since these small objects were found in great quantities in the late Qing, together they bore a significant number of characters that scholar-collectors compiled into catalogues or dictionaries. The cataloging of these characters eventually helped late Qing scholars deepen their understanding of ancient writings. Gao Ming, a modern scholar of paleography, especially praises two works, the seal book compiled by Chen Jieqi mentioned above and a dictionary compiled by Wu Dacheng — *Shuowen guzhou bu* 說文古籀補 (Addenda to the Ancient and Zhouwen Graphs Recorded in the *Shuowen*). He regarded Wu's works as landmarks in the history of scholarship on ancient writing because they established a new field: using ancient seals as a source for paleographic research. Gao writes: "In the eleventh year of the Tongzhi 同治 reign (1872), Chen Jieqi of Weixian, Shandong, compiled, based on his collection of ancient seals combined with collections from other collectors, *Shizhong Shanfang Yinju* (Seal Books Compiled by the Shizhong Shanfang Studio), a great compendium of collections of ancient seals." Beginning with Chen's *Shizhong Shanfang Yinju*, a distinction was made among ancient seals between those classified as Warring States seals and those classified as Qin and Han seals, a distinction that was a great contribution to the future study of ancient seals. Not long after, Wu Dacheng compiled his *Shuowen Guzhou Bu* (Addenda to the Ancient and Zhouwen Graphs Recorded in the *Shuowen*), which included many characters selected from the seals of pre-Qin dynasties. He not only initiated the practice of compiling characters from ancient seals but also inaugurated a new field for the study of ancient characters."³² Wu Dacheng's book lists about 3,500 characters taken from Shang and Zhou bronze inscriptions and pre-Qin seals, coins, and ceramics, the overwhelming majority of which are not found in Xu Shen's *Shuowen jiezi*.

Wu's groundbreaking *Addenda to the Ancient and Zhouwen Graphs Recorded in the Shuowen* was followed by several essential compilations of ancient writings made in the twentieth century, including *Dictionary of Bronze Inscriptions* (Jinwen bian 金文編) by Rong Geng (容庚 1894–1983) and *Dictionary of Oracle Inscriptions* (Jiaguwen bian 甲骨文編) by Sun Haibo (孫海波 1909–1972). Not only have these reference books been used by scholars of ancient writings for investigating ancient

³² Gao Ming 高明, *Zhongguo guwenzixue tonglun* 中國古文字學通論 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), 566. Shana Brown (*Pastimes*, 76–78) also discusses Wu Dacheng's updated dictionary.

history, but they have also been consulted by seal carvers interested in using pre-Qin scripts in making seals. This can be seen in the case of Huang Shiling, one-time secretary to Wu Dacheng. Sometimes, when he carved a seal with characters that others might not know, he indicates, in his inscription on the side of the seal, that a given character is “recorded in Hengxuan’s [Wu Dacheng] *Addenda to the Ancient and Zhouwen Graphs Recorded in the Shuowen*.”³³

Huang Shiling apparently consulted Wu Dacheng’s book routinely when carving seals. Seal books were also common sources of artistic inspiration for seal carvers. Taking the eminent seal carver Wu Changshuo as one example, many of his seals have thick, broken frames modeled on the outlying clay surrounding seal impressions made in clay, lending his seals an air of ruined antiquity. For these reasons, we can say that seal books and related research provided late Qing seal carvers with both paleographical and stylistic foundations for their work.

In her newly-published book on late Qing antiquarianism, Shana Brown points out that, in the past, many historians and archaeologists have emphasized the intellectual contributions of antiquarian research to contemporaneous visual culture while downplaying the explicitly visual influence of materials studied by antiquarians.³⁴ In the present context, her point is well taken: the case of Wu Dacheng demonstrates the intertwined relations between intellectual pursuit and artistic production. Wu was fond of seal carving from an early age and reached a high artistic accomplishment in his maturity. Although present scholars who study the history of seal carving seldom analyze his achievements in this art, it was his early and continued enthusiasm for carving seals that lay behind his interest in collecting ancient seals and promoting talented young seal carvers. The initiation of Wu Dacheng’s official career significantly amplified his social network and economic status, and these factors enabled him to become an important collector of ancient seals. He collected ancient seals both as art objects for appreciation and as textual and material evidence in his research into ancient history. For him, the aesthetic and intellectual aspects of collecting seals were inseparable; similarly, his collection supplied paleographers and historians with raw material for

³³ See Huang Shiling, *Huang Mufu yincun* 黃士陵印譜 (Hangzhou: Xiling yinshe, 1982), 21; see also the exhibition catalogue *Common yet Marvelous: Huang Shiling’s Seal Cutting, Calligraphy and Painting* (Macau: The Temporary Exhibition Gallery of the Provisional Municipal Council of Macau, 2001), seal book section, unpaginated.

³⁴ Shana Brown, *Pastimes*, 8.

research even as it offered seal carvers formal and aesthetic opportunities to broaden the scope of their art. This mutually beneficial relationship between the academic and the aesthetic may be viewed as the core not only of the art of seal carving but of Chinese literati art as a whole.

Plucking Hairs to Save the World? Northern Song Poets on Their Writing Tools¹

Colin Hawes

In this paper, I will be focusing on “objects,” or “things,” in particular the objects typically found on a northern Song scholar’s writing desk. There are several surviving Chinese catalogues (*pu*) dealing with writing tools, some dating from the northern Song period — for instance inkstone catalogues (*yan pu*) by Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and Mi Fu (1051–1107).² However, these consist mainly of bare technical descriptions with scarcely a hint of the deep pleasure and consolation that such objects could afford their owners. Fortunately, the subjective significance of writing tools emerges much more clearly in the poetry of the period. Through examining the sub-genre of northern Song poems on writing tools,

¹ My debt to Jonathan Chaves in this chapter should be clear: without his pioneering work on Mei Yaochen’s poetry, my own research on Ouyang Xiu and his circle of literati would not have been possible. Just in case readers are wondering what the title of this chapter has to do with writing tools, it is an allusion to Huang Tingjian’s (1045–1105) poem titled “Matching Qian Mufu’s Verse on an Orangutan Fur Writing Brush,” which concludes with the following couplet (addressing the unfortunate plucked primate): “Plucking your hairs really can save the world: / I’ll lift up this brush to prove Yang Zhu wrong!” According to the *Book of Mencius*, Yang Zhu was famous for being a hedonist who would not pluck a single hair from his own head even if it could save the world. In his typically weird style, Huang Tingjian refutes Yang by declaring that even an orangutan can benefit the world if it is willing to sacrifice a few hairs to make a brush, which can then be used to write five cartloads of books. See Huang’s poem in Chen Yongzheng, ed., *Huang Tingjian shixuan* (Hong Kong: Sanlian shuju, 1983), 105–106.

² See *Ouyang Xiu quanji* (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1991), [hereafter *Ouyang ji*] *Yanpu*, 524–525; and Mi Fu, *Yan shi* (Meishu congshu edition). Cf. translation by Robert van Gulik, *Mi Fu on Inkstones* (Peking: Henri Vetch, 1938).

we will not only learn to view the term “object” in a strange new light,³ but will also gain a more nuanced understanding of the powerful, sometimes unexpected, effects these objects exerted as they were circulated among the Song literati.

Yet before tackling the poems, we should first note an important characteristic of the Chinese word normally translated as “object”: *wu* 物. Besides referring to obvious inanimate objects like brushes, stones, ear-pickers, and the like, *wu* was also used in pre-modern China for *animate* objects like plants—for instance, tea bushes growing on a hillside⁴—and for birds and animals—pet rabbits, cranes, and parrots, etc. In other words, what we would call “creatures.”⁵ And in some cases, *wu* even referred to ghosts and other supernatural ghouls and spirits.⁶ It is impossible to use a single English word for such a diverse lot.

And rather than concluding that ancient Chinese scholars reduced everything (except human beings) to the status of an object, it would be more accurate to say the opposite: that they imbued even the most lifeless lump of rock, or the limpest of dead rat’s whiskers, with energy and animating power—or to use an authentic term, *qi*.⁷ *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* expresses the

³ Or possibly, a strange *old* light.

⁴ See Ouyang Xiu’s poem “On Tasting New Tea, Presented to Shengyu [i.e., Mei Yaochen]” *Chang xin cha cheng Shengyu*: “Ten thousand trees are cold and dull, unable to rouse from sleep; / This bush is the only one that has already sent out shoots; / Thus I realize it is an object (*wu*) of supreme spiritual power.” *Ouyang ji*, 49.

⁵ In Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen’s series of poems on white animals and birds in the late 1050s, they frequently use the word *wu*. See, for instance, Ouyang’s “Playfully Answering Shengyu” *Xi da Shengyu*: “When moonlight looks down over peaceful nights, / Or snow skims across clear mornings, / It is then that these two creatures (*wu*), / Shine without one speck of the finest dust.” *Ouyang ji*, 44.

⁶ See Mei Yaochen’s poem “Reading the Moon/Stone Screen Poem,” quoted below, p. 24, for a reference to Chang’e, goddess of the moon, as a creature (*wu*).

⁷ Often rat’s whiskers were used to make fine writing brushes, as in Mei Yaochen’s poem “Matching the Rhymes of Shichang’s Poem Describing a Scholar Who Asked for His Rat’s Whisker Brush; Since He Had Previously Given His One Made from Rat’s Whiskers and Rat’s Tail to Junmo [i.e., Cai Xiang, 1012–1067], He Presented Him with a Pine-Stemmed Brush Instead,” in Zhu Dongrun, ed., *Mei Yaochen ji biannian jiaozhu* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1980) [hereafter *Mei Yaochen ji*], 622. Of course, *shu* here may also refer to a squirrel rather than a rat!

point very concisely, with reference to rocks:⁸ “In estimating people, their quality of spirit (*qi*) is as basic as the way they are formed; and so it is with rocks, which are the framework of the heavens and of earth and also have *qi*.”

When we speak of objects in the Chinese context, therefore, we should always be ready for them to come alive, especially when placed into the hot hands of poets. At the very least, we should preface them with a qualifier: they are animated, or evocative, objects.

Returning to writing tools, I will deal with four kinds here: brushes, inkstones, paper, and inkstone screens—the last (*yan ping*) being a device to prevent ink splashing from the well in the inkstone onto the paper.⁹ I will focus on works by the three best-known early Song poets, Mei Yaochen (1002–1060), Ouyang Xiu, and Su Shunqin (1008–1048). Among these poets, it was particularly Mei and Ouyang who first encouraged the tendency to compose long, quirky ancient-style verse in response to gifts, and since writing tools were a natural gift for a scholar, many such thank you poems survive in their collections.¹⁰ After analyzing some of their more interesting compositions, I will conclude with a speculative explanation as to why these exchanges of gifts and poems took place.

BRUSHES WITH SCHOLARS

Looking first at poems on writing brushes, we immediately notice a surprising refrain—the owner or recipient does not necessarily use the brush! The plain-talking Mei Yaochen is particularly straightforward about admitting this fact. For instance, one of his brush poems ends by addressing the colorful and exotic tool:¹¹

⁸ Quoted in John Hay, *Kernels of Energy, Bones of Earth: The Rock in Chinese Art* (New York: China Institute in America, 1985), 111–112.

⁹ As for ink itself, I could only find one poem on the topic from the relevant period, so I will simply give the reference without further comment: “Responding to Zu Zezhi’s Gift of Scylla Ink,” *Da Zu Zezhi yi Xinluo mo*, in *Mei Yaochen ji*, 426.

¹⁰ Of course, later poets like Su Shi and Huang Tingjian greatly expanded this tendency, as they did with so many other stylistic features of earlier Song poets.

¹¹ From “Collator Tang Hong Gave Me a Brush Made from Garu-Wood,” *Tang Hong mijiao yi chenshui guanbi yi zhi*, *Mei Yaochen ji*, 812.

... In the empty hall, no dust falls on my clean writing desk,
 Beside the inkstone I place you on the rack, and you glow red like coral;
 Since you know that to be employed you must wait for the right time,
 You should not complain that for the moment you are living out in the sticks!

In other words, Mei has simply added the brush to his rack of never used writing implements.¹² On one occasion, however, Mei decides to pass on an excellent brush, by the almost legendary brush-maker of Xuanzhou, Zhuge Gao, to someone who can really use it — Ouyang Xiu. Though not famous as a calligrapher, Ouyang did at least become an enthusiastic practitioner in his later years.¹³ His lighthearted responding poem explains why Mei was happy to collect such superior writing tools without using them himself:¹⁴

Shengyu Gave Me a Brush from Xuanzhou: Written in Jest [1059].

by Ouyang Xiu

Shengyu is a native of Xuan City,
 He's competent with the violet-haired brush.¹⁵
 Zhuge Gao, a man of Xuan,
 Maintains the trade without losing ground.
 He makes the heart firm, and ties the long hairs,
 Wrapping three times: exquisite and dense.

¹² See below, next section, for Mei's similar treatment of calligraphic paper. Of course, here he could also be describing the humble state of his home which does not deserve such an honored guest as the brush.

¹³ See Ronald Egan's interesting article on the subject, "Ou-yang Hsiu and Su Shih on Calligraphy," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49.2 (1989), 365–419.

¹⁴ Text in *Ouyang ji* 373. Cf. Ouyang's two poems titled "Practicing Calligraphy," *Xue shu*, on the same page. In these, he notes that he started the pastime late in life but now gets great enjoyment from it.

¹⁵ Hard, pointed rabbit fur was called "violet hair" (*zihao*), and it was very suitable for calligraphy brushes.

Their firmness and softness suit the human hand,
 In one hundred brushes there isn't a single dud.
 The assembled brushmakers in the capital
 Set up boards advertising themselves.
 Crowded together, east of Xiangguo [Temple],¹⁶
 Numerous as lice in the gaps in your clothes.
 Some [of their brushes] are weak, lacking most of the point,
 Some are stiff and can't be made to yield.
 One can only store them in the metal brush-rack,
 They appear distinguished, but lack all substance.
 The price may be high, but you still waste your money,
 And can use them only a matter of days.
 How can they compare with a Xuancheng brush,
 Which endures long, yet can be had for free!

The brush, like Mei Yaochen, originates from Xuanzhou, yet despite its provincial origins and plain appearance, it is far superior to the expensive and flashy tools displayed in the nation's capital when it comes to being used, or employed (*yong*). Ouyang implies that Mei, like the brush, would also do an excellent job if entrusted with an important responsibility in the central government. In other words, just because one is not yet employed, it does not mean one lacks the potential to achieve great things.¹⁷

Not surprisingly, Mei was very pleased with Ouyang's poem and responded with a composition of his own:

¹⁶ A commercial district in Kaifeng.

¹⁷ Elsewhere, Ouyang claimed to be one of the few people who appreciated Mei's talent, and Mei was known, of course, for being poor most of his life, i.e., not rewarded with the status and remuneration of a central government post. See Ouyang's "Grave Inscription for Mei Shengyu," *Mei Shengyu muzhiming*, in *Ouyang ji*, 235; and his "Preface to Mei Shengyu's Poetry Collection," *Mei Shengyu shiji xu*, in *Ouyang ji*, 295.

Matching the Rhymes of Yongshu's "Testing the Zhuge Gao Brush, Written in Jest"
[1059]¹⁸

You are the most gifted [scholar] in the empire,
And you use your mind as you use the brush:
Upright and strong, moving with spontaneity,
You never miss a single stroke;
And then, looking at the characters on the page,
Great and small are perfectly proportioned.
The master brush-maker, Zhuge Gao,
Is known as the best within the [Four] Seas,
Year after year he comes to visit me,
What a shame that I cannot bear [to write]:¹⁹
I should not remain a mere ink-spattered scholar,²⁰
And I do intend to imitate the greats of the past,
But lazy by nature, I'm a true Xi Kang:
Sitting at leisure, I do nothing but scratch for lice!²¹

¹⁸ *Mei Yaochen ji*, 1093–1094.

¹⁹ More literally, "I can't bear the seven [things]," a reference to the famous eccentric Xi Kang's (223–262) "Letter Cutting Off Relations with Shan Juyuan [Shan Tao]," *Yu Shan Juyuan jue jiao shu*, in which Xi declared: "There are seven things that I cannot bear: ... *I was never good at calligraphy*, and I don't enjoy composing letters, but there are so many social matters I must attend to, piling up on my writing desk, and if I don't respond to them, then it would violate what I was taught and go against my duty. But when I try to force myself, I know it cannot last long. This is the fourth thing I cannot bear!" [author's emphasis]. See Dai Mingyang, ed., *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1962), 112–129, especially 120–121; English translation in Cyril Birch, ed., *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 1.162–6.

²⁰ Another allusion, this time to the *History of the Later Han* (*Hou Han shu*), "Biography of Ban Zhao," in which Ban declares that simply being a scholar is insufficient: he must serve in the government.

²¹ In Xi Kang's letter, cited in n. 18, he also writes: "When I'm sitting at an official audience, and I have an itch that I cannot scratch, ... this is the third thing I cannot bear": Dai, op. cit., 120.

For this reason I presented [the brush] to you,
 So as not to make a rare object suffer from neglect,
 And as I expected, you really love it:
 With outstanding strokes, you trace your words and deeds;
 They won't merely circulate in the present age:
 They'll surely be passed down to future generations.
 Sighing with admiration at your "brush-testing" poem,
 I hide it away so no-one else can have it!

Besides wittily matching almost all Ouyang's rhyme words, Mei adds his own twist to the brush/person analogy. He claims that Ouyang's character is as dynamic and spontaneous as a rapidly moving brush in the hands of a master calligrapher and never misses a stroke. He then emphasizes his own calligraphic incompetence with a comical allusion to Xi Kang, one of the eccentric sages of the Bamboo Grove, in order to prove that the brush has definitely found a more worthy owner in Ouyang Xiu—one who will use it to produce great writing for the ages.

PAPER AND HISTORY

A similar, if more florid, exchange of poems had occurred four years earlier when Ouyang's friend Liu Chang (1019–1068) came into possession of some quality antique paper from the royal court of the Southern Tang (937–975). He passed a couple of scrolls on to Ouyang, who responded in verse, chiding Liu for not giving any to Mei Yaochen, a far worthier recipient:

Matching Liu Yuanfu's "Clear-Heart" Paper²²

Have you not seen — Manqing and Zimei, true rare talents,

²² In *Ouyang ji*, 38. An alternative title is "Presented for Recitation, On the Paper of Clear-Heart Hall." Cf. another translation in Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 686–687.

Are long since dispersed and scattered, buried in brown dust.²³
 Zimei, alive, was poor; in death is much more esteemed,
 His surviving phrases and fragmented writings precious as jade treasures.
 Manqing's drunken compositions adorn red-painted walls:
 But the wall-paint is already peeling, covered by smoke and coal.
 The river pours down from Kunlun, with winding, bending power,
 Snow presses down Mount Taihua, towering in the heights.
 Ever since these two masters followed each other into oblivion,
 The climate of rivers and mountains has been thrown into utter disarray.
 It's true that in your home you have a sheaf of Clear-Heart paper,
 But do you know if anyone [survives] who would dare to place their brush on it?
 The Poet Elder of Xuanzhou is starving, about to die:²⁴
 A snow goose with broken wings, the sound of his cry so mournful.
 On occasions when he can fill his belly, he loves to create poems,
 It's like hearing someone sing out loud, and draining a golden goblet.
 Though two masters are dead and gone, this Elder still survives,
 His old hands are yet skilled in the craft of cutting paper.²⁵
 So why did you not send it to him, instead of showing it to me?
 This is rejecting serious debate in favor of jokes and mockery!
 Alas, I am decrepit now; I'm not the man I was,
 Why do I bother picking up books, opening and closing the pages?
 A century of fighting, and shedding of battlefield blood —
 A whole kingdom's songs and dances — are now just ruined terraces.
 At that time the hundred things were all exquisite and fine,

²³ Manqing was the nickname of Shi Yannian (994–1041), a poet and calligrapher whose work was admired by Ouyang. Zimei was the nickname of Su Shunqin (1008–1048).

²⁴ As noted above, Mei Yaochen's ancestral home was Xuanzhou.

²⁵ A figure for fine craftsmanship (in poetry), though here it is especially relevant since the subject is paper.

But most of what survives has been abandoned to rampant weeds.
 So where on earth did you manage to obtain paper such as this,
 Pure, strong, glossy and smooth: a volume of one hundred leaves?
 When work matters and official duties allow us the joy of leisure,
 In towers and halls we'll sing and respond, matching each other's bravura.
 The written word, since ancient times, has always managed to survive,
 How do you know that our compositions will not last into the future?

At first glance this work appears to be a lament for the loss of Ouyang's talented friends Su Shunqin and Shi Yannian; for Ouyang's own descent into barren old age; and for the collapse of the Southern Tang, which had in its heyday produced numerous objects equal in quality to this paper. Images of decay abound throughout the poem: Su and Shi are "dispersed and scattered; buried in brown dust"; their works are only leftover fragments or inscriptions on peeling paint "covered by smoke and coal"; and their death has disrupted the climate of mountains and rivers. As for Mei Yaochen, he is "starving, about to die: a snow goose with broken wings"; and Ouyang himself is "decrepit now, ... not the man I was." And the glory of the Southern Tang court is transformed into "ruined terraces" and "rampant weeds."

Unexpectedly, from each of these destructive images Ouyang discovers a reason for continued hope and perseverance. Thus, Su Shunqin was poor during his life, but more esteemed since his death; even fragments of his works are now prized like jade. Likewise, though Su and Shi have long since passed away, apparently leaving no great writer worthy of using such excellent paper, Ouyang suddenly remembers Mei Yaochen, who still survives and is "yet skilled in the craft of cutting paper." Mei is able to continue creating great art despite his poverty and hunger (lines 13–16). Moreover, the constant battles flaring up during the Five Dynasties, ultimately leading to their demise, seemed to have left nothing in an acceptable state. Nevertheless, Liu Chang has discovered a hundred sheets of Clear-Heart paper in pristine condition, somehow emerging from the ruins of the Southern Tang. Ouyang's surprise at this unexpected find is worth quoting again: "At that time the hundred things were all exquisite and fine, / But most of what survives has been abandoned to rampant weeds. / So where on earth did you manage to obtain paper such as this, / Pure, strong, glossy and smooth: a

volume of one hundred leaves?"

Thus, the poem which began as a lament surprisingly concludes with its own discovery of hope, as Ouyang plans to spend sociable evenings with his friends, writing on this excellent paper, in the expectation that their words will last into the future. The paper becomes a constant reminder that survival is possible, even in the most unpromising circumstances, a message that the ever-struggling Mei Yaochen would have found consoling.

And though Ouyang's poem was ostensibly addressed to Liu Chang, Mei clearly felt obliged to respond to the compliment with a matching composition.²⁶ In this rather conventional work, Mei compares Ouyang to a great ocean pounding on the towering mountains of the Tang writer and statesman Han Yu and adds that he himself needs no more paper: he still hasn't used the two scrolls of Clear-Heart paper that Ouyang gave him many years earlier!

The perfunctory nature of this matching poem indicates that Mei was by the mid-1050s quite fed up with Clear-Heart paper, having already composed two long ancient-style poems and regulated verses on the topic in previous years.²⁷ It may well be that Ouyang's suggestion to Liu Chang was a joke at Mei's expense, since Mei constantly claimed that he wasn't interested in practicing calligraphy. Even in his first and best poem on Clear-Heart Paper, composed around 1040, he makes the point comically clear:²⁸

Yongshu Sent Me Two Scrolls of Paper from Clear-Heart Hall

Yesterday morning a man arrived; he came from the Eastern Commandery,
I opened the seal on the letter he delivered: two scrolls of ancient paper,

²⁶ See *Mei Yaochenji*, 800–801, "Matching the Rhymes of Yongshu's 'Clear-Heart Hall Paper, Answering Liu Yuanfu'" *Yi yun he Yongshu Chengxin tang zhi da Liu Yuanfu*.

²⁷ Apart from Ouyang's gift in 1040 (for which see next note and main text below), Mei also received a hundred sheets from one Song Cidao, and two scrolls from Han Yuru, both in the 1040s. See his answering poems in *Mei Yaochenji*, 335–336 and 401 respectively. He barely conceals his frustration in the latter work: "I've received Clear-Heart paper three times before, / And I have already written several poems on the topic, / In them I gave a rough description of what it is like, / So here I will not go into its history again!" (See *Mei Yaochenji*, 401.)

²⁸ *Mei Yaochenji*, 156. Zhu Dongrun dates the poem to 1040 based on internal evidence.

Smooth as ice in spring, and dense textured as a silk cocoon,
 Surprised and joyful, I ran my hands over them: my heart began to wander!
 Shu notelets are worm-eaten and brittle: they cannot last very long;
 Shan paper is thin and unresponsive: really a pain to write on!
 Your letter said you sent [this gift] and "I should treat it like precious treasure;
 Take care not to cut off strips and mindlessly give them away!"
 In days when Duke Li of Jiangnan held power over his kingdom,
 One hundred cash was not sufficient to buy a single sheet;
 Only in Clear-Heart Hall could you find an object like this,
 Spread out for writing on silent desks, without a speck of dust.
 But then, when the kingdom was destroyed, was there anything that survived?
 In the royal storehouse, empty and bare, only moss and lichen flourished;
 All that remained were some library books and this [precious] paper,
 They carted it into the capital, without a thought for its worth.
 And now, another sixty years have passed since those troubled times:
 It lay abandoned within a great hall, stacked and piled in the corner....
 Now you have passed some sheets to me: I'm embarrassed for two good reasons:
 I lack your control of the brush, and I cannot match your brilliance.
 Flustered, I gather up [the paper], but I have no trunk or cabinet,
 Daily I guard it from my children; I fear they'll rip it to shreds!
 Lacking a fine calligraphic hand, I am merely filled with longing,
 And a lingering sadness, like Zishan's, arises [in my breast].²⁹

²⁹ Zishan was the style name of Yu Xin (513–581), who composed the famous "Rhapsody Mourning for Jiangnan" (*Ai Jiangnan fu*). The gift of Clear-Heart paper reminds Mei of the sadness of Li Yu, who briefly ruled the area of Jiangnan before losing his kingdom to the Song dynasty (see line nine of Mei's poem), and who spent the rest of his life composing melancholy songs remembering the past. But the paper also brings to mind Yu Xin's earlier lament on the destruction of Jiangnan, implying that the cycles of growth and decay repeat themselves endlessly. Of course, Mei's noble sadness seems somewhat incongruous when placed within the domestic setting of the preceding lines.

In both Ouyang and Mei's poems, we see again the connection drawn between precious objects and owners who are worthy to possess and use them. Here Ouyang and Mei both claim to be unworthy—Ouyang because he is already decrepit, and Mei because he is a substandard calligrapher. At the same time, they do appreciate the paper for its evocative power and its ability to conjure up a world of lost grandeur and to endure despite the destruction all around it.

Expressed in another way, we could say that the object—here antique paper—has built up a latent historical energy which, when it comes into contact with the right people, such as Ouyang and Mei, triggers their imaginations and alters their mood. Of course, in theory they will then employ the object, channeling their newly received creative energy into an inspired calligraphic performance. This is what happens with recognized masters of the brush like Cai Xiang (1012–1067), a friend of Ouyang and Mei and one of the Four Great Masters of Song calligraphy.³⁰ Mei describes what happens when Cai's mind is triggered by a collection of Tang scrolls:

In no time Duke Cai has found what he was looking for,
He takes an inkstone, spreads some paper, doesn't waste even a moment,
He covers the page in a single flourish, extremely nimble and powerful:
A lithe Dilu at Shan Creek, galloping past like a torrent!³¹

On another occasion, Cai is primed for action almost before he sees the object—a valuable inkstone from Shezhou:

He entered the gate, got off his horse, looked for paper and wrote:
Dragons leaping, tigers clawing, startling spirits and ghosts.

³⁰ The other three were Su Shi, Huang Tingjian, and Mi Fu, all of whom also lived in the northern Song.

³¹ *Mei Yaochen ji*, 590. Dilu was a horse that the famous ruler of Shu Han Kingdom, Liu Bei (161–223) rode to escape from his enemies. As Liu was riding, Dilu slipped down into Shan Creek and could not get out, but when Liu told the horse this would be the end of his kingdom, Dilu made an enormous leap out of the muddy creek, and Liu Bei safely escaped. This poem's title is "Looking at Song Zhongdao's [Collection] of Paintings and Calligraphy with Cai Junmo [Xiang] and Jiang Linji" *Tong Cai Junmo Jiang Linji guan Song Zhongdao shu hua*.

Our host, receiving his calligraphy, cared little for the inkstone,
 He gave it to me in return for a poem on the topic of blossoming flowers;
 Intoxicated, I held it tight, afraid I might carelessly drop it,
 I wrapped it in an arrow-quiver, and stored it away in a chest.³²

By contrast with Cai Xiang, Mei and Ouyang constantly claim that they lack talent for calligraphy, and that in one sense these gifts of writing tools are useless. Mei is particularly blunt on this score. Despite these assertions, however, they continued to give and enthusiastically receive writing tools throughout their lives. We can explain their enthusiasm in two ways.

First, as Ronald Egan has suggested, scholars like Ouyang Xiu practiced calligraphy more for the innate enjoyment of the activity itself than for the quality of the finished product. Hence, claims that they couldn't make use of writing tools were simply polite excuses for not presenting a mediocre calligraphic specimen to the giver—since they preferred to practice forming their strokes in private.³³ Thus, in a famous comment from his collection of notes titled “Comments on Calligraphy” (*Bi shuo*), Ouyang writes:³⁴

If I have some spare time I practice calligraphy, not to create an exquisite artwork, but simply because it's better than wearing out my mind on other matters.... Certainly one must exert some effort when practicing calligraphy, but it is not something that harms one's constitution. In fact, only [calligraphy] can allow one to find great joy within tranquility.... And even when the characters are not as well-formed as they could be,

³² *Mei Yaochen ji*, 594. *Zheng yue shi er ri Jiang Huai fayun Ma Chayuan du he shi yu guo men zhi wai. Yu fang zhi. Cai Junmo yi lai. Cai wei zhen cao shu fu. Ma yi suo yong She yan zeng yu.* See also Mei's poem on a gift of tea and calligraphy from Cai, in which he claims that the calligraphy is so vivid and full of energy that he must lock it in a box to stop it flying away like a dragon. (See *Mei Yaochen ji*, 964.)

³³ See Egan, “Ou-yang Hsiu and Su Shih on Calligraphy,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49.2 (Dec. 1989), 365–419, especially 378–379.

³⁴ *Ouyang ji*, 1044, extracts from two of Ouyang's entries: “Comment on Attaining Joy Within Tranquility by Practicing Calligraphy,” and “Comment on Practicing Calligraphy on Summer Days.”

this still applies: if one enjoys doing it and does not tire of it, then one never considers [the characters] to be ill-formed. And if they do turn out to be well-formed, then obviously one will find inexhaustible enjoyment in it! One need not seek to impress one's contemporaries or look for fame in future generations. The key is to find one's own satisfaction in it, and that's sufficient.

Secondly, whether or not Ouyang and Mei used these writing tools for practicing calligraphy—which was their ostensible function—they certainly did use them as the basis for poems. One might even argue that the main motivation for presenting an expensive and often antique writing tool to these non-expert calligraphers was to elicit a response in the form of a poem.³⁵ The writing tool was thus simply one stage in a larger circulation of evocative objects—including “poems-as-evocative-objects”—among the various groupings of Northern Song literati.

INKSTONES AND SCREENS: HISTORY AND COSMOS

Before discussing the significance of this circulatory system, we should provide a little more evidence for the kinds of exchanges that took place, and the energy triggered by them, in the form of poems responding to gifts of inkstones and inkstone screens.

In his early composition titled “Answering Xie Jingshan’s ‘Song on a Gift of an Ancient Tile Inkstone’” (1037), Ouyang Xiu expands powerfully on the historical energy that emanates from the gift.³⁶ The main subject of the poem is Cao Cao (155–220), from whose Bronze Sparrow Tower this ancient tile supposedly came.

³⁵ Certainly, a poor and lowly writer like Mei Yaochen had little else to give!

³⁶ In *Ouyang ji*, 358. Jingshan was the style name of Xie Bochu, a younger scholar who Ouyang befriended during his first exile in Yiling (late 1030s). See also a shorter work on the same object that follows this one, titled “Ancient Tile Inkstone,” *Gu wa yan* (359), which is stylistically similar to Ouyang’s poem on the Xuanzhou brush above.

When fire numbered four hundred, the scorching spirit of Han dispersed,³⁷
 The one who sought to take its place would come from the high road of Wei.³⁸
 Extreme treachery and utmost cruelty are not easy to take on,
 Only now did [Cao Cao] realize the strong foundation of Wen and Jing.³⁹
 Just when he brandished a long beak to peck at all under Heaven,
 Brave and heroic opponents rose, numerous as spines on a porcupine.
 Dong, Lü, Jue, and Fan died in quick succession,
 Shao, Shu, Quan and Bei engaged in mighty battles.⁴⁰
 The weak submitted to defeat, while the strongest emerged victorious,
 Countless talented virtuous minions toiled to bring him this reward,
 And yet it seemed that, within his grasp, he did not dare to take it,
 Instead he allowed those adult locusts to breed their pestilent young.⁴¹

³⁷ According to the commentator in Gao Buying, ed., *Tang Song shi juyao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 323, there are various references in the official histories to the Han (206 BC–220 AD) as a dynasty of fire, and to the scorching heat of this fire dispersing after four hundred years. In the first two lines of this poem, I have added Han and Wei for the sake of clarity.

³⁸ “Come from the high road” is a paraphrase of *dang tu gao*, literally “higher on the road,” or alternatively, “blocking the road with its height.” According to Gao, op. cit., 323, this phrase is part of an obscure riddle prophecy predicting that Wei would overthrow the Han dynasty, recorded in the *Chronicle of Wei Kingdom*.

³⁹ Based on the rest of the poem, I interpret the subject here to be Cao Cao. Wen and Jing were two early Han emperors whose virtue supposedly placed the Han dynasty on a sure footing, allowing it to last for several centuries.

⁴⁰ Dong Zhuo (d. 192 AD) overthrew Emperor Shao in 189 AD and placed a puppet ruler, Emperor Xian (r. 190–220) on the throne. Lü Bu (d. 198), after working with Dong Zhuo, betrayed and murdered him in 192. The other two men mentioned in line seven, Li Jue and Guo Fan, formed a loose coalition and seized power in the new capital, Chang’an, after Dong Zhuo’s death. Through political misjudgment, Li and Guo allowed the Emperor to return east to Luoyang, the former capital, in 195, where Cao Cao captured him the following year. In line eight, Yuan Shao (d. 202), was a strong regional leader defeated by Cao Cao at Guandu in 200. Shao’s cousin, Yuan Shu (d. 200), was actually a long-term enemy: the two cousins had struggled for supremacy on the eastern side of the Empire until Shu was decisively defeated by Cao Cao in 197. Later, Liu Bei (161–223) and Sun Quan (182–252) allied to defeat Cao Cao at Chibi (Red Cliff) in 208, preventing Cao’s ambition of unifying the empire under his control.

His son, Pi, right from the start was devoid of all sense of shame,
 He dared to claim that like Shun and Yu he received the mandate of Yao.⁴²
 By his treachery he did receive it, but he lost it just the same way,
 Who could have guessed that three horses would eat from his single trough?⁴³
 Cao Cao, in his ascendancy, had struggled with heart and soul,⁴⁴
 His curses and shouts were hail and thunder raising a typhoon wind.
 When weapons of battle were finally stilled, and countless enemies defeated,
 All his trusted ministers were gone, his loyal supporters depleted.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Locusts are clearly pests: it is possible that Ouyang is referring to Cao Cao's enemies in the other two of the Three Kingdoms, Wu and Shu-Han, whose successors continued to plague Wei with raids and campaigns. Wei never managed to unify the empire. Cao himself died in 220 and was succeeded by his son Cao Pi.

⁴² According to the *Chronicle of Wei Kingdom*, Cao Pi forced the last emperor of the Han to abdicate in favor of himself. In the edict recording the event, the Han emperor declared that they were emulating the abdication of the mythical sage Emperor Yao in favor of the equally sage-like rulers Shun and Yu. For a translation of this episode from a slightly different source, see Achilles Fang, trans., *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms, 220-265*. Vol. 1, chaps. 69–78 in *Tzu Chih T'ung Chien of Ssu-ma Kuang* (Harvard University Press, 1952), 37, n.35.1. Fang notes that the Han Emperor also gave his two daughters to be Cao Pi's wives, emulating Yao's presentation of his two daughters to Shun. However, Cao was already married, unlike Shun, and had a notoriously large harem. See Fang, 37, 40, n.38.

⁴³ Trough (槽 *cao*) is pronounced identically to the Cao family surname (曹). The three horses (三马 *san ma*) possibly refer to the Sima (司马) family, who usurped the Wei Kingdom and set up the Jin dynasty in 265 AD. Support for this interpretation comes from the passage in the *Jinshu*—"three horses eat together from one trough"—which Ouyang quotes almost verbatim in this line, and which was supposed to have been a dream vision about Sima Yi, posthumously known as Emperor Xuan of Jin, that Cao Cao had before his death. See *Jinshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 1.20, *Xuandi ji* (Annals of Emperor Xuan). Another possibility is that the single trough refers to the Empire and three horses to the Three Kingdoms who continued to struggle for it in the face of Cao Cao and Cao Pi's efforts at unification.

⁴⁴ Lines 13–16 referred to Cao Pi; here, the subject is once more Cao Cao in the days of his prime.

⁴⁵ This line literally reads: "Zhou had destroyed Fang and Shao; Yao had lost Gao." Since this is virtually impenetrable, I have chosen to paraphrase. The allusions in the first clause are apparently to Fang Shu and Shao Bohu (also known as Duke Mu of Shao), semi-mythical ministers who loyally served King Xuan (c. 827–782 BC) at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty, and are mentioned briefly in the *Classic of Poetry*. The final three words refer to Emperor Yao and his trusted minister Gao (Yao), supposedly the creator of laws and punishments. See Gao, *Tang Song juyao*, 324. I take the line to

Warriors had offered their toasts of wine, had honored his noble presence,
 How lofty he seemed in Bronze Sparrow Tower, soaring giddily on high!
 Flowing melodies echoed around, clear wine-goblets circulated,
 Wondrous dancers on every side revolved their slender waists.
 But one day all they saw was a massive tree guarding his tomb,⁴⁶
 How lonely then his tapestries seemed, swinging in the souging wind.
 At that time the bleakness was already deplorable enough,
 How much more in later ages do we mourn these former dynasties!
 The lofty tower has long since toppled, slowly becoming level ground,
 And this tile, as soon as it fell, was buried in choking weeds.
 Half obscured beneath patterned moss and sullied by barren earth,
 It had to endure the blood of battles, and the scorch of rural burning.
 But ruined leather and broken nets can still find useful employment,
 And someone chiseled and carved [the tile], forming a hollow inkwell.
 The powerful strokes of Jingshan's brush are sturdy as a crossbow,
 His phrases are lean, their diction hoary: he writes with bold gestures.
 But as for me, seizing it by force, how can I use [this precious tile]?
 My official papers pike up in mounds, splattered in red and black inks.
 Transferred around from north to south, I've never once left it behind,
 I wrapped it in several layers of silk, and carefully sealed the package.
 There have been times when my inner thoughts were about to fly and scatter,
 My moods became completely tangled, hard to separate the strands;
 Travelling by boat, I often feared being seized by the Water Deity,
 Frequently, in gloomy darkness, I battled through winds and waves;

mean that after all his battles and political maneuvering, Cao Cao no longer had any trustworthy advisors or ministers left to guide his rule, hence the Wei Kingdom could not last very long.

⁴⁶ Tomb is actually Western tomb, the place where Cao Cao was buried. Cao Cao apparently told his former concubines (the dancers in line twenty-four) to stay in Bronze Sparrow Tower, to continue dancing for him after his death, and on certain days to look toward his grave. The Tower was decorated with ornate tapestries. See Gao, *Tang Song juyao*, 324–325.

Stubborn by nature, this object has lasted, bearing a remarkable essence,
 I constantly dread its metamorphosis into a spirit or monster!
 Back in the capital, wherever I go, I hand it around for appreciation,
 I love it and wouldn't exchange it even for a jeweled sword of Lu.
 The long song that you gave to me is strange yet also powerful,
 I'm ashamed to say I've no jasper or jade with which I could repay you.

Ouyang, inspired by the tile, recreates the turbulent years preceding and following the Han collapse: Cao Cao's meteoric rise to power, when the Bronze Sparrow Tower was the scene of elegant parties hosted by beautiful ladies; his failure to unify the Empire; and the subsequent decline of the kingdom of Wei. Ouyang concludes the historical summary with a contrast between the glorious, heroic days of Cao Cao's prime, and the sad, lonely surroundings of the abandoned Bronze Sparrow Tower after his death, now a monument to the vicissitudes of political struggle (lines 21–26).

Finally, in the last fourteen lines, Ouyang turns to the inkstone, which has somehow survived since the days of the Three Kingdoms. He makes his customary self-deprecating claims about lacking the talent to answer Xie Bochu's poem and even the worthiness to possess such a powerful object. He declares that since it has come through such a checkered history — originally part of Cao Cao's Bronze Sparrow Tower roof, then enduring through repeated battles over the centuries, sullied and worn down by blood, moss, and earth, before being carved out into something useful — it must therefore contain an essential remarkable energy helping it to last (line 45). Thus, those who grind their block of ink on this tile, mix some of its mysterious power with that ink and can produce writing like Xie's, "sturdy as a crossbow, / ... phrases lean, ... diction hoary," full of "bold gestures." Though devoid of such talent himself, Ouyang still hordes the tile, taking it wherever he goes. He knows that its vitality and power to survive can protect him against storms and calm his agitated mood—a mood doubtless provoked by his exile in the late-1030s (lines 41–45). His only fear is that the tile will transform into a spirit and disappear, leaving him bereft of supernatural protection! (line 46)

Earlier, we noted that writing tools can resemble their owners and that worthy owners can utilize the moral energy of the tool, adding power to their writing. We have also seen that an antique writing tool—whether it is Clear-Heart paper or a Bronze Sparrow tile inkstone—contains a kind of

historical energy that triggers the imagination of owners who know its past and reminds them that neglected and forgotten objects may eventually be rediscovered and valued even more highly due to their powers of survival through suffering.

In our final set of poem/object exchanges, involving an inkstone screen, we encounter a third kind of energy within writing tools: what we might call cosmic energy. Here, Mei Yaochen plays the role of bemused skeptic to Ouyang Xiu's child-like enthusiast, with Su Shunqin as a kind of third man, roped in to play the circulation game. Ouyang provides a helpful prose preface, explaining where the inkstone screen actually came from, and demonstrating once again that the humble origins of an object do not prevent it from being unique and exquisite:

Preface to the "Song on a Moon/Stone Inkstone Screen" (1048)⁴⁷

When Zhang Jingshan was at Guozhou, he ordered repairs to the cobbles on the stone bridge there, and in one of the stones discovered the shadow of the moon. The stone itself is violet, but the moon is white. Within the moon there is a densely foliated tree, its outline black with strong old branches and leaves. Even the most skilled painters in the world could not have made it—it seemed a rare object indeed. When Jingshan was exiled to the South, he left it for me. I considered this stone to be absolutely unprecedented, but when I wished to write a description of it, I feared that I wouldn't stay true [to it]. Therefore I invited a good painter to come and make a drawing of it. When Zimei [Su Shunqin] sees it, he will doubtless sigh with admiration!

Of course, despite his claims that he could not do justice to the screen, Ouyang still went ahead and wrote a rambling, jocular poem. He describes how the moon managed to enter this stone and why only the osmanthus tree is pictured there without other lunar inhabitants like the rabbit and

⁴⁷ *Ouyang ji*, 474. *Yue shi yan ping ge xu*. The preface is dated 1048, but the poem is dated 1047; probably one of these is an error.

toad:⁴⁸

The moon ascended from the bed of the sea,
 And rose up to the South-East of the Heavens;⁴⁹
 Then just as it reached the centre of the Heavens,
 It sends down a ray to Thousand Zhang Pool.⁵⁰
 At the pool's heart the wind was still: the moonlight did not stir,
 Its upturned reflection radiated, entering a violet stone cliff.
 In moon's glow and water's purity, the stone shimmers cleanly,
 How inspiring, this Soul of Yin, descending to seep into its heart!
 Ever since the moon penetrated into the heart of this stone,
 The Two Fires in the Heavens were divided into three.⁵¹
 Its pure glow lasted for eons, without erosion or destruction,
 Yet supreme treasures of Heaven and Earth cannot be hidden or sealed.
 Heaven's Lord cried out for the Duke of Thunder:
 By night he wielded a huge axe to destroy the towering cliff.
 He chopped down this single slab from a height of eighty thousand feet,
 Brightly shining, the cold mirror now lies in a jade compact box.⁵²
 The lunar toad and the white rabbit both escaped to the Heavens,
 All that's left is an osmanthus shadow extending long and slender....
 How great are Heaven, Earth, and all between:

⁴⁸ *Ouyang ji*, 27. "Violet Stone Screen Song," *Zi shi ping ge*, alternative title is "Song on a Moon/Stone Inkstone Screen, Sent to Su Zimei, *Yue shi yan ping ge ji Su Zimei*."

⁴⁹ Traditionally the moon was believed to reside in a cave beneath the Eastern Sea during the day, only emerging from there at night.

⁵⁰ One *zhang* being equivalent to about three meters.

⁵¹ Two Fires (*liang yao*) refers to the sun and moon.

⁵² The mirror is the round, white moon form in the stone, surrounded by the violet (jade) stone, like a "compact box."

The ten thousand wonders cannot be fully expressed.
 Alas! I cannot help going too far,
 Longing to probe the depths of every matter.
 I wish to take all that two eyes and ears can perceive,
 And put up a fight with Creative Transformation for every tiniest hairtip!...
 And yet this stone: what kind of object could it be after all?
 I have a mouth and wish to explain, but alas, it seems clamped shut.
 I marvel at the heart of Master Su:
 Lined up in ranks, the myriad phenomena are all contained within it!
 Not only is his heart expansive, his boldness is also great,
 He constantly creates compositions to startle the vulgar and ignorant.
 Since I was able to obtain this stone,
 I haven't seen Master Su at all, and my heart is full of regret:
 Without first having to undergo the guidance of a master craftsman,
 What apprentice would dare to execute complex carving and chiseling?⁵³
 I'll call an artisan to make a painting of the stone and take it to you,
 I hope you'll give your opinion — and don't be constrained by modesty!

In this poem, Ouyang juxtaposes the piece of white translucent rock with the real moon—not such a clever comparison, until he begins to wonder whether the moon has actually fallen from the sky and landed on his desk. Yet since he still sees the real moon moving across the Heavens every night, he finds himself at a loss to explain the identity of this strange unearthly object. Of course, Ouyang's whole account of the failure of his imaginative powers is simply a cunning preparation for his introduction of Su Shunqin, a man completely at home in the realm of spirits and immortals, and thus quite able to express the cosmic power of the stone in verse. How can Su ignore such flattery and refuse to produce a responding poem!

⁵³ In other words, Su is like a master craftsman; Ouyang is his apprentice. He hopes that Su will show his mastery by writing a suitable poem about the screen.

Su's own poem does not actually add a great deal to that of Ouyang, though he does include further tongue-in-cheek evidence to support Ouyang's hypothesis that the stone has celestial origins.⁵⁴ Thus he claims that the reason Chang'e, goddess of the moon, cannot be seen in the moon/stone screen is because she must have gone off in a futile search for the escaped toad and rabbit and never come back. He also adds some other ancient examples of Heavenly Bodies entering tiny objects—for example, clams (*bang*) were supposedly able to suck in lunar foam when the full moon set in the sea, and this would form pearls within their wombs (i.e., miniature full moons).⁵⁵ Likewise, the curved horn of the walrus was supposed to be formed from a kind of sympathetic reaction to the crescent moon. Su explains these phenomena with the theory that there are “objects that can respond to each other despite lacking emotions.” He then concludes by passing the task of description on to a still more worthy poet, Lu Tong (d. 835), whose famous “Eclipse of the Moon” (*Yue shi shi*) proved him to be the true expert on lunar matters. Unfortunately, Lu Tong is long since deceased and cannot respond!⁵⁶

Into this environment of mutual flattery and false modesty steps Mei Yaochen, who is delighted to deflate all the extravagant hyperbole surrounding this lump of colored rock. He offers a withering, yet at the same time sardonically humorous, critique of Ouyang's and Su's logic:

Reading the Moon/Stone Screen Poem (1047)⁵⁷

I observed the two of you composing poems that discussed a moonlike stone:

Yet the moon is up in the Heavens,

And the stone was beneath a mountain,

So how could traces of the moon possibly have entered into the stone?

Enough! Master Ouyang Xiu:

⁵⁴ See poem titled “Yongshu's Song on a Moon/Stone Inkstone Screen,” *Yongshu yue shi yan ping ge*, in *Su Shunqin ji biannian jiaozhu*, 276–277.

⁵⁵ *Su Shunqin ji*, 276. *Bang* normally refers to clams, though here it sounds more like oysters.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Mei Yaochen ji*, 562.

You know you cannot explain it, but still you don't stop your prattling!
 Do you want to silence everyone who follows you, and give them nothing to say?
 And yes Master Su, it's true that you are extremely wild and expansive,
 But what's the point of stretching your analogies to walrus tusks and clams?
 Walruses and clams are vital and active: they *do* have thoughts and feelings,
 But stones lack any emotion or thought: that negates your claim straightaway!
 I say that, though traces on this stone may indeed resemble the moon,
 It cannot move through the Heavens or mark the months of the year,
 Neither has it ever emitted the slightest glimmer of light,
 Nor is it anything like a lamp to illumine the night:

 It is merely a rounded patch in a hard lump of rough jade ore,
 And its texture bears no comparison with a precious disc of jade.
 Yes, it *may* contain a lone osmanthus spreading its boughs,
 But Chang'e and the jade-white rabbit are nowhere to be found;
 Without these two lunar creatures (*wu*), can it possess any spiritual power?
 And simply to use it as an inkstone screen: well why treasure it for that?
 Alas, my talent is limited and I can't think of any more description,
 All I can do is review your two poems and give my evaluation!

This is the kind of poem one could only write to very close friends. Any lesser acquaintance would surely find its brusque manner mortally offensive. Since Ouyang's friendship with Mei continued to deepen over the next thirteen years, right up till Mei's death in 1060, we can assume that he took the poem as it was intended—a lighthearted joke, thinly disguised as the ravings of a pedantic logician (or literary critic?).

At the same time, through his supercritical alter-ego Mei does question the whole northern Song fascination with odd-looking, precious objects, and by so doing, makes it clear that Ouyang and his fellow enthusiasts are ignoring any function these objects may have had—i.e., as writing tools—in favor of emphasizing their evocative power and the expansive feelings that they trigger. Mei sums up his attack with the sharp and ironic line, “simply to use it as an inkstone screen: well why treasure it

for that?" In other words, what's the point of having a tool at all if you merely use it as a tool!

Still the real Mei knows well that, notwithstanding his apparent skepticism here, he too is heavily involved in this northern Song craze for exchanging unusual objects and writing poems about these exchanges.⁵⁸ I will conclude with some speculations on why such exchanges, specifically those involving writing tools, were so important to these scholars—even when the object in question was not utilized for its original function.

CONCLUSION: EXCHANGING OBJECTS/CIRCULATING ENERGY

At the beginning of this paper, I noted that the Chinese word *wu*, which we commonly translate "object" or "thing," has much broader connotations than these English equivalents imply. I suggested that, at the very least, we should use the term "evocative object" or "animated object" to reflect the sense of *wu* as bearing latent energy (or *qi*). Our examination of these poems on writing tools has revealed three basic kinds of energy within them: what I have termed moral, historical, and cosmic energy. Depending on the appearance, age, and background of the object, its owner or admirer attributes one or more of these kinds of energy to it and composes a suitable poem in praise of it. This may in turn lead to further responses from fellow literati.

When we talk about exchanging objects, it is difficult to avoid thinking in terms of economics. And, certainly, it is very important to remember that Song literati were just as venal and grasping as we are today and just as interested in using their social relations for material benefit. Hence the gift of a precious writing tool to a scholar-official could result in various tangible rewards for the giver, depending on the status and mood of the recipient. These might include a recommendation to an official position, introductions to those who conferred such positions, or simply access to an exalted social circle, with its regular exotic banquets and upscale entertainment laid on by wealthy and generous hosts. Even when the recipient conferred none of these direct benefits and chose simply to express gratitude with a responding poem, the giver could doubtless still use this poem as evidence of a relationship with this famous or powerful patron—perhaps sufficient to protect him against the

⁵⁸ For further evidence, see many translations of Mei's poems on rare objects in the final chapter of Jonathan Chaves, *Mei Yao-ch'en and the Development of Early Sung Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

worst excesses of the Song legal system.

Yet though the economic metaphor is certainly valid in many of these cultural exchanges, it surely cannot do justice to all of them—particularly, I would argue, to those between close friends such as Ouyang Xiu, Mei Yaochen, and Su Shunqin.⁵⁹

Perhaps in such cases, we should think in terms of circulation rather than exchange; and not circulation of capital or commodities, but in a more *organic* sense, circulation of energy or vitality (*qi*).

Just as an understanding of the social environment in the northern Song should alert us to the materialistic uses of literary exchanges, so too it should reveal why close friends continued to circulate their objects and poems even when there was no obvious material benefit in doing so. One central factor, I would suggest, was the sheer instability and unpredictable nature of the scholar-official's life at that time. Though officials were protected from some of the more draconian punishments meted out to vulgar offenders, they still faced the constant threat of exile to remote and ill-developed parts of the empire. Perhaps most distressing to those in such a predicament was the indeterminate length of their period of exile—Ouyang Xiu, for instance, after his exile to Chuzhou in 1045, had to spend nine years in the provinces before he was recalled to a central government post; and Su Shunqin, exiled to Suzhou around the same time, was not reinstated before his death in 1048.

There were also those who never became important enough to suffer exile—for example, Mei Yaochen, who saw many of his former colleagues rise to positions of great influence, while he languished in minor and tedious posts with meager remuneration. We might call this a kind of psychological exile. And even those officials who did rise to the top of the hierarchy, such as Ouyang Xiu in his later years, faced constant pressure and personal attacks from opponents and remained completely subject to the whims of successive, often capricious, emperors.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Of course, Ouyang did constantly try to promote Mei, and to a certain extent Su, by recommending them for official positions. But many of their object/poem exchanges were clearly not made with the aim of benefitting each others' careers. At most, one could say that their exchanges kept their friendships going, which may occasionally have been of some benefit in the material sense. As I argue below, though, the benefits were much more likely to occur in the emotional sphere.

⁶⁰ For an excellent description of Ouyang's later career, including the various personal attacks he had to endure, see James T.C. Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu: An Eleventh Century Neo-Confucianist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967).

Looking back at the above poems on writing tools in the light of this context, it is interesting that many of them were composed while either one or both the poetic participants were in exile. And even those that weren't exile poems, such as the Xuanzhou brush pair, also revolve around similar themes of precious, but unjustly neglected, objects awaiting discovery by a worthy and appreciative owner. There is obviously a kind of emotional release that accompanies these exchanges.

But perhaps we can go further than this in considering the whole context of such object-poem circulation. After all, poetry in the northern Song—and presumably in other periods of Chinese history—was much more of a social activity than modern Western readers, schooled on individualistic Romantic poets, might assume. The vast majority of poems in Song writers' collections are directly addressed to other people, and it is likely that many were actually composed at social gatherings—at least in draft form.⁶¹ It may well be that this sociable aspect of poetic composition was simply the manifestation of a society in which human relations were much more all-pervasive than they tend to be in the post-industrial West. The mature Ouyang Xiu, for instance, managed a family of at least twelve children and close relations and was host to a constant stream of friends and acquaintances.

In fact—to extend our organic metaphor—each person in northern Song society was surrounded by and contributed to a massive circulation of social energy; it is in this circulation that the lines between the subjective individual and the world outside would necessarily become blurred, if for no other reason than because people had so little time to themselves. One could even argue that in Song China there was no conception of an individual self separate from its human relationships and surrounding world, though that would be a little beyond the scope of this chapter!

In such a context, exile would therefore act as a partial dissolution of the exiled person's self,⁶² including in most cases a sudden separation from family and close acquaintances and leaving one bereft of much of the dynamic energy stemming from daily contacts with a familiar world. Or, expressed in a slightly less controversial way, the shock and stress of exile—or the frustration of being

⁶¹ And even those poems whose titles do not identify them as written in company often reveal evidence of it in their content. For further evidence on this point, see Colin Hawes, *The Social Circulation of Poetry in the Mid-Northern Song* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 1–2.

⁶² Self in the sense of a “self-world complex.”

passed over for an official position—would certainly cause a build-up of resentment within the victim, which he would not be able to express directly for fear of further recriminations. In either case, there would be a feeling of attack on one's integrity as a person. And in a number of recorded instances, this emotional stress would lead to serious illness and occasionally death.⁶³

The gift of a precious, previously neglected object, especially a writing tool, to an exiled scholar would thus have a number of beneficial effects. Not only is the object itself a latent source of energy due to the evocative associations that it triggers, but the act of giving is itself a transfer of social energy, which *demand*s a response from the recipient. And this very obligation draws the recipient back into a world beyond his diminished individuality—a world of energy-beyond-self. Writing the responding poem thus acts to release pent-up resentments, re-circulating them into the world, and balancing his emotions, ultimately, perhaps, healing his battered constitution.

If this conception of organic circulation of revitalizing energy seems rather far-fetched, we can offer two pieces of evidence that support it.

First, we should not forget that energy, or *qi*, had been a central requirement in both prose and poetic composition at least since Cao Pi's *Discourse on Literature*.⁶⁴ Flowing *qi* became particularly important in so-called ancient style writings (*gu wen*) of the Mid-Tang and northern Song, as is clear from a famous letter by Han Yu. He declares:⁶⁵

Qi is water, words are floating things. When the quantity of water is great, things big and small are able to float in it. The relationship of *qi* to words is like this. When *qi* is full then the length of phrases and the level of sound both become right.

⁶³ Whatever the modern explanation for these illnesses, the accounts of the time make it clear that the victim saw the punishment of exile as the direct cause. See for instance, Ouyang's comment about Su Shunqin's demise, in his preface to Su's collected writings: "Even if his enemies and accusers were once able to use their power to *hound him to death*, when it comes to his writings, they cannot damage or cover them up at all." *Ouyang ji*, 288 [author's emphasis].

⁶⁴ See the interesting article by David Pollard, "Ch'i in Chinese Literary Theory," in Adele Rickett, ed., *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 43–66, especially 45–50.

⁶⁵ From Han's "Letter Answering Li Yi," quoted in Pollard, 56.

Second, Mei Yaochen vividly demonstrated how one could experience the *qi* of an ancient-style poem like those we discussed above, in his full-bodied reaction to Ouyang Xiu's mighty composition "Lu Mountain High!"⁶⁶

One day, Guo Gongfu visited Mei Shengyu [Yaochen], who told him: "Recently I received a letter from Yongshu [Ouyang Xiu]; he has just written 'Lu Mountain High!' and is quite satisfied with it. I regret that I haven't seen this poem yet." Gongfu recited it for him. Shengyu beat the rhythm, sighing in appreciation, and said: "Even if I were to write poems for another thirty years, I couldn't manage to compose a single line like this." Gongfu recited it again, and they couldn't help becoming elated, so they laid out wine and recited it again. The wine went round several times; they both recited it several dozen times, then concluded the meeting without further conversation. The next day, Shengyu presented a poem to Gongfu....

Thus, the latent energy, or *qi*, of Ouyang's poem is released through rhythmic declamation and this, in turn, inspires another poem by Mei himself.

Though this anecdote deals with the reader's reaction to poetry, the one who actually composes the poem can also experience an outpouring of *qi* in two ways: either by rhythmically reciting his lines, or by physically writing them out with a brush. And the gift of a writing tool to such a poet is clearly an invitation to release his *qi* in the second way!

Yet is there really a revitalizing or healing power hidden within the well-chosen object given to an exiled or under-appreciated friend? It is easier to answer this question when the gift is obviously designed to encourage artistic expression, as in the case of a writing tool. Still, in the northern Song context one could argue that any gift to an educated person more or less demanded an artistic response in the form of a poem and/or calligraphic inscription. I am not claiming that the social obligation to respond was itself sufficient to revitalize an exiled, possibly sick, scholar. But it would

⁶⁶ For the poem itself, see *Ouyang ji*, 35–36. Mei's reaction is recorded in Hu Zi's *Tiaoxi yuyin conghua* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1981), 29:201–202. His poem recording the occasion is in *Mei Yaochen ji*, 756–757.

force him to put something on paper, even just to avoid offending the giver, and it provided a suitable object in which he could lodge his emotions and correct the imbalance of energy within. Whether this activity actually had healing power remains difficult to prove. We can merely adduce our second piece of evidence, from the related field of musical objects, to show that Ouyang Xiu, for one, believed in the healing qualities of practicing the arts. He writes, in his “Preface to Send Off Yang Zhi”:⁶⁷

I once had an illness caused by depression, and even though I took leave [from work] and lived at leisure, I could not regain my health. But soon afterwards, I began learning the zither (*qin*) with the help of a friend, Sun Daozi. He showed me several tunes in the *gong* mode, and after some time enjoying them, I was no longer aware of any illness in my body. Now illness comes from too much worry, and even the most potent medicines that can attack the accumulations of illness are no match for the all-encompassing reach of sounds (*sheng*). So it is fitting that sounds can bring harmony to imbalances in the heart, and when the heart is balanced and what lacks harmony is harmonized, then one’s illness will be forgotten....⁶⁸

My friend Master Yang likes to study and has a talent for writing. But several times he took the *jinshi* examination without success. And when he obtained a position through his relatives, it was as the magistrate of Jianpu, a tiny place thousands of miles to the south-east. Due to this, his heart will certainly feel an imbalance; and besides, he is young and susceptible to illness, there are few doctors in the South, and the local customs and diet will not suit such a weak constitution. So with an imbalanced heart, living among customs to which he is unsuited, surely he could easily succumb to prolonged misery! But if he wishes to bring balance to his heart in order to heal his illnesses, he too will also benefit from [playing] the zither.

⁶⁷ *Song Yang Zhi xu* in *Ouyang ji*, 290–291. Dated 1047, during Ouyang’s Chuzhou exile.

⁶⁸ Ouyang then continues with a passage describing the various kinds of “ancient, pure and bland” sounds that are most effective in healing the body and mind. This section is translated in Ronald Egan, *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–1072)* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 34–35.

Therefore I have written this “Discourse on the Zither” to send him on his journey, and I invite Daozi to pour wine and present a zither to him as a parting gift.⁶⁹

It is interesting to compare Ouyang’s comments here with his passage on practicing calligraphy partially quoted earlier, in which a similar refocusing of energy takes place:

In the long summer days, all I long for is to find something in which I can lodge my heart to help me get through the heat of the day, and the only thing that does not wear me out is doing calligraphy at my desk. When the brush goes flying along so that my hand cannot stop, then even if thunder and lightning tried to shock me, and rain and hailstones came pouring down, I wouldn’t even bother to glance at them!⁷⁰

So, in conclusion, the gift of an object, especially a writing tool, distracts the exiled or under-appreciated person from despair and offers him a means of channeling his pent-up energy through an alternative outlet—whether it is through musical sounds, written characters, or poetry which combines both sounds and writing. In this way, the heart’s imbalance may be overcome, and the risk to one’s psychological and physical health lessened.

⁶⁹ The word translated “present” here is actually *jìn*, which may just mean “to bring in.” However, a textual note in *Ouyang ji* (291) gives an alternative version in which Sun Daozi is not present, but instead Ouyang gives the zither that Daozi had earlier left him to Yang Zhi, who replies: “This is truly something that will give me joy. I will learn it while I travel!”

⁷⁰ *Ouyang ji*, 1044.

Wang Mian's Prunus Poetry and Painting

Richard A. Pegg

Wang Mian (1287–1359) is known as a painter of Ink Prunus (墨梅), a poet, and seal carver. He was also an accomplished military strategist as well as a martial artist specializing in the sword. This brief essay will explore Wang Mian's life, his painting, and his poetry to reveal something of this highly developed and accomplished master.

Wang Mian's biography, like those of many eccentrics who lived at the end of a dynastic period, was compiled by a combination of contemporaries and later authors into an unclear and quasi-historical narrative.¹ Although his actual birth and death dates remain unknown, from Chinese biographies we learn that Wang Mian was a native of Juxi, Shaoxing prefecture in Zhejiang province. He was the son of a farmer and showed an early aptitude and desire to study. After Wang failed to place in the *jinshi* examination in the standard classics, he studied military strategy, in particular the *Gu bingfa*, the ancient versions of the *The Art of War*. By Wang's time, these included the seven martial classics, the Sunzi and Sun Bing versions of *The Art of War*, and the later military classics.

Wang was tall with a bristling beard and was considered something of a wild man. He practiced the martial arts and sparred with wooden swords.² He became known first in Nanjing as a painter and poet. By the 1340s, he had traveled extensively and had begun telling friends about the coming rebellions and the end of the Yuan dynasty. In 1347, he traveled to the capital Dadu, today's

¹ L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 2:1395–1397.

² *Wushengshishi*, 1: 4–5 in *Huashi congshu*, vol. 3, Shanghai, 1982.

Beijing, but was soon disillusioned. In 1348, he traveled south and settled in Wu, at Mount Jiuli in Kuaiji, where it is said that he planted a thousand prunus trees on his property. Several differing stories tell of his relationship in the late 1350s with Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398, r. 1368–1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty, and his general Hu Dahai (d. 1362). It seems likely that given their similar backgrounds, experiences, and martial prowess that Wang and Zhu would meet, but Wang died soon after.

Wang Mian traveled south, then north to the capital, and finally south again. Wang appears to have refused or resigned from appointments because he considered them beneath him or because he was convinced of an imminent political breakdown of the Yuan dynasty. Wang's life was one of social dislocation, isolation, poverty, and wandering — turning a literati's accomplishments into a means of making a living. He was later immortalized, as an ideal scholar, in the first chapter of Wu Jingzi's (1701–54) famous eighteenth-century novel, *The Scholars* (*Rulin waishi*). In the novel, Wang is presented as a romanticized late Yuan scholar, an artist-hermit whose life of uncompromising self-cultivation satirizes his contemporaries who were driven by the competitive quest for riches and social position.³

Wang Mian's extant paintings, all done in ink only, were almost all of branches of prunus (梅 *Prunus mume*, also referred to as “flowering plum”) and are primarily dated to the 1350s.⁴ The Chan monk Zhongren (d. 1123), as first championed by Huang Tingjian (1045–1106), is generally considered the founder of the Ink Prunus painting tradition. Zhongren made painting prunus “an act of transformation” from which impression, not realism, emerging from his Chan practice, became the standard. Within the Chinese historical prunus construct, there was the so-called garden prunus (*yuanmei*) versus the mountain prunus (*shanmei*), and the official or palace prunus (*guanmei*) versus the wild prunus (*yemei*). During the Southern Song (1126–1279), the painter Ma Lin (act. early thirteenth century) represented the palace prunus, a refined academic court style, characterized by an elegant use of color and controlled representation. In contrast, Yang Wujiu (1097–1169) considered the

³ William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 461–463.

⁴ There are some thirty paintings affiliated with Wang Mian, of which perhaps a dozen or so are by the artist. James Cahill, *An Index of Early Chinese Painters and Paintings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 344–346.

second Ink Prunus master in the lineage, represented the wild prunus as a rustic amateur who used splashed ink.

Traditionally, multiple possibilities of interpretation and meanings are associated with the prunus. It has long been one of the “three friends of the cold season.” The pine and bamboo stay green throughout the winter, but it is the prunus that breaks out in late winter, presenting a pure white flower. The prunus produces the first flower of the year, and thus the first sign of springtime, and so became associated with the thaw of spring and change. The image of a gnarled and twisted solitary prunus, able to flower while there was still snow on the ground, became a metaphor for the pure of heart, the virtue of the upright Confucian scholar, and the hermit’s pure unworldly life — its fragrance, his virtue; its ability to flourish in adversity, his steadfast integrity. During the Southern Song, the prunus symbolized change and options — a time before scholars turned inward as in the Yuan, when the prunus changed to an embattled self-image. Wang lived in a period of turmoil at the end of the Yuan dynasty and, rather than participate in court, he rejected it and chose reclusion. Thus, the painting of prunus was appropriate to represent his life’s choices.



Figure 1. Wang Mian, *Fragrant Snow at Broken Bridge*, hanging scroll, ink on silk, 113 × 49.5 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973.121.9.

Wang Mian's extant works are painted primarily with ink on both paper and silk and in a variety of formats both large and small. Maggie Bickford has thoroughly examined the Ink Prunus theme historically. Technically, Wang was extremely skilled. As Bickford has noted, Wang was able to work on paper, creating a simple branch of Ink Prunus in 1346 on a handscroll now in the Shanghai Museum of Art. His range extended to more dynamic works on silk with complexity and density, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Fragrant Snow at Broken Bridge* (fig. 1).⁵ On the latter painting, he perfectly exercises the reverse saturation brush (*daoyun*) method that reserved the silk, a method attributed to Tang Zhengzhong (act. ca. middle twelfth to thirteenth centuries), Yang Wujiu's nephew. Wang stained the background with an ink wash leaving the blossoms themselves as unpainted silk. Bickford has suggested that generally "the works on paper were made for scholarly associates and the works on silk were made for market."⁶ Wang created striking prunus flowers and sprays that were naturalistic with quite accurate botanical morphology.

Compositionally, Wang Mian perfected S-shaped boughs with simple, gentle curves, and moist washes.⁷ Bickford has pointed out that Wang brought dynamic energy "by using big twisted forms to generate the torque that powers their soaring and pringing branches."⁸ I would agree and add that the great, bold, dynamic twists of form joined with delicate brush work just as accurately describe the expressions of the sword master. Wang's painting style reveals his understanding and appreciation of sword technique in its elongated slashing strokes, the grace and symmetry of curves, and the balance of branches and flowers. The relationship between wielding the brush and wielding the sword in China is well understood.⁹ The Chinese sword master makes slices and strokes that are long and

⁵ Maggie Bickford, *Ink Plum: The Making of a Chinese Scholar-Painting Genre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), plates 25 and 32, respectively.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁹ Richard Pegg, "Chinese Sword and Brush Masters of the Tang Dynasty," *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, vol. 10 (2001): 3:24–35.

graceful, using the entire body. These are combined with fine tip work that stabs and cuts. The terminology well describes both sword play and the brush play in the prunus paintings of Wang Mian. Wang was certainly a painting master, and his Ink Prunus works are considered the best of his generation. Wang is credited with having had three direct followers in the Ming dynasty: Chen Lu (fl. 1440), Liu Shiru, and Wang Qian (fl. 1500), with Xu Wei (1521–1593) an indirect follower. During the Qing dynasty, Jin Nong (1687–1764), another failed scholar turned professional artist, also depicted the Ink Prunus in the Wang Mian tradition.

Most importantly, as Bickford has eloquently pointed out, the Ink Prunus genre, in particular the work of Wang Mian, represented the achievement of the integration of two separate ingredients — image and inscription — into a new compound in the scholar-amateur art of the Yuan dynasty. From the *Wang Mian meipu*, we learn: “As for sketching prunus and composing poetry, their origin is one. Although they are called by different names, their principles of intention really are the same.”¹⁰ Wang’s friend Xu Xian stated that for Wang Mian: “Once the painting was done he always inscribed its surface.”¹¹ The Song dynasty prunus poetry had profoundly influenced Ink Prunus painting. In the Southern Song, “crossing (the river) to the south” (*nandu*) marked the division between the Northern Song and Southern Song, and the image of the prunus was tied to this. As Southern Song poets turned inward, the prunus became its own separate theme in poetry and painting. Perhaps as a result of the discord of foreign rule during the Yuan dynasty, prunus poetry and painting were reunited. For Wang Mian, these two arts were conceived as parts of the same thing — they were not separate but fully integrated. Wang represented the final phase of a steady development that created a separate and unique genre of painting. On a hanging scroll dated 1355, Wang inscribed his long “Biography of Mister Prunus” inscription first, then painted the prunus around it creating a truly integrated work of art.¹²

Much of Wang Mian’s poetry is found in his collected works, *Zhuzhai shji* (竹斋诗集 Bamboo Studio Collected Poetry). The first edition was prefaced by Liu Ji (1311–1375), who wrote that he first

¹⁰ Bickford, *Ink Plum*, 208.

¹¹ Ibid., 215.

¹² Ibid., plate 30.

met the author in 1354. Many of the poems Wang Mian inscribed on his Ink Prunus paintings have references to the history of prunus poetry, in particular those of Lin Bu (林逋 967–1028), whose sobriquet, or style name, was Lin Hejing (林和靖). Bai Juyi (772–846) was the first to celebrate the Gushan prunus of Hangzhou, but it was Lin Bu, a reclusive poet who lived on Gushan (孤山) in West Lake, in the present-day city of Hangzhou, who first championed the prunus in poetry, uniting the ideal of reclusion and the beloved prunus.¹³ Later, poets like Su Shi (1037–1101) and Wang Mian brought in aspects of reclusion and political allegory.

The prunus had long been appreciated in popular culture as a seasonal sign of the meeting and transition of winter and spring. That the prunus flowered in frost was considered its triumph and its sacrifice. In poetry, words like *moon*, *snow*, *jade*, *ice* and *frost* became associated with prunus. It also came to be associated with the elegance, radiance, and purity of a woman's beauty, as in a "white-robed prunus blossom beauty." Su Shi associated prunus with feminine beauty — with his "bones of snowy jade" and "soul of ice" (玉雪为骨冰为魂)¹⁴ introducing additional allusions. As a seasonal sign and marker of change, it had temporal qualities associated with transience — the transience of beauty, with pleasure and regret, and the Japanese aesthetic of *mono-no-aware*. Prunus poetry had a rich intentional ambiguity.

Perhaps Lin Bu's best-known poem of prunus is the first of two poems titled "Mountain Garden Little Prunus" (山园小梅). It may be translated:

众芳摇落独暄妍
占尽风情向小园
疏影横斜水清浅
暗香浮动月黄昏
霜禽欲下先偷眼
粉蝶如知合断魂

¹³ During the Southern Song when the capital was moved to Lin'an, modern-day Hangzhou, Gushan including Lin Bu's retreat, was incorporated into the Imperial Gardens, where only the imperial family was allowed. Hui-shu Lee, *Exquisite Moments: West Lake and Southern Song Art*, exh. cat. (New York: China Institute Gallery, 2001), 23–24.

¹⁴ The second line of the first couplet of Su Shi's poem titled 再用前韵. *Su Shi shiji*, 6:2076, Beijing, 1982.

幸有微吟可相狎
不须檀板共金尊

A crowd of fragrance shakes and falls, a solitary genial beauty
Seizing all the wind's feelings, facing this small garden.
Scattered shadows crisscross, where the water is clear and shallow,
Their secret fragrance floats along, as the moon emerges with the yellow of dusk.
Winter birds about to descend, first stealing a glance
Powdered butterflies as if they know, join in a swoon.
Fortunately there is a tiny sigh, that might be mutual intimacy,
Not necessary, "hardwood clappers" together with "golden bottle."¹⁵

The "scattered shadows" and "secret fragrance" of the second couplet were vernacular for future generations of prunus aficionados. Lin Bu, as recluse and lover of prunus, had obvious attraction for Wang and Lin's life experiences and choices, which became metaphors for Wang's own.

Lin Bu achieved fame in his lifetime despite his choice of seclusion. The Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022) awarded Lin a pension, while his successor Renzong (r. 1022–1063) honored Lin with the posthumous name title of Master of Harmonious Tranquility (*Hejing Xiansheng*). Lin's famous waterside pavilion on Gushan was named the Chaozhu pavilion. Both the Chaozhu pavilion and Lin's tomb on Gushan have been rebuilt many times since the tenth century.¹⁶ During the Southern Song when the capital was moved to Lin'an, modern-day Hangzhou, Gushan, Lin Bu's retreat was incorporated into the Imperial Gardens. On a map of West Lake, from the *Xianchun Lin'an zhi* (咸淳临安志) gazetteer dated 1265–1275, we can see the Broken Bridge (断桥) on the east side and Xilin,

¹⁵ *Lin Hejing xiansheng shiji* (Mr. Lin Hejing's collected poetry), 25, reprint in *Sipu congkan jipu*, Shanghai, 1929.

¹⁶ In 2003, *Hangzhou Magazine* used a 1890s black-and-white photograph of the 1821 rebuilt Chaozhu pavilion on its cover.

later known as Bai Bridge, to the west side of Gushan. Lin Bu's grave is shown mid-island toward the north shore facing the Inner Lake.¹⁷

The physical geography of Hangzhou, West Lake, and in particular Gushan, as well as something of the life of the poet Lin Bu is essential in understanding Wang Mian's poetry, especially the poems inscribed on Ink Prunus paintings. The referencing of the historical or literary past is an important artistic trope in China that bridges time and space, making the past relevant in the present. For example, on a Wang Mian ink on paper hanging scroll titled *Ink Prunus* in the Feng Collection (fig. 2) is a poem that may be translated:

和靖门前梅烂开
巢居阁下同春回
五更月落霜林静
湖上琴声裁鹤来

Before Hejing's gate, prunus burst open,
Below the Chaozhu Pavilion, the beauty of spring's return.
Fifth watch, moon has fallen, frosted trees are peaceful,
On the lake, sound of the *qin*, carries the crane back.

¹⁷ Gushan was considered to be the north mountain area of the four quadrants of West Lake. Behind the island is the area known as the Inner Lake. On Gushan are also two Daoist temples, Temple of the Four Sages Who Invite the Auspicious (*Sisheng yanxiangguan*) and the West Supreme Unity Temple (*Xi taiyigong*). Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu*, 12: 228, preface dated 1274, in *Dingjing menghua lu wai sizhong*, 129–328, Taipei, Dali chubanshe, 1970.



Figure 2. Wang Mian, *Ink Prunus*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 79 × 27 cm, Feng Family Collection.

Here two specific references are made to Lin Bu in the use of Lin's sobriquet, Hejing, and in the Chaozhu pavilion. The Ink Prunus theme evoked the ideals of seclusion and reclusion, as the poem added other specific references to the place where Lin Bu lived and worked. One would be transported to Lin's time and place in a sensual and spiritual experience. Thus, a connection with the past and the history of that past is immediately brought to the present. As seen here, Wang preferred the quatrain for his painting inscriptions. The concise literary format of the quatrain was well matched to Wang's tightly focused paintings of sprays of prunus branches.

The previous heptasyllabic quatrain is related to a series of poems Wang Mian wrote on the theme of "Prunus Flowers" (梅花). Ten of these poems are found in Wang's collected works, the *Zhuzhai shiji*.¹⁸ The eighth and ninth poems are in the same rhyme scheme and meter as the poem inscribed on the Feng painting. "Prunus Flowers," poem eight, may be translated:

和靖门前雪作堆
多年极得满身苔

¹⁸ *Zhuzhai shiji* (Bamboo Studio collected poetry), in *Lidai huajia shiwenji*, Taipei, 1971.

疏花个个团冰雪
羌笛吹他不下来

Before Hejing's gate, the snow piled up,
Over many years amassed, lichen over the entire body.
Scattered flowers, one by one, collect on the frozen snow,
Western flute, plays to them, they will not come down.

"Prunus Flowers," poem nine, may be translated:

马迹山前万树梅
千花万花如雪开
满裁扬州秋露白
玉箫吹过太湖来

Before Majishan, a myriad prunus trees,¹⁹
1,000 flowers, 10,000 flowers, like a snow storm.
Fully laden, spread out, like white autumn dew,
Jade flute, has played, coming back across Lake Tai.

An obvious similarity is that the first four characters "Before Hejing's gate" (和靖门前) of the Feng poem and of the "Prunus Flowers," poem eight, are the same. The same set up of a place name and the character "before" (前) is seen in the first line of poem nine as well. As will be shown again, Wang often referenced other poems. On the Feng painting, Wang referenced his own poetry, but he also referenced poems by other poets, as in the case of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's painting (fig. 1).

¹⁹ Majishan is the second largest island in Lake Tai.

In these poems, Wang Mian demonstrated his mastery of the quatrain format in that he activates temporal, visual, and auditory stimulation, evoking a range of emotional responses. In each case, the last line of the previous three poems included a reference to musical instruments and their songs. This harkens back to the tunes collected by the Music Bureau (*Yuefu*), established about 120 BC by Emperor Wu (r. 140–86 BC) and later championed in poetry by poets such as Bai Juyi in the Tang dynasty. The Music Bureau songs, typically anonymous folk songs attributed to the Han period, provided the tone of the empire. One of the Music Bureau's duties was to collect songs from the various corners of the empire. These songs typically reflect the lives and hardships of the common people and were considered a barometer of the empire in general. The language is generally direct and simple. Specifically, Wang selected the "jade flute," which refers, not accidentally, to the "Prunus Blossom Fall" (*meihua luo*) tune, a song that is traditionally played on the flute (*di*). Wang's other references to the Western or barbarian flute (*qiangdi*), nomad pan-pipes (*hujia*), and jade-dragon flute (*yulongdi*) are all associated with the "Prunus Blossom Fall" tune. This tune and these instruments were non-Chinese tunes that stirred a poet's sense of loss and transience of life. Later poets also used the tunes and style of *yuefu* poetry to express anger or protest and to gain the ear of those in power. These songs also became a method of expressing important personal feelings or beliefs. One would not want to criticize the government too openly, but rather would couch one's words in old-style poetry. For Wang Mian the inclusion of music and song in his quatrain poems has the ring of this type of song as the conveyance of a grievance. As we have seen, Wang made his opinions known about the imminent fall of the Yuan empire.



Figure 3. Wang Mian, *A Prunus in the Moonlight*, hanging scroll, ink on silk, 164.5 × 94.5 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art, 74.26.

The fifth poem of the ten “Prunus Flowers” is another quatrain inscribed on a hanging scroll done in ink on silk and titled *A Prunus in the Moonlight* now in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 3). The poem may be translated:

海云初破月团团
 独鹤归来夜未阑
 一片笙箫湖水上
 玉妃无语倚阑干

A break in the sea of clouds, the moon gathers,
 A lone crane returns home, night nearly spent.
 A slice of flute and pan-pipe, rises from the lake,
 “Jade lady,” silent, leans against the rail.

The inscribed poem has a slight variation of the poem from the *Zhuzhai shiji*. The fourth character in the fourth line is *yu* (语 words) in Wang’s collected works, while the inscribed poem uses

the character *xiao* (笑 smile). This makes for a slightly different meaning. The “jade lady” (i.e., the prunus) is “without words,” or as I have rendered it “silent,” as opposed to “without a smile.” The intent in either case carries a sense of loneliness and melancholy in keeping with the prunus poetry traditions. The flute and pan-pipe again reflect Wang’s implication of the coming changes.



Figure 4. Wang Mian, *Ink Prunus*, hanging scroll, ink on paper, 138.5 × 25.7 cm, Yale University Art Gallery, 1954.40.3.

On the *Ink Prunus* hanging scroll painted on paper now in the Yale University Art Museum (fig. 4) is a quatrain that may be translated:

猎猎北风吹倒人
乾坤何处不沙尘
清高只有孤梅树
照水开花箇箇真

A blustering north wind, enough to blow a man down,
In what place between heaven and earth, is there no sand or dust?
There is only purity and nobility, solitary prunus tree,
Opening blossoms reflect in the water, each one true.

Here the proud solitary prunus withstands the worst that winter has to offer, and the self-referential metaphors are well understood. Wang Mian took a very particular position. The shift from Southern Song refined taste, plain elegance and pleasures of reclusion to the moral stance of the scholar-official who refuses to enter the Mongol court is seen here. This is protest poetry, and Wang can be understood as confrontational in this work. The falling blossoms that had earlier meant transience, for Wang have been transformed and now, as seen in the final line of poem eight of the “Prunus Flowers,” the blossoms refuse to fall. These poems present confrontation, resistance, and protest.

Another poem inscribed on a hanging scroll done in ink on silk and titled *Fragrant Snow at Broken Bridge* is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s collection (fig. 1). The poem may be translated:

一条寒梅白玉条
暖风吹乱雪飘飘
孤山处士情如故
谁载笙歌过断桥

A wintry prunus tree, white jade branches,
A warm breeze, petals scatter fluttering like snowflakes.
The Gushan Hermit remains true to himself,
Who will carry the song of the flute across Broken Bridge.

The references to Lin Bu are present in the “Gushan Hermit” and the “Broken Bridge,” a bridge as noted already located on the east side of Gushan. As we have seen, Wang saw himself as the Gushan hermit, here remaining true as he awaited the warm spring breeze of change that would be announced on the song from the flute coming to him in his chosen place of reclusion. Throughout Wang’s simple quatrain poetry, we repeatedly see the torment of a man living in troubled times staying the course through reclusion and intentional separation.

For the previous poem, Wang has chosen an eighth-century quatrain by Zhang Wei (张谓) titled “Early Prunus” (早梅) as the inspiration for his own poem. Wang has copied the first line and kept the same rhyme and meter as the original poem, which may be translated:

一条寒梅白玉条
迥临林村旁溪桥
不知近水花先发
疑是经春雪未销

A wintry prunus tree, white jade branches,
Separate but near to a forest, in a hamlet by the valley bridge.
It does not know of recent moisture, its flowers first to emerge,
Doubtful of this passing, spring snow not yet melted.²⁰

Wang's poem, like Zhang's, hints of coming change — for Zhang of a seasonal nature and for Wang of a political nature. Wang has an additional poetic allusion, with references to Lin Bu and *yuefu* poetry, in his flute song reference.

Wang Mian also wrote four, eight-couplet heptasyllabic poems titled “Prunus Flowers” (梅花).²¹ Couplets three and four of the third poem are inscribed on an Ink Prunus hanging scroll dated 1355 now in the Masaki Museum Collection in Osaka. They may be translated:

我与梅花颇同调
相见相忘时素笑
冰霜岁晚愈精神
不比繁华易凋耗

²⁰ *Quan tangshi* (Complete Tang Poetry), 197:2022, Taibei, 1982.

²¹ *Zhuzhai shiji*, 40.

Prunus blossoms and I rather sing the same tune,
 Seeing each other, forgetting each other, sometimes provoking a smile.
 In ice and frost as the year grows old our spirit only grows stronger,
 Not to be compared to the flourishing flowers that so easily wither and scatter.

Wang clearly equated himself with the prunus in this poem, using plain and direct language, while also clearly separating himself from the other flowers, scholars in the court perhaps, which so easily wither and scatter. This painting and poem were completed near the end of Wang's life, and we see Wang reflecting on his life with satisfaction and pride.

As we have seen, many of Wang Mian's poems inscribed on paintings include musical instruments and the sounds of song. These hint at melancholy, but we also understand that these songs announce a change in the political climate of the late Yuan. The layering of these tunes and the instruments that play them provide specific meaning for Wang. Combined with the associations of the prunus and the traditions of prunus poetry, they make up the rich texture of Wang's own prunus poetry. Wang created his own forms of autobiographical, protest, reclusion, unrecognized talent, thwarted ambition and writing-in-seclusion poetry. Wang's compressed use of ink and paper combined with his quatrain poetry, all reduced to a minimalist essence, was the ideal way for the scholar-amateur to express his feelings in the late Yuan. In addition, Wang's Ink Prunus paintings have a complex, combined layering of poetics and painting, which represented a new formal integration — the fusion of picture and poetic inscription. The poem empowered the painting, and the painting became the answer to the questions posed in the poem. Wang set a very high standard for Ink Prunus, as the work's totality was required. This was new to the Yuan, and these "perfections" became the goal for future generations of Ink Prunus painters.

Author's Statement: I have been fortunate to have had some great teachers in my life, and Jonathan Chaves is one of them. In completing a BA and MA with Jonathan, I had the opportunity to cover a broad range of Chinese and Japanese literature with him, in translation and the original, and for some classes it was just the two of us, one-on-one. His eloquent translations, wit, and encyclopedic knowledge continue to be a constant inspiration. In this essay, I have referenced but a few of the

myriad topics Jonathan introduced to me: the Music Bureau, *mono-no-aware*, *The Scholars*, along with the poets Bai Juyi, Su Shi, and so many others. My debt to Jonathan is immeasurable, and I am honored to be his student, friend, and colleague. My deepest thanks.

Kimura Kenkadō: Patron, Painter, Poet, and Polymath of Eighteenth-Century Osaka

Felice Fischer

Kimura Kenkadō's was among the most famous faces in eighteenth-century Osaka cultural circles (fig. 1). A portrait of Kenkadō by Tani Bunchō reveals a humble homeliness, coupled with a definite *joie de vivre*. When I first saw this image, I was drawn to it and wanted to know more about the life and times of the man Kenkadō.¹



Figure 1. *Portrait of Kimura Kenkadō.* Tani Bunchō (1736–1841). Ink and color on silk 1802. [After Kokka, no. 805 (April 1959), plate 7].

Kimura Kenkadō (1736–1802) was much admired for his generosity and learning, manifested

¹ Tani Bunchō (1736–1841) painted his rendering of Kenkadō after the latter's death in the first month of 1802 at the request of his family. See Yoshizawa Chū, "Tani Bunchō hitsu Kimura Kenkadō zō," *Kokka*, no. 805 (April 1959), 108–109.

in his sharing of his knowledge, collection, and wealth. Kenkadō recognized and supported talent in every field. His patronage of art took many forms: the outright purchase of works of art; hosting gatherings for introductions between artists and prospective collectors; publishing reference works and printed versions of old and new art; and opening his collections, both to artists as sources of inspiration and to fellow collectors to introduce new works and artists, all enriched by Kenkadō's seemingly limitless capacity for friendship.

Kenkadō was bold in all his patronage initiatives. He used, for example, his financial resources to promote the dissemination of knowledge through publishing projects and book collecting, including those concerning Western scientific knowledge and painting styles. Even more importantly for the course of the history of art in Japan, at a time when the Nanga literati movement was still at a formative stage, Kenkadō supported early and thoroughly Chinese studies, culture, and arts. Thanks in large part to his patronage, one of the greatest proponents of the new Chinese inspired literati style, Ike Taiga (1723–1776), could make a living and work freely at his painting.²

Born in 1736, Kimura Kenkadō was the son and grandson of wealthy sake brewers in Osaka. The brewery was called Tsutsuiya, and Kenkadō's name was originally Tsutsuiya Kichiuemon. He lived much of his life at the residence where he had spent his childhood, a large estate with extensive gardens. His family was typical of the prosperous Osaka merchants of their day.

Osaka was already a bustling population center during the early seventeenth century. Its geography was an asset, with the site at the juncture of primary water shipping routes. This made Osaka militarily important and was one major reason that Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) built his magnificent Osaka castle there. Hideyoshi's castle was destroyed by the opposing Tokugawa forces under the future shogun Ieyasu in 1614–1615.

Recognizing the site's strategic importance, Ieyasu's son and successor Hidetada had Osaka castle rebuilt as the fortress for the Tokugawa house in western Japan. The castle commanded the highest point in the city, overlooking the Yodo and Yamato Rivers, and was the key building project

² An exhaustive study of Kenkadō and his times is found in Nakamura Shinichirō, *Kimura Kenkadō no saron* (The Salon of Kimura Kenkadō) (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2000). (Nakamura) Nakamura has a detailed chronology on pages 714–723. A good source of visual images is Osaka History Museum, *Kimura Kenkadō—Naniwa chi no kyōjin* (Kimura Kenkadō: Intellectual Leader of Naniwa) (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 2003). (Osaka cat.)

of the seventeenth century in the area. To attract artisans and merchants to the city, the shoguns exempted them from paying real estate taxes.³ Members of the merchant class became influential politically through their appointments to administrative posts in the city government, especially the merchant delegates (yōkiki) who communicated government edicts and made sure that taxes were paid. They also served as hosts for dignitaries visiting from other regions, and even other countries, such as the Korean delegations that came in 1748 and 1764.

The same geographic advantage that made Osaka desirable militarily also benefited its economic growth. Osaka soon became the storehouse and distribution point for foodstuffs for all Japan and was nicknamed “the country’s kitchen.” Osaka merchants played a key role in the conduct of Japan’s limited foreign trade. Although Nagasaki was the only designated port, around fifty Osaka merchant houses had shogunal authorization to participate in the raw silk trade with China, for example. Osaka also became the wholesale regional and national center for a variety of goods, ranging from cotton cloth and tatami-mat facing to dried bonito and pharmaceuticals. In 1722, Osaka’s Doshomachi became the country’s distribution point for all imported medicines from China. Osaka was the site of three great markets: one for fruits and vegetables, one for fish, and one for rice.

The abundance of rice also made Osaka a natural center for sake brewing, and by Kenkadō’s time there were over 200 firms, including the Tsutsuiya run by his family. Other merchants founded dry goods stores such as the Echigoya of the Mitsui family, future founders of the Mitsukoshi department stores. By the mid-eighteenth century, Osaka, with a population of over 300,000, became a bastion of wealth and political influence. The prosperous Osaka families embraced the Confucian ideal of ensuring a thorough education in the Chinese classics, poetry, calligraphy, and painting for their sons.

The rise of Chinese literati culture in Japan of the Edo period had a long history of precedents. Already since the sixth century, when Chinese language and culture were first imported into Japan

³James L. McClain and Wakita Osamu, eds., “Space, Power, Wealth, and Status in Seventeenth-Century Osaka,” *Osaka: The Merchants’ Capital of Early Modern Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 45. This volume is the source for the information on Osaka that follows.

along with Buddhism, Chinese literature was highly regarded and continued to be influential.⁴ By the early seventeenth century when the Japanese government came under the de facto control of the Tokugawa shoguns, Confucian theories of government and social order gained prominence. In art, the paintings and lifestyles of the Chinese literati offered one new model for Edo period Japanese artists who created their own literati culture. Among the artistic ideals of the literati was to gain proficiency in the “three perfections” of poetry, calligraphy, and painting. Poetry was composed in classical Chinese and, for the most part, treated Chinese themes as did the painting. Literati culture acknowledged and encouraged individuality and even eccentricity in artists. The free and open artistic atmosphere of eighteenth-century Japan set the stage for the flourishing of literature and art, ushering in a period of creative experimentation by a remarkable group of talented men and women. Because their city was unburdened by the weight of tradition or the cultural aura of imperial Kyoto, Osaka artists, poets, and playwrights were even freer to try new modes and styles, and Osaka became a burgeoning locus of artistic and intellectual creativity. It was in this cultural landscape that Kimura Kenkadō grew up and spent most of his life.

When he was about six years old, Kenkadō’s education in the field of painting began, like most, under the tutelage of a Kano school artist named Ōka Shunboku (1680–1763). Several years later in 1748, Kenkadō was introduced to the artist who would have the greatest impact on him, Ike Taiga (1723–1776).

⁴ See for example the eleventh-century collection, J. Thomas Rimer and Jonathan Chaves, *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing: The Wakan rōei shū* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

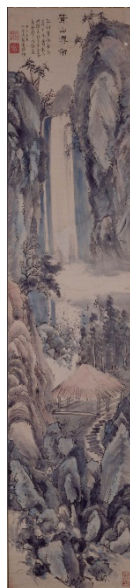


Figure 2. *Waterfall at Mount Minō*. Taiga (1723–1776). Ink and color on paper. 1744.

Private collection, Japan. [After Taiga cat., no. 5].

Kenkadō owned at least a dozen works by Taiga and was one of his most important patrons during the ensuing decades. Kenkadō was unusual among Japanese collectors in that he frequently followed the Chinese custom of stamping his own collection seal on the paintings and books he owned. Among the paintings to which Kenkadō affixed his seal is one of Taiga's earliest dated works, *Waterfall at Mount Minō*, a famous scenic spot near Osaka, dated to 1744 (fig. 2).⁵ This date is before he met Kenkadō, so it would seem that Taiga could not sell the painting earlier, being a struggling young artist himself. He subsequently either gave it or sold it (probably the latter) to Kenkadō sometime after 1748. Kenkadō must have highly treasured Taiga's *Waterfall at Mount Minō*, for he used it as a model for at least two extant versions of his own (which are unfortunately not dated).⁶ The copying of

⁵ Felice Fischer and Kyoko Kinoshita, *Ike Taiga and Tokuyama Gyokuran: Japanese Masters of the Brush* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2007), cat. no. 5. (Taiga cat.) It was in conjunction with research for this catalogue that I first encountered Kimura Kenkadō. The same project prompted the collaboration with Jonathan Chaves who translated all of Taiga's poems in Chinese into English for the first time. In many ways, Jonathan's wide-ranging interests and talents, his joy, and his generosity in sharing his knowledge make me think of him as a modern-day Kenkadō, to which Jonathan would perhaps add, "If I only had his dough."

⁶ Osaka History Museum, 62, cat. 61.

works by earlier masters has always been one of the fundamental methods of learning the discipline of the art of painting, both East and West. Taiga himself employed Chinese models for much of his work. However, original Chinese paintings which Japanese artists sought to emulate were scarce and often housed in inaccessible elite collections. Artists like Taiga depended on painting manuals published by the Chinese, such as *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. Kenkadō was an avid bibliophile and had a large collection of these painting manuals. Part of his generosity as a patron was to give artists access to his collection of rare books. Taiga's use of such manuals can be seen by comparing his *Handscroll of the Four Seasons* with sections of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*.⁷ In 1762, Kenkadō himself commissioned Taiga to paint a handscroll of model landscapes that could be used for his own practice. Titled *Six Distances*, the influence of the Chinese painting manuals is also clearly evident.⁸

⁷ Taiga cat. 123, 56, fig. 30. For an English translation of the manual, see the Bollingen series, Sze Maimai, trans. and ed., *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting: Chieh Tzū Yuān Hua Chuan, 1679 – 1701* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1963).

⁸ Tanaka Ichimatsu, et al., *Ike Taiga sakuhin shū* (Ike Taiga's Collected Works). 2 vols. Tokyo: Chūō Kōron, 1960. (SS), SS 433. See Osaka cat. 43 for a later copy also commissioned by Kenkadō.



Figure 3. *Plum Blossoms in Moonlight*. Ike Taiga (1723–1776). Ink and color on paper. 1768. The Newark Museum.

Another work that bears witness to the deep artistic ties between Kenkadō and Taiga is the latter's, *Plum Blossoms in Moonlight* (fig. 3).⁹ In his inscription on the painting, dated to 1768, Taiga states that he did it at the request of a “poetry society brother” in Osaka, who was most likely Kenkadō. The inscription is not strictly speaking a poem at all, but rather, a series of phrases describing the best situations for viewing plum blossoms. The list includes circumstances such as, “in dawn sunlight, in pale shade, ... while brewing tea, in delicate cold,” and “in moonlight,” as depicted in Taiga’s scroll. The listing was based on a Chinese original titled *Twenty-Six Phrases Suitable to [Plum] Blossoms*, drawn up in the late twelfth century by the poet Zhang Zi. Among the paintings known to have been in Kenkado’s collection is another version of plum blossoms in moonlight, by the Chinese artist Cai Jian, dated to 1650. It may be that Taiga drew his inspiration from the Cai Jian scroll, as did Kenkadō,

⁹ Taiga, cat. 39, with a complete translation of the text by Jonathan Chaves.

who did a rendering of his own closer in execution to the Chinese painting he owned.

Then as now, the relationship between patron and artist is not always the smoothest. We have a rare example of Taiga's seeming dissatisfaction with Kenkadō as a patron in an inscription on a scroll dated to 1770. As Taiga relates in the inscription:

In the seventh year of the Meiwa era [1770], the second month of spring, Master Ki[mura Kenkadō] planned a gathering for calligraphy and painting, assembling distinguished scholars at the Nanzen-in in Naniwa [Osaka and Kyoto].

First he selected paper and silk, and distributed these to various artists present. His close associates from the capital responded right away to his request. And he also deigned to include my group. Hence I produced for him a painting of *Mountain Peaks above Spring Haze* in pale colors, and also wrote out a calligraphic scroll to present to him to complement it. [two effaced characters] But the gentleman [Kenkadō] expressed dissatisfaction at the rough plainness of this work, going on about it without cease, and he had Mr. Hayashi of the book shop repeatedly dun me [for another painting], and had him set forth five-colored inks and a new sheet to work on. However, to execute the kind of finely detailed composition with rich and lovely colors that he was now calling for, really required a specialist in such a style; it was truly something I could not hope to achieve. And yet again he went on about it without let up, so what could I do?

Therefore again I [four effaced characters], stubbornly using lacquer thick ink to "hook forth" this *Bamboo and Rocks after Spring Rain*, adding some dumb red and stupid blue-green, in the manner of etched woodblock prints, simply for the purpose of filling his exigent request! How could this be worthy of looking at?¹⁰

The version we have as related by Kenkadō is quite different:

¹⁰ Taiga cat. 199 (*Mountain Peaks Above Spring Haze*), translation by Jonathan Chaves; SS 469 (*Bamboo and Rocks After Spring Rain*), translation by Jonathan Chaves.

Kenkadō organized an exhibition of calligraphy and painting.... He assembled the work of famous artists of Kyoto and Osaka. The master [i.e., Taiga] was sent a notice, according to proper form, but when it arrived he was in Ōmi at the temple of Emman'in. Upon his return late at night, Gyokuran showed him the invitation. The master set off in such haste for Osaka that he forgot his box of brushes. Gyokuran rushed off in pursuit, box in hand, and caught up with him at Fushimi Inari. It was raining heavily as the master continued on his night journey to Osaka. He arrived at our house dressed in a straw hat and raincoat. The servants took him for a beggar and told him they had nothing to give him. Then they looked again and discovered that it was the master. Greatly embarrassed, they scurried back into the house. Well then, on the day of the exhibition, the master's work, a single hanging scroll was exhibited at Ryūsen-ji. It was entitled *Bamboo and Rocks after Spring Rain*.

Both paintings became part of Kenkadō's collection, and the two men remained fast friends. Two years later, Kenkadō was among those hosting Taiga's fiftieth birthday celebration at a restaurant in the Gion district of Kyoto. Furthermore, most of what we know of Taiga's life, including the latter narration of Taiga's painting for the exhibition, comes through a work called the *Ike Taiga kafu* (Records of the Ike Taiga Lineage), compiled from Kenkadō's oral accounts to his adopted son Sekkyo.¹¹

The incident of the painting "feud" points out another remarkable aspect of Kenkadō's life as a patron: he was among the earliest of what we would now call "curators of contemporary art." This 1770 exhibition of paintings by Kyoto and Osaka artists was one of the earliest of its kind.

The exhibition was, as noted by Kenkadō, held at Ryūsenji, a temple in Osaka. Temples had traditionally been sites of exhibitions of sorts, called *kaichō*, or "opening the curtain" when there would be temporary unveilings of temple images and treasures for the faithful. These were open to all

¹¹ Melinda Takeuchi, *Taiga's True Views: The Language of Landscape Painting in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 168.

for a donation to the temple, and in fact constituted a fundraising event as well as a religious one.¹²

What was new that Kenkadō partly pioneered was having secular art by living artists on exhibit at a temple exhibition, and also most likely for sale, though this is not specifically mentioned by Taiga or Kenkadō. Kenkadō succeeded in merging the larger popular temple venue with the mode of elite viewing for a chosen few. The private viewings were simply called *shogakai* (calligraphy and painting gathering). Often the patron would invite a select group of connoisseurs and fellow-patrons to a restaurant or private home for an evening of convivial dining and viewing, with the expectation that the calligraphies and paintings on view would be purchased during the course of the evening.¹³ Kenkadō also held these private parties for the enjoyment of art and was famed for his generosity as a host. The gathering of fellow collectors and scholars was another by-product of some of the Chinese literati ideals, particularly those reflected in the world of Chinese tea, or *sencha*.

The Japanese literati like Kenkadō, with their admiration of Chinese culture, deliberately set about creating their own version of the Chinese-style tea ceremony. In contrast to the frothy whipped tea known as *matcha*, made from powdered tea, the Chinese style *sencha* tea was made from tea leaves thrown directly into a pot of boiling water and simmered for a short time before drinking. The habit of drinking tea Chinese style originated with the monks of the Ōbaku sect who came to Japan after the fall of the Ming dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century and lived at the main temple, Mampukuji in Uji, not far from Osaka and Kyoto. During Kenkadō's time, the great popularizer of *sencha* was an eccentric Ōbaku monk called Baisaō (Old Tea Seller; Kō Yūgai, 1675–1763), who was befriended by Ike Taiga and others in Kyoto.¹⁴

Sencha became associated with the whole literati culture, and also became codified with its rules of preparation, utensils, and behavior. *Sencha* gatherings served basically the same purpose as Japanese style tea: an occasion for like-minded friends and connoisseurs to meet, with poetry and art

¹² P.F. Kornicki, "Public Display and Changing Values: Early Meiji Exhibitions and Their Precursors," *Monumenta Nipponica* 49 (Summer 1994): 2:167–196; ff., 174–178.

¹³ Andrew Markus, "Shogakai: Celebrity Banquets and the Late Edo Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 53 (1993): 135–167.

¹⁴ Taiga, cat. 79; see also Patricia Graham, *Tea of the Sages: The Art of Sencha* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 68–91.

(Chinese, in this case) the focus of discussions. It would be a stimulant to spiritual enrichment. Tea was also considered a medicinal plant and of interest to Kenkadō as one of the botanical-medicinal subjects of his studies as well. In Osaka, Kenkadō would prove to be one of *sencha*'s most effective promoters, by hosting parties, collecting utensils, and by his support as a publisher.

Kenkadō is often credited with organizing the first true *sencha* tea gatherings, which were frequently held at his estate and outdoors, in homage to the Chinese literati ideal of the scholar living in seclusion in the mountains. The communion with nature combined with convivial gatherings was a popular subject of the Nanga painters, especially the depictions of the *Orchid Pavilion Gathering*. In this case, sake was the drink of choice, but other paintings focus on the tea. (Since both beverages were served in similar small cups, it is not always easy to tell.) The gatherings that Kenkadō hosted can perhaps be best compared to the ideal of the salon. Tea and food would be served, paintings viewed, and poetry composed and recited, as topics of conversation ranged freely from ancient music to the game of Go to Chinese bronzes.

We have the report of one visitor about tea with Kenkadō, in the person of Ueda Akinari (1734–1809), perhaps best known now for his fiction such as *Ugetsu monogatari* (Tales of Moonlight and Rain). But Ueda was also a student of medicine, a poet of Chinese verse, and a leading intellectual in Osaka. Ueda describes a visit to Kenkadō in 1774: Kenkadō welcomed him by setting out some Chinese-style candies, which it turns out Kenkadō himself made. Then Kenkadō prepared *sencha* tea: the tea being of a type called Dragon Well, considered the finest Chinese tea available. It is not clear whether Kenkadō had obtained the tea from China or whether this was a Japanese-grown version. After tea, Kenkadō brought out some of the books he recently acquired, and later still, he produced recent archeological specimens and his shell collection. Part of the shell collection still survives and is housed at the Osaka City Natural History Museum.¹⁵

Kenkadō helped advance the knowledge about *sencha* and its popularity among Confucian scholars through his publishing projects. Kyoto booksellers had begun reprinting the seventeenth-century *Chinese Classic of Tea* by Li Yu (1611–1680) in the mid-1750s. Kenkadō's library housed other Chinese texts on tea, such as Ye Zhuan's *Secrets of Steeped Tea*, which Kenkadō had re-published in

¹⁵ Nakamura, *Kimura Kenkadō no saron*, 218–221; for the shell collection see Osaka, cat. plate 145.

Kyoto in 1764. This detailed account of different types of teas, brewing methods, and utensils provided concrete guidelines for codifying *sencha* preparation. Kenkadō took his task one step further by also having the Chinese texts translated into Japanese and having Japanese-language texts about *sencha* made available, such as *The Classic of Tea*, first published in Japanese by Kenkadō in 1774. Kenkadō himself kept records of *sencha* implements and painted illustrated manuals for *sencha* devotees. His own collection of tea implements included some that had once belonged to Baisaō.¹⁶ As can be seen from the example of his involvement with *sencha*, Kenkadō was not merely or even primarily a *bon vivant*; he was a serious scholar of Chinese learning and civilization.

The decade of Kenkadō's life in the 1760s was particularly filled with his literary, bibliographic, and publishing activities. At the heart of Kenkadō's Chinese literary studies was Chinese poetry. In 1758, Kenkadō started a sort of study group on Chinese language and literature that came to be called the Kenkadō-kai because it was held at his studio in Osaka. The sobriquet "Kenkadō" by which he is best known is actually taken from the name of the building where the meetings took place. It means, literally, "Reed [*kenka*] Hall [*dō*]," and got its appellation from a fossilized reed that was discovered while the building was under construction.¹⁷

The members of the Kenkadō-kai included highly respected scholars of the day such as Katayama Hokkai (1723–1790), Kenkadō's poetry teacher. Kenkadō had begun his studies of Chinese language and culture when he was about eleven years old, and he was enrolled at a private Confucian academy founded by Hokkai. His studies focused particularly on the *Confucian Classic of Poetry*, and the love of poetry stayed with him all his life.

The Kenkadō-kai morphed into a group called the Konton [shi]sha (Chaos [Poetry] Society) in 1764 with Hokkai as its leader. The members gathered on the sixteenth of every month. At each meeting a poetic topic and Chinese rhyme scheme was decided upon for each member to employ in composing his verses. While the quality of composition under such circumstances was not necessarily always of the highest order, the Kontonsha included some of the most notable scholars

¹⁶ Ibid., plate 117.

¹⁷ Like his contemporaries, Kenkadō used a variety of names throughout his life: his formal artistic name (*azana*) was Kōkyō, and other studio names (*gō*) were Sonsai and Seishuku.

and artists of the time and served as a communication center for the cultural events and players of the day. Among its members were the scholarly monk Daiten Kenjō (1719–1801), a close friend of Kenkadō's since their days together as Hokkai's poetry students, as well as Ike Taiga. Many verses composed by members of the Kontonsha have survived for posterity to judge, owing to Kenkadō enthusiasm. One manuscript of Kontonsha members' poetry, *Kenkadō kōshin ki* (The Kenkadō Record of the Year of the Monkey) compiled by Kenkadō, dates to 1764 and includes poems by several Korean visitors.¹⁸

In 1764, a Korean embassy arrived in Japan. This was a fairly rare occurrence, the previous one having been in 1748, nearly two decades earlier. Kenkadō was among those honored in 1764 with the task of receiving some of the members of the delegation (the complete entourage was about 500 strong). Japan had ceased direct diplomatic relations with China after the fall of the Ming dynasty in the seventeenth century, but the Koreans still sent embassies to the continent. As a result, Korean visitors were much sought after as a direct source of Chinese culture. The common language of diplomacy was Chinese, and Hokkai recorded in his diary of the 1764 visit that there was an exchange of poems between the Koreans and their Japanese hosts during the banquet held by Kenkadō. He also notes that Kenkadō received the latest Chinese books as gifts from the visitors.¹⁹

Kenkadō's library constituted one of the largest and most complete in Japan at the time. He collected texts on Chinese poetry, painting, Confucian studies, as well as Chinese rubbings and the like. His holdings were considered so important that, after his death, the shogunal government purchased Kenkadō's entire library for the enormous amount of 500 *ryō* and deposited at the central Confucian academy established in Edo in 1797, the Shōheizaka Gakumonjo. It is now housed for the most part in the Library of the National Archives in Tokyo. As noted above, Kenkadō had financed the

¹⁸ Osaka History Museum, cat. 31. For samples of Chinese poems by Japanese authors of the period in English translation, see Burton Watson, *Japanese Literature in Chinese*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 2:35, which includes a verse by Tani Bunchō's father, Rokkoku. The Kontonsha poets' verses await the translation talents of someone like Jonathan Chaves.

¹⁹ It is possible that Kenkadō also met some members of the 1748 embassy. See Burglind Jungmann, *Painters as Envoys: Korean Inspiration in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Nanga* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 51–166, for descriptions of the artistic and cultural exchanges between the Koreans and Ike Taiga and his circle.

publication of books such as the Japanese translation of the *Classic of Tea* in 1764. In 1777, he helped edit and publish the magnum opus begun by the artist Sakaki Hyakusen (1698–1753), a comprehensive *Dictionary of Painters of the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties* (Genminshin shoga junmei roku). The impact of the rise of printing in disseminating new knowledge in Japan, beginning from the mid-seventeenth century, cannot be overestimated. Kenkadō recognized the importance of the print medium as a means of spreading Chinese culture as well as scientific knowledge.

Kenkadō also collected maps and owned many volumes on cartography, both from Chinese as well as from Western sources. Among the books on Chinese geography owned by Kenkadō was a printed gazetteer of 1609 titled, *Wonders Throughout the Country* (Hainei qiguan). Pictured in this volume is the tidal bore at the Qiantang River. This seems to have served as a model for Ike Taiga's rendering of the same subject on one of a pair of screens, *High Tide at the Qiantang River*.²⁰ Taiga himself was an intrepid traveler (albeit limited to Japan). He was an avid climber of mountains, so his eye and hand developed from sketching actual sites as well. We have one such example in his *Journey to the Three Peaks* sketchbook made while sojourning at Hakuzan, Tateyama, and Mt. Fuji in 1760.²¹ The relatively new mode of painting actual scenery (*shinkeizu*, or “true view”) from on-site plein air sketches, may have in fact, originated with the Korean embassies. Both the 1748 and the 1764 embassies had artists in their entourage whose task it was to paint the Japanese scenery on their route of travel. Kenkadō's portraitist Tani Bunchō was also commissioned in 1793 to do similar drawings of the Japanese coastline by the daimyo Matsudaira Sadanobu. The latter's motive was not to inspire artists but to have an accurate survey of the Japanese coastal areas. Until then, most maps of Japan were stylized approximations.

The second type of maps and volumes about geography in Kenkadō's library comprised those from Western sources reflecting Western ideas about cartography, such as a Dutch world map of 1570 etched in copperplate.²² This latter group reflected Kimura Kenkadō's intense interest also in Western

²⁰ Taiga cat. 159 and fig. 59.1, 449.

²¹ Ibid., 187.

²² Yukiko Shirahara, ed., *Japan Envisions the West: 16th–19th Century Japanese Art from Kobe City Museum* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2007), plate 15.

learning, the so-called Dutch studies, or *rangaku*.

In the early seventeenth century, the shogunate had banned Christianity and designated the Dutch East India Company as the sole European group authorized to trade strictly limited items through Nagasaki. However, by 1720 the eighth shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune lifted the ban on the importation of Western books translated into Chinese that had been in effect for nearly 100 years. Only books dealing with Christianity were still outlawed. Yoshimune himself was interested in Western mathematics and astronomy (in his desire to establish a more accurate calendar for Japan); as a result, Dutch language and scholarship received official sanction from the government.

During Kenkadō's lifetime, one significant breakthrough occurred in 1774, with the first publication of a translation of a Western book on anatomy.²³ While Confucianists also encouraged the study of nature, the "investigation of things," they saw it primarily as a source of finding a set of metaphysical symbols for establishing the harmony of man in his universe. The new element that the Dutch studies introduced was the investigation of things for their own sake, in order to produce practical results. Kenkadō's curiosity knew no bounds, and his library contained over ten different dictionaries of the Dutch language, as well as the Chinese translations of European works.

The rise of Dutch studies was accompanied by an interest among Japanese artists in Western painting techniques, introduced primarily through Dutch oil paintings and etchings. Western style painting was called *yōga* (Western picture), and Kenkadō's painting collection extended to include works such as a painting of a Dutch lady by Ishikawa Tairō (1762–1817), acquired by Kenkadō in 1801.²⁴

One of the most famous practitioners of Western-style painting was another acquaintance of Kenkadō's, the Edo artist Shiba Kōkan (1747–1818). Kōkan had started as an *ukiyo-e* artist (and successful forger of Harunobu's works), but after he saw examples of Dutch oil paintings, he began experimenting with Western techniques. One of his earliest paintings is a very naturalistic image in oil on paper of the Chinese Buddhist priest Xainzi, who is usually represented in the abbreviated sketch-

²³ Calvin L. French, *Shiba Kōkan Artist: Innovator, and Pioneer in the Westernization of Japan* (New York: Weatherhill, 1974), 120.

²⁴ Shirahara, plate 68.

like versions of Zen ink painters.²⁵ One can only try to imagine how startling such a realistic version would have been to a contemporary Japanese audience. Shiba Kōkan was also one of the first Japanese artists to make copperplate etchings. In 1788, en route to Nagasaki, Shiba Kōkan paid his first visit to Kenkadō. He sojourned in Osaka several more times, and during one of his trips showed Kenkadō a sample of his copperplate etching. Kōkan wrote in his travel journal, “When I showed him the copperplate picture of Ryōgoku Bridge that I myself had made, Kenkadō could scarcely believe that it had been produced in Japan.”²⁶

Botany was another area especially close to Kenkadō’s heart. It was a subject he had started studying as a child under the tutelage of the Kyoto scholar, Tsushima Keian. Kenkadō studied the available European books he could find for his library and collected and recorded all manner of specimens himself. The artist Noro Kaiseki (1747–1828) records in his diary that Kenkadō traveled to Wakayama prefecture to Kaiseki’s home to deliver a rare specimen of Chinese bamboo that Kenkadō had received through an interpreter at Nagasaki.²⁷

Kenkadō’s home was a veritable natural history museum, featuring, besides the botanical items and his shell collection, butterfly collections, Ainu objects, and fossils. It became a mecca for scholars and artists, and much of what we know about him comes from the writings of his visitors. One such visitor, the young artist Tanomura Chikuden (1777–1835), noted in his travelogue:

[Kenkadō’s learning] was extensive and he liked the past. He was good at connoisseurship and he was versed in the study of grasses, trees, birds and beasts. He collected calligraphy model books, famous paintings ... and even unusual pieces and strange things from abroad — they filled his house. His household had previously been wealthy, but due to his collecting it almost went bankrupt.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., plate 37.

²⁶ French, 181, no. 12.

²⁷ Hugh Wylie, “Nanga Painting Treatises of Nineteenth Century Japan: Translations, Commentary, and Analysis,” PhD dissertation (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 1991), 24.

²⁸ Ibid., 110

Beginning in 1779, Kenkadō himself started keeping a diary. Its format reflects the scientific bent of his mind: for, rather than being a narrative, it was a daily log of the names of people he met, whether as visitors to his residence or at other gatherings, while traveling, or even just along the street. Along with their names he recorded their home province and sometimes their profession.²⁹ The diary includes names from all over Japan, from every profession and class: scholars, painters, poets, seal carvers, botanists, and Chinese and Korean visitors. The sheer number of names listed makes one wonder when he ever had time to sleep. One entry in 1782 lists a visit to Sōrin-ji Temple in Kyoto with Ike Taiga's widow Gyokuran to see a painting exhibition.

That same year, 1782, although not mentioned in his diary, Kenkadō succeeded to the head of his family's sake brewery at the death of his father. One aspect of his career that suffered as a result of his peripatetic life and multiple interests was the family enterprise. One can well imagine that the daily routine of managing a business would not appeal particularly to Kenkadō, and he delegated the responsibility for the operation to others. The result, unfortunately, was that in 1790, his brewery was accused of underreporting the consumption of rationed rice allotments. After his brewery manager was found guilty of fraud, Kenkadō, though not personally involved, went into self-imposed exile and moved his family to Ise for a number of years. He returned to Osaka in 1793 and, although his wealth was much reduced owing to the brewery scandal, he continued pursuing his many interests. According to Kenkadō's record, it was after his return to Osaka that his portraitist Tani Bunchō first visited him during the seventh month of 1796, returning several times during the following month. Bunchō seems to have made his first sketch of Kenkadō during this sojourn.³⁰ Kenkadō died the twenty-fifth day of the first month of 1802, active to the end. Among the visitors recorded in the prior year 1801 was Tanomura Chikuden.

In his journal quoted above, Chikuden states about Kenkadō:

²⁹ Mizuta Norihisa, et al., eds., *Kanbon Kenkadō nikki* (The Complete Kenkadō Diary) (Tokyo: Geika shoin, 2009). This volume reproduces the entire diary.

³⁰ Yoshizawa Chū, "Tani Bunchō hitsu Kimura Kenkadō shōzō gakō Tani Bunchō hitsu Kimura Kenkadō jūkyō zukō," *Kokka*, no. 973 (September 1974), 31–33.

He most liked to commend and praise, encouraging the development of talent, and he was unstinting in his praise of it. Moreover, when he spotted someone with talent, he always wholeheartedly favored him and cultivated him. He had numerous associates everywhere; his contemporaries hastened to ingratiate themselves with him. The name of Kenkadō spread throughout the land.³¹

Among the artists whom Kenkadō patronized, I have used the example of Ike Taiga, but Kenkadō supported many other important artists, such as Kuwayama Gyokushū, Noro Kaiseki, and Okada Beisanjin and his son Hanko, to name just a few. Then as now, artists knew to value a collector with a good eye and a generous host, who provided a good meal in the company of the great minds and talents of the time, to feed both body and soul.

Kenkadō's life resonated with artists in more recent times as well. One early twentieth century biographical sketch of Kenkadō was written by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927), best known as the author of fiction such as *Rashōmon* and *Hell Screens*. In an essay of 1924, Akutagawa relates that he visited a museum in Kyoto and happened to wander into a room that had a small display of Nanga paintings. His attention was immediately drawn to a hanging scroll of a landscape, “somewhat ‘amateurish’ in feeling ... it had blue moss on the mountain rocks, with mountain apricot flowers in bloom. The entire atmosphere was serene and calm. I felt the sensation as of spring breezes wafting through the glass of the exhibition case, melting away the bitterness that had been paining my stomach”³² (fig. 4). Akutagawa had written a short story in 1921, called “Autumn Mountain,” about two Chinese connoisseurs discussing a painting of that title. Akutagawa's tale beautifully evokes the emotional atmosphere of the effect that art can have on the viewer, presaging his own reaction to Kenkadō's spring landscape three years later. In his biographical essay, Akutagawa admired Kenkadō's existence as a multi-talented, genial dilettante, who was confident yet modest in the not insignificant role which he played on the esthetic, intellectual, and scientific stage of that vital cultural period in

³¹ Wylie, *Nanga Painting Treatises of Nineteenth Century Japan*, 110–111.

³² Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, “Kimura Sonsai.” Originally published in *Josei kaizō*, vol. 3, nos. 8 and 9 (August/September 1924); reprinted in Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966). “Autumn Mountain,” is translated in Ivan Morris, ed., *Modern Japanese Stories: An Anthology* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962).

Japan's history. It is this aspect, I suspect, rather than Kenkadō's efforts as a painter that held a fascination for Akutagawa. What might Kenkadō mean to a struggling writer in the early twentieth century? Akutagawa's era was one of soul searching by artists in every field for a sense of individual and collective identity in a rapidly changing world. To someone like Akutagawa, Kenkadō represented a man of admirable balance and stability, who was inquisitive as well as acquisitive, and who enjoyed life and friends to the fullest.



Figure 4. *Landscape.* Kimura Kenkadō (1736–1802). Ink and color on paper.
Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2016-194-4.

Bunchō's painted portrait has captured for the ages Kenkadō's open, generous spirit — a certain radiance and magnetism. Kenkadō seems caught in mid-conversation at one of the many gatherings he hosted in Osaka for artists, scholars, poets, and friends.

Mural, Mural on the Wall:
An Ancient Custom Reflected in Six Dynasties Bricks¹

Willow Weilan Hai

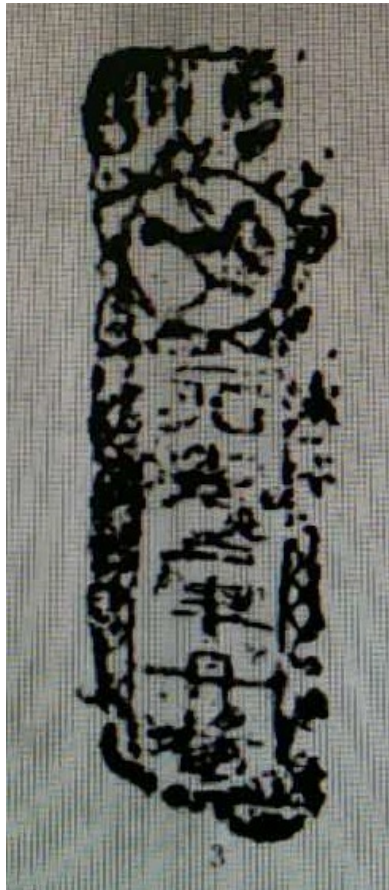


Figure 1. Rubbing of figured brick with three-toed bird from a tomb dated the third year of Yongan (260 BC) in Jintan, Jiangsu Province. *Wenwu*, 8:94. 1989.

¹ This essay is written in honor of Professor Jonathan Chaves, who is singularly capable of touching the spirit of Chinese poetry, a spirit that had been highly nurtured in the Six Dynasties.

The special Six Dynasties (220–589) art form of brick murals was popular in the Changjiang (Yangzi River) area of southern China. It was centered in the ancient capital Jiankang (present-day Nanjing in Jiangsu province) and fanned out several hundred miles into neighboring areas, reaching westward into present-day Hubei province and southward into Fujian province. Tombs with decorated bricks were fashionable in the Jiankang area for several hundred years. The earliest evidence comes from a tomb dated to the third year of Yong'an (260 BC) in the Wu kingdom (*Wenwu* (1989), 8:69–78, 96) (fig. 1); in addition to the date, the bricks were stamped with geometric patterns and images of the three-legged bird (a sun symbol). From these simple designs, the art reached its peak around the fifth century in elaborate large-brick murals — best represented by the depiction of the *Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove*² (fig. 2) — some of which could possibly have been produced for emperors of the Southern dynasties.³ This elaborate style lasted until the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618–907).



Figure 2. The figure of Ji Kang, detail from the brick mural *Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove*, excavated from the Southern dynasties period (420–589) tomb at Xishanqiao, Nanjing. Courtesy of Nanjing Museum.

The impressing of brick designs was not a new method of tomb decoration in the Six Dynasties. It had been used in central China since the Warring States period (475–221 BC). From there

² Wu Xiang, "A Study of Six Dynasties Pictorial Tombs in Jiangsu," *Dongnan wenhua* (1997), 1: 92–93.

³ Yang Hong, "Dongjin Nanchao huaxiangzhuan de yuanliu ji yanbian," *Wenwu yu kaogu lunwen ji* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1986), 222–224.

it spread to neighboring areas, becoming popular in the ensuing Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD) and blossoming especially in what is today the Sichuan area. During the Six Dynasties, however, while impressed brick decoration was being revived becoming a dominant regional art form with Nanjing as its center, it was declining in other areas. Its resurgence in the Nanjing area was possibly due to the expense and difficulty of working with stone. In addition, the damp climate of the area made it difficult to preserve wall paintings from deterioration, although the traces of pigments found in some large-sized tombs were sufficient to reveal the use of painted decoration and its original appearance. It is possible that for the above reasons, tomb structures in this period were mainly built of bricks. Over the past several decades, over two hundred decorated brick tombs of the Six Dynasties period have been excavated, providing us with sufficient data for study.

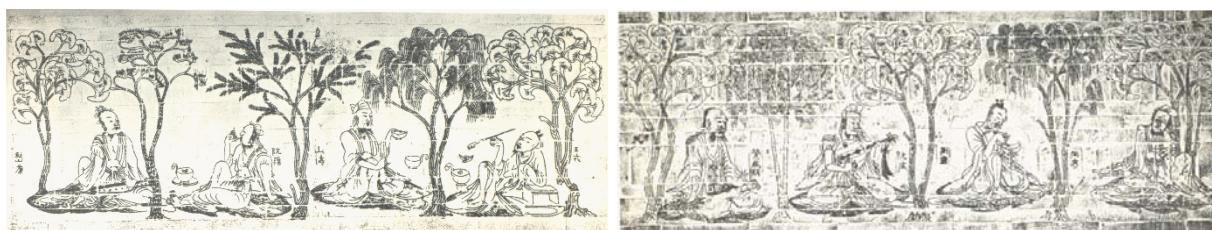


Figure 3. Rubbing of impressed-brick mural depicting the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and Rong Qiqi. The brick mural excavated from the Southern dynasties period (420–589) tomb at Xishanqiao, Nanjing. Courtesy of Nanjing Museum.

There are mainly two shapes of bricks: one is wedge-shaped and the other rectangular. The wedge-shaped brick is often used for corners, curved ceilings, or arches; they are roughly a few cm wide and 12 cm long. The rectangular bricks are made in different sizes, ranging from a few cm to 16 cm wide and from 16 to 35 cm long. They are decorated mainly by the use of molds, by incising lines, or by the use of a carved stamp to make impressions. Earlier brick designs are more often linear in style, whereas later bricks are more often decorated with a high relief effect. Similar chronological distinctions can also be seen in the designs. In general, the variety of designs in brick decoration includes geometric patterns, floral motifs, figures, animals, and religious motifs, as well as calligraphic inscriptions. In the earlier stage, that is, during the Wu and Western Jin period, geometric and general

floral patterns were more popular, but later, the coin-motif geometric pattern and the Buddhist-themed lotus flower pattern would become prevalent. Images of people, measuring 2 to 3 m in height — with the renowned Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove (fig. 3) marking the genre's peak — are put together with hundreds of bricks in a new mosaic style of brick mural. The earliest example of this regional style can be found in the Eastern Jin dynasty (316–417): a tomb excavated in 1957 at Maigaoqiao in Nanjing, dated to the fourth year of Yonghe (348), was decorated with three pieces of molded bricks that formed a single image depicting a roaring tiger, accompanied by the four characters *hu xiao shan qiu* (tiger roaring in the hills) on the four corners.⁴ (fig. 4) Soon, a number of bricks with partial images came to be used to form a large picture, much like a jigsaw puzzle assembled on the wall. Called “molded brick murals” or “mosaic brick murals” by Chinese scholars, this regional feature of mortuary architecture became a fashionable trend in tomb decoration.

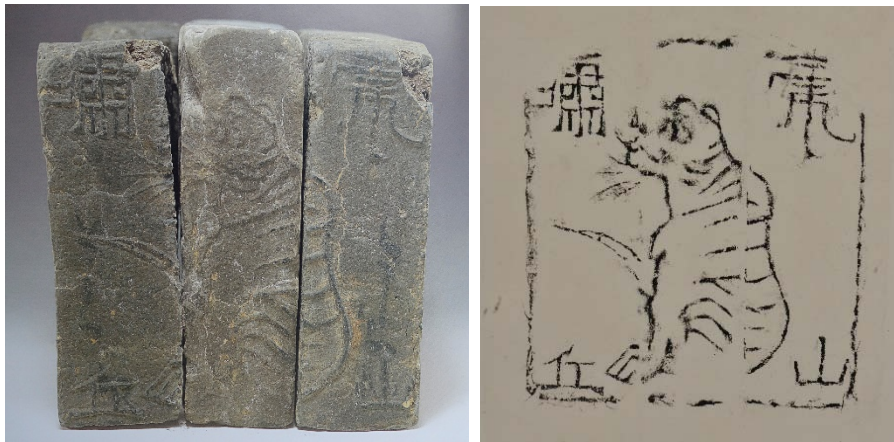


Figure 4. Brick and rubbing of mold-impressed brick “Hu xiao shan qiu,” dated fourth year of Yonghe (348). Courtesy of Nanjing Municipal Museum.

Nonetheless, the older style of one brick decorated with one image continued to be used, either as single units or grouped together to make a larger picture; they were also used jointly with the main decoration of mosaic-style murals to create elaborate brick walls for the tomb. Usually, tombs with brick decorations measure from 3 m to over 9 m in length, making them a luxury which only those from the middle class up to the royal family could afford.

⁴ Nanjing Relic and Protection Association, “Brief Report on a Six Dynasties Tomb at Nanjing,” *Kaogu* (1959), 5:231–236.

In addition to such well-known themes as the Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove and the immortal with a dragon, there are some scenes decorating the tombs of this period that have been generally described as “picture of an outing” (*chuxing tu*), for instance, the one discovered in Changzhou, Jiangsu province,⁵ and another in Dengxian, Henan province.⁶ But the purpose of the outing is not known — where are they going and why? Now, a group of scenes decorating a newly excavated brick tomb from Nanjing may help us to look further into the question and figure out the activities they will engage in at their destination.

In 2007, bulldozers disturbed a large ancient brick tomb during construction for the Huawei Computer Software Company on the southern outskirts of Nanjing, in Yuhuatai district. This part of the city — within a perimeter approximately 2 km square (east from Huashen Avenue, west to Ningdan Highway, north to Yanxi Road, and south to Ningnan Avenue) in an area graced with rolling hills — was densely laid with ancient tombs. Excavation of the large brick tomb at the foundation of the Huawei Company building yielded some beautiful decorated bricks that reflect a popular lifestyle of the Six Dynasties period.⁷

The tomb was situated on a hillside, 31 m above sea level. Oriented with its entrance to the east, this partially preserved rectangular brick tomb is 8.02 m long and 2.75 m wide, with rounded corners at the rear wall. These are the dimensions of what is considered a rather large tomb, suitable for the consumption of members of the upper class. Other features of the tomb — the sloping entrance ramp and water drainage system — further support the higher status of the occupant.

Long ago looted, the tomb was left with almost none of the original burial goods, except for a celadon pot and a limestone fragment incised with three characters reading “*xi wen ... ji*” (in the past, heard...). But we are fortunate that a large number of decorated bricks remained. There are three different shapes of brick: one is wedge-shaped and decorated on its surface with a lotus blossom and a precious vase. The second type is the niche brick, formed by putting two rectangular bricks together

⁵ Changzhou Municipal Museum, “Southern Dynasties Tombs with Decoration from the Southern Outskirts of Changzhou in Jiangsu Changzhou,” *Kaogu* (1994), 12:1097–1103.

⁶ Henan wenwu gongzuodui, *Dengxian caise huaxiangzhuan mu* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1958).

⁷ Nanjing Municipal Museum, et al., “A Southern Dynasty Brick Tomb from the Yuhuatai District of Nanjing,” *Kaogu* (2008), 6:43–50.

side by side. A hollow is cut into the face where the two bricks join, creating a peach-like niche in the center that was possibly meant for a candle. These two bricks are decorated on each side of the opening with a willow tree and a girl holding a long staff mounted with a candle. The third shape is rectangular, ranging closely from 34 to 34.6 cm in length, 14.4 to 14.6 cm in width and 4 to 4.1 cm in thickness.



Figures 5-1, 5-2, 5-3. Three pictorial bricks depicting an aristocratic outing with rubbings. Southern dynasties (420–589). Courtesy of Nanjing Municipal Museum.

Among the rectangular bricks are several with complete images, adding to the known designs used in brick mural decoration from this area. All are decorated at both ends with a pattern of lotus roundels and double diamond-shaped motifs called *fangsheng*. The main surface is decorated with a scene depicting a figural group. These scenes can be divided into three different types. The first type, found on five bricks, consists of five men all dressed comfortably. The main figure, sitting astride a saddled horse with ornamental trappings, wears loose-fitting pants and a hat with two projecting wings. Before and behind the horse are a total of four servants; they wear different headdresses but similar kimono-like tops and loose pants tightened below the knees for easy walking. One holds a stick, another holds an umbrella, and a third servant holds a mat (perhaps of straw or bamboo). In the background stands a willow tree with fresh buds on its curved branches, suggesting the season is early spring. The group is depicted traveling to the right. (fig. 5-1)

The second type of figural scene, found on four bricks, consists of a similarly attired group of men with two willow trees in the background. As in the first type, the main figure is riding a horse surrounded by servants: three are each holding up a different item — a stick-like object, an umbrella,

and a circular fan — while the fourth seems to be clapping his hands. This group is heading toward the left. That these two different groups head in opposing directions suggests that the bricks originally lined the side walls flanking the tomb chamber, perhaps in the front part of the chamber that connects to the tomb ramp. This suggestion is based on the location where the bricks were found. (fig. 5-2)



Figure 5-2.

The third type of scene, depicting a group of women, is found on seven bricks. In the center of the scene is an ox-drawn carriage. Four ladies accompany the carriage. One, wearing pants, walks beside the carriage and holds the reins of the ox. The other three wear long empire-style gowns with a short bodice; their hair is arranged in chignons. One woman holds a circular fan, while the other two walk empty-handed. (fig. 5-3)



Figure 5-3.

Although essentially a continuation of the tradition of one brick one image, these three types of images may well be combined with several bricks to form a long procession scene in a single simple mural. They may also be combined with other decorative bricks for the effect of a larger and more elaborate mural.

A comparison of these pictorial bricks with the Changzhou (fig. 6) and Dengxian tomb bricks show that all depict “outing” scenes in which the main male figure rides on a horse while the women accompany the ox-drawn carriage. All the servants walk with light steps, holding various objects, such as a mat — which is seen in all of these tombs — fan, umbrella, the musical instrument *qin*, incense burner, stick, etc. These seem to be functional objects for an outing.

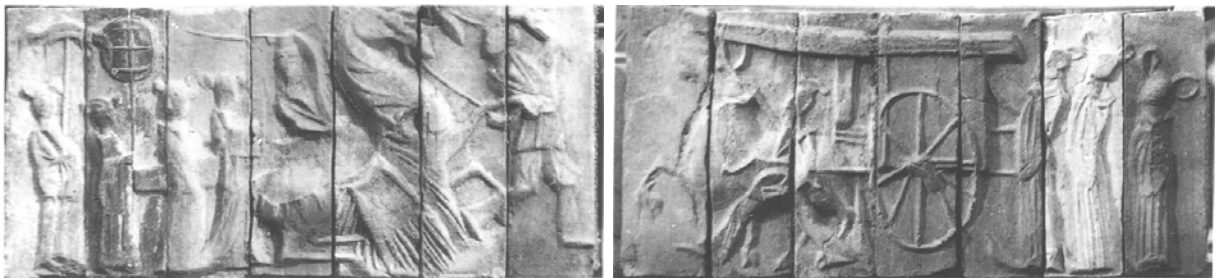


Figure 6. Bricks with outing scenery, excavated in 1984 from a Six Dynasties period tomb at Wujin, Changzhou, in Jiangsu province. *Kaogu*, 12:1097–1103, illustration 1–2 from compiled edition of 1994.

Doubtlessly, these bricks show scenes of an outing. But why do the participants appear so relaxed, and where are they going?

In all three types of scenes in the new Nanjing evidence, willow trees are placed in the background. These are not seen in the other “outing” images from Changzhou and Dengxian. Importantly, the trees indicate the season in which this outing takes place; it must be early spring out in the field. All the participants — men on horseback and ladies taking the carriage — bring with their servants’ assistance various objects for outdoor activities, such as the mat for sitting on the ground and the umbrella for blocking the sun. Even though rendered in a very simple linear style, the figures convey a sense of relaxation, from their facial expression to their gestures, as if they were engaged in something enjoyable.

What could entice people to come out so happily in the spring? The surviving literature of the time can help us imagine some events associated with the season. In particular, the festival of Shangsi, which usually takes place on the first *si* day of the third lunar month according to the Chinese calendar, is frequently recorded in the classics. This ancient festival is traced back to the legendary Chinese ancestors Nü Wa and Fuxi, who created humankind. It is said to have been a national holiday since the Han dynasty. On the festival day, people would go out to the river or lake to bathe, washing away bad spirits, and to pray for good luck.

During the Six Dynasties, this festival became more important. First of all, the day of this festival began to be fixed on the third day of the third lunar month, not necessarily on the *si* day. Second and more importantly, the nature of this festival was changed from that of exorcising bad luck, a more primitive belief, to one of enjoyment; there were more artistic events and fun for people of all classes, providing a perfect social occasion for youths. As Zong Bing (ca. 501–565) records in his book *Jingchu suishi ji* (Notes on the Customs of Jingchu [mainly present-day Hubei and Hunan provinces]): “On the third day of the third month, intellectuals and common people all go to rivers, lakes, and ponds to float cups and bet for drinks.”⁸

The classic literature of the Six Dynasties period contains numerous mentions of this popular and enjoyable festival. Many intellectuals left writings or artworks describing this day; the most famous example is Wang Xizhi’s fantastic calligraphic prose work *Preface to the [Poems Composed at]*

⁸ Xu Hui, ed., *Six Dynasties Culture* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2001), 556–557.

Orchid Pavilion, which recounts the occasion of a Shangsi festival celebration with fellow artists and friends as they bet for drinks along a stream of winding water, composed poetry, and created calligraphy. His *Preface* has been considered the number-one running-script calligraphy work under heaven, and though he tried many times after the occasion, he could not do anything better than what he did spontaneously by the winding stream after drinking. This spontaneous work reflects a moment of such enjoyment of nature, such thoughts of life, and such passion that the highest realm of creativity was sparked. According to Chinese conceptions, this is a realm of superior energy that combines heaven's power with human capabilities (*tianren heyi*) to reach the impossible creation.

The love for this celebration is conveyed through many poems. Wang Xizhi had composed several describing the joyfulness of the festival in a time of beautiful spring weather. In the third of his six works titled "Poem of the Orchid Pavilion," he writes: 三春启 群品, 寄物在所因. 仰望碧天际, 俯磐绿水滨. 寥朗无崖观, 寓目理自陈. 大矣造化工, 万殊莫不均. 群籁虽参差, 适我无非新 (亲).⁹

Threefold spring deploys a profusion of phenomena:
 We express our joy through those which move us most.
 Gazing up at the edge of azure heaven,
 Lingering below on banks of emerald waters.
 Vast, expansive — view without a border:
 Feasting our eyes, Principles display themselves.
 Ah, how great, the Creator's skill:
 Ten thousand different creatures, yet none disharmonious!
 And while nature's sounds are so various,
 Pleasing us, not one seems alien.
 (Translated by Jonathan Chaves)

⁹ Huang Ming, ed., *Weijin Nanbeichaoshi jingpin* (Shanghai: Shehuikexue chubanshe, 1995), 154.

Such a fun festival, coming just after the cold and dark winter, excited even the emperors. In a passionate foreword to a poem on this festival, Emperor Jianwen of the Liang dynasty (503–551) in the south writes this colorful description:

[三日曲水诗序] ... 是节也, 上巳属辰, 余萌达壤. 仓庚应律, 女夷司候. 尔乃分阶树羽, 疏泉泛爵, 兰觴沿泝, 蕙肴来往. 宾仪式序, 盛德有容. 吹发孙枝, 声流嶰谷, 舞艳七盘, 歌新六变, 流云驻彩, 仙鹤来仪. 都人野老, 云集雾会. 结轸方衢, 飞轩照日.¹⁰

... On this festival, the “Upper Si Day” defines the occasion, and the final burgeoning is achieved in the soil. The oriole sings in perfect pitch, while the Flower Goddess manages the season. And so people in ranks like feathered formations float wine-vessels on streams. Their orchid wine cups flowing the flow, while gourmet delicacies are passed around. The guests are orderly, following proper deportment, displaying the guise of flourishing virtue. Music issues forth from “grandson branch” flutes, the tones wafting through gullies and valleys; dancers perform the “Seven Turnings,” the songs newly composed, with six variations! Floating clouds arresting their colors, immortal cranes arrive in state! Men of cities and elders from the country gather together like clouds or fog. Carriages park where avenues cross, their flying canopies scintillating in the sunlight!

~Translated by Jonathan Chaves

What an event! The entire country’s joy gathered in one day! Nature, wine, music, dance, and even birds are coming for the celebration! This festival is full of the free spirit of the Six Dynasties period, lifting up humanity and nature even in that time of chaos and frequent turmoil.

The Shangsi festival was much celebrated until the Song dynasty, and then it faded from the calendar of the Han people. But there are still some partial traces of it left, for instance, in the event held at Tai Hao Temple in Huaian, Jiangsu, to celebrate Fu Xi as the primordial ancestor of mankind.

¹⁰ Ouyang Xun, et al., *Yiwen Leiju*, *juan* 4, “Suishi zhong, Sanyue san.”

Among other Han traditions associated with this day is the legendary Peach Party held by the Queen Mother of West, and in Daoism it is the birthday of the mythological emperor Zhenwu Dadi. This festival day is celebrated especially in the southwestern part of China among various minority groups — the Li, Zhuang, Tong, Tujia and others — although more as a kind of local “Valentine’s Day.”

Sadly, the festival of Shangsi, or “Upper Si,” as celebrated by all the people in the Six Dynasties on the third day of the third month, is no longer a national holiday. The newly discovered bricks from a Nanjing mural may serve as a mirror for this joyful spring festival and provide vivid evidence for a custom dated 1,500 years ago.

A Day in the Life of Pu Songling¹

Victor Mair and Zhenzhen Lu

In the first month of the forty-fourth year of Kangxi's reign (1705), Pu Songling was afflicted by a terrible toothache. On the day of the Upper Prime while he was drinking congee, half a tooth had chipped off, and he had congratulated himself that his teeth still formed a row.² But on the twenty-eighth day of the month what remained of the chopper ached like it never had before.³ In one of his more relaxed moments as his toothache relented he wrote a long poem to console himself:⁴

¹ This is an imagined account of a day in the life of an aging Pu Songling constructed from his poems, prose writings, a eulogy he wrote for his wife, as well as what others in his day and later wrote about him. Toward the end of the story, a folk opera believed to have been completed by Pu sometime late in his life, which is also based on a strange tale, is incorporated into the narrative. While our story is imagined, we have consulted much factual information, whose details are provided in the notes. The Chinese text is also provided in note form so as not to interrupt the flow of the narrative for those readers who would like to read it as a story.

² See Pu Songling 蒲松齡, “Shangyuan ri shi zhou, yin luo ban chi” 上元日食粥, 隱落半齒 (“I Was Eating Congee on the Day of the Upper Prime, and Half of a Tooth Fell Out with Me Unaware”), in Zhao Weizhi 趙蔚芝, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu* 聊齋詩集箋注 (The annotated poems of Make-Do Studio; Ji'nan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 1996), 486. In interpreting and translating the poems contained in this story, we have followed the text and chronology contained in Zhao's book and have consulted his annotations. For an introduction to Pu Songling as a poet, see Yagi Akiyoshi 八木章好, “Shijin toshite no Ho Shōrei” 詩人としての蒲松齡 (Pu Songling as a poet), *Geibun kenkyū* 58 (1990): 80-94.

³ See Pu Songling, “Can chi da tong” 殘齒大痛 (“My Chipped Tooth Ached Like Crazy”), in Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 486. An extant manuscript of poems in Pu's own hand records the date; held at the Ryōsai Bunko 聊齋文庫 at Keio University, it is reproduced in facsimile form in Keiō Gijuku daigaku chūgoku bungaku kenkyūshitsu 慶応義塾大学

My Ailing Teeth⁵

Going on seventy, I am old and weak,
 All thirty-two of my teeth are in teetering shape.
 My two chipped teeth on the left and right sides of the jaw
 Are awfully shaky, but they wouldn't fall!
 Cold and warm liquids alike are causes of concern:
 The pain tears at my heart when they're touched by accident.
 My gums are bulging like a string of pearls,
 The pain subsides, only to rage again.
 From aching it goes to shaking, then to falling off,
 They're wont to all drop, without one to remain!
 Now, though my sight is dim, fortunately I can still peruse books;
 My tongue is sufficiently intact for me to utter mad words.
 Who'd blame a decrepit old man for garbled speech?
 Why grieve over distensions, or missing teeth!

中国文学研究室, ed., *Hoshi zokufu, Ryōsai sō: Ho Shōrei shushō* 蒲氏族譜・聊齋草: 蒲松齡手鈔 (A genealogy of the Pu family, and a draft from Make-Do Studio: Manuscripts of Pu Songling; Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1991).

⁴ In Zhao's *Pu Songling shiji jianzhu*, this poem appears first in order in Pu's poems of 1705 and precedes the other poems on the subject of teeth. That Pu suffered from toothaches early in that year is certain; fortunately, his teeth would for the most part remain intact until eight years later. In the poem, "Qiyue chuyi luo yi chi" 七月初一落一齒 of 1713 ("On the First Day of the Seventh Month I Lost a Tooth"), Pu documents losing one tooth painlessly, with thirty-one to remain (Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 631).

⁵ "My ailing teeth" 病齒 goes like this: 古稀行近老且衰, 三十二齒皆浮危. 左車右車兩半齒, 欲落不落尤傾欹. 飲冷啜熱均為患, 偶觸劇痛切心脾. 齧肉墳起貫珠顆, 時殺時作難瘳夷. 因痛得搖搖得墮, 勢將凋謝無子遺. 目昏幸不礙披覽, 舌在猶足宣狂痴. 龍鍾語誤誰復怪, 龐贅缺殘何須悲! (Ibid., 485).

When he thought about it, he became rather amused at himself, but when the throbbing sensation of yet another wave of cramps came over his gums again, he could not help turning his smile into a wry one. Thus, he wrote:

To My Teeth⁶

Life is but a tour, and I earnestly thank you all, my teeth.

Not that I keep you if you wish to go: why must you act like this!

To which he himself fancied a reply:

The teeth replied⁷

For sixty years and some, we chewed pickles on your behalf.

Upon parting from our dear flesh, ought we not to ache?

Pu Songling was reminded that he was growing old. Many years ago, when he was still in his prime, he had detected the whitening patches of his beard and felt greatly indignant at how quickly he had acquired the appearance of age. In those days, his beard grew with the ferocity of weeds and a stubbornness to match, so that despite his annual efforts at plucking out the discolored strands they quickly repopulated his cheeks. In his indignation he had contemplated getting rid of his beard altogether, only he could not imagine himself without it.⁸ Now — with his sagging cheeks and wrinkly

⁶ “To My Teeth” 告齒: 人生過客耳, 殷勤謝吾齒. 欲別不相留, 何須復爾爾!

⁷ “The teeth replied” 齒答: 六十有餘年, 為君嚼齏羹. 骨肉慙相離, 寧不為一痛? The text for this and the previous poem can be found in Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 487. Zhao glosses *jiweng* 齏羹 as “salted vegetables pickled in a jar” 羹裏醃的鹹菜, and interprets the mention of chewing them to describe humble living.

⁸ We inferred Pu’s beard troubles from his playful prose composition, “I Reproach My White Beard” 責白髭文, in Lu Dahuang 路大荒, ed., *Pu Songling ji* 蒲松齡集 (Collected works of Pu Songling), 4 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 1:299–300. There the first-person narrator tells of himself returning home in the autumn of 1687 (the real Pu Songling would have been forty-seven years old) after failing to succeed in the provincial examinations to find his aging

face, his thin moustache and silvery goatee, and a gaunt figure to match — he was veritably an old man.⁹ He had emerged a survivor through the days and nights which slowly and imperceptibly made up the years of a person's middle age — from the times in his adulthood scrambling for a living as a tutor and secretary to the travels he made time after time to Ji'nan and the raised hopes and disappointments which came with each provincial examination.¹⁰ He was already sixty-six years old.¹¹ What had he accomplished in those sixty and some years? What had he to boast? In his ripened old age he still could not yet afford to retire; soon, this year, like other years, he would head back to the Bi house in Xipu village, some seventy *li* away at the western end of Zichuan County. It was there that he had spent the greater part of each year for the last twenty-five years.¹²

self in the mirror, upon which he penned a reproach in parallel prose against his white beard. Afterward, the Beard God approached him in a dream to voice the indignities which he himself suffered as the beard of a humble scholar; the narrator, too afraid to speak, silently contemplated exterminating his beard. Finally, after a fall-out with the Beard God when he pretended to give up his ambitions and cares altogether, the narrator woke up abruptly; stroking his beard, he found several strands stiff as if angry.

⁹ We base this description on a portrait of Pu Songling painted by Zhu Xianglin 朱湘麟 dated 1713 (this is, alas, eight years from the present moment in our story). There, Pu is clad in official hat and garb (he had been awarded the degree of *suigong*, or senior licentiate, a couple of years previous) and, among his two inscriptions above the portrait, Pu wrote in characteristically self-deprecating fashion: “Your face is ugly; your figure is gaunt. You are now seventy-four years old; what have you accomplished in these twenty-five thousand days and more? Alas, you’re already a hoary old man....” 爾貌則寢, 爾軀則修. 行年七十有四, 此兩萬五千餘日所成何事? 而忽已白頭. The painting is reproduced in Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄, ed., *Liaozhai zhiyi ziliao huibian* 聊齋志異資料彙編 (Compendium of materials related to the Strange Tales of Make-Do Studio; Tianjin: Nankai daxue, 2002), plate 1. In that portrait, Pu is painted stroking his beard. Did he decide on this pose for which he is to be remembered by posterity?

¹⁰ On Pu's early career as a tutor to gentry families in the region, see Yuan Shishuo 袁世碩, *Pu Songling shiji zhushu xinkao* 蒲松齡事跡著述新考 (New studies on the life and works of Pu Songling; Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1988); on his repeatedly unsuccessful examination career and the larger background of the examination system in his times, see Allan Barr, “Pu Songling and the Qing Examination System,” *Late Imperial China* 7, no. 1 (1986), 87–111.

¹¹ This is according to the Chinese count, which includes the time that a person spends in his mother's womb. Being born in 1640, by New Year's in 1705, Pu Songling would have started counting his sixty-sixth year.

¹² A eulogy for his father by Pu Ruo, Pu Songling's eldest son, recounts with guilt how, as an old man, Pu still had to brave the weather on mountain roads to earn bread for the family (see Pu Ruo 蒲箬, “Qing gu xian kao sui jinshi, houxuan ruxue

But for now he was home. It was the Lunar New Year, and Pu Songling was at his house. His eldest son, Pu Ruo, now over forty years old, had returned from his own engagement as a tutor, as did Ruo's three brothers Pu Chi, Pu Hu, and Pu Yun.¹³ Pu Lide, his precocious grandson who understood best his own literary idiosyncrasies,¹⁴ was somewhere in the back of the family compound taking in the wintry landscape of the fields in the afternoon sun. In moments like these, Pu Songling felt properly like the old patriarch of a bustling house. How his family compound had grown! When his father had divided the property between him and his brothers many years ago, Pu Songling had inherited the shabbiest of the lot — an old farm shed of three rooms, without a single wall intact,

xundao Liuquan gong xingshu” 清故顯考歲進士、候選儒學訓導柳泉公行述 (“A Biographical Chronicle of My Late, Illustrious Father, Gentleman of the Willow Spring, Senior Licentiate of the Second Class, and Candidate for Prefectural Sub-Director of Schools under the Qing Dynasty”), in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 4:181–182). Pu had suffered from relative hardship in his twenties and thirties before finding stable employment with the prominent Bi house, where he served as tutor from 1679 to 1709. Pu's first patron, Bi Jiyou (1623–1693) was the son of a Ming minister and had served as Sub-Prefect in the Jiangnan area before retiring to his magnificent Zichuan garden estate in 1663. Pu worked ostensibly as a tutor but harbored a lifelong friendship with Bi Jiyou, his son Bi Weizhong, and other members of the Bi family. At the end of his thirty years' tenure there—four years from the present moment in our story—he was able to enjoy a comfortable retirement. See Yuan Shishuo, *Pu Songling shiji zhushu xinkao*, 147–175.

¹³ For biographical information on Pu Songling's children, see, for example, Liu Jieping 劉階平, *Pu Liuxian zhuan* 蒲留仙傳 (A biography of Pu Songling), 3 vols. (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1970), 2:181–188. Pu had one daughter and four sons; Ruo, the eldest, was born in 1662. We could not find any substantial information on Pu's daughter. Like their father, Pu's sons earned their livelihoods as tutors to local families and lived away from home during the year. By Pu Songling's own account, the Pu family compound was expanded with each son's marriage, and his extended family grew quite large, such that each son's family cooked their meals separately (see Pu Ruo, “Qing gu xian kao sui jinshi, houxuan ruxue xundao Liuquan gong xingshu,” in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 4:1819; see also Pu's eulogy for his wife, “Shu Liu shi xingshi” 述劉氏行實 (“A Biographical Account of [My Deceased Wife] Mrs. Liu”), in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 1:250–251.)

¹⁴ Pu Lide, born 1683, was the eldest son of Pu Ruo and shared with his grandfather a passion for letters and learning from a young age; Pu Songling records him to have composed his own scrolls of “minor tales” (“xiaoshuo”) as a child, whose contents are unfortunately no longer extant. See Yuan Shishuo, *Pu Songling shiji zhushu xinkao*, 251–254; Liu Jieping, *Pu Liuxian zhuan*, 2:186–188. Pu Lide is also known to have composed a vernacular ballad entitled “Wentian ci” 問天詞 (“Verse Interrogating Heaven”).

populated by bushes and weeds wildly overgrown.¹⁵ While Pu spent year after year away from home his wife hacked down the thicket of weeds and thorns, hired workmen to build the walls, and borrowed from her eldest brother a door of unpainted boards, slight as can be, so as to divide the inside from the outside.¹⁶ It was back in those days that she gave birth to Pu Ru. At times the swishing of downpours filled the whole courtyard, or there were squalls of wind or the rattle and rumble of thunder. At night when wolves made their way in, the hens in the hen-house squawked in terror and the pigs in the pig-pen ran to and fro with fright.¹⁷ That was back then. Now — how much things have changed! All the former thicket of thorns and weeds has long since given place to thatched roofs; his children now have families of their own; the days of rustic living have become associated in his memories with a certain romantic image of his youth.¹⁸ Some twenty years ago, when major

¹⁵ The third of four sons of his merchant father, Pu Songling was given the poorest lot when the family property got divided in 1662 partly due to the bickerings of his sisters-in-law. In his eulogy for his wife, Pu recounts: 兄弟皆得夏屋, 爨舍閑房皆具; 松齡獨異: 居惟農場老屋三間, 曠無四壁, 小樹叢叢, 蓬蒿滿之 (Pu, “Shu Liu shi xingshi,” in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 1:250). The last part of our line in the story (after the hyphen) is a rough translation of part of this passage. Here and in the next lines, we have opted not to use quotation marks in the body of the main text so as not to interrupt the flow of the story; the notes make it clear which parts are translated from Pu.

¹⁶ This line is likewise adapted from Pu’s eulogy for his wife. Continuing from the previous line, Pu tells of his wife’s ableness in his years away “at his studies” (when in fact he was serving as secretary or tutor to various gentry households in the area and living for a time with his childhood friend Li Yaochen, who was in less straitened circumstances. See Yuan Shishuo, *Pu Songling shiji zhushu xinkao*, 26–49; “at his studies”—Prusek’s translation for “youxue”—is omitted in our sentence): 松齡歲歲遊學。劉氏薙荆榛, 覓傭作堵, 假伯兄一白板扉, 大如掌, 聊分外內.... (Pu, “Shu Liu shi xingshi,” in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 1:250). Here we have adopted (with modifications) Jaroslav Prusek’s translation of this passage. See Jaroslav Prusek, “Two Documents Relating to the Life of P’u Sung-ling,” in *Chinese History and Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1970), 86–87.

¹⁷ This and the previous lines (from “it was back in those days”) are translations of parts of the following passage in Pu’s eulogy for his wife: 時僅生大男箬, 攜子伏黽黽之徑, 聞蹙然者而喜焉。一庭中觸雨瀟瀟, 遇風喁喁, 遭雷霆震震謖謖; 狼夜入則嘒雞驚鳴, 圈豕駭竄.... (Pu, “Shu Liu shi xingshi,” in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 1:250). We have borrowed Prusek’s translation with modifications.

¹⁸ Pu’s eulogy for his wife goes on a little later to tell of how conditions eventually improved since he and his wife first moved into the cottage, and of how they raised new buildings on the site to provide to their sons upon marriage: 十餘年, 漸自成立。為婚嫁所迫促, 努力起屋宇, 一子授一室, 而一畝之院, 遂無隙地, 向之蓬蒿, 悉化而茅茨矣 (Ibid.). We

constructions were completed on the grounds of the family compound, Pu Songling had proudly documented the event in a series of poems under the title, “On grounds wild and overgrown a little house is brought to completion, with a grove of cypresses before the entrance; the plaque says ‘The Green-Screened Studio.’”¹⁹ One of the verses went like this:

Now it is past the time of Duanyang,²⁰ and the wheat extends through the fields;
 The grounds of my dwelling have taken shape, and my little house is built.
 The rising sun shines upon my door, where the spruces form a screen;
 The courtyard spans but ten square feet, and the rooms are tiny as can be.
 I let my sons slack their homework duty, with books a-plenty to read;
 My fine old wife heads the kitchen, she can even cook without rice!²¹
 With no tax collector’s exhortations besides, our grain bin is hardly exhausted;
 I’m feeling rather giddy, having downed three cups of ale.

A servant from the house of a local gentleman had come with a casket of ale earlier in the day, asking for a calligraphic favor: the family had known that he was going to take off in the next weeks and made sure to come by and entrust him with the task.²² Pu Songling was never left alone at New Year’s

have taken the first part of our sentence (“all the former thicket...”) from Prusek’s translation of the last line and modified it to fit the present context.

¹⁹ See Pu Songling, “Huangyuan xiaogou luocheng, you cong bai dang men, yan yue Lüping Zhai” 荒園小構落成，有叢柏當門，顏曰綠屏齋，in Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 273–279. Zhao places the series of verses among compositions dated to the twenty-seventh year of Kangxi’s reign (1688). The lines translated here are: 端陽已過麥連阡，院落初成小構竣。日出當門松似壁，庭開方丈屋如拳。有書讀任群兒懶，無米炊憑老婦賢。租吏不催糧未罄，三杯濁酒意醺然。

²⁰ Also known as the Dragon Boat Festival; the fifth day of the fifth month according to the agricultural calendar.

²¹ This line jokes on the good qualities (*xian*) of his wife, playing on the common saying that “even a skillful wife can’t cook without rice” 巧婦難為無米之炊。

²² We have created this fictional episode from seeing a set of congratulatory verses for the birth of a son collected under his writings that year (see Pu, “He ren sheng zi” 賀人生子, in Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 501). In his lifetime, Pu Songling wrote many compositions on behalf of others from letters and prose which he penned for friends and patrons to

time: his reputation in Zichuan as a learned scholar earned him an incessant stream of favor-seeking friends and relatives, if not yet an official title. And Pu was rarely able to fend them off despite his reluctance. He was, after all, the pride of his village since his youth; and despite his eloquence with brush and ink, in person he was hardly skilled in the art of negotiation. One may even say that he was a little bashful. Bashful people harbored great capacities for the imagination in their sensitivity and reticence.²³

For all that was demanded of him every year around New Year's, Pu Songling was glad that the first month had passed. He had, despite all these demands, been productive. The previous winter he had penned the preface to his completed *Popular Characters for Daily Use*, an extended series of rhymes in his native Shandong tongue on all matters of daily life, with which he entertained his wife and children.²⁴ This winter marked yet another fruitful occasion: he had finished putting together the *Classic of Farming and Sericulture*, a product of his wide-ranging forages into agricultural literature

pieces for which he perhaps received remuneration in one form or another. A glimpse of his own attitude can be found in his playful prose composition titled "Jie yingchou wen" 戒應酬文 ("I Am Hereby Done with Compositions Upon Request"). In this latter piece, the narrator recounts the anecdote of how he decided to quit once and for all—only to find a relative with presents at his door, asking for yet another favor which he couldn't refuse (Lu Dahuang ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 1:300-301).

²³ A younger countryman of Pu Songling, Zhang Yuan 張元, wrote in the inscription he penned for Pu's tomb: "Alas! When I did not yet know the Master and had only read his works and heard how famous he was, I pictured him as an eloquent orator and brilliant debater, as a person with charming and captivating manners and behavior.... When, however, I went and was received by him, I found an old man, somewhat slow and very precise, and when he spoke it seemed as if he found difficulty in speaking, as if he could not get the words off his tongue. But when one looked into his innermost being, it was at once apparent how wide and well-founded was his knowledge and how deep and daring his spirit...." (Jaroslav Prusek, "Two Documents Relating to the Life of P'u Sung-ling," 901).

²⁴ This is his *Riyong Suzi* 日用俗字 ("Popular Characters for Daily Use"); the preface, dated to the first month of 1704, is in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 2: 743. The series of verses in heptasyllabic rhymes, remarkable for their colloquial topolectal qualities, captures an extensive array of subjects of village life and beyond from flora and fauna to objects and commodities to the professional figures of the village. Here we have surmised that Pu did not compose these marvelously recitable rhymes in solitude but shared them with his family.

past and present. The preface, which Pu had penned on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, read like this:²⁵

The most important tasks of domestic affairs are none other than farming among external matters, and the rearing of silkworms among internal matters. Formerly there was the *Advice on Farming* by a certain Mr. Han, whose orderly counsels made it possible for wealthy sons and bookish scholars to all know about agricultural matters. I read it and approved of it. Where it had places in need of clarification, or where it [described things] practicable elsewhere but not here in this region, I have taken the liberty to add and delete accordingly; furthermore, I have drawn widely from writings on the rearing of silkworms from the ancient day to the present, and gathered [the selections] into a book, which I append after [the book on farming]. Though [this work] will not be able to transform all across the realm, hopefully it can make a present for my sons and grandsons.²⁶

²⁵ See “*Nongsang jing xu*” 農桑經序 (“Preface to *The Classic of Farming and Sericulture*”), in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 2:768: 居家要務, 外惟農而內惟蠶。昔韓氏有農訓, 其言井井, 可使紈褲子弟, 抱卷書生, 人人皆知稼穡。余讀而善之。中或言不盡道, 或行於彼不能行於此, 因妄為增刪; 又博采古今之論蠶者, 集為一書, 附諸其後。雖不能化天下, 庶可以貽子孫云爾。

²⁶ Mr. Han’s “Advice on Farming” as described by Pu Songling is no longer extant. *The Classic of Farming and Sericulture* is itself a fascinating text of two parts, the first devoted to crops and the tasks of agriculture (described by month) and the second to the rearing of silkworms and the cultivation of mulberry trees. At the same time that it is full of technical detail, many popular religious aspects of farming and sericulture can be discerned from the text. Based on the number of extant manuscripts, it seems to have circulated widely in Pu Songling’s native region. Amano Motonosuke 天野元之助, in “Qing Pu Songling Nongsangjing kao” 清蒲松齡農桑經考 (A Study of Qing Dynasty Pu Songling’s *The Classic of Farming and Sericulture*), Tao Zhengang 陶振綱, trans., *Pu Songling yanjiu* 22 (1993):155–178, suggests the text to be both founded upon local experience and indebted to early texts of agricultural scholarship. Annotations with information on differences in manuscript versions can be found in Li Changnian 李長年, ed., *Nongsang jing jiaozhu* 農桑經校注 (The annotated *Classic of Farming and Sericulture*; Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1982). For a brief survey of Shandong authors of other agricultural texts, see Hu Daojing 胡道靜, “Shandong de nongxue chuantong” 山東的農學傳統 (Shandong’s Tradition of Agricultural Studies), in Yu Xintang 虞信堂 and Jin Liangnian 金良年, eds., *Hu Daojing wenji* 胡道靜文集, 3 vols.

The compilation was motivated partly by his opinion that learned men all ought to know something about farming. Speaking of farming — what an eventful year the past year had been!²⁷ Two years ago things were bad enough — there were floods and drought and pestilence, and famine ravaged the land. And then — as if all that wasn't enough — in the last year there was a terrible drought. When Pu had returned home for a visit in the spring he saw the roads littered by fleeing villagers, and upon inquiring he found that they were from his native district.²⁸ In the sixth month, the rain finally came down, only to be followed by a terrible infestation of worms and then a plague of locusts. Men sold their sons; bandits plundered the villages. Pu had been spared hunger while staying at the Bi household but he worried constantly about his family and his village. In poem after poem, Pu wrote of drought, of the crops, of peasants who lost their homes, and of the famished folks on the roads. In one poem he recorded:²⁹

(Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2011), 218–19; this article was originally published in *Wen shi zhe* 2 (1962). We would like to thank Dr. Nathan Sivin for useful references on early agricultural texts.

²⁷ We have gathered the information in this paragraph from Pu Songling, “Kangxi sishisan nian jizai qianpian” 康熙四十三年記災前篇 (“A Record of the Calamities in the Forty-Third Year of Kangxi's Reign, Part I”) and “Qiu zai jilue houpian” 秋災記略後篇 (“Summary of the Calamities in Autumn, Part II”), in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 1:47–52; we have also consulted Pu's poems of 1704, in Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 459–484. Weather troubles, crop failures, and maladministration had led to widespread famine in Shandong in 1703, and by Pu's own account things were especially bad in Zichuan, where conditions were exacerbated by further drought and pestilence. See Luo Jingzhi 羅敬之, ed., *Pu Songling nianpu* 蒲松齡年譜 (Biographical chronicle of Pu Songling; Taipei: Guoli bianyi guan, 2000), 175–188; on Zichuan's climate, famines, and banditry as relating to Pu's tales and in his prose, see Allan Barr, “Pu Songling and Liaozhai Zhiyi: A Study of Textual Transmission, Biographical Background, and Literary Antecedents,” Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1983, 107–110 and 123–126.

²⁸ This is reflected in Pu's poem, “Wuyue gui zi jun, jian liumin zai dao, wen zhi, jie Ziren ye” 五月歸自郡，見流民載道，問之，皆淄人也 (“When I Returned to My Home District in the Fifth Month, I Saw the Road Filled with People Fleeing the Land; Upon Inquiring, [I was Told that] All Were From Zichuan”), in Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 461).

²⁹ On Pu's poems of 1704 on the subject of famine, see Sheng Wei 盛偉, “Shi lun Pu Songling Kangxi jiashen nian ‘liumin’ shi ji xiezuo de lishi beijing” 試論蒲松齡康熙甲申年“流民”詩及寫作的歷史背景 (On Pu Songling's poems on “vagrants” in the *jiashen* year of Kangxi's reign and the historical background of their composition), *Pu Songling yanjiu* (1986), 1:48–63.

The Famished³⁰

Where can one learn of fasting's way?³¹

Going door to door begging for food are those fleeing the land.

Pity the elderly couple, who have no means to go on:

They sold another of their boys in exchange for a peck of grain husks.³²

Pu Songling had for some time begun to breed in his mind a story — a story that begins with famine and the troubles of the land, with the avarice of officials and the woes of the people who lived in the place. It is to be centered on the trials and tribulations of one family — that of the righteous young man Zhang Hongjian. He had already made his appearance as the protagonist of one of Pu's classical tales:³³ There he had penned a letter of complaint against a corrupt local magistrate and, being forced to flee, escaped into the wilds to meet and love a fox-fairy. In that version of the story there was no famine, but there was already the material of a family's separation and eventual reunion after many years of separation. Ostensibly, it was about the love between a man and a fox; but it was also about a man's love for his wife and family, from whom he was separated by the exigencies of his fate and of his times. The exigencies of the times — they were on Pu Songling's mind. What would he do to capture them under his brush?

One thing he was sure of was that the story would not be in classical Chinese, because the

³⁰ Pu, "Eren" 餓人 ("The Famished"): 何處能求辟穀方? 沿門乞食盡逃亡。可憐翁媼無生計, 又賣小男易斗糠 (in Zhao Weizhi, ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 463).

³¹ "Fasting" here refers to a technique associated with Daoist cultivation, which is believed to lead to lightness of the body, youthfulness, and longevity.

³² Presumably the "young sons" are their grandsons, who are left behind, along with their elderly grandparents, while the able-bodied members of the family have fled the land. The last line reflects not only the direness of the family's situation but also the exorbitant price of grain in a famine year.

³³ See Pu Songling, "Zhang Hongjian" 張鴻漸, in Zhang Youhe 張友鶴, ed., *Liaozhai zhiyi hui jiao hui zhu hui ping ben* 聊齋志異會校會注會評本 (*The Strange Tales of Make-Do Studio* with collected commentaries and annotations), 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986), 2:1227–1234.

language would determine the genre, and this time he had no interest in writing another strange tale. Rather, he would compose it in his own native Shandong tongue — this medium he had long sharpened through his various experiments with the vernacular. In fact, he had already composed a narrative ballad in eighteen chapters after the same story, titled *Riches and Glory: Divine Immortals*.³⁴ Now, he had on his mind a work of altogether greater proportions, which he would call *A Song of Tribulations*.³⁵ It would be a full-fledged opera in thirty-six sections; it would tell of not only one man's trials, but it would depict an entire world from villagers to emperor and from bandit-king to the immortals. What songs would Pu Songling include? What lyrics would he pen? Humming the tune 'The Lotus Falls,' Pu thought of the words for a beggar's song:³⁶

How the millions of folks suffer in a poor harvest year
The fields are all parched, and the wheat stalks are brown

³⁴ This is Pu Songling's *Fugui shenxian* 富貴神仙; we have borrowed Wilt Idema's translation of the title. See Wilt L. Idema, "Prosimetric and Verse Narrative," in Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, eds., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2:360; 358–361 provides a general introduction to Pu Songling's vernacular ballads and plays. See also, Zhenzhen Lu, "The Vernacular World of Pu Songling," Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2017.

³⁵ This is Pu's *Monan qu* 磨難曲; we have borrowed Idema's translation of the title. The exact date of composition of this work is unknown, although scholars generally agree that it was completed in his later years. He Manzi 何滿子 suggested that *Monan qu* reflected the famines in Shandong of 1703–1704 and was composed after that date; see He Manzi 何滿子, "Jizhong yi Liaozhai gushi yanhua de suqu" 幾種以聊齋故事衍化的俗曲 (Several popular musical works evolved from stories in *Strange Tales of Make-Do Studio*), in his *Pu Songling yu Liaozhai zhiyi* 蒲松齡與聊齋誌異 (Shanghai: Shanghai chuban gongsi, 1955). Lu Dahuang 路大荒 produced an early, lightly annotated version of *Monan qu*; see Lu, ed., *Liaozhai zhiyi waishu Monan qu* 聊齋誌異外書磨難曲 (*A Song of Tribulations*, a work in addition to the *Strange Tales of Make-Do Studio*; Tokyo: Bunkyo-dō, 1936). A recent, more fully annotated version of *Monan qu* is included in Zou Zongliang 鄒宗良 and Pu Xianming 蒲先明, eds., *Liaozhai liqu ji* 聊齋俚曲集 (Beijing: Guoji wenhua, 1999).

³⁶ The translated text: 萬民造孽年景荒、田地焦旱麥枯黃、共總種了十畝麥、連根拔了夠一筐、蓮花落哩溜蓮花 (in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Liaozhai zhiyi waishu Monan qu*, 6). On *lianhua lao* 蓮花落, see Chen Yuchen 陳玉琛, *Liaozhai liqu* 聊齋俚曲 (Jinan: Shandong wenyi, 2004), 405–414; Guan Dedong 關德棟, "Tan 'luohua'" 談落花 (On 'falling flowers') and "Sanhua' yuanliu ji qita" 散花源流及其他 (The evolution of 'dispersing flowers' and a few other things), contained in his *Quyuan lunji* 曲藝論集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), 151–165.]

From a total of ten *mou* of wheat fields grown
 There's but a basket's yield, with roots and all!
 The lotus drops, hey, slips the lotus.³⁷

Pu had a clear picture of what the righteous Zhang Hongjian would be like, but how about his wife Mrs. Fang? In the tale, she had the good sense to warn him against joining his comrades in their youthful protest against a corrupt official, good sense which Zhang himself did not have. And in the many years he spent away in the company of the elegant fox-fairy, she had kept their house, raised their child, and tended to all that needed to be tended to, while waiting against all sense and hope for his eventual return. Pu thought of his own wife. From the early year that he had spent away in the South³⁸ to the last several decades of his tenure with the Bi family, she had kept the house and managed everything in his absence. She supplemented their income with spinning; she washed and mended; one could even say that she was thrifty to a fault. She would save up all the treats that came her way for him, so that by the time he returned home they were always spoiled. And now, she was old. She had pains in her arms; she suffered from a hard lump in her chest.³⁹ Pu was reluctant to leave at the end of every New Year's holiday, but still the growing family needed income, and some more savings would also fare well for later. He thought about his travels in the weeks to come and wondered if there would be snow on the road. He had more than seventy *li* to go on horseback; though he had long become familiar with the mountain roads, every trip seemed to be a new journey.

³⁷ We have liberally rendered this line from 蓮花落哩溜蓮花, an ornamental motif in the performance of *lianhua lao* which is present not so much for meaning as for auditory effect; similar lines with a "lotus" motif appear in songs in between or at the end of sections of verse. Here this song appears in the first chapter of *Monan qu*, when a group of villagers fleeing the land decided to beg along the road singing. The performance is rendered with a lead and chorus, along with rhythmic accompaniment (in the play, the lead hands out a little drum and a string of bamboo clappers to members of the group and tells the rest to join clapping).

³⁸ This was during 1670–1671, when Pu Songling served as aide to Sun Hui (*jinshi*, 1661), a magistrate in Jiangsu and a fellow countryman. This seems to have been the only time in Pu's life when he traveled outside of the Shandong region.

³⁹ The information in this paragraph on Pu's wife comes from Pu Songling, "Shu Liu shi xingshi," in Lu Dahuang, ed., *Pu Songling ji*, 1:251.

It was getting late in the day. He heard his wife calling to him — was it already supper time? Pu looked out the window of his studio. He thought of some old lines that he had penned many years ago at this house:⁴⁰

A few thatched huts now embellish the village landscape,
 By secluded mulberry trees and evergreens, my chamber stands intact.
 I sat facing the empty courtyard, as the sky turned pale with dawn;
 Amid the young trees by the window, now the dusking hour grows.

⁴⁰ Pu Songling, “Huangyuan xiaogou luocheng, you congbai dang men, yan yue Lüping Zhai,” in Zhao Weizhi ed., *Liaozhai shiji jianzhu*, 273. The Chinese text of the translated lines are: 數間茅屋托山邨, 桑柘蕭然四壁存。坐對空庭生白曉, 窗臨短樹易黃昏。

PART V

ESSAYS ON CULTURE AND HISTORY

Where Did Modern Japanese Music Come From? Some Informal Remarks¹

Thomas Rimer

Jonathan Chaves and I have long shared a deep interest in Western classical music, and so it seems fitting that, for this volume, I should contribute an informal essay that only broaches this complex and fascinating topic, and one which, inexplicably, has not as yet, caught the attention of scholars in this country.²

Many Japanese and Western scholars who have written on the impact of Western culture on the Japanese arts in the latter part of the nineteenth century and after have concentrated on the beginnings of those early contacts made in the earlier part of the Meiji period (1868–1912). I myself have explored the career and writings of Mori Ōgai (1862–1922), who spent four years in Germany from 1884 to 1888 and returned to write a long series of trenchant stories and novels about his experiences as a cosmopolitan person back in Japan, as well as to introduce German literature through his translations for the Japanese public.

I have come to realize, however, that it is rather the “second generation” of figures, those who began their artistic careers when a sufficient basis of understanding of Western art and aesthetics had

¹ This brief essay is adapted from a lecture I gave at UCLA in April 2008. I have kept the tone informal, rather than scholarly, as what I present here is more speculation than certainty.

² After completing this essay, a colleague brought to my attention an excellent overview of modern Japanese music by Luciana Galliano, *Yōgaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002) translated from the Italian, which represents a major contribution to modern Japanese studies. She provides a detailed summary of Yamada Kōsaku's career.

already been established in Japan, who are perhaps even more significant. Their accomplishments certainly are as great, perhaps greater. The list is long of those who in this second generation made enduring contributions to twentieth-century Japanese culture. I myself have taken a particular interest in such figures as Senda Koreya (1904–1994), who was a disciple of Osanai Kaoru (1881–1928), mentioned below, and who began the modern Japanese theatre movement in Japan. Senda went to study in Germany and returned as an actor, performing *Hamlet* in the 1930s in Tokyo. He endured prison and house arrest during the Pacific War and in 1944 began the creation of the famous Haiyūza company (known in English as the Actor's Theatre), introducing Japanese audiences to plays by such Japanese writers as Abe Kōbō and Tanaka Chikao, as well as Molière, Brecht, and Sartre. One might also examine the career of the painter Fujishima Takeji (1867–1943), encouraged by Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924), who brought the art of oil painting (*yōga*) to Japan. He studied with Fernand Cormon at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and with Carolus-Duran (also the teacher of John Singer Sargent) at the French Academy in Rome before returning to a long and successful career as a painter in Japan. Such artists built on the foundations set down a generation earlier or more by their predecessors, and their work often moved well beyond those first experiments of their predecessors to reach a higher level of accomplishment.

Coming to terms with European culture, for the first generation of talented and creative artists of all kinds in the Meiji period, was perhaps less complicated for writers, such as Mori Ōgai, Natsume Sōseki, and others, because as writers they worked alone and needed no collaborators to realize their aims. Those in other fields, such as theatre, music, and art required considerably more — audiences, Western-style theatre buildings, art galleries, training institutions, and other support that required time and money.

Many of these conditions were certainly required for the development of Western classical music in Japan. I have been striving for some time to establish a kind of satisfactory intellectual framework through which to examine the lives and work of a number of these second-generation figures. I will explain my tentative strategies later, but let me begin with some specifics, as concerns the development of Western-style music in Japan.

Those of us who have heard what might be termed Japanese classical music, played on the *koto* or the *shakuhachi*, know that such traditional works inhabit an altogether different sound world

from that of the Western composers whom the Japanese quickly came to admire — Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms. Indeed, once exposed to Western concert music and opera, the Japanese began a powerful love affair with Western music that has never abated. This is now true of Korean and Chinese audiences as well.

But how was that aural gap closed so quickly? The details of that rapid shift may reveal much about the way in which art forms and ideals have come to move from culture to culture with increasing rapidity in the last hundred years or more.

When I was drafted in the U.S. Army in 1956 and sent to Sapporo, where I lived for two years, I knew very little, if anything, about the traditional Japanese arts. Teaching English conversation to a group of gifted graduate students from Hokkaido University in the evenings, I thought that, since I have always loved Western classical music, I might learn something from them about their own Japanese traditions, but instead, it was they who insisted on taking me to concerts of the Western music they loved so much. I was stunned to hear a recital by a remarkable Japanese baritone of the period, Nakayama Teiichi (1920–2009), who performed Schubert’s daunting song-cycle *Winterreise*, one of the composer’s masterpieces, in a chilly hall in downtown Sapporo. Nakayama, who studied in Munich from 1952 to 1957, had just returned from Europe and gave a powerful and compelling performance of such a depth and inwardness that one would have been privileged to hear it in New York, London, or Berlin. I next heard a very credible performance of Handel’s *Messiah* by a group of local church choirs, which showed not only a devotion to that hallowed score, but a considerable deftness in performance. Such fascination with Western music certainly seemed genuine to me at the time, and its attraction for Japanese audiences went far beyond the nature of any fad.

I’ve been asked over the years if perhaps Japanese audiences have been attracted to such music because of the cultural prestige of the West. My own experience indicates something far deeper, perhaps a kind of yearning for a transnational, interior experience. When I was again in Tokyo during the 1980s, I was able to hear a performance during a visit by the Bavarian State Opera. The tickets were terribly expensive but all performances were sold out. I managed to get a ticket in the balcony (for something like \$200, as I recall) for Richard Strauss’ *Arabella*. Chatting with the Japanese couple sitting next to me, I learned that they had saved money for a year to be able to come to hear this performance. “We can never afford to go to Munich,” they told me, “but we know the opera so well on

records, and this evening is the closest we can ever come to experiencing something that we love so much." This love, and this financial sacrifice, was surely no mere whim.

In terms of understanding the dynamics of the development of Western music in Japan, probably the most important period to examine is the span of roughly two decades or so from 1900 into the 1920s. It is true, as I will indicate below, that in the early decades of the Meiji period, a snobbish fad for things European among the upper classes did help launch this interest. By the end of that period, Western classical music had certainly found audiences among Japan's urban population. It is remarkable to realize that the first recording ever made of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, now a work high in the canon of European symphonic works, was made in Japan in 1930 with a distinguished Japanese conductor Konoe Hidemaro conducting the New Symphony of Tokyo.³ Konoe had studied with Yamada Kōsaku, the subject of this essay, then with the celebrated German conductor Eric Kleiber. And if this old recording sounds a bit tentative, even pallid by today's standards, contemporary Japanese musicians such as Suzuki Masaaki (famous for his Bach recordings) and Seiji Ozawa now often set the international standards for performance and recording.

In taking the genealogy of those involved with Western music back to the beginnings shortly after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, it is clear that the earliest major figure is Yamada Kōsaku (1886–1965).⁴ He was surely the first important musician to come out of Japan, and the trajectory of his career, both psychological and historical, tells much of that sort of heroic conjoining of enthusiasm, commitment, and talent needed to create a career of this stature in an environment where no precedents existed.

Fortunately, Yamada wrote an autobiography, published in 1957,⁵ which provides considerable insight into his early motivations and aspirations. He only recounts his life until the beginnings of World War I, when he left Germany to return to Japan, so his account is by no means complete.

³ The recording has been made available in CD format, Denon CO-2111-ex.

⁴ Yamada chose a rather odd romanization for his name, which thus appears in some Western sources as Yamada Kōşçak. Yamada Kōsaku remains more common.

⁵ Yamada Kōsaku's memoir of his youthful career exists in many editions. The easiest to obtain at this time is *Jiden wakaki hi no kyōshikiryoku*. Vol. 2 of *Ningen kiroku* (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1999).

Nevertheless, he provides a privileged source of information about the artistic and intellectual milieu of the later years of the Meiji period and of the same period in Germany as well. Yamada was, by all accounts, an accomplished raconteur, so there are doubtless some distortions in his account. Nevertheless, the view he constructs of his progress is an absorbing one.

Yamada's recollections of his early life are of interest in a variety of ways, but for my particular purposes, let me select a few salient points. His father died when Yamada was ten years old, and his mother was left to bring him up. She, of course, knew nothing about Western music. According to his account, Yamada indicates that he first took a decided interest in Western music when he heard a piano being played next door. He was then eight years old. When he was fifteen, his older sister married an Englishman, Edward Gauntlet, a teacher of English and a dedicated amateur musician. Through this new member of the family, he learned to appreciate Beethoven, Mozart, and Mendelssohn.

After his secondary schooling, Yamada entered the Tokyo School of Music in Ueno, in the northern part of Tokyo. After some tentative beginnings, the school had been put on a firm foundation in 1899.⁶ The school now offered a passable level of instruction in the performance of Western concert music, although composition itself was apparently not yet in the curriculum. Yamada worked hard at his studies, getting some personal help in composition from some of the teachers and, because of money difficulties, found it necessary to give extra lessons to fellow students for pay. Some of these were girls, and he hints that a few modest scandals ensued. Overworked, he sometimes fell ill.

In addition to his composition studies, Yamada took up the cello and learned to perform vocal music. He threw himself into these efforts with determination and enthusiasm.

Reading over Yamada's own account of these years, and juxtaposing his testimony with the careers of other writers and artists of the period, I believe I can locate four stages in the development of his self-consciousness as an artist, stages which he shares to some degree with the others whose

⁶ For the most accessible information in English on the Tokyo School of Music, see the various entries in Komiya Toyotaka, *Japanese Music and Drama in the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Ōbunsha, 1956).

lives I have examined. Painters, actors, and dramatists all faced the same variety of challenges during this period, and many seemed to follow a similar trajectory.

Let me explain what they are and in what order they appear by examining Yamada's youthful experiences.

(1) As a musician, Yamada's first stage consisted of his efforts to answer a basic question crucial to his future success: *what is a good musical performance?* It is difficult for us, living in a culture saturated with music from morning to midnight, to realize that he had no real models before him, other than a few halting performances of chamber music he heard at Ueno. There were, as yet, no radio broadcasts, no real recordings. He could only *read* about what might constitute a good performance.

The same, of course, was true for young Japanese artists working in Western-style oil painting (*yōga*), who had no European masterpieces at hand to study, or actors who could read Chekov and Ibsen on the page but could have no conception of how such roles were actually performed on stage in Europe or America. Given this context, Yamada's first challenge was to decide how to set standards for oneself *without* access to any firsthand experience of genuine excellence in his field.

Yamada's efforts to come to terms with this issue involved several experiments. Probably the first of them came through the process of collaboration with others of his generation, in particular, his contacts with Osanai Kaoru, mentioned above, who later became the founder of the first theatre company in Japan dedicated to performing modern drama. (Osanai's first landmark production in 1911 was *John Gabriel Borkman* by Henrik Ibsen.) While students, they began to work together on what has been described as a kind of oratorio, which they had performed by their fellow students at the Unitarian Church of Tokyo in 1909.

As a result of this and other activities, Yamada's talents were increasingly recognized to the extent that in 1910 he was given funds by a wealthy patron, Iwasaka Koyata (1879–1949), a powerful figure in the Mitsubishi industries, to go abroad to further his studies. According to Yamada, his patron said to him, "Go abroad to work for our country." But his sister told him instead, "No, you have to work for yourself first; then you can work for our country."

Yamada arrived in Berlin shortly afterward; and although he now knew some English, he had heretofore no experience with the German language. He took the musical entrance examination for

the famous and forbidding Hochschule, where so many of the greatest performers, conductors, and composers received their training. He received a letter admitting him to the composition program but was not able to read the results, which he later learned when his landlady kindly read and explained the letter to him. He soon began his studies with the famous composer Max Bruch (1838–1920), a highly-respected musician whose violin concerto remains even today a staple of the repertory.

Yamada threw himself into the cultural life of Berlin, exposing himself to every aspect of music and the allied arts. He saw his first operas staged, noting in particular his admiration for Bizet's *Carmen*, written in 1872, and Wagner's *Parsifal*, written in 1882. These scores are now revered classics, but in those years, they were still fresh, and their virtues still debated. Among musicians he heard perform, he singled out one in particular, Enrico Caruso.

As Yamada continued to work to perfect his German, he became, as did Mori Ōgai thirty-odd years before, entranced with German romantic poetry. This enthusiasm in turn led him to begin to read contemporary Japanese poetry written in the newly employed Western style, that is to say, in forms longer and looser than the traditional thirty-one syllable *waka* and seventeen-syllable *haiku*. Among the young Japanese poets he most admired was Miki Rōfu (1889–1964), especially a collection titled *Haien* (The Overgrown Garden). Miki himself was among the first Japanese symbolist poets who searched for resonances in the Japanese and French traditions.

In an essay, Rōfu wrote:

It is an undeniable fact that Symbolist poetry was transmitted to Japan thanks to the influence of the French Symbolist poets, but its spirit ... has existed from ancient times in Japan. I do not mean that anything as vague as saying symbolism is as old as the hills; I mean that the Japanese literary spirit has revealed itself in the form of splendid Symbolist writings. If we consider the poetic style Bashō developed in the haiku, we shall see that, despite the differences in name, it was this same spirit that permeated Bashō's mind at that time. The *yūgen* style is what we call today the Symbolist style. The special feature of this style is that it avoids explanations and prizes suggestion

instead. It does not divide phenomena into minute categories but looks at them as a whole and simplifies them, attempting insofar as possible to transcend reality.⁷

Yamada, too, in many of his works, sought consonances between the Japanese texts and Western vocal traditions. And he set a number of Rōfu's poems to music.

(2) The second stage in the development of Yamada's self-consciousness lay in his attempt to answer the question that in these years in Berlin now became foremost in his mind. What did it mean to be a *Japanese* composer? In some ways, that question was also being asked in those decades by so-called "nationalist" composers such as Dvorak, Smetana, and, in America, Edward McDowell, all of whom were trying to master an idiom defined by the German (and to a lesser extent the French) masters of the period. The problems faced by Yamada, however, were far more difficult. For composers in Eastern Europe and America, the idiom itself in which they wished to work was basically their own and long familiar. In Yamada's case, that idiom was still alien to most of his countrymen. The challenge both to master that idiom while refining his personal musical talents within that still-unfamiliar tradition was a forbidding project.

During his studies, Yamada began to experiment with setting Japanese poetry to music. He quickly realized that the Japanese language involves very different problems from those posed by German, French, or English. Later, he would develop an eloquent means to incorporate the natural sounds of Japanese into a Western-style musical idiom, composing many dozen art songs, many of which are still very popular today.

In 1912, Yamada set out to write a symphony, the first to my knowledge ever written by a Japanese composer.⁸ It is still performed today. In the following year, he continued his experiments with orchestral writing, composing a tone poem titled *Kurai tobira* (The Dark Gate), inspired by his

⁷ Cited in Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era Poetry, Drama, Criticism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 252.

⁸ A recording of the symphony is currently available on CD, Naxos 8.555350. The recording also includes the pieces of Yamada inspired by works of Miki Rōfu and Saitō Kazō.

response to a poem of Rōfu, written in turn because of the poet's attraction to a play of Maeterlinck,⁹ *Les Aveugles* (The Blind). In the same year, Yamada wrote another tone poem titled *Mandara no Hana* (Flowers of the Mandala), a reference to the fabled trees that grow in Paradise. This work was similarly inspired by his response to a poem written by a close friend then living in Berlin, Saitō Keizō (1887–1955).

During these years in Berlin, Yamada met important German and other European figures prominent in the arts. Equally important for his future were the friends he made with a number of young Japanese artists and intellectuals then in Berlin, which, like Paris, served as crucial cultural crossroads for the Japanese both before World War I and after. Many of them went on to become central figures in the development of modern Japanese culture. Almost all remained friends with Yamada throughout his life. He came to know Abe Jirō (1883–1959), the noted writer and philosopher of aesthetics. Yamada again met Osanai, who was on a tour of Europe and Russia, and became friends with Ito Michio (1882–1961), who, several years later, would dance for Yeats in the production of the first of his *Nō* plays — *At the Hawk's Well* — which premiered in London in 1916. Ito and Yamada would work together again in New York less than a decade later. Yamada also saw again the young dancer Ishii Baku (1892–1961), whom he first met in Tokyo. Ishii went on to study with the eminent German choreographer Mary Wigman (1886–1973). Ishii brought modern dance to Japan and his work, in turn, helped guide Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–1986), the founder of the now widely appreciated *butoh* dance form.¹⁰ A shared enthusiasm was created among this group that helped sustain each of them through the inevitable difficulties they faced when they brought their newly-honed European sensibilities back to a Japan as yet ill-prepared to understand them. All of the second generation artistic figures came to face in their respective fields the same questions that were so important to Yamada. The best of them managed, in their own ways, to find the means to master the complexities of European culture while seeking to define themselves and the nature of their own talent.

⁹ For details, see the excellent notes by Takuo Yuasa in the recording mentioned in the preceding note.

¹⁰ The artistic genealogy of many of these cultural figures is significant. Ishii's son Ishii Maki (1936–2003), for example, studied with Xenakis and became one of the most significant composers of his generation.

(3) The next stage in Yamada's developing self-consciousness, and perhaps the most important one, was surely to face the challenge of coming to terms with the nature of his own talents — and his own limitations — as a creative artist.

Yamada wrote in his autobiography that he was dissatisfied with his 1912 symphony. He found the form too complex for him to master to his satisfaction, and he became ever more certain that his real abilities lay in vocal music.¹¹

In an eloquent passage in his autobiography, Yamada describes a crisis of some three days in which he came to face these issues directly. At the end of that time, he emerged with the strong conviction that he was prepared to take whatever risks were necessary to become, as he put it, an *artist* rather than an *artisan*.

This kind of spiritual crisis has been testified to, in one way or another, by many other creative figures of this second generation. The most well-known of these, surely, was that of the writer Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), arguably the greatest of twentieth-century Japanese novelists, who, going through a similar testing of his soul while studying in London from 1901 to 1903, came to the realization that he could not *become* an Englishman and so turned from his attempt to become a scholar of English literature to that of a creative writer.¹² Takamura Kōtarō (1883–1956), one of modern Japan's greatest poets and sculptors, had to forcefully repudiate the attitudes of his father, Takamura Koun (1852–1934), a sculptor who began his career at the beginning of the Meiji period and still conceived of himself, as did most of those in his generation, as a traditional artisan.¹³ And in his 1890 story *Maihime* (The Girl Who Danced), Mori Ōgai traced the powerful tensions between the

¹¹ The issue of complexity is a persuasive one for Japanese artists of this generation. It has often been pointed out, for example, that young playwrights attempting to write modern dramas in these years much preferred one-act plays, which were relatively easy to construct, as opposed to full-length works, which required a real mastery of dramatic architecture. These problems would be solved by the succeeding generation of playwrights.

¹² For some details on Sōseki's difficulties, see Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Fiction; Japanese Literature in the Modern Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 311–312.

¹³ For a trenchant essay on the tension between father and son, see “The Poet-Sculptor Takamura Kōtarō's Love-Hate Relationship with the West,” in Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Japan's Love-Hate Relationship with the West* (Folkestone: Global Oriental Ltd., 2005), 474–492.

traditional need to serve one's society versus the desire to find a way to follow one's own destiny, however difficult that dream might be to realize.¹⁴

As a result of his new level of self-understanding, Yamada decided to follow his talents in vocal music. He decided to write an opera. This first effort, too, led to certain difficulties. He decided to use the text of a play by Maurice Maeterlinck, *Alladine et Palomides*, as the basis for his opera.¹⁵ His experiments with the text soon proved unsatisfactory to him. Yamada again, thinking of what his own culture might contribute to his musical stance, now became convinced that in many ways *kabuki* was Japan's theatrical form closest to Western opera. Sending to Tokyo, he received a promising text titled *Ochitaru tennyo* (The Fallen Angel), based on a text by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935), the playwright and scholar who would later produce brilliant translations of all of Shakespeare into Japanese. Shōyō's libretto was first set to music in 1906 by Tōgi Tetteki (1869–1925), a court musician and composer. As far as I have been able to determine, Yamada was not familiar with this earlier musical setting. He prepared a piano-vocal score and was delighted to receive a contract for a production of his opera in Berlin.

Now at last, Yamada wrote, he hoped he could *hear* how his own music would sound when performed. He decided to return to Japan to complete the project and to collect musical materials, costumes, and other things needed for the physical production. Unfortunately, while he was back in Tokyo, World War I broke out and, as he could not return to Europe, the project had to be abandoned. Eventually he did finish the work, which premiered much later in Tokyo in 1929 but without the resources — vocal, instrumental, and scenic — that would have been available to him in pre-war Berlin.

(4) Yamada now approached the last phase of his self-awareness as an artist, one concerning that which he understood all too well by the time he left Berlin: What were the challenges of re-entry

¹⁴ For a translation of the story, see Richard Bowring's version in J. Thomas Rimer, ed., *Mori Ōgai: Youth and Other Stories* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 6–24.

¹⁵ Maeterlinck, who received the Nobel Prize in 1911, was then at the height of his fame. A number of European composers set his plays to music, most notably Debussy in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, which premiered in Paris in 1902. Another important work by Paul Dukas, based on Maeterlinck's *Ariane et Barbe-Blue*, was first staged in Paris in 1907. It is not clear whether Yamada knew these scores. He does not mention them explicitly in his autobiography.

into Japan, where the Western musical culture he now knew and admired, was still foreign to his audiences? He would spend much of the rest of his career working through the difficulties that lay ahead.

After his return in 1913, Yamada found the school of music in Ueno, where he began his training, hopelessly parochial. And even if he had wanted to work there, there were no positions open for him. Where should he then begin? He began to lay plans for the creation of an apparatus that could make possible the wider acceptance of classical Western-style music in Japan. He envisioned a national concert circuit and a network of locations where talented students and his own colleagues could give public performances. All of these initiatives would eventually be realized, but it took many years — and many supporters — for these cultural structures to come into being.

After the end of World War I, Yamada quickly undertook new adventures, this time in New York. In 1917, he gave concerts at Carnegie Hall and met again Michio Ito, who had come from London. The two were to work on several projects together. While outlines of his career are available from other sources, readers who consult them miss in those accounts the kind of rich anecdotal incidents that make Yamada's own writing so colorful.

JAPANESE AUDIENCE FOR WESTERN MUSIC

Of all the problems that Yamada identified, that of creating a suitable audience in Japan for his music and for Western-style music in general was perhaps the most difficult to overcome. But he shared this task with other advocates, who also sought advances in finding the means necessary to develop and sustain an audience for Western music in Japan. This period of transition is worthy of some extended comment.

Accounts of the responses by Japanese audiences to Western music in the early years of the Meiji period indicate that these first transitions were sometimes difficult. Western music sounded as strange to them as Japanese traditional concert music sounded — and often still sounds — to us. Basil Hall Chamberlain's amusing account of one of the early appearances of Western opera singers in Japan suggests some of these difficulties:

Talking of reform and Europeanization, it fell to our lot several years ago to witness an amusing scene in a Japanese theatre. The times were already ripe for change. An Italian opera troupe having come to Yokohama, a wide-awake Japanese manager engaged them, and caused a play to be written for the special purpose of letting them appear in it.... But oh! the effect upon the Japanese audience! When once they had recovered from the first shock of surprise, they were seized with a wild fit of hilarity at the high notes of the *prima donna*, who really was not at all bad. The people laughed at the absurdities of European singing until their sides shook, and the tears rolled down their cheeks; they stuffed their sleeves into their mouths, as we might our pocket handkerchiefs, in the vain endeavor to contain themselves. Needless to say, that experience was not repeated.¹⁶

By the turn of the last century, however, reasonable performances were being given by European teachers (and the occasional missionary) in the larger urban centers. The first opera performed in Japan by Japanese artists was a concert version of Gluck's *Orfeo* in 1903, sung in a Japanese translation by Mori Ōgai, an event now regarded as a heroic moment in the development of Western music in Japan.

Indeed, it was the continued commitment and energy of Japanese writers and intellectuals that helped to provide the momentum that gradually built and sustained the interest of Japanese audiences.

Mori Ōgai, for example, in his 1912 short story *Fujidana* (The Wisteria Trellis), includes a slightly sarcastic description of a lawn party and concert held at the home of a rich patron; many in the well-dressed audience could not appreciate what they were hearing. The focus of the story is on a young man, Hidemaro, who had recently returned from Europe and, of course, had developed a great interest in music and other European arts.

¹⁶ Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935), an English scholar, taught in Japan in the late nineteenth century. His writings provide a privileged glimpse of life in Japan at that time. The quotation below is taken from his *Things Japanese*, first published in 1890. The book has seen many editions and is currently available under a slightly different title, *Japanese Things: Being Notes on Various Subjects Connected with Japan* (North Clarendon, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1971), 466–467.

There were more women than men. More Japanese than Western dress. Fashionable colors like blue predominated among those wearing seasonable kimono with family crests. You could see the under-kimono at the sleeve opening and the tie above the obi; these women carried parasols in their hands, wore a variety of hair ornaments, and in general, created the impression of an unlimited variation of color. The men were generally in black frock coats and stood at the back, gathered to one side, closer to the stone house and forming what appeared to be a sparse black line.

Hidemaro and Watanabe joined this black line. Watanabe moved about greeting the vice-minister, the bureau chief, and several others, while Hidemaro stood in a corner and glanced around, greeting just those few relatives who happened to be nearby....

The musical performance commenced. March music by someone or other. Guests flipped through their programs. Hidemaro let his eyes wander above the crowd of guests who were listening reverently.... The musical performance moved on to the second piece on the program. A singer fired with sentiment blended in. The guests, as one would expect, listened admiringly.... The second piece ended. The managing director led the way to the intermission location that had been set up in an arbor across the lawn....

“Everyone is behaving well and listening obediently,” Hidemaro said.

“That’s true. And yet there are many who don’t understand what they are listening to.” There was a flicker of disdain in Watanabe’s twinkling eye.

“Music isn’t conceptually based, however, so if anyone listening experiences positive emotions, that’s just fine, isn’t it?”¹⁷

¹⁷ A translation of the story by Helen Hopper and Mayu Tsuruya-Wynne can be found in J. Thomas Rimer, ed., *Not a Song Like Any Other: An Anthology of Writings by Mori Ōgai* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 90–100. The quotations given here appear at various points in the narrative.

Hidemaro has understood through his European experience the way in which music functions for the individual listener.

In another slightly satirical, yet poignant scene, Natsume Sōseki, in his 1907 novel *Nowaki* (The Autumn Wind),¹⁸ describes the reaction of his young protagonist, Takayanagi, who is taken for the first time to a concert in Tokyo by his wealthy friend Nakano. Sōseki, who had attended concerts while in London, captures beautifully the confusions of Takayanagi, who, ill-dressed and ill at ease, “felt he and this concert were altogether incompatible.”

It seemed that there were thousands of people assembled to hear this concert, and those thousands all seemed to raise both hands to welcome his friends, while with a stern gesture they seemed to be rejecting him. It would be better, he thought, if he had not come to such a place. Yet his friend seemed aware of none of this.

“It’s time. They’re going to start,” his friend said, glancing down at the printed program.

“Is that so?” Takayanagi said mechanically, his eyes falling over the printed page.

First came a violin-cello-piano composition. Takayanagi had no idea what a cello might be. Second, a sonata, a work of Beethoven. All he recognized was the name of the composer. Third, an adagio, a piece by Purcell. He had no idea what this might be. Fourth — but just as he began to read, the sudden thunder of applause seemed to shake the rafters. The players now appeared on the platform.

In a moment, the trio began. The audience in the hall turned silent, as though turned to stone. Out the window to the right, he could see half of a tall fir tree and behind it the faint country of the blue sky into which it thrust itself. To his left, pouring in through the green curtains, came the brilliantly clear autumn light which shone diagonally on the white walls.

¹⁸ *Nowaki* is the most important novel of Sōseki not yet translated into English. For a concise summary of the novel, see Angela Liu, *Chaos and Order in the Works of Natsume Sōseki* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 13–26.

The music, with a quiet spontaneity, seemed to move forward happily among the quiet listeners.... Takayanagi watched as a black kite, disengaging itself from a branch of the fir tree, somehow seemed to be dancing. How strange, he thought, that the bird seemed to be moving to the rhythm of the music.

Loud applause suddenly erupted. Takayanagi responded with a start. He felt as though he had been a little boy all alone in the midst of some other race of beings. Next to him, his friend Nakano was applauding vigorously. Takayanagi felt as though he were the one who, like the black kite, high, high in the sky, had now been called back to the confining valley below by his friend who had brought him here against his will.¹⁹

The passage continues to describe the rest of the concert and Takayanagi's reactions to the music. The sounds themselves produce happy, even poetic images in his head, but he remains intimidated by the trappings of the occasion and his sense of the wealth and ostentation of the audience. But, like Hidemaro, he grasps the real effect on his interior thoughts through what he has heard.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, serious chamber music concerts became more common, although, as suggested by the passages above, the idiom was still quite unfamiliar to Japanese audiences. One commentator has written that these early audiences listened to such music as though "to sutra chanting, to an unknown text." Nevertheless, concerts — and exposure — continued. In addition to Ōgai and Sōseki, other prominent and respected writers, such as Nagai Kafū (1879–1959) and Shimazaki Tōson (1872–1943), wrote with great enthusiasm and discernment about the music they heard in Paris. Tōson, in particular, compared with considerable sophistication certain elements in the music of Debussy with those he identified in traditional Japanese concert music. These accounts, published in leading newspapers, were widely read.

¹⁹ This extract, in my translation, appears in chapter four. I used the Shinchō bunko edition (#2339) first published by Shinchōsha in 1976 and reprinted numerous times thereafter. In that edition, this passage appears on pages 127–128, and can easily be located in a variety of other editions.

According to some accounts from the period, Japanese musicians in the early decades played more or less by rote, afraid to “interpret.” As more and more visiting musicians from Europe and America came to give concerts in Tokyo and other large metropolitan areas, however, standards rose.

By 1914, there was enough interest in Western opera to provide an audience for Japan’s first opera company, the Akasaka Opera, under the direction of a certain V.S. Rossi (about whom more research needs to be carried out). The company performed for several years, presenting truncated versions of such European favorites as Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*, Donizetti’s *Daughter of the Regiment*, and operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan, Offenbach, and others. From what I have been able to determine, these works were sung in Japanese translation.

What of the later career of Yamada himself? As mentioned above, he had considerable success in New York, worked with Ito Michio, received a commission for an opera from a French company in 1931, when he traveled to Paris, followed by a successful tour of the Soviet Union. In 1940, he saw the first staging of the vocal work that many consider his masterpiece, the opera *Kurobune* (Black Ships), which deals with the coming of Matthew Perry to Japan. The work has been recorded and revived a number of times, including a well-received production in 1995.

Looking at both the trajectory of Yamada and of Western music during this complex period, it is tempting to seek some kind of abstract theoretical framework in which to explicate the significance of these artistic journeys. Some have suggested the possible use of a sort of colonialist or neo-colonialist approach. In such an analysis, the invaded culture pays homage to the art forms popular with the imperial master involved. In the case of Japan, I myself do not believe that such an analysis is correct. The Japanese have long possessed sophisticated theatre and concert audiences; with the coming of the West, they learned, and rather quickly, to turn their attention to new forms of music, but their predisposition to embrace sophisticated art forms has never been in question.

Still, one is left with a sense of pleasant surprise at the quick and enduring success of Western music in Japan, in the midst of the rapidity of these significant cultural shifts. Such acceptance certainly occurred more quickly, and with less strain, than did those which took place in other areas of the performing arts, such as dance and theatre. Yamada himself certainly understood what some of those mechanisms for success required, and he helped encourage them.

Looking back over the period from 1890 to the 1930s, a number of factors seem important. First of all, in the spread of chamber and concert music, the fact that audiences were not required to understand sung texts, particularly those in a foreign language, meant their musical experiences could be more direct (as Ōgai and Sōseki noted) and less dependent on, say, the kind of cultural background needed to understand and appreciate a scene from a Verdi opera or a Schubert song. Secondly, musicians soon began to teach Western music in the secondary schools, so that young people were exposed quite quickly to these new types of sound and became familiar with them within a generation, so much so, in fact, that Japanese film composers most often used Western-style music, rather than Japanese, in their compositional styles.

Finally, I believe, the learning process needed to perform Western classical music comes closer than any other Western art form to the way in which important Japanese traditional art forms — *nō* chant, flower arranging, calligraphy, etc. — have long been customarily taught. The student of piano or violin follows a fixed learning trajectory, slowly mastering the elements needed for performance and copies techniques used by master musicians. Eventually, just as with the Japanese traditional arts, the student comes to absorb such lessons so well that his or her individuality in performance can eventually emerge. This kind of learning pattern, which so long provided the methods for success in the traditional Japanese arts, could thus be easily transferred to those Japanese young people wishing to learn to play a Western instrument.²⁰

Finally, I suppose one might ask if, in terms of the standards of world music, Yamada Kosaku did in fact become a great composer. I think the question needs to be modified to ask instead, for whom? He was immensely talented, of course, but by the same token he never attained the level of others in his generation, such as Richard Strauss, Paul Hindemith, etc. Still, for his Japanese audiences and admirers, he remains a great and revered figure.

I believe that he surely deserves such admiration and in the same way that we as Americans admire some of our own talented composers. During roughly this same period we produced no towering geniuses, with the possible exception of Charles Ives, but we can still listen, say, to Victor

²⁰ The so-called Suzuki method, created in the mid-twentieth century, seems to me in some ways to serve as an effective modern adaptation of traditional techniques used to teach various of the Japanese arts by using imitation rather than prior analysis.

Herbert, George Gershwin, Howard Hanson, and others of the pre-war period with real pleasure. Their music is good and, to our ears, these composers offer proof to American audiences that music can possess an American sound. We feel close to them. European and Japanese audiences may not always understand the depth of our enthusiasm, but we can derive real satisfaction from their work, just as Japanese audiences can admire Yamada's accomplishments. And that is as it should be.

Beyond such issues, however, I remain fascinated by the significance of the larger patterns of cultural assimilation revealed in Yamada's courageous attempts to come to grips with the role of the artist in early twentieth-century Japan. His talent and intensity certainly make him a member in good standing of a heroic generation.

Alexis de Tocqueville, China, and France¹

Emmet Kennedy

I

Alexis de Tocqueville is arguably the most widely read political thinker of the nineteenth century, due principally to his two works, *Democracy in America* (two vols., 1835 and 1840) and *The Old Regime and Revolution* (1856). In the first, this scion of a Norman aristocratic family showed how pristine conditions and the absence of centralization favored the rise of liberty in the fledgling United States, while in the second he showed how venerable political and social institutions impeded the development of liberty in France despite the Revolution.

Tocqueville's great-grandfather, Malesherbes-Lamoignon, was the chancellor of Louis XV, during the high Enlightenment. As chief royal censor, he permitted publication and diffusion of many works that unwittingly undermined the Old Regime. The French Revolution, "so long in coming and yet so little foreseen," found Malesherbes defending the king at the expense of both of their lives. Alexis' father, Hervé de Tocqueville (1772–1856), had served in the king's guard and married Malesherbes' granddaughter, making him doubly suspect. The victimized family lived under the dark cloud of Revolution. Tocqueville, however, made it his mission to understand this great event as a moderate rather than to oppose it as a legitimist defender of the Old Regime. His temperament

¹ A version of this paper was given at Christendom College in April 2014.

disposed him to accept historical facts and understand foreign civilizations, however alien to his upbringing and family background.²

Raised during the empire, Alexis was trained as a prosecutor during the Restoration when he had access to his grandfather's library, brimming with the works of the Enlightenment philosophes, including those of Montesquieu. It seems that he lost his Catholic faith among those tomes, but he believed, contrary to the philosophes, that Christianity was crucial to liberty and to the post-revolutionary advent of democracy in the West.

Tocqueville's famous visit to the United States in 1831 led to his subsequent publication of *Democracy in America*. Shortly after he visited England and Ireland, he was always concerned about liberty in different circumstances. It is important, however, to note that Tocqueville inherited the Enlightenment doctrine concerning the inverse suitability of republics to large territories. Posited by Montesquieu, but refuted after 1791 by Madison and Destutt de Tracy, America proved the exception to that rule in the "age of the Democratic Revolution," while Russia, Persia, and China had long confirmed it.³ American democracy had been shaped by a number of colonial institutions — from town meetings, congregational churches, and colonial assemblies even before state and federal constitutions, public opinion, pluralism, free associations, and a free press — that made it possible. But Tocqueville also recognized the limitations of democracy such as the "tyranny of the majority." He disapproved of slavery, feared its consequences, and criticized the exclusion of Indians from the Republic. (His travel companion in Louisiana, Gustave de Beaumont, wrote a novel, *Marie*, about a Creole woman whose misfortunes told a bleak counterpart to the celebratory experience of Tocqueville.) While Tocqueville certainly predicted the inevitable triumph of democracy in the

² André Jardin, *Tocqueville, A Biography* (1805-1859) (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988), pt. I; Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and Revolution*, ed. François Furet and Françoise Melonio, trans. Alan F. Kahn, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), I, 48, 396; hereafter *ORR*. My translation of Tocqueville's description I, chap. 1 of the advent of the Revolution: "jamais d'événements conduits de plus loin ... et moins prévus." On the European passing of the Old Regime see Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

³ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, bk. IX, ch. 1; *Federalist Papers*, no. 10; Destutt de Tracy, *Commentary and Review of Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws* (Philadelphia, 1811), 79 ff. The Jefferson-Tracy correspondence in Gilbert, Chinard, *Jefferson et les Idéologues* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1925).

Christian West, when he wrote about France itself in 1856, two decades after *Democracy*, he was far less optimistic because he saw centralization, the very enemy of democracy, surviving in full force. In neither the American nor the French case did Tocqueville think revolutions themselves engendered liberty or democracy but rather their opposite. "Corporate liberties," such as those enjoyed by the church, the aristocracy and the provinces, checked the absolutism of the Old Regime monarchy."⁴

But, Tocqueville did not restrict his observations about democracy to "the West." In the decade after his visit to America, he visited Algeria and delivered parliamentary speeches on India. However, neither Algeria nor India was, in his view, susceptible to democracy. Algeria, conquered by the French after 1830, consisted of a horde of tribes and chieftains, lacking local government, educational institutions, and salutary marital and familial customs. Given the caste system in India, its passive Hinduism and absence of any central government, the subcontinent was likewise more susceptible to (British) conquest than to independent nationhood. In both Algeria and India, Tocqueville introduced a dualism, absent from *Democracy* and his writings on England and Ireland, emphasizing what a colony could offer the metropole — economically, strategically, and militarily — preceding the civilizational benefits the metropole could bring to the colony, short of democracy or nationhood.⁵

Tocqueville's views of Europe, America, and Africa are the backdrop of his views on the Orient. He considered China to be a very large and "foreign [*étrange*] country," inhabited by "a foreign

⁴ ORR, 48, 396. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, trans. and eds., *Democracy in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), hereafter *DA*.

⁵ Tocqueville, *De la colonie en Algérie*, ed. T. Todorov (Brussels, 1988), 37-38; Roger Boesche, "The Dark Side of Tocqueville: 'On War and Empire,'" *Review of Politics* 67 (2005), 740. See also Jennifer Pitts, "Empire and *Democracy*: Tocqueville and the Algerian Question," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2000), 742 ft.; Cheryl B. Welch, "Colonial Violence and the Rhetoric of Evasion" in Eva Atanassow and Richard Boyd, eds., *Tocqueville and the Frontiers of Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 111-132; A generally balanced overview that omits the role Tocqueville gives to religion can be found in Seymour Drescher's "Tocqueville's Comparative Perspective," in Cheryl B. Welch, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 78-132. For its absence in non-European countries see Jennifer Pitts, "Democracy and Domination: Empire, Slavery, and Democratic Corruption in Tocqueville's Thought," *Tocqueville and the Frontiers of Democracy*, 261-262.

[*étrange*] people,” but not so “foreign” [or strange] as to be altogether incomparable to France.⁶ His observations are clearly those of a sedentary commentator, who cannot visit China, but the importance of China cannot escape him any more than could Russia due to its size and population. That Tocqueville had not visited China as he had America makes his judgment certainly of a different order, although not necessarily an inferior one. His judgments merit attention as the critical opinion of a great writer about a great country, like those of other leading intellectuals, such as Montesquieu, Voltaire, or Hegel, none of whom had visited China, but whose characterizations of it were extremely influential. We are not looking for new information from them, but new insights⁷ into the place of China in the constellation of world civilizations. As a sociologist, he is interested in political, cultural, and religious relationships which result in more or less freedom in one country or “regime” compared to another. Tocqueville’s concerns are primarily about the causes and effects of a centralization even greater than that of France.

II

To date, attention to Tocqueville’s views on China has been incidental mainly because Tocqueville never devoted a treatise to the celestial empire as he had to Algeria or India. Whatever remarks he made have been viewed as part of a “dark departure” from his favorable estimates of countries like France and America and are found solely in digressions and notes to his main works and his correspondence. Recently Tocqueville’s own tools and principles were used to analyze China, rather than his *opinions* about China. Simultaneously an unprecedented interest on the part of China’s leadership in Tocqueville’s writings has aroused curiosity in the Western press.⁸

China forms part of Tocqueville’s approach to the non-Western (with the exception of Russia) and the non-Christian world. His accent on religion, which was civic rather than doctrinal, was based

⁶ “Tocqueville to N. W. Beckwith,” September 7, 1858, in Aurelian Craiutu and Jeremy Jennings, eds., *Tocqueville on America after 1840* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 295. The French word Tocqueville uses, of course, is *étrange*.

⁷ Jonathan Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continental China in Western Minds* (London: Penguin, 1999), 145–225.

⁸ Cheryl Welch explains how contemporary Chinese scholars have used Tocqueville to analyze China from a sociological perspective, drawing on the ORR, rather than on *DA*; see *Tocqueville and the Frontiers of Democracy*, 111–132. See below n. 14.

on his sociological conviction that the Christian religion was particularly favorable to democracy. In this, he anticipated the later views of Max Weber.⁹

“Oriental despotism” had been a “trope” of Enlightenment political analysis, particularly of Montesquieu, who had viewed it as an inevitable characteristic of large territories. Looking at China indirectly through the lenses of the Enlightenment *physiocrates*, the group to be called *economistes*, Tocqueville found they admired China unquestioningly for its administrative efficiency and a uniformity achieved at the expense of individual liberty (preferences characteristic of that branch of the Enlightenment) which presaged, in Tocqueville’s mind, the socialism of 1848. Both opted to sacrifice liberty: the first to rationalism, the second to equality. Thus, China played a model for eighteenth and nineteenth century centralization, in contrast to America, which served as a model of limited government for Europe.

For lack of a model in time, they invented a model in space, namely China, where the educated, a meritocracy recruited through competitive examinations, were the instruments of the natural order! Thus, in the midst of the Old Regime, the physiocrats imagined a sort of democratic despotism — a “rational,” all-powerful state, uniform rules, and the equality of individuals.... Not yet finding around them anything which seemed to conform to this ideal, they sought it in the depths of Asia. I do not exaggerate in stating that there is not one of them who does not in some part of his writings give an emphatic eulogy of China. In reading their books one is sure to encounter at least this: and since China was still very badly known, there was no kind of nonsense which they didn’t speak about. This imbecile and barbarous government that a handful of Europeans mastered at will, seems to them the most perfect model that the nations of the world could copy. It is for them, what later England and finally America became for all the French. They find themselves moved, and apparently entranced, at the sight of a country whose sovereign, absolute, but exempt from

⁹ Doris S. Goldstein, “Trial of Faith, Religion, and Politics” in *Tocqueville’s Thought* (New York: Elsevier, 1975), chap. VI, 113–117.

prejudices, once a year plows the earth with his own hands to honor the useful arts; where all positions are obtained through literary competitions; which has for religion only a philosophy and for an aristocracy none but intellectuals. We believe that the destructive theories which are known in our days under the name of *socialism* are of recent origin; this is a mistake: these theories were contemporary with the first physiocrats. While the physiocrats used the all-powerful government they dreamed to change society's form, the socialists in their imagination grasp the same power to destroy its base. Read the *Code of Nature* by Morelly, and you will find there, along with all the doctrines of the physiocrats on the omnipotence of the state and its unlimited rights ... the community of goods, the right to work, absolute equality, uniformity in all things, mechanical order in all the movements of individuals, regulatory tyranny, and the complete absorption of the personality of the citizens in to the social body.¹⁰

The “socialist” revolution of 1848, thought Tocqueville, was an extension of physiocratic thought. “The same revolution” pushed for equality, simultaneously increasing the power of the state — leading to the Second Empire of Napoleon III, when Tocqueville's *Old Regime and Revolution* was published decrying both.

Tocqueville kept in view three social-political models — France, America, and China — gauging the degree of liberty existing in all three at different times. The first two were mobile, but not eternal. China was characterized by intellectual comfort and habit favorable to centralization and despotism. The imperial government controlled competitive examinations, which reduced all learning to memory, all intellectual talent and private affections to the state.

In China, where equality of conditions is very great and very old, a man passes from one public office to another only after submitting to a competition. This test is

¹⁰ *ORR*, I, 213.

encountered at each step in his career, and the idea of it is so well introduced into mores that I remember having read a Chinese novel in which the hero after many vicissitudes finally touches the heart of his mistress by passing an examination well. Great ambitions breathe uneasily in such an atmosphere.¹¹

The Jesuits had discovered the wonder of Chinese erudition in the sixteenth century, but Tocqueville implies that a legacy of traditional learning and erudition never rekindled active scientific discovery. China was intellectually ossified by a Mandarin Confucianism, which Tocqueville saw as both cause and effect of centralization.

Another fairly common opinion, and on which I would be very curious to have your view, is that regarding the religious beliefs of the Chinese. All those who return from China, mainly the missionaries, assure us that China is the country of the world in which religion properly speaking exists among the least enlightened classes and comes closest to being a pure philosophy. According to them, the religion of Buddha has passionate and convinced supporters only among the lowest class of the people, and even there it is in decline, as one can observe by looking at the great number of temples that are falling into ruin. Above the people, religious sentiment, or at least the sentiment attached to a positive religion, is almost unknown. The same persons add that, of all people, the Chinese have surrendered most to a practical Epicureanism, which leads them to look only for worldly pleasures and to live with only that goal in mind. This is possible, but such a state is rare and in general lasts only for a short time among human beings. I doubt that anyone has ever seen in the past a great mass of people who are moved only by the passion for material well-being. From time to time, more elevated aspirations and yearnings of the soul toward an invisible world have

¹¹ *DA*, 602.

never failed to manifest themselves. It would be as odd to imagine the opposite phenomenon as it would be sad to consider it....¹²

Buddhism, which emphasized withdrawal and resignation, had spread widely among the popular classes. Tocqueville's dim view of China's religions strengthened his prejudice against China's qualification for democracy. Since he links Christianity to the wave of democracy sweeping the European West, its absence in China could well serve him as an explanation for its absence of liberty. Tocqueville disapproves of a religion such as Buddhism as an escape from any civic expression or duty. As a sociologist, he sees it (and Hinduism)¹³ as inculcating "epicurean" comfort and inaction rather than political commitment. No elevated or transcendent "aspirations," no salvation or even a Confucian sense of personal duty (which characterizes the Mandarins) elevates a Buddhist. Neither Hinduism nor Buddhism fuels his dynamism which the sociologist Max Weber later attributed to Christianity. Tocqueville is among the first to identify Christianity in a positive sociological manner. First as a theorist of democracy and then as a sociologist of religion.

III

Was Tocqueville unabashedly, if subliminally, Eurocentric? He certainly did not refrain from value judgments, unfavorable to non-European, non-Christian countries. His positive proposal that a non-European world could be changed by Europe is most blatant in the following letter to Henry Reeve, the English economist and a translator of his *Democracy*.

If I were English, I would not view the expedition that is being prepared against China without anxiety. In my capacity as a beneficent but disinterested spectator, I can only

¹² Tocqueville to N. W. Beckwith, September 7, 1858, in *Tocqueville on America after 1840*, 295; *The Frontiers of Democracy*, 111–132; Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905); *The Religion of China* (1915), *The Religion of India*, 1916–1917). Raymond Aron, *Currents in Sociological Thought* (1965); see chapters on Montesquieu and Tocqueville.

¹³ Goldstein, *passim*. I am indebted to a critique of Tocqueville's views in this passage by my colleague William R. Johnson.

rejoice in the thought of an invasion of the Celestial Empire by a European army. So at last the mobility of Europe has come to grips with Chinese immobility! It is a great event, especially if one thinks that it is only the continuation, the last in a multitude of events of the same nature of which are pushing the European race out of its home and are successively submitting all other races to its empire of its influence. Something more vast, more extraordinary than the establishment of Roman Empire is growing out of our times, without anyone noticing it; it is the enslavement of four parts of the world by the fifth. Therefore, let us not slander our century too much; the men are small, but events are great...."¹⁴

The Frenchman's colonial outlook already in his writings on Algeria anticipate the imperialism and *mission civilisatrice* of the next generation. His attitude in this letter endorses unambiguously the gunboat policy of Great Britain, whereby the British "opened" up its opium trade with China by force. Tocqueville eludes the drug issue and focuses on the benefits of civilization which he had invoked previously. To an even greater extent, however, he compares euphorically the worldwide expansion of European commerce to the great liberating expansion of the Roman empire, the Pax Romana, perhaps that empire had the best historical reputation. Such an "enslavement" is made more acceptable by this flattering classical analogy with what many historians regarded as the highest point of world civilization.

Tocqueville warns against slandering "our generation" for this enslavement which, contrary to its usual meaning, he views as liberation. Thus, he invokes the perennial justification of violating a country's sovereignty for its own good. Freedom and democracy were unquestionable benefits for the conquered as well as the conqueror.

This astounding letter shows that neither Tocqueville, nor many of his contemporaries, nor for that matter earlier French revolutionaries found conquest and altruism, occupation, and self-

¹⁴ Tocqueville to Henry Reeve, April 12, 1840, in James Toupin, trans., and Roger Boesche, ed., *Tocqueville, Selected Letters on Politics and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 141–142.

determination incompatible. The French revolutionary wars in the Rhineland, Belgium, and Italy were justified long before the age of imperialism, as *wars of liberty* and *requisitions*. Tocqueville would not have alluded to nor justified these precedents of the revolutionary maelstrom (1792–1815), but he continued to the end to support the “opening of China’s doors to the West” by the Great Occidental Powers by approving the Treaties of Tientsin in (1858).

These are not the first time these passages have been quoted, but they have not always been quoted in full nor have they been cited as characteristic of Tocqueville’s quest for liberty, but rather as embarrassing deviations or a “dark side” of that quest. But if we keep in mind the Roman Empire, as the extension of liberty via the Pax Romana, we obtain a different perspective. Freedom and civilization could still be kept on the horizon.

IV CONCLUSION

Tocqueville’s reputation lies in his unique aphoristic and paradoxical discernment of the essential traits of civilizations, even when bereft of direct knowledge. His prognostication of China’s future — that Western intervention would play a major role — was exact, if insensitive. He did not foresee the crumbling trauma of the Chinese imperial edifice in civil war, the foreign invasion and occupation or the emergence of a harsher more centralized regime. Cracking the ossified giant would answer his immediate desire to open China to Western influences, but these Western influences came as undisguised Western economic interests which provoked a titanic anti-imperialist reaction and to the opposite of what he desired — the crushing of liberty.

Following the civil war of the 1930s and 1940s, the victory of Mao Tse Tung’s CCP and the horrors of his cultural revolution, a calmer, less ideological, “capitalist” regime has emerged. Surfacing in this turmoil has been one surprising result: China’s discovery of Tocqueville from the Politburo of Xi Jinping down.¹⁵

¹⁵ What caught the attention of the Politburo were Tocqueville’s alarming paradoxes regarding triggers of a coming revolution which occurs after a period of general prosperity and rising expectations (that China was then experiencing) rather than after a period of economic decline; from discontent of the elites rather than of the “people”; and when a ruling

This inexplicable vogue seems like a dramatic ending to the story — too good to be true — especially since Tocqueville wrote so little and so disparagingly about China. One naturally asks what the Chinese could possibly find in his work, particularly since their choice of texts was *The Old Regime and Revolution* rather than *Democracy in America*. Perhaps readers were aware that China did not possess the pristine characteristics that had made democracy in America possible. On the other hand, China, like France, had been formed and scarred by centuries of centralization. From those millennia, France, rather than America, would be a more likely model for China.

The Politburo in Beijing itself in 2012 and 2013 recommended the public to read Tocqueville. Dozens of editions of *The Old Regime and Revolution* were printed and countless copies reportedly sold. Perhaps the vogue of Tocqueville's works in China can be explained as the antithesis to Mao and Marx, by the appreciation of freedom versus equality, the partial unraveling of the Maoist state, and a search for a new intellectual guide away from totalitarianism.

Tocqueville fits such a need because he understands the relationship between democracy and centralization, between an enduring “old regime” and a fledgling new regime, between faith in the little “red book” of Mao and a reasoned hope based on history. Perhaps a century of selfish Western aggression and the Marxist revenge against it were the necessary steps that had to occur before any hope of a Tocquevillian democracy could be entertained. But more certain than any immanent democratization of China is the survival of China's millennial centralization, a condition with which any future regime, including a democratic one, must come to terms.

cadre is unable to satisfy structural and other demands in a period of rapid growth such as China's economic upsurge after 2000. See Qinglian's [unofficial articles in translation], “China's Political Predicament”; Sheila Melvin, “The Great Flourishing: China's Cultural Rise, Tocqueville in China—The Communist Party Studies the Old Regime”; *An Arts Journal Blog*, March 9, 2012; Banyan, “The Old Regime and Revolution,” *The Economist*, March 16, 2013. Substantial essays on China, especially of the American Enterprise Institute's Tocqueville on China Project, see: James W. Caesar, “Why Tocqueville in China?” *AEI*, online, January 25, 2010; and “Tocqueville in Beijing, The Old Regime Fears a Revolution,” *Weekly Standard*, November 19, 2012; Cf. Elizabeth Pond, “The Popularity of Alexis de Tocqueville in the Middle Kingdom,” *World Policy Blog*, October 12, 2012; Tocqueville in China,” Nailene Chou West, “Tocqueville in China,” *Caixin*, online, September 14, 2012, which signals the crucial role of Vice Premier Wang Qishan in recommending ORR to the bureaucratic elites in China; and Rebecca Liao, “Tocqueville in China,” *Dissent Magazine*, May 22, 2013.

Developments since 2013, involving repressive restrictions, silencing and imprisonment of countless journalists and military officers, betray any serious interest in democratization by President Xi Jinping or Wang Qishan, the politburo chief of discipline. Their initial flirtation with Tocqueville's work, sold even in the party's bookstore, seems to have been more of a voyeuristic reading of tea leaves in *The Old Regime and Revolution* in order to avoid revolution rather than to encourage one. This common-sense conclusion has eluded much of the western press, which misjudged the situation with wishful thinking. China's future may well continue to make more concessions in one sector, such as the market, but perpetuate millennial centralization in its twentieth century form: one party rule.¹⁶

¹⁶ Sylvana Tomasselli of Cambridge University has perceptively noted that China's rising expectations and the coming revolution are not Tocqueville's principal message in ORR, "but the culmination of hundreds of years of centralization." *Financial Times*, May 16, 2013.

Chinese Art History Beyond the Modernist-Postmodernist Dialogue:
Tung Ch'i ch'ang and Immanuel Kant

Arthur Pontynen

Professor Jonathan Chaves has dedicated his career to the study of Chinese literature and art. What is remarkable is that he has done so without being limited by a modernist-postmodernist methodology, destructive of the very literature and art that he loves.

As a kindred spirit, I dedicate this essay to Professor Chaves. It discusses how a positivist and constructivist methodology is antagonistic to the pursuit of the Dao and Dharma, how that methodology develops not only in the West, but also in the East, and how that corrosive antagonism threatens all wisdom- and beauty-seeking cultures around the world.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, the Chinese scholar artist Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555–1636) struggled to resolve certain perennial, indeed cosmopolitan, issues in scholarship and art. He attempted to reconcile traditionalism with progressivism, intellectualism with emotionalism. As such, Tung has been recognized as a conservative-radical¹ artist and scholar.

The question of whether or not Tung succeeded in his conservative-radical task presents a variety of intellectual and emotional challenges to contemporary art history. For some art historians, the notion of conservative-radicalism, one that recognizes both traditionalism and progressivism, makes no sense. A vital traditionalism is necessarily dedicated to the pursuit of timeless ontological

¹ Wen Fong, *Images of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 164.

wisdom; a progressivist viewpoint is incapable of considering, much less obtaining glimpses of, ontological wisdom.

The gap between the traditionalist and the progressive has been a defining generalization for centuries of Western cultural and political practice. That gap, however, has been obscured by the very methodology that scholars commonly use in their attempt to understand culture and science. That methodology is positivist and constructivist; foundationally Kantian, it centers on producing facts and placing those facts within constructed and deconstructed narratives.

The shift from seeking truth (Dao or Dharma) to manufacturing facts and placing them into constructed and deconstructed narratives was explained in the West by the Baroque scholar, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744). That shift is one from Truth as Being, that is, truth as knowledge of the eternal essence of things, to Truth as made, that is, truth resulting from making accurate descriptions. *Factum* is that which is done, made, accomplished, and that which is *manufactured* is that which is manually done, made, accomplished. So the shift from truth to fact is a shift from truth found to facts — and fact-based narratives — made.

The point of this paper is to establish that the shift from seeking Truth or Dao to manufacturing fact-based narratives is tragically evidenced in both the West and East. That tragedy is no longer understood because of the methodology employed in our scholarship. A comparison of Immanuel Kant with Tung Ch'i-ch'ang is not only intellectually valid, it is methodologically vital. First, it is vital because the problem of reconciling truth with progress is a cosmopolitan and perennial concern. Second, it is vital to recognize that within a global context most cultural traditions have been dedicated to the pursuit of Truth. Therefore, to study all cultural traditions via a constructivist-deconstructivist methodology interferes with our ability to understand non-modernist-postmodernist cultures.

We cannot properly understand all cultural traditions around the world via a modernist-postmodernist viewpoint.² To do so is to treat all cultural traditions as trivial lifestyle choices or

² For our purposes, modernism refers to the Kantian paradigm in which facts are placed into narratives that conform to the structures of our minds; therefore, culture is comprised of meaningful fictions that coexist via tolerance and diversity. Postmodernism refers to those who view meaningful fictions as a trivialization of reality and life. Instead, they pursue authenticity based upon an immanent idealism (Hegel) and empiricism (Marx, Nietzsche, et al.).

lifestyle choices that are brutally absolute as modes of authenticity. It is to trivialize and brutalize the very notion of civilization.

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's response to the problem of reconciling tradition with progress might well cause discomfort to some contemporary readers. That discomfort is likely to be exacerbated by a disconcerting realization: Tung's ideas concerning art and art theory resonate with those of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). They are also essential to an understanding of the theory and practice of contemporary art history. To read Tung is to understand much of seventeenth century and later Chinese art and culture; to read Kant is to understand the foundation of the modernist tradition in the West. *To read both is to be struck by a sense of shared tragedy.*

Like Tung, Kant strove to escape a moribund traditionalism (scholasticism) on the one hand, and a (Humean) reduction of culture to sheer sentimental subjectivism on the other. To conclude that to read both is to be struck by a sense of shared tragedy will strike some contemporary scholars as inappropriate. Some will view a comparison of distinct meaningful fictions as tragic, to be nonsensical; others will view a comparison of distinct modes of authenticity as groundless. Nonetheless, such a comparison makes sense since both were seeking to solve the same cosmopolitan problem. The point of this paper is to establish that a comparison of Tung with Kant is not only intellectually valid — it is methodologically crucial for art history as a humanistic discipline with cultural importance.

As we shall see, there is a tragic internal contradiction not only in the theorizing of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, but in the very practice of modernist-postmodernist art and art history. Both Tung and Kant are intellectually and culturally liberal humanists, both believe in human dignity and freedom, and both attempt to transcend the tyranny of facts and the anarchy of sheer subjectivism. Their shared means of doing so is by a personal intuitive formalism. As such, they both replace the pursuit of beauty and wisdom with aesthetics³ and rational coherence. Chinese history suggests Tung's solution,

³ By aesthetic is meant sensation and emotional response; by beauty is meant the manifestation of truth and good. As noted in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 1790 (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 476: "If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but ... to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure." As noted by Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (New York: International

however noble in intention, is flawed.⁴ Postmodernism reveals the intrinsic inadequacies and contradictions of Kantian-based modernism. The common conclusion is thus: that an aesthetic intuitive formalism can lead only to a new type of tyranny and anarchy.⁵

It is not only the substance of Tung's and Kant's paradigm that fails. That aesthetic intuitive formalism affects our methodology as well. Modernist aesthetic intuitive formalism reduces truth and beauty to structures of the human mind; postmodernists reject any formalism as sterile and oppressive, preferring instead experiential events and authenticity.

To study Tung Ch'i-ch'ang via an aesthetic intuitive formalism is to focus on the construction of fact-based narratives devoid of Truth or Tao. To limit the study of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang to that particular scholarly paradigm is to affirm his intentions but to deny any pretense of academic authenticity or academic purpose. It is to embrace an indifference to either actual experience or actual truth. It is to affirm and thus destroy his point of view. That the philosophies of Tung and Kant logically lead us to do so is the tragedy inherent in their work and inherent in the methodology of contemporary art history.

Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's advice to glean from the past to create a vital and profound present teaches us something of contemporary scholarship and art. The essential point of this paper is that a

Universities Press, 1967), 5: "Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment. To enjoy aesthetically means to enjoy myself in a sensuous object diverse from myself, to empathise myself into it."

In contrast, see Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics* (The Hague: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1970–1974), vol. 1, 128, citing Plato: "All that is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful cannot lack proportion"; and vol. 2, 257, citing Aquinas: "Good is the object of desire ... beauty, on the other hand, is the object of cognitive power...." See also Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1947), 19–30, where beauty is defined as an analogous predicate. The Confucian position is presented in Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 31: "Set your will on the Way. Have a firm grasp on virtue. Rely on humanity. Find recreation in the arts."

⁴ James Cahill, *The Compelling Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 225.

⁵ For a discussion of modernity as cultural nominalism see: Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *Meaning and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 230–272. No doubt Derrida would scoff at Chu Hsi's advice in Wing-tsit Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967): "The student must devote himself to reality." Instead of setting our will upon the Way, Kant argues that the Way, the *ding an sich*, cannot be known, whereas the postmodernist equates the Way with experience. Notably, Augustine admonishes us not to confuse experience with truth.

contemplation of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's art and art theory reveals a flaw that is common not only in seventeenth century and later Chinese art and art theory, but in Kantian-based Western scholarship and art as well. That flaw is an intuitive-formalism, resulting in an empty yet coercive aestheticism.

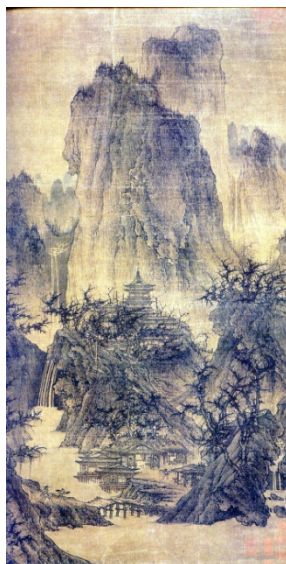


Figure 1. Li Ch'eng, *Buddhist Temple Amid Clearing Mountain Peaks*. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (Nelson Fund).



Figure 2. Wang Yuan-ch'i, *Landscape after Li Ch'eng*. National Palace Museum, Republic of China.

We begin with a contemplation of two Chinese landscape paintings, one (fig. 1) by Li Ch'eng (919–967?), dating to the Northern Sung dynasty (960–1126), the other (fig. 2) in the style of Li Ch'eng, by Wang Yuan-ch'i (1642–1715) of the Ch'ing (1644–1911). An initial glance suggests the rectitude of traditional assessments of Li Ch'eng's work and the spiritual harmony existing between that work and Wang Yuan-ch'i's painting. In both, there is an economy of brushwork in establishing a sense of structure, evoking a mood of lightness and intuitive spontaneity; there is a restrained sense of brushwork per se, and each presents a sense of clarity and completeness.⁶

But differences exist and they are significant. For Li that completeness was rational, naturalistic, indeed ontological. Li was praised for effortlessly presenting a spatial continuum in landscape without the laborious use of formalistic patterns devised to capture reality. In essence, Li Ch'eng's work may be characterized as cognitive and evidencing an ontological perfection. It is a concrete embodiment of the Tao. It is analogic in that form corresponds with content, and content corresponds with nature. In contrast, Wang Yuan-ch'i's painting appears far less a naturalistic window on reality. There is a schematic quality to the composition, a sense of limited motifs and spatial constructs. Wang Yuan-ch'i's work is non-cognitive (in the sense of not attempting to imitate nature), self-referential (it is about a formalistic view of nature, culture, and thought), and a perfection of a kind. There is a coherence to its form and content that refers not to the rational and real, but the rationalistic.⁷

We will return to that point later; for the moment it can be noted that each of these paintings, in its own fashion, is essentially rationalistic, each in its own way is positivist. But the crucial shift evidenced by these paintings (and by our scholarship today) is from an ontological paradigm seeking

⁶ This analysis relies upon Max Loehr, *The Great Painters of China* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), 102ff, 319ff.

⁷ In reference to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, Cahill, *The Compelling Image*, 37, notes: "[T]hese profoundly unnaturalistic works are largely divorced from real concern with either visual or metaphysical aspects of the sensible world and are best understood as aesthetic structures, bearing only a rarefied relationship to the physical structures and phenomena of nature. It was acceptable, by this time, to paint landscapes of which that can be said; it was not acceptable to acknowledge doing so, because even in an age when mind and not external nature was the ultimate reality, the older conception of nature as the embodiment of a normative order on which human society and conduct must be modeled still held too much authority to be rejected altogether."

to reveal Truth or Tao, to an epistemological focus seeking to evidence a rationalized coherence. That shift is fraught with consequences.

The sequence runs from cognition to non-cognition, from ontology to the deontological, from beauty to aesthetics, from harmony to violence. And a consequence of that shift is that the Baudrillardian notion that the map is not the territory. But if all maps, all narratives, fail to provide any profound objective insight concerning reality and life, then what is the purpose of the map, the scholarly narrative? Indeed, what is the purpose of culture? An essentially sociopathic specter looms large in the contemporary academic mind.

But that mind is not limited to a single perspective; the current debate concerning the scope and purpose of the discipline of art history might well be traversed vis à vis these landscape paintings, for they share with scholarship the notion of mapmaking, of narrative making. Indeed, the intrinsic historical purpose of humanist art and scholarship has been the attempt to reconcile the map with the territory while preserving human dignity and freedom.⁸

What type of landscape might our scholarly and artistic efforts pursue? What type of narrative of mapmaking might we seek? Surely, afflicting Li Ch'eng's painting with a contemporary bias that categorically denies its content, its claims to ontology or wisdom, is unscholarly if not unjust. But to simply discuss what such paintings meant via a historicist perspective, does just that. To reject such paintings' claim to perennial wisdom via a historicist-aesthetic paradigm is patently ideological and ahistorical. But how might we contemplate whether or not Li Ch'eng's artworks are indeed maps of the territory — humanity and its relationship to the Tao and nature?

Given that scholarly and painterly narratives are images of the mind,⁹ a concept traditionally assumed by Chinese scholar-painters, what type of landscape, or landscapes, are real and which false? What minds are lofty and free, and which vulgar and constricted? Which are in touch with reality, and which are not? These were the issues faced by the Chinese artists to be discussed below, and they remain as crucial issues faced by the fine and liberal arts today.

What then of this current attempt at mapmaking? Its purpose is two-fold: to explain the

⁸ Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 7, 2.

⁹ Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 3.

historical and theoretical content of two Chinese paintings, and to discuss how that explanation might help us resolve some of the vexing problems facing scholarship today. We will attempt to determine the historical content of these works and their perennial import. That task involves a comparison of the art theory of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang with that of Immanuel Kant, a discussion of whether that resonance is genuine, and whether those theories are true. It is a purpose in complete accordance with the intrinsic historical and theoretical content of these Confucian paintings: we are advised to purposefully review the old to find the new and that only those who do so are qualified to teach.¹⁰

“ALL RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE IS EITHER MATERIAL OR FORMAL.” —
IMMANUEL KANT¹¹

Indeed, a historical contemplation of the paintings by Li Ch'eng and Wang Yuan-ch'i, and the philosophies of Chu Hsi (1130–1200), Wang Yang-ming (1472–1529) and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, is to realize that their cultural dialogue forms a counterpoint with the development of the Kantian based modernist paradigm so common today. In the East and West, that dialogue proceeds from the analogical to the schematic with historicist and subjectivist interludes.

Just as Tung Ch'i-ch'ang is central to understanding alter Chinese cultural history, it is Kant who is pivotal in the development of Western modernism. Significantly, it is Kant who provides the foundation for the theory and practice of much of contemporary art and art history, permitting Heinrich Wölfflin's transformation of the practice of art history from a cultural analysis (as advocated by his teacher Jacob Burckhardt) to one modernist and eventually postmodern.

In his essay on the history of art as a humanistic discipline,¹² Erwin Panofsky speaks of certain virtues historically grouped under the rubric of liberal humanist. To be liberal is to embrace freedom; to be a humanist is to espouse tolerance, responsibility, and reason.

It is no coincidence that Panofsky's essay begins with an anecdotal reference to Immanuel

¹⁰ Chan, *A Source Book*, 23.

¹¹ Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), 253.

¹² See: Joan Hart, “Reinterpreting Wölfflin: Neo-Kantianism and Hermeneutics,” *Art Journal*, XLII, (1982): 292–300; Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 1ff.

Kant: in scholarship and in art, Kant provides the foundation for the modernist version of liberal humanism. Kant proposes that all knowledge is either material or formal¹³ and, on one hand, there are descriptive facts, while on the other, structures of meaning. To ensure freedom, one must separate fact from value, truth from good. To preserve individual responsibility and tolerance one must rationally and humanely contemplate meaning. There are both facts and meaning and the two shall meet within the humanistic and rational realm of personal conviction.

Modernist liberal humanism has attained the status of myth in that it is a widely-held collective belief; nevertheless, there are different ways to view any myth. We might accept a myth metaphorically, as symbolically containing the uncluttered essence of truth, of genuine ontological insight, or we might reject it as mere sociological or psychological fiction. And that choice of being faithful to or skeptical of modernist liberal humanism forms the crux of the central debate in contemporary scholarship and art.

For the faithful the presumptions of the modernist myth rely upon the notions of *genius* and the possibility of the *synthetic a priori*. The Kantian concept of genius declares itself to be the ability for producing that for which no definite rule can be given, possessed only by those who enjoy an exemplary originality of talent.¹⁴ The notion of the synthetic a priori is twofold: by synthetic is meant that we construct paradigms of meaning, and that those constructs are a priori, that is, not based upon experience.¹⁵ There are facts, like bricks, but how we select and arrange those bricks to build a structure is a matter of personal cognition.

According to the modernist myth, then, liberality is synonymous with personal conviction, and humanism is synonymous with a universalized rationalism. Following Kantian principles, personal conviction, when universalized, results in a liberal and humane culture. Consequently, following Kantian precepts, art is the product of personal genius, it is non-cognitive, self-referential, and a perfection of a kind.

¹³ Kant, *The Metaphysic of Morals*, 253.

¹⁴ Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 525ff.

¹⁵ Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), 14ff. For a discussion of the synthetic a priori see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1946–1965), 6:220ff.

Kant was faced with the dilemma of reconciling truth — that is, fact — with freedom and of preserving human dignity within a factual predictive context. So too was Tung Ch'i-ch'ang. Although Tung was operating in a Confucian culture that granted prominence to traditionalism and Kant operated in an empiricist culture that granted new prominence to manufactured empirical thought, each responded with an intuitive formalism. An intuitive formalism that relied upon sincerity to bridge the gap between truth or fact and good and would ensure human dignity and freedom. To attain their ends each relied upon the notions of genius and the synthetic a priori: that humanity can avoid the pitfalls of dogmatism and anarchy by an intuitive formulation of sense data. Thus creativity and wisdom might prevail.

THE CONFUCIAN SYNTHETIC A PRIORI

As cited above, the summation that art is non-cognitive, self-referential, and a perfection of a kind refers to the Kantian formula that provides the very foundation for the modernist-postmodernist dialogue: the genius-based synthetic a priori. And as noted above, it accurately refers to a Chinese painting by Wang Yuan-ch'i (fig. 2) from the Ch'ing dynasty. The implication is that beneath any differences in context and refinement, there exists a Confucian philosophical and artistic tradition that shares certain fundamental principles with the modernist tradition of the West.

Those principles assume that any narrative (e.g., art history), any map (e.g., landscape painting), is comprised of two disparate elements: the a posteriori (descriptive singular facts) and the a priori (rational structures). Those elements are intuitively synthesized.

For Tung Ch'i-ch'ang synthesis is central to fine art, a synthesis that concerns nature, culture, and art. As Wen Fong notes:

As a creative principle, Tung's art historical theory of a proper, orthodox stylistic lineage was synthetic rather than dogmatic.... Tung taught that all ancient styles must be reunited in a "Great Synthesis" (*ta-ch'eng*) in which the best of each artist's style could be plucked from history and integrated into works in which the whole exceeded

the sum of the parts.... Having gathered [all these styles] into a Great Synthesis, the painter may then come out with inventions of his own.¹⁶

That synthesis transcends the mere imitation of nature for a beneficent tension between nature and the mind:

The painter who models himself after ancient masters already belongs [in the Buddhist sense] to the Upper Vehicle. Advancing one more step, he must model himself after heaven and earth.... After he becomes familiar with nature, he will transmit the spirit [of the landscape]. To transmit the spirit there must be form. When the form, the mind, and the hand are in total accord, each forgetting the other's separate existence, then the spirit [of the landscape] will reside in a painting.¹⁷

And between nature and fine art:

If one thinks of strange scenery, then painting is not the equal of real landscape; but if one considers the wonders of brush and ink, then landscape can never equal painting.¹⁸

We see then that according to Tung's principle of synthesis (*ta-ch'eng*) the scholar-painter, freed from the constraints of representation, can produce landscape paintings that are projections of the images in his own mind.¹⁹ How then does one distinguish the lofty from the mundane? Wen Fong cogently sums up the solution Tung offered:

¹⁶ Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 170.

¹⁷ Ibid., 168.

¹⁸ Ibid., 167.

¹⁹ Ibid.

To the question “What if scholar-painters ‘hiding behind clouds and mist’ were simply bad amateurs?”... Tung intoned that every scholar-painter “must read ten thousand books and travel ten thousand miles.” A painter had to study not only ancient models, but also nature.²⁰

It is striking to compare these ideas with those of Kant. As with Tung Ch’i-ch’ang, synthesis is central to culture; Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790) is concerned with a synthesis of nature, ethics, and art. For example:

Now I willingly admit that the interest in the beautiful of art ... gives no evidence at all of a habit of mind attached to the morally good, or even inclined that way. But on the other hand, I do maintain that to take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature ... is always a mark of a good soul.... It must, however, be borne in mind that I mean to refer strictly to the beautiful forms of nature....²¹

And a beneficent tension between nature and the mind:

... universal laws of nature have their ground in our understanding, which prescribes them to nature.... The finality of nature is, therefore, a particular a priori concept which has its origin solely in the reflective judgement.²²

And nature and art:

The superiority which natural beauty has over that of art, even where it is excelled by the latter in point of form, in yet being alone able to awaken an immediate interest,

²⁰ Ibid., 168.

²¹ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 521.

²² Ibid., 522.

accords with the refined and well-grounded habits of thought of all men who have cultivated their moral feeling.²³

And how does one insure that loftiness of character and vision?

... the mind cannot reflect on the beauty of nature without at the same time finding its interest engaged. But this interest is akin to the moral. One, then, who takes such an interest in the beautiful in nature can only do so in so far as he has previously set his interest deep in the [a priori] foundations of the morally good.²⁴

But it was philosophical realism that provided the foundation for the historical dialogue present in the transition from the Sung artist Li Ch'eng to the late Ming scholar-artist, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang,²⁵ to the painting in the mode of Li Ch'eng by Wang Yuan-ch'i. And it was philosophical realism that provided the foundation for the work of Kant, which attempts to deny the pursuit of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty via his three critiques of pure reason, practical reason, and judgment. The difficulty is that in East or West, within the tradition of realism, the issue is not one of synthesizing the *a posteriori* with the *a priori*, but rather, of seeking knowledge *in re*. As we will see below, Tung Ch'i-ch'ang was as adamantly opposed to positivism and subjectivism as was his Western intellectual counterpart, Kant. But in attempting to transform philosophical realism into a liberating pluralism,

²³ Ibid., 522.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ As noted by Cahill, *The Compelling Image*, 37: "... the critical concepts and vocabulary applicable to a naturalistic art had atrophied after the Sung, and a force almost moral opposed their revival...[Tung's] profoundly unnaturalistic works are largely divorced from real concern with either visual or metaphysical aspects of the sensible world and are best understood as aesthetic structures, bearing only a rarified relationship to the physical structures and phenomena of nature. It was acceptable, by this time, to paint landscapes of which that can be said; it was not acceptable to acknowledge doing so, because even in an age when mind and not external nature was the ultimate reality, the older conception of nature as the embodiment of a normative order on which human society and conduct must be modeled still held too much authority to be rejected altogether."

they denied ontology (*in re*) and tragically laid the foundation for the transformation of realism into an idealist and eventually subjectivist ideology.

This becomes evident when one attempts to approach these works of art, as Tung Ch'i-ch'ang would, from a cognitive rather than merely aesthetic and antiquarian point of view — when one proceeds via the assumption that history is the pursuit of wisdom, rather than the pursuit of a historicist accumulation of nostalgic facts, or a subjectivist construction of coercive or meaningful fictions. It becomes clear when one asks a question now uncommon in certain circles of contemporary scholarship: “In the context of reality and life, are either of these paintings true?”

“IF A KU ISN'T A KU, IS IT A KU? IS IT?” — CONFUCIUS²⁶

It is possible that new information concerning these paintings, from the Sung and Ch'ing dynasties and their critical intercessor Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, could be gained by a further positivistic accumulation of descriptive facts. And there exists the possibility of reconsidering what these paintings might have meant. Determining when facts, or interpretations, become trivial is a real but contentious issue. Alternatively, there is ground to be gained by wondering if either of these paintings is true. By that is meant whether either of these paintings accurately explains the very nature of reality (Truth or Tao) and humanity's place in that context. We might seek new insight concerning what these paintings mean.

It is the rational pursuit of truth that informs the essence of Confucian culture and consequently of much of Chinese civilization. One painting that evidences this was introduced earlier. In the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, *Buddhist Temple Amid Clearing Mountain Peaks*, by Li Ch'eng (919–967) is an ontological tour de force. More than merely an aesthetic vision it presents in visual format an exposition of the principles of Neo-Confucianism, principles that purport to explain the very essence of reality and life.

The painting is an exquisite example of its type, exhibiting a variety of characteristic traits.

²⁶ See for example, Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, part 1, 170–176. The Confucian version of this idea is articulated by Chu Hsi: “In the universe there has never been any material force without principle or principle without material force.” Chan, *A Source Book*, 634.

The Chinese phrase *T'ien ren ho I* (literally “heaven-people-one”) sums up its content: there is a sense of order — of cosmos — permeating the scene, a sense of transcendent harmony between humanity and nature, idea, and matter.

The Confucian precept *Ku pu Ku, Ku-tsai, Ku-tsai* (literally, a *Ku* [a ceremonial vessel] that is not a *Ku*, is it a *Ku*? Is it a *Ku*?) is central to its ontological claims. Although Confucianism is primarily moralistic, with formal logic peripheral, the issue of the relationship of language with reality is unavoidable. Confucians accept the correspondence theory of truth that words, when true, correspond with an objective, singular reality. They also accept the notion that contradictions indicate falsehood. Essentially similar to the Aristotelian principle of contradiction,²⁷ Confucians agree that similars are united by the notion of identity, thus providing a basis for cognition, speech, and moral action. Confucianism also allows for a dual logic: passive and active. Passive logic is formal; whereas active logic is dialectical.

And it is a combination of formal and active logic, of cognition, that forms the very substance of this painting. Chapter six, section twenty-one of the *Lun-yu* (Analects of Confucius) explains not merely the form, but the very content of much of Chinese landscape painting: “The wise man delights in water, the Good man delights in mountains. For the wise move; but the Good stay still. The wise are happy; but the Good secure.”²⁸ Noted for his ability to reproduce recognizable landscapes, Li Cheng was more than a mere imitator, for an active rational and ontological process is inherent in his work. It is not only the forms that are reproduced, but an evocation of the very processes inherent to the living, natural landscape.²⁹

So there is more to this painting than logic, be it formal or active. It is ontological, and as such there is a moral content as well. Indeed, there is no distinction between cognition, morality, and beauty. Spiritually akin to works such as Raphael's *School of Athens*, it embodies the optimistic notion that the physical and moral universe is cognizable, correlate, and indeed beautiful. These ideas

²⁷ Ibid., 69.

²⁸ Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Random House, 1938), 120.

²⁹ Susan Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037–1101)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013) to *Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555–1636)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 60.

apparently transcend cultural perspectivism or mere human rationality, be it universal or not. They are cosmopolitan, found among philosophical realists in the East and West. In place of Raphael's *Plato and Aristotle*, both proponents of various modes of philosophical realism, Li Ch'eng participates in the Confucian variation of philosophical realism, including Han Yu (768–824), Chou Tun-I (1017–1073), Chu Hsi, and Wang Yang-ming.³⁰

Within the cosmopolitan tradition of philosophical realism in the East and West, a core set of ideas dominates discussion concerning the relationship of science, ethics, and art. Aristotle notes that fine art might be criticized if it is incompatible with reason, moral laws, and artistic laws.³¹ So does Chu Hsi.³² The intrinsic content of this painting by Li Ch'eng (and that by Raphael) is then the pursuit of wisdom, a pursuit marked neither by the constructing of mental fictions nor their deconstruction. It is inspired by the hope for some precious degree of success.

“THE SUPERIOR MAN IS BROADMINDED BUT NOT PARTISAN; THE INFERIOR MAN IS PARTISAN BUT NOT BROADMINDED.” — CONFUCIUS³³

That pursuit was altered by subsequent political and intellectual developments. On the one hand, a cultural alienation resulting from the Mongol conquest of China in the thirteenth century promoted a subjectivist and expressionistic art epitomized by Ni Tsan. It is during the Yuan period (1279–1367) that the notion of artistic genius, the solitary individual voice transcending cultural oppression, attains prominence.³⁴

³⁰ As discussed in James Cahill, “Confucian Elements in the Theory of Painting,” in Arthur Wright, ed., *The Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 115–140.

³¹ Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, 149.

³² Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, 63–67.

³³ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁴ Loehr, *Great Painters of China*, 231. The Kantian reliance upon genius is cited in *The Critique of Judgement*, 1790, 525ff. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), 98, addresses genius: “The basic error in what we have called the illusion of culture is the assumption that art is something to be done by

On the other hand, the re-establishment of native Chinese rule during the Ming period (1368–1644) provoked a traditionalist revivalism: a return to the past signaled a return to normalcy. Scholars and painters subsequently drew upon the Southern Sung school of artists, not so much for inspiration as for imitation.³⁵

These sequential political developments precipitated a later intellectual division within post-Yuan Neo-Confucianism. To the point, a significant portion of later Chinese history divides into two groups: those that attempt to revive Sung Neo-Confucianism, and those that pursue an idealist version of Confucian realism as epitomized by the philosophy of Wang Yang-ming.³⁶ Just as the rejection of the Aristotelian paradigm historically promotes new advocates of Platonism in the West, rejection of Chu Hsi results in a furthering of Wang Yang-ming.

And like the Glossators of the West, the revivalists transformed the philosophical into the literal, the perennial into an ossified historicism. It was that historicist, indeed mannerist, tendency that later scholar-artists such as Wang Yuan-ch'i rebelled against, specifically against the historicist-aestheticist Che school of painters with its transformed Ch'eng-Chu school philosophical basis.³⁷

It is worth noting that historicist art was accompanied by historicist art history. Ming scholarship is noted not only for its revivalism, but for its partisan contentiousness as well. As James Cahill notes:

Objectivity can be an ideal, and it seldom was in Ming writings on painting; what might have developed into attempts at straightforward accounts were instead presented as the bases for arguments. Ming writers, who seem to have been fond of

a special kind of man, and particularly that kind of man whom we call a genius. In direct opposition to this is the normal and humane view that art is simply the right way of making things ... in other words, not that the artist is a special kind of man, but that every man who is not a mere idler and parasite is necessarily some special kind of artist.... It is not the genius, but the man who can produce a masterpiece that matters."

³⁵ Sherman E. Lee, *Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson-Gallery-Atkins Museum*, Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), xxxv.

³⁶ See Chan, *A Source Book*, 654ff.

³⁷ Loehr, *The Great Painters of China*, 319.

sectarian disputes, were unwilling to separate “what really happened” from the factional issues or to present these issues without taking personal stands on them; and their tendentious or contentious mode of art history sets the tone for late Ming and subsequent discussions.³⁸

A primary dilemma exists then for the contemporary scholar studying the two Chinese paintings here discussed. To study them via a contemporary Western historicist-aestheticist paradigm is in essence to study them from a Ming perspective. To do so is to engage in a politicized methodology that denies these paintings their historical role in a specific cultural narrative. To study Sung and Ch'ing paintings from a Ming perspective is to make nonsense of them: they are neither historicist nor merely aesthetic.

“... TO DESTROY THE KU ... TO ACHIEVE ROUNDNESS ... [ONLY THEN TO CARVE] ROUNDNESS INTO A KU!” — TUNG CH'I-CH'ANG³⁹

In this context it is interesting to contrast the Nelson-Atkins Sung dynasty painting with the Ch'ing dynasty painting in the National Palace Museum. Introduced earlier, *Landscape after Li Ch'eng* by Wang Yuan-ch'i (1642–1715), might suggest by title alone a historicist imitation of landscape painting as practiced by a venerated master of the past. But in actuality, this painting specifically attempts to transcend mere imitation (be it historicist or positivist) and subjectivism, via an intuitive formalistic synthesis.

Wang Yuan-ch'i's painting focuses on capturing and synthesizing his work with the spirit, the genius, of Li Ch'eng. It follows the theoretical lead of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and relies on the philosophical foundation of Wang Yang-ming.⁴⁰ As noted above, it is Tung Ch'i-ch'ang who within this painting tradition attempts to maintain a Confucian respect for antiquity without falling prey to subjectivism

³⁸ James Cahill, *The Distant Mountains: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Dynasty, 1570–1644* (New York: Weatherhill, 1982), 7.

³⁹ Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 167.

⁴⁰ Cahill, *The Compelling Image*, 38.

or antiquarianism.⁴¹ Tung criticized these pitfalls, noting that previous attempts to reconcile the two had failed:

Hsia Kuei followed Li T'ang, further simplifying his style, creating what the sculptors call a pared-down sketch. His idea was to avoid the narrow path of tracing and imitating.... [Hsia Kuei] tried to destroy the [square] ku [ritual bronze beaker; i.e., an established method] in order to achieve a roundness [a less formal approach]; now [the Ming imitators of the Hsia Kuei idiom] are carving roundness back into a ku!⁴²

Tung complains then that tradition was contested by an innovative spontaneous intuitiveness, but that intuitiveness had been transformed into a specious new traditionalism. An institutionalized radicalism is inevitably a boring parody of itself. A historicist-aestheticism replaced genuine purpose in painting.⁴³ Indeed, Tung's complaint rings true in his time and our own: the pursuit of truth, good, and beauty increasingly has been denied; the map is not the territory, the ku is not a ku and the not ku has become the ku.

Tung deliberately advocated the abandonment of a historicist-aestheticist paradigm. How then does one teach the fine arts? Tung's solution is remarkably similar to Kant's: a genius-based synthesis that transcends mere tradition (the a posteriori) for the intuitive (a priori). Both advocate the pursuit of a synthetic a priori.

"THE ABSENCE OF FALSEHOOD IS CALLED SINCERITY." — CHU HSI⁴⁴

Central to Sung Confucianism is the notion that by studying things sincerity is ensured.⁴⁵ Ming historicism made a mockery of such alleged sincerity by its politicized scholarship and historicist and

⁴¹ Wen Fong, "Wang Hui, Wang Yuan-ch'i and We Li," in Roderick Whitfield, *In Pursuit of Antiquity* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1969), 177. Fong astutely notes the similarities between the late Ming period and our own.

⁴² Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 167.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, 25.

subjectivist art. Within the context of the visual arts, the Che school was subsequently cited as evidence that knowledge of the masters is an inadequate indicator of artistic competence. The education of the artist is an issue that goes beyond the study and the studio, for it addresses the issue of cultural education in general. How then does one nurture a civilized and lofty perspective?

It was during the late Ming that Wang Yang-ming argued that both knowledge and sincerity are necessary,⁴⁶ but in the reverse order from that of the Sung. Indeed, that reversal constituted a reification for Wang Yang-ming; he observed that Chu Hsi had himself changed the order of these elements in his study of the Confucian classic, the *Ta-hseuh* (The great learning). That text originally proposed that sincerity of the will is necessary for knowledge to occur. In a reformational mode, Wang Yang-ming concurred.

And so too concurs Kant. But in place of the Confucian concept of sincerity, Kant cites the idea of duty; it is duty that drives genius in the pursuit of the synthetic a priori.⁴⁷ The Kantian concept of genius declares itself to be the ability for producing that for which no definite rule can be given, possessed only by those who enjoy an exemplary originality of talent.⁴⁸ The notion of the synthetic a priori is twofold: by synthetic is meant that we construct paradigms of meaning, and that those constructs are a priori, that is, not based upon experience.⁴⁹ There are facts, like bricks, but how we select and arrange those bricks to build a structure is a matter of personal cognition, conviction, and duty.

⁴⁵ Chan, *A Source Book*, 86.

⁴⁶ Wang Yang-ming's preference for sincerity over knowledge is discussed in Chan, *A Source Book*, 655. The debate between Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming is reminiscent of the Christian debate concerning works versus faith, and the debate between modernists and postmodernists (Marxists, feminists, deconstructionists) concerning intentionality: the former affirming its importance as central to free and responsible action, the latter criticizing it as humanist fallacy or dogmatism. See Salim Kemal, *Kant and Fine Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 116, 283; John M Ellis, *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 13–14, 104; Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 48.

⁴⁷ Kant, *General Introduction to the Metaphysic of Morals*, 1785. See Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 6, 220ff, 317ff.

⁴⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 525.

⁴⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 14–17.

Kantian genius is not an aptitude for what can be learned or understood according to some rule, but rather is an intuitive, immediate event. It cannot be taught, but it can be nurtured. It is other than subjectivism or a mere imitation of nature; to unify subjectivism and nature, or freedom and truth, Kant declares that nature conforms to our understanding and prescribes the rule of composition through genius, not to science but to art. In other words, it is a genius-based formalism that permits both creativity and knowledge.⁵⁰

What then of Tung's advice concerning art? As noted above, Tung acknowledges that whereas painting is not the equal of real landscape, formalism establishes that landscape can never equal painting. Tung concurs that genius cannot be taught,⁵¹ and suggests that formalism is distinct from mere historicist imitation:

While copying or tracing [a style] is easy, spiritual communion [with an old master] is difficult to express.... When an ordinary painter copies and produces something that looks like any other copy, how can his work be passed on to future generations?⁵²

The desire to confront both history and nature, to pursue wisdom, forms the core of traditional ontological scholarship. Not so with Tung and Kant. Tragically, to ensure both freedom and dignity, Tung and Kant separate history and nature, art and reality.⁵³ Their synthesis leads to equating realism with a subjective idealism, as seen in the later Confucian followers of Wang Yang-ming.⁵⁴ In so doing, they embark on a path that leads to objectivity being subjectified, where all

⁵⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 467ff, 525.

⁵¹ Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, 181.

⁵² Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 168.

⁵³ Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 523; as noted above, Tung remarks that whereas painting may never equal real landscape, landscape can never equal painting.

⁵⁴ Chan, *A Source Book*, 655, 667.

narratives, all maps, are made, are synthetic, are made, not found.⁵⁵ Consequently, the pursuit of wisdom and beauty is replaced by a manufactured formalism, setting the stage for the merely willful.

Sincerity — of character or duty — is the key to the ethical and artistic visions of Tung and Kant. But sincerity is anathema to historicism and formalism, to the idea of willful or meaningful fictions.⁵⁶ Both Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming agree that, whatever their order, knowledge and sincerity go hand in hand. If the map does not attempt to inform one of the territory, then the map is false; if the map is false, then it lacks sincerity, and it ought not claim to be a map. Consequently, it is ironic and ultimately manipulative or nihilist. The dilemma facing contemporary scholarship is oddly similar to that of the late Ming China. Genius-based narratives (be they derived from Kant or from Tung) lead to (modernist or Ch'ing) formalism, formalism leads to solipsism and irony, irony leads to nihilism.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, 527: "Nature is no longer estimated as it appears like art, but rather in so far as it actually is art...."

⁵⁶ Kant objected to the notion that constructs are fictitious, citing rationality as objective. See: Kemal, *Kant and Fine Art*, 161ff. The Neo-Kantians would of course inform him otherwise. It is interesting to compare Wang Yang-ming's notion (Chan, *A Source Book*, 667): "The mind is principle. Is there any affair in the world outside of the mind? Is there any principle outside of the mind?" to Natorp's Neo-Kantian assertion (Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 7:363) that "both, namely thought and being, exist and have meaning only in their constant mutual relations to one another." The idea of meaningful fictions is central to Hans Vaihinger's *The Philosophy of As-if* (1911); another Neo-Kantian, Heinrich Rickert, suggests that the ideal of historiography is a [historicist] science of culture which depicts historical development in the light of the values recognized by different societies and cultures (Ibid., 365–367). One can only wonder if such ideas were the specific aim of Berenson's critique of modern German thought that has "... produced a nihilistic attitude towards the guidance of reason, and a contemptuous hostility towards everything that reason has done for us." See Bernard Berenson, *Aesthetics and History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 37.

⁵⁷ Nietzsche's equating the Apollonian with the Dionysian in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) devastates Kant's reliance upon genius and reason. Foucault's development of this idea is explained by John Rajchman in *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 17–18: "The thesis of a modernist sublime is what connects the formal or formalist nature of modernist art to the great figures of modernist contempt and condescension: the petit bourgeois consumer ... the inauthentic das Man ... the "neurotic" whose life is a long unsuccessful denial of his perversion, anxiety, rage, and death. Marx, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Freud are thus the heroic thinkers for this conception of modern experience.... In short, the modernist sublime articulates the Dionysian wisdom that the world of the inauthentic petit

Formalism relies upon sincerity, or duty, to ensure the integrity of the creative synthesis central to its process. But that sincerity which validates the synthesis sought is solipsistically negated by formalism. Formalism reduces rationality to a hollow or brutal willfulness. It implies a cosmopolitan pluralism, but in fact it legitimizes barbarism.

For example, Confucian synthesis is criticized as class-bound, tied to the oppressive scholar gentry class of Confucian culture; the *Ta-ch'eng* (Great synthesis) is deemed by some to be merely the expression of a particular social elite.⁵⁸ Similarly, Kantian synthesis is criticized as class-bound, but here those classes are empiricist based, the allegedly universal Categorical Imperative transformed or confronted by a variety of empirical groupings be they grounded in race, gender, economics, psychology, or ethnicity.

Indeed, the notions of genius and the synthetic a priori in the modernist myth are mocked as simply masks for power or of ignorance. There are a multitude of examples to offer: Nietzsche equating the Apollonian with the Dionysian, for example, and Wittgenstein aphoristically arguing that rather than genius it is psychology that describes what is observed.⁵⁹ Indeed, postmodernism argues upon various grounds that a genius-based formalism, the intuitive synthetic a priori, the inspired and systematic arrangement of painting or ideas or words, is in fact an exercise in social power. Someone selects particular bricks (or facts or works of art) and imposes particular structures (or narratives).

The old modernist formula, that artists make art and scholars nostalgically sort out and

bourgeois neurotic rests on a fundamental Nothingness which he must deny...." The irony of this stance is noted by Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism into Maximalism: American Art, 1966–1986* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1987), 4–5: "... the Modernist Period [was] assassinated by its own internal forces, the Fascism implicit to the self-service of totalitarian wills to power, wills often enough Socialist in origin. Small wonder the recent Left has embraced the intellectual despair of the Post Modern. How else could it integrate a grief generated by the very internal disparities and discrepancies of its very own position?... The grandest irony of all is that the continuity of the modernist dialect assumes as a given the continued prosperity of a middle class—a bourgeoisie—suppressed by Aristocratic or Proletarian absolutism. Yet neither of those latter classes recognize as art a production that does not expressly glorify them. By contrast, ... the bourgeoisie recognizes as art even those cultural manifestations that are severely critical of its perquisites...."

⁵⁸ Cahill, *The Compelling Image*, 39; Bush, *The Chinese Literati on Painting*, 180.

⁵⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 13e.

analyze what they make, is no longer plausible. The artist can no longer claim the impartiality of genius; the art historian can no longer claim the impartiality of historical positivism. We must select which objects are art, which are to be analyzed, and by what structure that analysis will proceed. A fact-based (de)constructivist paradigm of art historical and humanistic scholarship are thus ideologized and politicized. They are mere implements for power.

“SOME LATER CRITIC MAY INDEED ARGUE THAT ‘THERE IS NO TRUE TUNG CH’I-CH’ANG!’” — TUNG CH’I-CH’ANG⁶⁰

Would not Tung Ch’i-ch’ang be dismayed at being written off as an oriental male aristocratic hypocrite in his noble search for a way to combine freedom with truth? Would he not be astonished to discover that his interpretation of nature and history is categorically dismissed as merely misinterpretation; that his intentions are not only suspect, but judged irrelevant fictions?

Similarly, Wang Yuan-ch’i’s painting is tragically vulnerable to the charge of aesthetic and intellectual formalism, that for all its concern for human dignity and freedom, it is merely an expression of upper-class Chinese males. As such it is merely an example of cultural coercion or decadence. Its formalism is judged (as formalism never is by those practicing it) as marking the demise of any vital meaningful culture.⁶¹ A prescient critique of Ch’ing dynasty painting is offered by Cahill:

Wang Yuan-ch’i and Tao-chi, like Tung Ch’i-ch’ang before them, aimed at new states of wholeness — comprehensive systems of style supported by comprehensive theories. They painted and wrote as though offering models and counsel for painters who would follow them. But they were followed, not by the great new age of landscape painting that their systems might seem to have deserved, but by sharp decline.

⁶⁰ Fong, *Images of the Mind*, 174.

⁶¹ As Vernon Louis Parrington notes in *Main Currents in American Thought*, vol. 1 of *The Colonial Mind* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 99, formalism marks the end of sincerity.

We can never account fully for what did not happen in history, least of all, perhaps, in art history. But a partial explanation ... [might be that] theorizing in art, which takes a somewhat separate course from the creation of art, ... tends always toward transcendence, toward the adoption of strong, perhaps extreme positions. It can push painters into curious corners and impasses.

A final pairing of Wang Yuan-ch'i's and Tao-chi's pictures [evidences a contrast] between a painting heavily dependent on schemata and references to tradition and another that was, for the Chinese, unacceptably free of them. We have reached an end without reaching a resolution.⁶²

“ONE MUST REVIEW THE OLD TO FIND THE NEW.” — CONFUCIUS⁶³

Having reached the end of this paper, what might we resolve? There are differences in sequence and context, but insight remains. Although Tung Ch'i-ch'ang operated within a Confucian culture, and Kant within an empiricist one, both argue for an intuitive formalism. Their purpose is uniformly noble: to preserve human dignity and freedom. In contesting a humanistic positivism (the Cheng-chu revivalists) and subjectivism, Tung rejects a singular call to return to the past (fu-ku), Back to Sung!,⁶⁴ only to be posthumously condemned by a formalism judged coercive and elitist. In contesting an empiricist positivism and subjectivism (particularly Hume and Newton), Kant attempts to reject the anarchy of subjectivism and the tyranny of fact-based science, only to be posthumously confounded by the Neo-Kantian call to return to the past, Back to Kant!,⁶⁵ a call that offers no effective response to the postmodern rejection of Kant's willfully rationalistic meaningful fictions.

In East or West, the synthetic a priori transforms science, ethics, and art from the pursuit of Beauty (that which is true and good) to an aesthetic formalism. That is the tragedy of Tung and Kant:

⁶² Cahill, *The Compelling Image*, 225.

⁶³ Chan, *A Source Book*, 23: “Confucius said, ‘A man who reviews the old so as to find out the new is qualified to teach others.’”

⁶⁴ Wai-kam Ho, “Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's New Orthodoxy,” 119–122.

⁶⁵ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 7:361.

each attempts to defend freedom and dignity, but a rationalized formalism contradicts both sincerity and wisdom. It makes a mockery of the former and politicizes the latter. The conflict between Tung and his Ming antagonists is strikingly similar to contemporary debates concerning the nature of art and scholarship. Indeed, intentions notwithstanding, for historicists and formalists, narratives can only produce nostalgic or coercive assertions, where the issue of ontological quality is singularly ignored.

Art and scholarship, indeed knowledge and experience, are thus equated not with excellence but coherence, not with wisdom but with power. Consequently, the notion that any narrative, any public activity, can provide elevating and liberating ontological insight is judged vulgar, unseemly, and, at the very least, bad form.

But is it bad form to be a liberal and a humanist, but neither a subjectivist nor an ideologue; to value both freedom and the pursuit of a lofty cosmopolitan society that transcends willful coercion grounded in the individual, the group, or assertions of genius? We can embrace the modernist notion of tolerance and the postmodernist notion of authenticity, but then the notion of quality is denied in art and life. The insignificant becomes manneristically significant, a lofty and rewarding public existence is thwarted, and the words *truth*, *good*, and *beauty* are replaced by *fact* and *power*.

It is to the point to quote Bernard Berenson on these matters:

Until a few decades ago nobody questioned that events of every nature had qualities attached to them as definite as to things to eat or drink or smell. It was admitted that what was one man's meat might be another man's poison.... But it is something new in the world that value, choice, preference, no matter how freakish and how perverse, should be excluded altogether. Not only is value to be tabooed in questions of art but in questions of history and even life itself.

Thus, I have heard of an Italian nobleman in the best of society, who could not understand why there should be such an outcry over the treatment of Jews in Naziland and none over the forcible feeding of geese in Strasburg. And I once knew a lady who doubted our right to destroy noxious animals, including microbes, and regarded our clamors for help in the war against them as impertinent, and our claim

for sympathy as impudent.

Behind this [modernist-postmodernist] attitude there is, no doubt, the uncomfortable feeling that every entity has the right to exist on its own account, regardless of its effect upon other entities, and furthermore that there is good in things most evil, and beauty in shapes most ugly.

No doubt in a universe of everlasting ecstasy each entity would realize itself completely without interfering with any other entity. Its intrinsic qualities would be allowed full play and never at the expense of others. No meanest being would be called upon to wither that others might flourish, to die that others might live.

But strict economy must be practiced by us if we are to find shelter yet a while in the exquisitely contrived House of Life that we have been constructing in the course of millenniums.⁶⁶

“IT IS GOODNESS THAT GIVES TO A NEIGHBORHOOD ITS BEAUTY. ONE WHO IS FREE TO CHOOSE, YET DOES NOT PREFER TO DWELL AMONG THE GOOD — HOW CAN HE BE ACCORDED THE NAME OF WISE?” — CONFUCIUS⁶⁷

The very notion of constructing a lofty House of Life is considered, at least by modernists engaging in a subjective formalism, as somehow too fictitious, too restrictive, to be pursued with passion. Is not a House of Life at best a meaningful fiction, at worst merely nonsense on stilts? For postmodernists, a House of Life is grounded in authenticity; if it is our house it is liberating, if it is your house then it is oppressive. Is not the pursuit of the good life best replaced by the pursuit of a variety of lifestyles, or our variety, or none at all?

What results is a singular conformity. A conformity to the principle that all narratives are meaningful fictions, be they rationalized or experienced. Therefore all culture is either trivial, absolute, or oppressive. The correspondence theory of truth, of art, is superseded by the coherence theory: we

⁶⁶ Berenson, *Aesthetics and History*, 47–48.

⁶⁷ Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, 102.

cease to discuss art or beauty or truth, but rather, theories of art, theories of beauty, theories of truth. The issue is not what art, what narrative, what map provides some slight hope for genuine insight about reality and life, but rather, how it is constructed, how it is consistent, and how it is essential to maintaining or destroying our identity. Whereas the modernist scholar and artist once embraced a high moral purpose — to nobly wrest freedom, responsibility, and tolerance from the grip of life's vicissitudes — the debate has tragically shifted to a postmodernism devoid of and antagonistic to qualitative contemplations.

It is the contention of this paper that today's challenge to art history, indeed, to the humanities at large, is strikingly similar to that faced by Tung: one of obtaining a narrative that is neither merely historicist nor aesthetic. The ontological approach of Li Ch'eng is unabashedly realist; it is analogic and analytic; and it offers a lofty vision of humanity and its place in nature. But it is vulnerable to the charge of coercive imitation: that by conforming to an objective but singular and primarily deductive vision of reality, humanity is denied freedom and hence dignity. The epistemological approach of Wang Yuan-ch'i is schematic and synthetic: it celebrates the freedom associated with synthesis. But it is vulnerable to the charge of sheer aestheticism, that by conforming to the synthetic notion that all narratives are willful or coercive, humanity is denied distinctions of quality and hence dignity. In each case, volitional and purposive or teleological action is denied⁶⁸ and our House of Life becomes either a banal triviality or a prison. But perhaps we can return to an *in re* pursuit of the good life. Instead of assuming the manufacturing of scholarly narratives, we might consider a cosmopolitan pursuit of wisdom. To pursue a humanistic ontological rationalism in scholarship and art, we need merely to accept that our scholarship, and our art, has the purpose of seeking Truth. That we live in a realm of becoming, often sordid and violent, but there is a realm of Being, call it Truth, Logos, Tao, or Dharma. There is an ideal to pursue and to some precious degree a realm of meaningful completion. We might affirm a cosmopolitan ontology while recognizing, indeed affirming, a variety of narratives in scholarship and life. Our historical narratives might be based upon the notions of life being a qualitative context between two cosmopolitan rather than empiricist

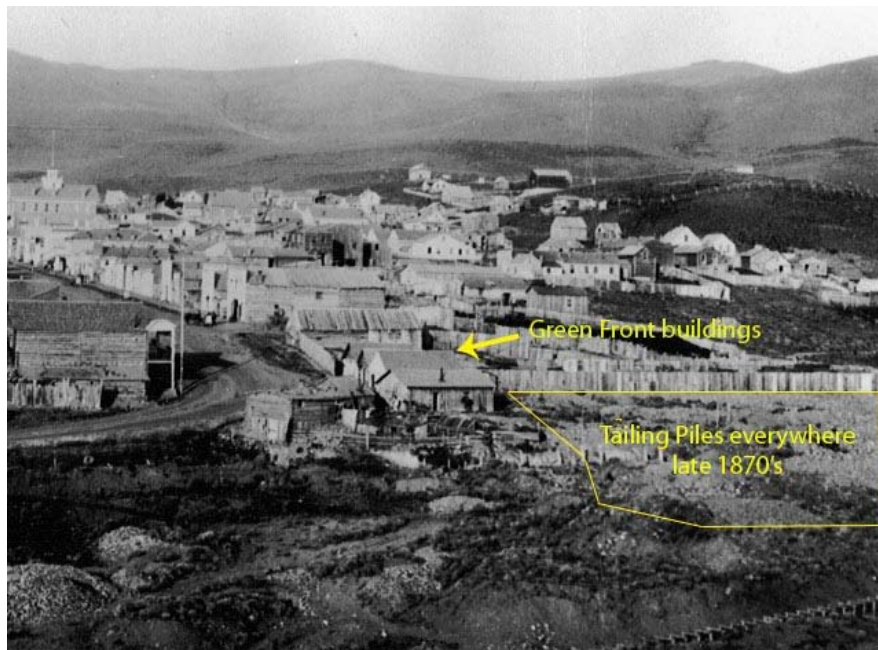
⁶⁸ Kant's teleological claims are rational and idealist—but not ontological. They are grounded in the human mind. See Kemal, *Kant and Fine Art*, 140ff. Should the synthetic a priori prove false (as suggested by Frederick Copleston) then so too Kant's teleological claims.

groups: the wise and the less wise, or occasionally, the foolish. That degrees of wisdom are obtainable; that absolutist thought, be it subjectivist or dogmatic, need not prevail.

Art history and studio might more loftily engage in a cosmopolitan (*in re*) pursuit of freedom (synthesis) and quality (analysis). Indeed, by recognizing that scholarship and art operate in the context of life, and as such are driven not just by coherence but also by excellence, the pursuit of a culture both liberal and humane becomes real. Panofsky cites reason, responsibility, freedom, and tolerance as the perennial ideals of liberal humanism. In East or West, the genius-based synthetic *a priori* reduces reason and responsibility to mere willful assertion. Berenson's admonition that we maintain our House of Life is trivialized by our embracing freedom and tolerance alone. But by replacing genius and willfulness with those forgotten liberal humanist values, reason and responsibility, then the discursive ideals of liberal humanism will be restored. Relieved of the authoritarianism of genius, the burden of ideology, and the coercive banality of rationalized or experienced meaningful fictions, scholarship and art might contemplate anew the good life.

The Vanished Chinese Community of Virginia City, Montana

Philip F. Williams¹



Nineteenth-century photo of the town of Virginia City.

¹ The author, a professor of East Asian literature and culture at Montana State University, would like to thank Hua Li, Kathleen McCourt, Timothy Minton, Susan Ren, and an anonymous proponent of local cultural history for their assistance with this research project.

INTRODUCTION

Although the scholarly writings of Jonathan Chaves deal mostly with Chinese poetry, he has occasionally written about controversies in the United States. In one such essay, Chaves offers a succinct and devastating critique of Edward Said's dramatic claim "that Western scholarship on Asia has merely served as the handmaiden of imperialism and colonialism" and shows disdain for Asian cultures and peoples; Chaves cites numerous counterexamples such as the great nineteenth-century scholarly pioneers Max Müller (1823–1900) and James Legge (1815–1897).² It was also during the second half of the nineteenth century when the first truly large-scale migration of East Asians to the Americas and other parts of the West began. Successive waves of migration from Asia to the West naturally encountered setbacks such as nativist resistance and exclusionary legislation from time to time, but the overall upward trend has proven that the West can accommodate the East rather than merely dominate or colonize it; the majority of U.S.-based scholars of Asian studies have been of Asian ethnicity for many years already. What is less well known, however, is the importance of nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants to the development of the mining frontier in rural regions of the Rocky Mountain West such as Montana.

² Jonathan Chaves, "When West Meets East," *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* 19.9 (September 1995): 13-16, esp. 15. This article takes issues with Said's incendiary portrayal of Western scholars of Asian culture as nothing more than the intellectual wing of Western imperialism, as luridly sketched in Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).



Virginia City's two-story Chinese temple (ca. 1870–1940).

The only Chinese face you might occasionally see in Montana's former territorial capital of Virginia City during the early twenty-first century would be that of a tourist. Yet the western side of this Madison County town and its mining operations nearby teemed with Chinese residents during much of the late nineteenth century. Virginia City's two-story Chinese temple was one of the town's most prominent buildings, and 272 of the town's 867 residents consisted of Chinese at the time of the tabulation of the 1870 census — roughly one-third of the town's total population.³ Yet since this temple and virtually all of the shacks that once housed the town's Chinese residents have been torn down, little remains to testify to the formerly thriving Chinese presence here except for old black-and-

³ Larry Barsness, *Gold Camp: Alder Gulch and Virginia City, Montana* (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1962), 239 and 296.

white photographs and a variety of unearthed archaeological artifacts such as opium pipes and Chinese crockery.⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the frontier-era shops and homes of the majority population of European descent in Virginia City, which have been preserved so well as to make this one of the Rocky Mountain mining frontier's most authentic assemblages of late nineteenth-century frontier architecture, furnishings, and related artifacts.⁵

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY MIGRATIONS FROM SOUTHEAST CHINA TO THE AMERICAN WEST

To understand Virginia City's sudden influx of Chinese residents beginning from the 1860s and its more gradual but equally thoroughgoing loss of those Chinese residents during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is helpful to examine the historical and cultural background of Chinese migration to the American West during the nineteenth century.

Along with the "pull" factors that beckoned immigrants from most regions in the world to the United States, there were many "push" factors that pressured untold thousands of young and middle-aged Chinese men to leave southeastern China (mainly Guangdong Province in the general vicinity of Hong Kong) throughout most of the nineteenth century.⁶ China's population had swollen to a world-leading total of 360 million by 1800, giving rise to labor surpluses and ever tinier plots of farmland for the eighty-five to ninety percent of the Chinese populace who lived in rural areas.⁷ Inter-ethnic

⁴ The Chinese temple was torn down in the late 1930s to straighten out what formerly was a sharp curve in State Highway 287 near the west end of Wallace Street, according to Kathleen M. McCourt, "Green Front Buildings (V094 & V095): A Cultural Resource Survey of Virginia City, Montana" (Virginia City: Montana State Historic Preservation Office and Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission, 2011), 3.

⁵ Similarly, some historical documents from Virginia City's gold rush era do not even mention Virginia City's sizable Chinese population, such as the diary of the transient shopkeeper James K.P. Miller (1845–1891), who lived there from June 1865 until May 1867. See Andrew F. Rolle, *The Road to Virginia City: The Diary of James Knox Polk Miller* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960).

⁶ Although some southeastern Chinese women also emigrated during these decades, the overwhelming majority of economic sojourners and migrants from this region were men.

⁷ F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 906.

conflicts over scarce land and water resources between the long-established Cantonese or Punti residents and the aggrieved minority of Hakka or “guest people” from the north commonly became violent in Guangdong province and elsewhere in southeastern China, culminating in the calamitous Taiping Uprising (1850–1864). This decade-and-a-half civil war came close to toppling the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and devastated huge swaths of southern and eastern China, leaving at least twenty million dead in its wake; it was the top “push” factor leading to the exodus of an estimated 300,000 southeastern Chinese migrants to the Americas between 1850 and 1875.⁸ Furthermore, most of the onerous reparations that the British levied on China’s Qing dynasty in the wake of their victories in the first Sino-British War of 1839–1842 were extracted from Guangdong province alone, thereby leading to higher taxes that squeezed the populace economically. Finally, Guangdong had long been China’s top province for producing economic sojourners and other emigrants to ethnic Chinese communities throughout Southeast Asia, so there was already a propensity for Cantonese to show little hesitation to emigrate in the face of sufficiently compelling push factors at home.

“Pull” factors for Chinese migration to the Americas were accelerating around the same time as the push factors outlined above, and in fact also predate the “push” factors. By as early as the late sixteenth century, the Western Hemisphere was becoming associated with New World silver and other riches in the minds of southeastern Chinese traders in the Spanish colonial port of Manila; these mostly Fujianese and Cantonese merchants traded their cargos of silk and porcelain for the Mexican and Peruvian silver that the Spanish galleon trade brought regularly from Acapulco, Mexico, to Manila, Philippines.⁹ Moreover, the 1848 discovery of gold in California sparked a rush of migration from southeastern China to the U.S. West, while subsequent gold rushes throughout the Rocky Mountain mining frontier brought crowds of Chinese sojourners to mining boom towns in sparsely populated territories marked by labor shortages such as Idaho and Montana.

As the enslavement of Africans and others was gradually abolished during the nineteenth century — for example, in 1833 by the British Empire and in 1863–1865 by the United States — New

⁸ Theopolis Fair, “Asia and Latin America in the Context of World History,” in *Asia in Western and World History*, ed. Ainslie T. Embree and Carol Gluck (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 782–797, esp. 790.

⁹ Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), 25.

World shortages of manual labor grew ever more acute and increasingly resulted in the active recruitment of coolie laborers from places like India and southeastern China to fill the gap. Coolie laborers who could not afford to pay for ocean passage from Asia to the Americas were often persuaded to sign contracts to work as indentured laborers for a set period of time overseas in lieu of paying for a boat ticket: this was known as the “credit-ticket” system.¹⁰ Moreover, coolies were often lured by recruiters’ hyped handbills about the abundant riches to be had practically for the taking in the “Gold Mountains” of the western United States.¹¹ To be sure, average wages and other earnings tended to be significantly higher in the United States than in China back then, and successful Cantonese sojourners in the United States who later returned to China with stories of windfall earnings there tended to inspire even more job-related migration to the United States by ambitious hometown lads.

THE “COMPANY” AS A COMMON GROUPING OR NETWORK OF CHINESE MIGRANTS WORKING OVERSEAS

Most nineteenth-century southeastern Chinese migrants to the West were sojourners who hoped to build up their overseas earnings for a number of years before eventually returning to China; few set out with the idea of settling down permanently overseas as immigrants. Although some of these Cantonese migrants to the United States were on their own at least initially, the more typical pattern was a type of networked or “chain” migration in which migrants would group together based on native-place or hometown ties, and would already have made arrangements for their group to be met upon arrival overseas by a fellow provincial who had already settled down in the receiving locale. In this way, new migrants would already have a support network of fellow provincials who spoke their same dialect of Chinese waiting for them overseas to help arrange matters such as housing, transportation, and employment opportunities.

¹⁰ Philip A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 212–213.

¹¹ The most common port of entry into the United States for nineteenth-century Chinese migrants, San Francisco, was and still is called Jiu Jinshan or “Old Gold Mountain.”

The chief institution for organizing a group of migrant Chinese workers overseas was known as a *gongsi* or “company,” which was also crucial for organizing southeastern Chinese migrants throughout Chinatowns and various Chinese-dominated worksites in Southeast Asia from at least the 1700s. Far from amounting merely to a business entity attached to work site, a “company” of southeastern Chinese migrant workers also shared the functions of a native-place association that provided mutual aid and a sense of identity, a labor cooperative that negotiated remuneration and working conditions, and a mini-government whose headman negotiated the settlement of internal disputes as well as managing relations with the non-Chinese majority authorities.¹² Deciding an issue by group consensus was usually preferred, though a given Chinese company’s headman would routinely make an executive decision on the basis of group consultation if no consensus could readily be achieved.

A Chinese company of this sort would sometimes be referred to as a “Tong” due to this word’s meaning of a “meeting hall” where the company would generally gather for a group consultation or discussion. Hence the so-called “Tong Wars” that broke out now and then in Montana’s mining towns such as Virginia City and Butte during the latter half of the nineteenth century were typically fought between companies of the abovementioned sort. More specifics about such “Tong Wars” such as the so-called “China War” in Virginia City during 1881 will be discussed later in this article.

EARLY CHINESE MIGRATION EAST AND NORTH OF THE CALIFORNIAN FORTY-NINERS’ GOLD MINES

From the beginning of Chinese gold prospecting in the western United States around 1850, a common technique was placer mining, in which sluice boxes were used to gather surface gold from gulches and streambeds in promising regions such as California’s Sierra Nevada foothills. After American miners collected the easily panned gold from a given streambed and then abandoned it for richer pickings elsewhere, Chinese miners would frequently set up their sluice boxes and mine the remaining gold from the Americans’ tailings and less readily accessible portions of the streambed or gulch.

¹² Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, 37.

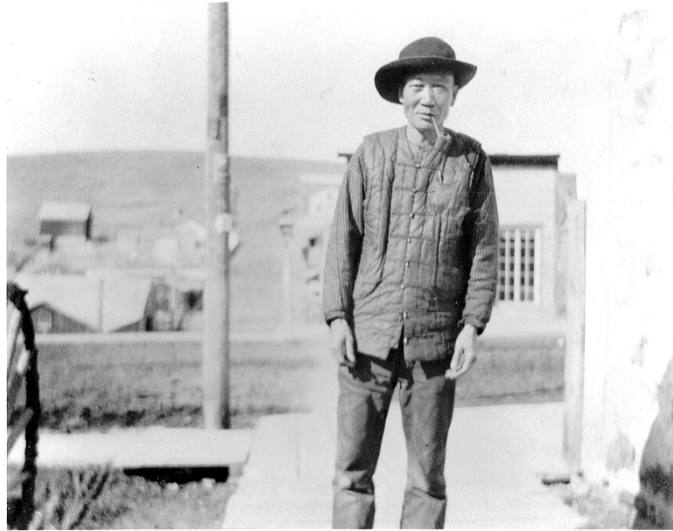
Between 1850 and 1855, California's Chinese population skyrocketed from 660 to around 20,000, and reached 34,933 Chinese out of California's total population of 380,000 in the 1860 census.¹³ While the Chinese in California usually earned less than their Euro-American counterparts, it was still far more lucrative than what they would have earned back in Guangdong, which explains the rapid increase in their numbers in the American West. Although three-quarters of California's Chinese at that time lived in counties whose main occupation was mining, many of them branched into service trades as cooks, laundry workers, or shopkeepers — a pattern that would persist in the Rocky Mountain mining frontier of Montana such as Virginia City.

As the pickings in California's gold mines grew slimmer in the mid- to late-1850s, Chinese migrants rapidly followed other gold rushes as far north as Canadian Victoria, where they established a community called Little Canton in 1858.¹⁴ A gold rush in southwestern Oregon during 1857 also drew many Chinese migrants, as did a similar gold rush in Dayton, Nevada, during the following year, in which a Chinese miner could collect an average of one ounce of gold per day of work — roughly sixteen dollars' worth, a lucrative sum at that time.¹⁵ The subsequent discovery of silver in the Comstock Lode of Virginia City, Nevada, in 1859 also attracted numerous Chinese miners further inland.

¹³ Liping Zhu, *A Chinaman's Chance: The Chinese on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997), 26.

¹⁴ Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, 55.

¹⁵ Zhu, *A Chinaman's Chance*, 27.



Chinese workingman, Virginia City.

The first group of Cantonese miners to strike pay dirt on the Rocky Mountain mining frontier journeyed to what was then the Washington Territory's Boise Basin (now in Idaho) from California in 1856. However, these Cantonese kept their placer mining success in streambeds there a closely guarded secret — that is, until the last living member of that party, Wong Ying (b. 1837), recounted their success some seventy-five years later in a 1931 article from the *Idaho Daily Statesman*.¹⁶

Wong Ying's lucrative gold prospecting in Idaho occurred just four years after the first recorded discovery of gold in what is now Montana, namely by the trapper François Finlay in 1852 at Gold Creek west of the Continental Divide.¹⁷ Yet the first genuine gold rush in what is now Montana had to wait another ten years, when in July 1862 the prospector John White struck gold where Grasshopper Creek flows into the Beaverhead River. The town of 300 residents that quickly sprang up along the banks of those streams was christened Bannack, after the name of a local Native American tribe.¹⁸ In May 1864, Bannack became the first territorial capital of the newly incorporated Montana

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Dick Pace, *Golden Gulch: The Story of Montana's Famous Alder Gulch* (Virginia City, MT: n.p., 1962), 5, 41. François Finlay was better known by his pseudonym of Benetsee. The Gold Creek area was at that time still part of Washington Territory.

¹⁸ Ibid., 6, 41. Though now a ghost town within Montana's Bannack State Park, Bannack grew to accommodate approximately a thousand residents by July 1863, one year after its founding. At the time of its founding, Bannack was still

Territory. Yet by the autumn of 1865, Bannack lost that distinction to Virginia City, the new territorial capital whose gold placer mining along Alder Gulch was already outproducing Bannack's mines within a year of the discovery of gold there in May 1863. The acting governor of Montana Territory, Thomas Meagher, "put the territorial government in his saddlebags and moved to Virginia City" from Bannack in September 1865.¹⁹ Even by the previous year, there were already eyewitness reports and photos of Chinese residing on the west side of Virginia City.²⁰ During roughly half a century following the end of the Civil War, Chinese residents of Virginia City would contribute to both the economic productivity and the cultural efflorescence of the mining town that quickly emerged to become Montana's second territorial capital — and which has remained the county seat of Madison County to this day.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHINESE ENTERPRISE AND CHINESE COMMUNITY IN VIRGINIA CITY

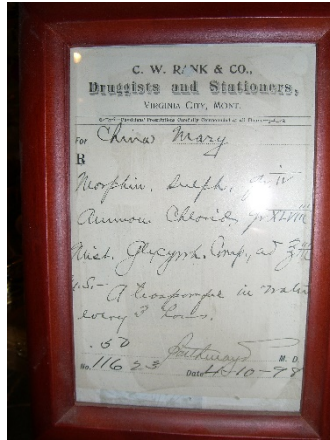
Placer gold mining was the initial magnet for most of the Chinese residents of Virginia City and other towns built amidst the hilly terrain on both sides of Alder Gulch in Madison County, Montana. Within two years after the initial discovery of gold in Alder Gulch during May 1863, Chinese settlers had already become a commonplace on Virginia City's streets, especially in its Chinatown neighborhood along Main Street at the western edge of town. Lower in elevation and closer to Alder Gulch than the rest of the town, Chinatown was relatively odiferous due to the sewage and other effluent trickling downward from more elevated portions of town. A Virginia City ordinance required that all of its

part of Dakota Territory. Although Laura J. Arata has claimed that some Chinese gold miners "spent time" in Bannack at some point during its early history, no specifics such as names or archaeological evidence appear to have been uncovered thus far to back up this claim; see her article, "Beyond the 'Mongolian Muddle': Reconsidering Virginia City, Montana's China War of 1881," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 62.1 (Spring 2012): 23–35, 90–93, esp. 24–25.

¹⁹ Ibid., 45.

²⁰ For instance, a photograph of a Chinese miner standing near the intersection of Jackson Street and Wallace Street at the eastern end of Virginia City's Chinatown has been dated to 1864 in Evalyn B. Johnson, *Images of America: Virginia City* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 32. Moreover, local Chinese residents were mentioned in excerpts from an 1865 diary by a young Virginia City denizen named Isaac Rogers, as noted in Barsness, *Gold Camp*, 20.

Chinese inhabitants reside within Chinatown. As many as six hundred Chinese residents crowded the log cabins that had sprung up in this area, replacing the tents and lean-tos that housed the earliest prospectors and shopkeepers in town.²¹



White druggist's 1898 prescription for "China Mary."

The most rapid influx of Chinese residents into the area occurred around 1868, when many Euro-American placer miners forsook Virginia City's partially played-out gold mines in search of richer claims elsewhere in the region. Chinese companies or work gangs bought or leased these previously worked claims, assiduously sluicing all the old tailings as well as any other land at their disposal in order to squeeze what seemed like every last bit of gold dust out of the locale's sand, clay, and rocks. Trotting along behind their wheelbarrows while moving immense amounts of earth one barrowful at a time, they were so thorough that no Chinese claim was considered worth mining again.²² The only exceptions to this rule were the new steam-powered dredges such as those introduced to Alder Gulch by the German Bar Placer Mining Company in 1896–1897 and by the

²¹ See Johnson, *Images of America: Virginia City*, 30; and Muriel S. Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt: A Guide to the Mining Camps of the Treasure State* (Athens, OH: Sage Books, Ohio University Press, 1963), 38.

²² Wiley S. Davis (1886–1980), "Chinese in Virginia City, Montana, 1863–1898," unpublished conference talk manuscript held by Virginia City's Thompson-Hickman County Library and dated 1967, 5; Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, 40.

Conrey Placer Mining Company in 1898.²³ This dredging machinery superseded Virginia City's gangs of placer miners, including the bulk of the town's Chinese residents, nearly all of whom "disappeared" from Virginia City at this juncture, heading back to West Coast Chinatowns or the small yet longer-enduring Montanan Chinese communities in Butte and Helena.²⁴ Yet even though Chinese residents had vanished from the streets of Virginia City by the early years of the twentieth century, some Chinese residents in Helena of the Wong family were still trading mineral rights under the surface of the old territorial capital as late as 1975.²⁵



Chinese woman's portrait, Virginia City.

Virginia City's Chinese residents sometimes worked at jobs other than mining. This was especially true of the relative handful of Chinese women in Virginia in comparison with their hundreds of male counterparts. Chinese laundries were long a fixture of U.S. Chinatowns, and Virginia City's clothes washing shops counted women such as Moy Si among their employees.²⁶ The town also housed a Chinese dry goods store run by a Cantonese shopkeeper who always tallied his customers'

²³ Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt*, 40–41.

²⁴ Davis, "Chinese in Virginia City," 6.

²⁵ The warranty deed for the transfer of some mineral rights in Virginia City from Donald J. Wong to Twila L. Wong, both residents of Helena, is lodged in the Madison County Archives and dated December 7, 1975. The author located the deed and has a photocopy of it in his possession.

²⁶ Davis, "Chinese in Virginia City," 3.

purchases with an abacus, which was something of a sensation among Virginia City's Euro-American children who curiously observed the shopkeeper's fingers flicking the beads of this foreign device back and forth.²⁷ Other Chinese in the area worked as cooks for householders, hotels, or restaurants, or else traded in opium or ran gambling joints.

The latter two activities of gambling and opium smoking were the most prominent "vices" of Virginia City's Chinese residents, who on the whole were mostly respected by the Euro-American majority for their industriousness and law-abiding ways.²⁸ These Chinese forms of recreation are roughly analogous to the Euro-American majority's fondness for poker, betting, and intoxication through liquor. Opium was still legal to buy over the counter in the United States and most other countries during the nineteenth century; the drug was prized by the largely single male Chinese residents in Chinatown as a simple and inexpensive way to induce a deep sleep and thereby temporarily escape from homesickness, loneliness, and the fatiguing daily grind of manual labor.²⁹ It is little wonder that an opium can and an opium pipe are among the most prominent artifacts that archaeologists have dug up at the Green Front Building site in what used to be Virginia City's Chinatown.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 1.

²⁸ In "Chinese in Virginia City," 5, Davis characterizes interethnic relations between Chinese and "whites" (Euro-Americans) there during the late nineteenth century as mostly respectful but not close, as the two communities hardly ever mixed socially. This is backed up by late nineteenth-century Madison County marriage records in which Chinese marriages across ethnic lines do not appear; examples are the marriage certificates of Ah Ho and Gwig Choy (July 18, 1882), Ah Hoy and Chow Gie (May 1, 1882), Ah Che and Sing Gim (February 17, 1875), Chine Foo Chee and Ly Choy (September 30, 1886), and Lum Louis and Ah Fah (May 6, 1894).

²⁹ On the use of opium to dull the discomfort of homesickness, loneliness, and sore muscles see Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, 119–120.

³⁰ See McCourt, *Green Front Buildings* (V094 & V095), 11, 13.



Chinese metal buckle, archaeological dig, Virginia City.

CHINESE FESTIVALS AND RITUAL OBSERVANCES IN VIRGINIA CITY

Virginia City's Chinese temple in the northwest corner of Chinatown was not only the central meeting place of the town's Chinese residents, but also brought Chinese together from all over Madison County and many adjacent regions in Montana during the main annual festival of the Lunar New Year holiday.³¹ The Chinese temple was originally constructed as a single-story building at the western end of Wallace Street in the 1860s, while a second story and a covered porch were added by 1875, as can be seen in a photo taken that year.³²

The temple's upper floor contained a finely carved wooden altar, a few large Buddhist figurines to whom believers prayed, and a small stage where a small Chinese musical ensemble would generate a din that could be heard all over town and from miles away down Alder Gulch.³³ Overall, the upper floor was used mainly for worship and ceremonial meetings of the Chinese community, though Euro-American residents were generally welcome to drop by and observe the Chinese prayers and ceremonies. In contrast, the ground floor of the Chinese temple was reserved for more secular uses

³¹ The Chinese Lunar New Year Festival lasts for one to two weeks and usually starts in early February. However, this holiday can begin as early as the end of January or as late as during mid-February on some years.

³² See McCourt, *Green Front Buildings*, 4.

³³ Johnson, *Images of America: Virginia City*, 30; and Davis, "Chinese in Virginia City," 2. Based on Davis's description of the musical ensemble's performances, the instruments used include a *suona* horn, a two-string *erhu* fiddle, a kettle drum, large cymbals, and a gong. All of these instruments were played so loudly that if you did not stuff cotton into your ears before going indoors to listen to the ensemble, your ears would soon be ringing and it would take a few minutes before you could hear anything else clearly after going back outdoors and walking away.

such as festive banquets, opium smoking, gambling, and miscellaneous gatherings of Chinese in the region.³⁴ Sadly, as Virginia City's Chinese residents dwindled to fewer than ten by the census of 1910, the town no longer retained a constituency that was intent upon preserving the Chinese temple for posterity.³⁵ Increasingly dilapidated through many years of neglect, the grand old temple was thus torn down in the late 1930s to provide open space for straightening out the bend of State Highway 287 that enters Virginia City from the west along Wallace Street. Unfortunately, it was not until the 1940s that the historical preservationists Sue and Charles Bovey became regular visitors to Virginia City and began to lead a successful effort to repair and restore the town's vintage nineteenth-century buildings.³⁶ The Boveys' arrival on the scene was thus not quite early enough to save the Chinese temple from the wrecking ball.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the two-week festival of the Chinese Lunar New Year in early February marked a temporary increase of the town's Chinese population due to the arrival of so-called "Celestials" who were visiting from outside Virginia City — and sometimes from even outside Madison County.³⁷ There was simply no gathering place for Chinese in southwestern Montana that could rival Virginia City's Chinese temple for elegance during those decades. Moreover, there was more interchange between the normally separate communities of Chinatown and the rest of Virginia City during the Lunar New Year festivities than at any other time of the year. Chinese hosts would sometimes include Euro-Americans among their guests at their New Year's feasts of roast pork

³⁴ Ibid. Johnson also alleges that Chinese prostitutes would sometimes entertain their countrymen on the ground floor of the Chinese temple, but this has not been corroborated by Davis.

³⁵ Dick L. Pace and Gary R. Forney, *It Takes All Kinds: Stories from Virginia City, Montana* (Virginia City: Thompson-Hickman Library, 2010), 88. With only ten Chinese remaining in all of Madison County by 1910, there were likely even fewer than ten Chinese remaining in Virginia City at that time. Apparently, most of what few Chinese remained in Virginia City in the 1900s moved to Butte or other larger towns and cities with better job prospects.

³⁶ Pace and Forney, *It Takes All Kinds*, 147.

³⁷ Chinese people often proudly referred to their homeland of China as *Tianchao* or "the Celestial Empire" prior to the end of the imperial dynastic system in the 1911 Revolution. Euro-Americans thus often derisively referred to Chinese as "Celestials" during the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century. For an example of this usage in Virginia City, see Pace and Forney, *It Takes All Kinds*, 79.

and other delicacies, and the tradition of flying kites during the New Year attracted many Euro-American children to Chinatown. Euro-American residents who were considerate in their dealings with their Chinese neighbors in Virginia City would sometimes receive a gift during the New Year's festival; Wiley Davis recalls his mother having received such a Chinese New Year's gift, though he adds that this was an exception to the rule in which social mixing seldom occurred between the Chinese and Euro-American communities, who for the most part maintained a friendly distance from one other.³⁸

VIRGINIA CITY'S 1881 CONFLICT BETWEEN CHINESE MINING COMPANIES: LEGEND VS. REALITY

On the relatively rare occasions in which violence broke out in Virginia City, it tended to be within the Euro-American community or the Chinese community instead of crossing ethnic lines and taking on an inter-ethnic quality. The best-known violent conflict between Chinese miners in and around Virginia City was over disputed mine claims. This Virginia City "China War" (or "Tong War") legend is colorful — and has varied in its details, depending on who happens to be recounting the story at a given time. However, the gist of the legend is that a huge fight among Chinese miners up and down Alder Gulch broke out in 1881 between the "Two-company" faction and its rival, the "Four-company" faction. After at least two Chinese miners were killed in the fracas, Virginia City's sheriff arrested several Chinese suspects, among whom two defendants were brought to trial for murder: Ah Wah and Ah Yen. Both men were found guilty by the jury and were sentenced to death by hanging. However, the defendants' lawyers appealed to a higher Montana court, which ordered a retrial due to a procedural irregularity.

According to the legend, at the beginning of this second trial one of the defense attorneys rose to inform the judge that neither of the men seated at the defendants' table was either Ah Wah or Ah Yen. It seemed that the Two-company and Four-company factions had settled their differences over the mine claims and decided to help two of their countrymen to evade the hangman's noose by means of a ruse. Both of these defendants had supposedly swapped their prison garb with two Chinese

³⁸ Davis, "Chinese in Virginia City," 5, 7.

visitors of similar height and weight and then walked out of jail and left town in broad daylight, since the Euro-American prison warden thought all Chinese looked alike, and thus could not distinguish one “Chinaman’s” face from another. All in all, the legend appears to be an entertaining account of the cultural distance that yawned between Virginia City’s Euro-American and Chinese communities. However, a closer examination of the historical record reveals the above account to be largely a comical fable rather than a sober account of the 1881 Chinese murders and trials.³⁹

The actual incident and trials were significantly different from the legendary account. In late February 1881, an argument over adjoining mine claims broke out between Chinese miners of the Hy Chung Company on one side and the Hung Wah Company on the other. The major bone of contention was that some Hy Chung miners had allegedly been dumping rocks on the Hung Wah mining works and were thereby severely disrupting their mining activities. Furious objections from the Hung Wah miners led to physical violence that seems to have been initiated by the Hy Chung miners, who also drove away representatives of the Sam Wah Company who tried in vain to intercede for the sake of preserving harmony and de-escalating the conflict. Two Hy Chung Company miners named Ah Sue and Ah Lang were subsequently killed in the fracas, presumably by some of the more combative Hung Wah miners. Virginia City’s sheriff arrested a total of eleven suspects, among whom two Chinese named Ah Wah and Ah Yen were brought to trial for murder, with Judge Everton J. Conger presiding. After one of the twelve jurors, Michael A. Hatfield, stepped down from the jury due to illness, instead of replacing him with an alternate juror, Judge Conger simply made do with eleven jurors. These jurors found both defendants guilty of first-degree murder, and on April 7, 1881, both defendants were sentenced to death.

However, the two men’s defense attorneys, Henry N. Blake and James E. Calloway, swiftly appealed the verdict to the Montana Territorial Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled unanimously that no verdict found by a jury of only eleven members was tenable, and then ordered a new trial. In this second trial of the two defendants, held in Virginia City in November that same year, the defense attorneys made a persuasive case for a reasonable doubt that the defendants were guilty

³⁹ An example of the humorous legendary version of the 1881 murders and trials can be found in Phyllis Smith, *Montana’s Madison County: A History* (Bozeman, MT: Gooch Hill Publishing, 2006), 118–119. In contrast, for a carefully documented historical account, see Arata, “Beyond the ‘Mongolian Muddle,’” *Montana* 62.1 (Spring 2012): 23–35, 90–93, esp. 30–33.

due to a dearth of compelling evidence. Because nobody knew which wound had been fatal to either of the two victims, whose corpses were covered with wounds and bruises, there was no way of ascertaining exactly who had committed the murder. The jury agreed with this reasoning and unanimously acquitted the two defendants on the first ballot.

The Chinese defendants thus walked free as a result of proper U.S. legal procedures being followed rather than due to the supposedly unitary Chinese community's clever and deceptive ruse of stealing away in some visitors' clothing, as the legend of this trial has portrayed it. The Chinese of Virginia City were thus more apt to play by the rules of their adopted society than the Euro-American majority has sometimes been able and willing to recognize.

CONCLUSION

Few traces remain of the large and vibrant Chinese community in Virginia City during the final thirty-five years of the nineteenth century, other than old documents, black-and-white photographs, and various Chinese artifacts that have been dug up at local archaeological sites. Nearly all of the Chinese residents' original log cabins with their dirt floors have long since been torn down; the only examples of Chinese pioneering-era hovels preserved in neighboring Nevada City, Montana, were actually trucked in on flatbeds from other Chinese mining sites in southwestern Montana. Therefore, even though Virginia City has never been a ghost town due to continuous habitation since its founding in 1863, its Chinese community could be considered a ghost community, in that not a single living descendant remains in town — and there were merely a handful of Chinese residents remaining in town as long ago as 1910.



Former site of Chinese miners' shacks, Virginia City.

Nevertheless, this sense of a vanished community of Virginia City's Chinese residents does not diminish their important contribution to the town's mining industry, to its service trades such as food shops and laundries, and to its cultural and architectural diversity as represented by the majestic Chinese temple. Companies of Chinese placer miners proved extremely thorough and diligent in working mine claims along Alder Gulch, often successfully reworking claims that Euro-American miners had abandoned as supposedly spent. It was only with the arrival of machine dredging in Virginia City in the 1890s that placer mining was superseded; this led to the eventual dispersal of the town's Chinese residents, as the dredges were run by Euro-Americans exclusively. Although Chinese immigrants were not always welcomed with open arms to places like Virginia City, particularly in the context of discriminatory legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the primary reason for the Chinese dispersal from rural mining areas around the turn of the century was the difficulty of adapting their skills to radical changes in mining technology such as machine dredging. Urban areas with ethnic Chinese neighborhoods, shops, and job opportunities such as San Francisco and Seattle served as a magnet for many such displaced miners in the Rocky Mountain region. Ethnic Chinese communities continued to play a significant role in the development of America's culture and economy during the twentieth century and beyond, though in a considerably more urbanized context than had been the case in mining towns like Virginia City during the nineteenth century.

The China Image and Political Reform
in Clarence Budington Kelland's *The Cat's-Paw* (1934)

David K. Schneider

One of the most important and influential images of China in the American mind has to do with political reform. Here is *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman, in high agitation about the state of American democracy on NBC's *Meet the Press* with host David Gregory on May 23, 2010:

Well, David, it's been decimated. It's been decimated by everything from the gerrymandering of political districts to cable television to an Internet where I can create a digital lynch mob against you from the left or right if I don't like where you're going, to the fact that money and politics is so out of control — really our Congress is a forum for legalized bribery. You know, that's really what, what it's come down to. So I don't — I, I — I'm worried about this, it's why I have fantasized — don't get me wrong — but that what if we could just be China for a day? I mean, just, just, just one day. You know, I mean, where we could actually, you know, authorize the right solutions, and I do think there is a sense of that, on, on everything from the economy to environment. I don't want to be China for a second, OK, I want my democracy to work with the same authority, focus and stick-to-itiveness. But right now we have a system that can only produce suboptimal solutions.¹

¹ ABC News, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/37279599/ns/meet_the_press/t/meet-press-transcript-may/#.WXC3RYTyuM8

Friedman might not have known that this had already happened! — in a most unlikely way. In 1934, Ezekiel Cobb, the son of an American missionary brought up in China and educated in the Chinese classics, came to America a complete innocent in all things American, save for the English language. He ended up getting elected mayor of a town notorious for corruption and graft. He used methods of virtuous government derived from his education in Chinese history and philosophy to suspend all normal democratic operations of the city for one day, a day on which he arrested all of the mobsters and their corrupt political cronies and clapped them in jail, thereby restoring good government to the citizens of the city. Chinese benevolent despotism had succeeded in restoring American democratic order, thereby realizing Friedman's fantasy.

This is, of course, a fictional incident — the story of a novel by Clarence Budington Kelland (1881–1964) called *The Cat's-Paw*, published in 1934, in the depths of the Great Depression.² Kelland's novel plays to the many anxieties that Americans experienced during the tumultuous era of the 1920s–1930s — anxieties caused by rapid urbanization with all its profound changes and social pressures, combined with the traumatic onset of the Great Depression. The 1930s was a time of crisis: “By 1932 wages had fallen by as much as 35 percent in some economic precincts, and a new deal president occupied the White House as waves of frustration washed across the land. Democracy, however defined, was a system under siege. America's dreams hung in fragments.”³ This crisis of democracy prompted the rise of social and cultural reform movements. One of the main points of frustration for all reformers was the system of urban political machines, the political setting of

² Clarence Budington Kelland, *The Cat's-Paw* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1934), hereafter, *Cat's-Paw*. Kelland was a major and influential writer and political figure of the first half of the twentieth century. It is surprising that the author of sixty novels and more than 400 short stories has never been the subject of academic study. Many of his works were made into popular movies and television programs. Most important among them are *The Cat's-Paw* by the great comic filmmaker Harold Lloyd (1893–1971) and Frank Capra's (1897–1991) movie *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, which was based on Kelland's story “Opera Hat,” published in serial form in *The American Magazine* in 1935, both to be discussed below. To the knowledge of this author, this is the first scholarly study of one of Kelland's works.

³ Patrick Gerster, “The Ideological Project of ‘Mr. Deeds Goes to Town,’” *Film Criticism* 5 (Winter 81), no. 2 (1980): 35. There are two excellent histories of the times: David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), and Amity Shlaes, *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

Kelland's novel, known as the "boss system" in American politics that developed with the growth of the major cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Richard Hofstadter describes the process well:

The city, with its immense need for new facilities in transportation, sanitation, policing, light, gas, and public structures, offered a magnificent internal market for American business. And business looked for a sure thing, for privileges, above all for profitable franchises and for opportunities to evade as much as possible of the burden of taxation. The urban boss, a dealer in public privileges who could also command public support, became a more important and more powerful figure. With him came that train of evils[:] the bartering of franchises, the building of tight urban political machines, the marshaling of hundreds of thousands of ignorant voters, the exacerbation of poverty and slums, the absence or excessive cost of municipal services, the cooperation between politics and "commercialized vice" — in short, the entire system of underground government and open squalor that provided such a rich field for the crusading journalists.⁴

The work of these "crusading journalists" exposed many of the criminal dealings of city and state political machines and gave rise to the many reforms proposed and eventually passed into law by the Progressive Movement. Here again is Hofstadter:

Unless the machine and its leader, the boss, could be broken, unless the corrupt alliance between special interests and the machine could be smashed, it seemed that no lasting reform could be accomplished.... What the majority of Progressives hoped to do in the political field was to restore popular government as they imagined it to have existed in an earlier and purer age. This could be done, it was widely believed,

⁴ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform from Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 174. See also Harold E. Gosnell, *Machine Politics: Chicago Model* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938).

only by revivifying the morale of the citizen, and using his newly aroused zeal to push through a series of changes in the mechanics of political life — direct primaries, popular election of Senators, initiative, referendum, recall, the short ballot, commission government, and the like. Such measures, it was expected, would deprive machine government of the advantages it had in checkmating popular control, and make government accessible to the superior disinterestedness and honesty of the average citizen. Then, with the power of the boss broken or crippled, it would be possible to check the incursions of the interests upon the welfare of the people and realize a cleaner, more efficient government.⁵

As Hofstadter notes in this passage, the Progressives tended to use government action or institutional reform to confront the problem of political machines and their ill effects. But not all reformers favored government activism based, as the Progressives claimed, on scientific management. There were other reformers who saw the problem not so much as a problem of institutional management but as a crisis of culture, historical memory, and morality. These reformers emphasized historical memory and moral renewal rather than institutional changes in the operation of politics and government activism. This took the form of an artistic movement in literature, art, and film that attempted to explore the many facets of the crisis and to offer visions of reform based on a new cultural assertion of American democratic-republican values and moral renewal. Kelland was a major contributor to the movement. Besides *The Cat's-Paw*, he published another important story in 1935 called "Opera Hat," which gave rise to the iconic character Longfellow Deeds, about whom more will be discussed shortly. One of the most visible expressions of this movement was the art of Norman Rockwell (1894–1978), which is a vast celebration of the "Everyman" in American life, especially in small town and country life, which was fast disappearing. Rockwell's paintings throughout the 1930s regularly adorned the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*, in which a number of Kelland's stories were published as serial novels. There was also a number of important films that contributed to the formation of a new collective cultural memory of American history: David Wark Griffith's (1875–1948)

⁵ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 255.

Abraham Lincoln in 1930, with a screenplay written by Stephen Vincent Benét (1898–1943), author of the epic poem *John Brown's Body* (1928); John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *Drums Along the Mohawk*, a film depicting the struggles of common Americans on the frontier during the American Revolution, both in 1939; Margaret Mitchell's (1900–1949) book about the Civil War *Gone with the Wind* in 1936; and David O. Selznick's (1902–1965) film version of the same in 1939.⁶ Patrick Gerster adds to the forgoing enumeration a list of Frank Capra movies — *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) among them — all with characters and ideas closely related to *The Cat's-Paw*.⁷ There is also Harold Lloyd's *The Cat's-Paw*, a movie adaptation of Kelland's novel, in 1934. Some of the public adoration for the founding fathers of American history was also expressed in public monuments. The Jefferson Memorial was begun in 1939 and completed in 1943; Mount Rushmore, which features immense busts of presidents George Washington (1732–1799), Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), and Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1915), carved out of a mountain side in South Dakota, was initiated in 1927 and opened for visitors in 1941. These books and films, monuments and paintings all attempt to revive the American tradition and identity through an exploration and re-definition of the American character and cultural-historical memory. Most feature not the elite figures of history but rather celebrate the common man. The film portraits of Abraham Lincoln emphasize, in particular, his humble everyman origins. Indeed, especially in literature and film, the guiding spirit of the age was without a doubt Abraham Lincoln. Merrill D. Peterson perfectly captures the significance of the Lincoln figure:

This continuing, even enhanced, fascination with Lincoln's life and meaning stemmed, in part, from the felt need for symbols of democracy and leadership when the country faced grave problems of depression and discord at home and the threat of totalitarianism abroad.⁸

⁶ Gerster, "The Ideological Project of 'Mr. Deeds Goes to Town,'" 36.

⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁸ Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 312.

The decade of the 1930s was framed by two great movies about the life of Lincoln noted above — Griffith's *Abraham Lincoln* in 1930 and Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* in 1939. These two films provide a template for the archetypal figure and symbol of the aspirations of cultural reformers in the 1930s.

A Chinese figure, such as we have in Kelland's *The Cat's-Paw*, might seem quite strange in an age that was busy reviving the American cultural memory with such a deep exploration of the American past. Yet, it is the creation of a cultural archetype based on the figure of Lincoln that provides a figurative pattern for all of the other literary and film characters of the age, including Kelland's missionary from China, Ezekiel Cobb, who is a variation on the Lincoln archetype. In order to understand the significance of the China image in political reform movements in the 1930s, we will have to explore some of the important works of the cultural response to the problem of political machines. Before we can define the character of Ezekiel Cobb and the China image in *The Cat's-Paw*, and thus tease out the political significance of the China image in the novel, we will have to undertake three tasks in the remainder of this essay: first, to delineate a picture of the Lincoln archetype and to draw out Ezekiel Cobb's relationship to it; second, to answer the question of where the China image comes from in American literature and how Kelland uses it; and third, to glean from the novel a clear view of the political meaning of the China image in the cultural context described here.

THE LINCOLN ARCHETYPE

Griffith's movie *Abraham Lincoln* emphasizes Lincoln's background in poverty, and how he, through self-education and in spite of hardship and the stigma of possessing no formal education, advances into the professional class, only to be described as "an unknown cornfield lawyer." Lincoln uses his constant moral sense and work ethic, along with his homespun wisdom and humor, to prevail in the Civil War and to become what the movie clearly implies is America's greatest president. Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* also highlights Lincoln's lack of education and his corresponding self-made qualities. The film treats primarily Lincoln's legal career in Springfield, Illinois, and emphasizes the frontier culture in which Lincoln is a central figure, a background that gives him a folk authenticity that looks awkward in sophisticated social circles. Simple and clear principles of right and wrong, and a strong sense of justice and fair dealing, help him prevail in a murder trial fraught with corrupt lawyers and

lying criminals. In the course of the trial, Lincoln delivers a ringing defense of the common woman against the power of those who use the law without decency and mercy, and he uses a *Farmer's Almanac* rather than law books to solve the case, thus vanquishing lawyers much more experienced than himself. As we shall see, both of Kelland's key characters, Deeds and Cobb, do this same thing, much to the amazement of their much more capable and educated adversaries. These movies taken together give us a composite Lincoln archetype that stresses his rural, frontier origins (which includes his experience with small business, farming, rail splitting, and avid reading), his integrity and honesty, his capacity for hard work, humility, reliance on the constancy of common folk sense, and his ability to get things done and solve problems with the humble application of everyman wisdom that sees through others' interests and corruptions.

The Lincoln archetype spawned many adaptations in the decade of the 1930s, five of which were either directly created or inspired by Kelland's work: two versions of Ezekiel Cobb, two versions of Mr. Deeds, and, arguably, Mr. Smith. The twentieth century version of the frontier was the small town. Both were seen as places where virtue lived and thrived, as opposed to the cities, which were seen as squalid scenes of vice and corruption. The contemporary figures of the age are modern versions of the Abraham Lincoln persona, all from small towns, or, in Cobb's case, a small village in China, away from the big cities and political centers of American life. They represent traditional values in contemporary times.

There are two versions of the Mr. Deeds story, that by Capra and that by Capra's source, Clarence Budington Kelland. Kelland's story "Opera Hat," published as a serial from April through September 1935 in *The American Magazine*, tells the tale of Longfellow Deeds. Deeds lives in the small town of Mandrake Falls, where he owns a successful local small business and works also as a poet for greeting and postcards. He suddenly inherits an immense fortune from a deceased uncle. This prompts a move to New York City, where Deeds becomes the president of an opera house by virtue of his newly acquired majority share in the opera company. He faces two major challenges. First, the opera house is insolvent. It remains open, for a mere fourteen weeks a year, only because Deeds' uncle would make good the shortfall each year to the tune of \$200,000. Deeds wonders why the opera can't make it on its own merits. It is tradition, he is told. The opera is an essential art that is above modernization and the vulgar considerations of markets and finance and therefore must be

subsidized. Deeds, as an enlightened ruler, eventually replaces the opera's management board with forward looking business men who will use new technologies and marketing ideas to promote the opera as a year-round business. In other words, he transforms the opera company from a depressed entity on artificial life support into a vibrant enterprise in harmony with the new mass-market economy. And he saves the opera in the doing. The second challenge is that Deeds, from the moment he inherits all his wealth, is beset by all kinds of corrupt and devious characters that inflict upon him lawsuits and extortion plots. He is even at one point implicated in a murder. But he defeats all his adversaries the same way he reforms the opera, through his steadfast adherence to his small town values of honesty and common sense, which to those corrupted by the city looks like naiveté. At one point his love interest in the story endearingly calls him "a small-town sap" and an "agricultural idiot." At another point, his big city lawyer praises Deeds saying: "Young man, I seem to have underestimated your foresight." Deeds replies: "It's just common sense."

Capra's adaptation of the Deeds character both relies on and departs from Kelland's original. Capra's Deeds is still a small-town innocent transplanted to the city, and he has to fight constantly against the corrupt forces all around him. He maintains his Lincolnesque persona with all the common-sense intelligence and social awkwardness that entails. The difference is that the Capra movie focuses on the scramble to defraud Deeds from his fortune, rather than emphasizing Kelland's economic message, and Deeds' desire to use it charitably, even as he defends it from predators. Where Kelland is an economic rationalist, Capra is an economic populist. Nonetheless, both figures are modernized Lincoln figures who fight the political and economic machines that corrupt American life.

The plot of Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is very close to that of Kelland's *The Cat's-Paw*. The protagonist, Jefferson Smith, another Lincoln figure,⁹ from the small town of Sweetwater, is appointed to replace a senator who has suddenly died, but only as a tool of the political machine that runs his state, in other words, as a cat's paw. Smith is a leader of a club for boys called the Boy Rangers

⁹ Peterson makes this point about *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, that it is the "spiritual legacy of the words rather than the life" of Lincoln that animated the Smith character. But, as Peterson suggests, "Lincoln, in sum, was a metaphor for the good and honest in American politics." There are much more than just the words that inspire Smith, there is a whole literary persona, a shared set of characteristics and ideas that link Lincoln to Mr. Smith and to all of the other characters discussed shortly. See Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 354–346.

and is not so different from his young charges. He knows the words of the Founders and Lincoln by heart. This is the source both of his naive idealism and of his moral uprightness and honesty. Awkward, genuine, honest, he alone is incorruptible in a world where everyone is corrupt and on the take. His only friend and ally is his secretary Miss Saunders, who, like Jake Mayo (a key character to be discussed below) in *The Cat's-Paw*, is converted. She starts out as cynical and doubtful, but falls for him and becomes his most important tutor in the ways of corrupt Washington politics. When Smith is framed and discredited, Saunders tells him that his "plain, decent, everyday common rightness," will defeat the machine.

We can now describe the modernized Lincoln figure of 1930s fiction and film who breaks the political machine. All are from small towns. All are outsiders, who come in as naive and awkward characters, who get drawn deeply into urban society, and who deal with corruption, crime, and political machines as they are framed for corruption and crime. In the course of their confrontation with their enemies, they come to represent a sum of the values drawn from the depths of the American cultural memory: Lincoln and the virtue of the frontier/small town experience as a curative for urban corruption; common sense rooted in the folk wisdom and learned from experience; hard work; honesty and fair dealing; charity; love for one's fellows as the basis for a harmonious community; the dignity of every man; the lessons of history; a straightforward approach to problems that cuts through self-interest and corruption; natural genuineness; humor; opposition to ill-gotten and unjust privilege; self-sacrifice; and grassroots democracy founded on the superior virtue of the common man when freed from the corruption of political and economic machines. Now, as we shall see later, Ezekiel Cobb is a variation of this composite Lincolnesque character, with a crucial nuance — he represents an analogous Chinese tradition in which similar values are emphasized. We have one task to complete before we can discern the meaning of the Kelland's China image in the debate over political reform in the 1930s — we must ask why China? Where does this use by Friedman and Kelland of China as a political model come from?

THE ORIGIN OF KELLAND'S USE OF CHINA AS A POLITICAL IMAGE

As we have seen, Friedman's idea was not new, but neither was Kelland's. Both drew upon a long tradition in Western thought of seeing one's own polity through foreign eyes and of using images of Eastern civilizations, particularly China, as a critique of one's own society. Kelland's novel is a uniquely American contribution to this tradition, which employs a hybrid character to deliver at once a critique of American political society in Kelland's time and to represent a vision of American republicanism, deeply rooted in the history of American political thought and figured as an idealized Chinese model.

The practice of social and political critique through foreign eyes began in modern times with the Enlightenment.¹⁰ One of the earliest examples is one of the most profound and penetrating: Montesquieu's (1689–1755) *Persian Letters* (1721). A collection of letters by two Persian travelers in Europe, Montesquieu's "short novel" critiques European and, particularly, French society. In letter 46, from Usbek to Rhedi, for instance, Montesquieu has his fictional Persian make the case for a natural religion of toleration and common sense against the wars between sectarian partisans that had raged in Europe since the Reformation:

I observe that people here argue about religion interminably: but it appears that they are competing at the same time to see who can be the least devout.

Not only are they no better as Christians, they are not even better as citizens, which is what affects me most: for, whatever religion, one may have, obedience to the laws, love of mankind, and respect for one's parents are always the principal acts of

¹⁰ For a useful discussion of the rich motif of the East in the literary and philosophical cultures of England and France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see Hamilton Jewett Smith, *Oliver Goldsmith's Citizen of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), especially 1–16. See also Levette Jay Davidson, "Forerunners of Goldsmith's the Citizen of the World," *Modern Language Notes* 36, no. 4 (1921): 215–220; and Jonathan Chaves, "When East Meets West," *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* (September 1995): 13–16.

religion.¹¹

The letters cover a wide range of topics — religious toleration (85), the role of women in society (63), justice (83), political philosophy (80, 103, 104), science (97) — all key issues in the debates of the European Enlightenment. Subsequent French philosophes tended to see China rather than Persia as the Enlightenment standard. This began with the reports sent back to Europe by Jesuit missionaries in China starting in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and continuing into the Qing (1644–1911). China was seen as almost a utopia, a rational society based on virtue and rooted in antiquity. David Hawkes gives us a nice summation of the aggregate image of Chinese civilization in the Jesuit conception that shaped the image of China in the eighteenth-century European mind:

In the Confucian view the Chinese empire, lying physically at the centre of the world, was founded by sages in the Golden Age of high antiquity; and the culture created by those sages was codified and enshrined for all time by Confucius, whose followers, the educated elite, preserved this cultural heritage from age to age, and by virtue of this office had, like the guardians in Plato's republic, the right to rule the rest of society and to be supported by its labours. Dynasties rise and fall in endless cycles, but the overall picture is one of a static unchanging world.

Confucianism is rather like a secular religion invented by a benevolent agnostic for the harmonious functioning of a human beehive. It is an excellent code for an enlightened bureaucrat. It inculcates honesty, loyalty, integrity, a sense of responsibility, a spirit of tolerance and compromise, a benevolent concern for the welfare of one's inferiors, a decent respect — wherever conscience permits — for one's superiors, a proper regard for ceremony and precedent, and a nice sense of the

¹¹ Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans. C.J. Betts (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 101.

degrees of affection and obligation demanded by each set of human relationships.¹²

Hawkes notes that this image of China, particularly in its natural religion and its government by enlightened despotism, was “eminently acceptable to the men of the Enlightenment.”¹³ The ruling elite at the core of that despotism was believed to have been educated in the Confucian classics and in the history of China. Such men “[d]ischarging these responsibilities through study, contemplation, and writing perfected their character and became not only a learned but a moral elite.”¹⁴ The first thing to notice about the virtues enumerated in this passage is not only its compatibility with Enlightenment critiques of eighteenth-century European politics, but also its compatibility with the virtues contained in the Lincoln archetype of the 1930s in America. As we shall see, this image of the Chinese literate elite was highly influential in the making of the literary persona of Ezekiel Cobb and other important characters in *The Cat's-Paw*.

Voltaire (1694–1778) followed Montesquieu's use of the East as an ideal standard of comparison in the *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764), but he attempted to base his views on empirical information, derived from what turned out to be the idealized portrait of China coming from the Jesuit writings Hawkes describes. Voltaire, in the scientific spirit of the age, portrays what he sees as the real China as his standard, rather than using the fictional device pioneered by the *Persian Letters*:¹⁵

There is no necessity for being a zealot in estimating Chinese merit. The constitution of their empire is the only one entirely established upon paternal authority; the only one in which the governor of a province is punished, if, on quitting his station, he does not receive the acclamations of the people; the only one which has instituted rewards

¹² David Hawkes, *Chinese Classical, Modern, and Humane: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 25 May 1961* (Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1961), 9–10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ Arthur F. Wright, “The Study of Chinese Civilization,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21, no. 2 (1960): 237.

¹⁵ Voltaire, the author of *Candide*, *Zadig*, and *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (*The Orphan of China*), among other satirical stories, was, of course, not averse to using fiction as a vehicle for philosophy and criticism.

for virtue, while, everywhere else, the sole object of the laws is the punishment of crime....¹⁶

Voltaire creates a modern Enlightenment philosopher out of the ancient Chinese figure of Confucius in *The Ignorant Philosopher* (1766):

Confucius is very modern.... He neither instituted any worship, any rites. He neither called himself inspired or a prophet; he only formed into a body the ancient laws of morality. He persuades men to forgive injuries, and to remember nothing but benefits. He advises that every man should watch carefully over himself, and to correct on each day the faults of the former.

To suppress the passions; to cultivate friendship; to give without ostentation, and not to receive without meanness and only in extreme necessity.

He does not say you shall not do unto others what you would not they should do unto you; this is only forbidding injury: he goes further, and recommends goodness; "treat others as you would wish to be treated."

He enjoins not only modesty, but even humility; and he recommends all the virtues.¹⁷

Yet another French Enlightenment thinker shared Voltaire's enthusiasm for what the philosophes thought of as a benevolent Chinese autocracy: François Quesnay (1694–1774). The influence of Confucian thought on Quesnay, especially that of Mencius (372–289 BC), led to his being called the Confucius of Europe.¹⁸ In his "The Despotism of China" (1767), Quesnay posits two forms of despotism,

¹⁶ Voltaire, *The Works of Voltaire: A Philosophical Dictionary in Ten Volumes* (Chicago: E. R. DuMont, 1901), 3:93–94.

¹⁷ Voltaire, *The Ignorant Philosopher*, trans. from the French of Mr. de Voltaire, by the Rev. David Williams (London: printed for Fielding and Walker, In Pater-Noster-Row, 1779), 56–57.

¹⁸ Quesnay in France and Goldsmith in Britain, discussed below, were both known as or claimed to be the "Confucius of Europe."

legal and illegal or arbitrary, and concludes that “the despotism of China belonged to the former, meaning that the authority of the Chinese emperor was limited by the ‘the constitution founded upon the wise and irrevocable laws.’”¹⁹

All of these images of China are more rhetorical devices used as critiques of European politics and society than attempts to understand China on its own terms, as Joseph R. Levenson argues: “[I]n the realm of general ideas, we find Voltaire acknowledging the influence of Confucian secularism, as strained through the Jesuits’ reports on China, but Voltaire’s anti-clericalism was a Western issue; his Chinese evidence weighed in a conflict whose lines were drawn already in European history.”²⁰ In other words, Voltaire’s idealization of the “rational government of China” was an attack on the French church in support of his quest to reform French political culture so it would conform to his idea of natural religion and secular government. The same could be said about Montesquieu and Quesnay. Voltaire and his fellow philosophes created an image of China as a rhetorical device to critique the France of their age.

This motif of seeing the West through Eastern eyes was not unique to France. It was also common in England in the eighteenth century. Horace Walpole (1717–1797) published in 1757 *A Letter from Xo Ho: A Chinese Philosopher at London, to His Friend Lien Chi at Peking*. The letter is particularly interesting because it revives the epistolary-fictional mode used by Montesquieu in his *Persian Letters*, as opposed to the genre of philosophical discourse employed by Voltaire and Quesnay. The letter is framed as direct observation and commentary on English politics. In it, the Chinese philosopher Xo Ho draws a picture of the chaos and a flawed notion of freedom of English factional politics, which he measures against an implied standard of Chinese rationality:

Here one is told something every day; the people demand to be told something no matter what: If a Politician, a Minister, and Member of their Assembly was mysterious and refused to impart something to an Enquirer, he would make an Enemy: If he tells a Lie, it is no Offence; he is communicative; that is sufficient to a free people: All they

¹⁹ Hyobom Pak, *China and the West: Myths and Realities in History* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 56.

²⁰ Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 1158.

ask is News; a Falsehood is as much News as Truth. Why I believed a Ministry would soon be named, was: I thought that in a Country where the whole real business of their General Assembly was to chuse Ministers, they could never be without: I was deceived. I thought that when a Prince dismissed one Minister, he would take another: I was deceived. I thought when a Nation was engaged in a great War with a superior Power, that they must have Council; I was deceived: Reason in *China* is not Reason in *England*.²¹

This passage anticipates, as we shall see, a number of themes and motifs in Kelland's use of the China image as a critique and standard against which to measure 1930s American politics, especially Xo Ho's view of political corruption and the role of the news media. It is quite possible that Kelland knew of Walpole's letter and drew upon it for his own figurations, not the least of which is the fact that Ezekiel Cobb is cast as a Chinese philosopher. In Kelland's case, however, Cobb is not simply an observer of politics but a crucial participant. Another important possible source of Kelland's image of China and the Chinese philosopher is Oliver Goldsmith's (1728–1774) *The Citizen of the World or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to His Friends in the East*, letters by a fictional Chinese traveler to England published in 1760. In these letters, Goldsmith, "in the dignified guise of a Mandarin philosopher, became a critic of his nation," argues Hamilton Jewett Smith. Smith goes on to write, "A pseudo-letter serial printed in a London newspaper, having for its hero a Chinese who told strange tales of the East, who moralized, philosophized, and satirized, was to the English of his time a new kind of literature, which was then sure of popularity."²²

Kelland's use of the China image is deeply influenced by this tradition and is, in fact, a significant and unique development of it. In the European tradition, the philosophers are Persians and Chinese. But in the American tradition writers from early on created a uniquely American form of

²¹ Horace Walpole, "A Letter from Xo Ho: A Chinese Philosopher at London, to His Friend Lien Chi at Peking," *The Works of Horace Walpole* (London, 1798), 1:205.

²² Smith, *Oliver Goldsmith's Citizen of the World*, 5. It is noteworthy that, as Smith argues, the principal influence on Goldsmith in this venture was Voltaire, whose views of China were shaped fundamentally by the Jesuit image discussed above. See 6–12.

hybrid character to fulfill the role of the critic of American society and politics. These characters are not just outside observers, highly intelligent and insightful as they may be. The American hybrid character acts as a full participant in American life and embodies both the outsider and the insider in one character. One of the earliest examples of such figures is James Fenimore Cooper's (1789–1851) character Natty Bumppo — variously nicknamed “Hawkeye,” “Leatherstocking,” “The Deerslayer,” “The Pathfinder,” and “Long Rifle” in his series of “Leatherstocking” novels published between 1823 and 1841. Lindsey Clare Smith argues that Natty Bumppo's “obsession” in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) “with proving his white legitimacy while also demonstrating hunting and battle skills that are commensurate with the Mohicans is crucial to understanding his characterization.” She goes on to summarize the views of critics on what is seen as Bumppo's cultural ambiguity and conflictedness: that “Bumppo finds himself to be morally superior to and therefore severed from European society, yet not quite savage enough — through blood or culture — to be Indian.” For Smith, the answer is in Bumppo's “own biracial heritage.”²³ He is both “Anglo and Indian” and thus gains the power to comment on both societies from the inside. Kelland's Ezekiel Cobb stands firmly in the tradition of the American hybrid character. But, in a gesture toward the European epistolary tradition, Kelland writes the figure of Ezekiel Cobb in the first person, almost as a memoir.

Ezekiel Cobb is a missionary's son who is raised more as a Chinese gentleman than as an American. When Ezekiel is just about to depart for America, his father tells him of his regret at not having sent his son home to be educated. Ezekiel responds: “But I am educated.” This exchange follows:

²³ Lindsey Clare Smith, “Cross-Cultural Hybridity in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*,” *American Transcendental Quarterly* 20.3 (2006): 547. See also the work of Barbara A. Mann, who advocates “assessing James Fenimore Cooper as an author ahead of his time in terms of cross-cultural application” in “Whipped Like a Dog: Crossed Blood in *The Last of the Mohicans*,” in *James Fenimore Cooper: His Country and His Art: Papers from the 1995 Cooper Seminar*, ed. Hugh C. MacDougall (Oneonta: SUNY Oneonta Press, 1995), 3. Also quoted by Smith in “Cross-Cultural Hybridity,” 529. Finally, Donald E. Ringe writes: “Only Hawkeye, of all the whites, is competent to survive, mainly because his experience in the woods has instilled in him the humility he needs to understand the Indian and to interpret the white and the red man to each other,” *Cooper* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), 44.

"As a Chinese gentleman," he replied. "You speak and write the language and the dialects. You know the sages and the poets. But your Occidental education is only such as your mother, before she left us, and I could give you. I doubt," he concluded, "if you ever have spoken with a hundred Americans — and there are a hundred and twenty million."

"He," said I, "who has seen one grain of rice is wise as he who sees the crop of a province."

"Human beings," said my father, "are not grain."

"Americans," said I, "all look alike. I cannot tell them apart. They do not seem to be individual, as are the Chinese."²⁴

The rest of the novel contains numerous references to how alien Americans and American culture are to Cobb, even as he becomes intimately involved with both. He is racially white-American, but culturally he is a Chinese gentleman. This is interesting considering that Cobb is the son of a Protestant missionary. Yet it is not missionary zeal that he takes home with him, and it is not Protestant morality that informs his reformist impulses. It is rather his deep education in the Chinese classics and in Chinese history that sustains him throughout his ordeals with Americans. It is in the actions of our hybrid Chinese gentleman taken in response to the various political and cultural challenges he faces that both a critique of America and a composite image of China emerge. We will need to trace out both the critique and image and then ask: what do they signify in the context of the political culture of 1930s America?

²⁴ Kelland, *The Cat's-Paw*, 2–3. American culture in the 1930s featured a number of essentially hybrid Chinese-American characters such as Charlie Chan and Dr. Wang, both detectives appearing in popular films. Both are highly intelligent and cultured Chinese gentleman who speak English, dress in Western style, and stand in sharp contrast to their rather boorish white colleagues. Kelland's invention is clear here in that he creates a white figure who stands as a Chinese gentleman, almost certainly following Cooper's Natty Bumppo, a character Kelland would have known well.

THE CHINA IMAGE AND REFORM OF THE POLITICAL MACHINE

Now we are ready to address *The Cat's-Paw* directly. Kelland's political setting is a very well-crafted literary version of the political reality of big city politics from the 1880s well into his own times, and described above by Hofstadter. The key political arrangement in Kelland's Middlesex is this: the Democrats have a lock on the mayor's position. Their candidate is re-elected each year because the Republicans, controlled by the "Middlesex Corn Roast and Good Government Club" headed by Jake Mayo, put up sham candidates each election and run a show campaign that guarantees the Democrats victory. Both parties share in the corrupt structure of the government where everyone is on the take and in cahoots with gangsters. A real Republican victory would upset the apple cart and ruin everyone's cozy and profitable arrangement. So, when the prospective Republican candidate suddenly dies, the Corn Roast Club needs a replacement who is sure to lose. Enter the clueless Ezekiel Cobb. The club persuades him to run for Mayor of Middlesex on the guarantee that he would never have to serve in office. He would be a cat's-paw of the Republican organization. The problems begin when Cobb actually wins the election and rather than play the dupe of the machine, he decides to govern according to the principles he had learned from the Chinese classics and history. This sets Cobb against both the Democrat and Republican political machines and all their allies in organized crime. As Mayo says to him on his first day in office:

"Morgan's [the former mayor] out of office, but he runs this town. He owns the board of aldermen; he can swing the police department. The prosecuting attorney is a county official, and he belongs to Morgan. So does the sheriff. Criminal cases are tried in the two recorder's courts, and Morgan elected both of them. You got nothing to fight with."²⁵

Through the course of Cobb's administration, his enemies work to undermine and destroy him and eventually to frame him in a corruption scandal. Noteworthy here is the variation on the Lincoln archetype described above. It is in his conflict with these forces that his character as a Chinese

²⁵ Kelland, *The Cat's-Paw*, 90.

gentleman emerges and, through this development, we gain a picture of the image of China Kelland creates in the novel.

Ezekiel Cobb, in Lincoln fashion, is distinguished by his genuineness, which he maintains throughout the novel, and by his Chinese education, which is principally represented in the words of a fictional Chinese philosopher Ling Po, “a sage who lived under the Ch’ien Lung dynasty,”²⁶ whom Cobb liberally quotes from the beginning to the end of the story. These guide him from the state of innocence in his progress through experience in which he masters his world by continually drawing on those two qualities, a constant honesty/genuineness and a flexible application of his Chinese education in the classics and the examples of history — both combine to complete his particular brand of personal and political virtue. It is from this perspective that Cobb critiques American democracy and implies an image of China as the ideal opposite of the state into which Cobb sees that America has fallen.

The first point about American democracy comes from the mouth of the head of the Chinese community in Middlesex, Tien Wang, to be discussed in more detail later. He frames his advice in a comparison between Chinese and American politics. This device of Kelland’s works well, for Cobb only knows about Chinese politics. Thus, Tian Wang starts with what Cobb knows and then proceeds to teach him what he does not:

“The object,” he said, “of politics is to seize command of that in which supreme authority resides. In old China one intrigued for the favor of the emperor; in this land the effort is to control the favor of the people. It is the nature of all politicians that they prefer to win by adroitness and deception rather than by straightforward service and honesty. They prefer a trick to an accomplishment.”

Tien Wang advises Cobb to proceed with the situation he is in and tells him that his learning must be completed by experience: “Knowledge without experience is water with no pitcher in which to carry it. Remembering always the wisdom of the sages, follow this path on which your feet have been set, for it

²⁶ Ibid., 58.

will be rich in that practical knowledge which makes a complete man."²⁷ At the opposite end of the novel, after he has gained all the experience necessary to complete his quest both for knowledge and for virtuous action, and just when he is about to be arrested by his enemies, Cobb gains his essential insight into the deepest problem that plagues American democracy. This is the key critique of America that sets up the China image to be discussed next and also forms the basis of the American political ideal that Cobb comes to represent. Thus, it is worth quoting at length. Cobb is in his office looking out the window at the people passing by:

There were the people I served; there were the people served by their elected and appointed officers — by police and magistrates, by commissioners and clerks and street cleaners. In them resided the source of all authority, and all government and ramifications of government belonged to them and were, in theory, for their benefit. Yet they were as far removed from government as if they had resided on the moon. They were unconscious of it. They did not think of it any more than they thought of the air they breathed. Their hearts and their minds were in their work, in their means of livelihood, their families, their homes and their recreations. But I and all others engaged in politics and in maintaining the machine of government were a race apart. We were of a different cast, upon another basis.

Those hurrying crowds were engaged in commerce; they earned their living by buying and selling. We earned our living by taking away from each and every one of that throng a part of his earnings in the form of taxes. We rode upon their shoulders, and when they thought about it — which was seldom — they resented it. We were a little section of the population, isolated, circumscribed and, for the most part, disregarded.

Cobb reflects at the end of this meditation on what the public would think of the accusations against him, concluding that they would expect him to make deals to free himself of responsibility and of the

²⁷ Ibid., 33.

charges against him, which are false, the result of a plot to unseat him. The public was, he reflects, "callous. A politician was expected to be crooked."²⁸ The government and the people have become alienated from each other. America is divided in two: at the top there is the political and business elite, corrupt to the core and living off the hard work of the everyday American. Below the elite, and subject to its lies and deceptions, is the common man, represented in the novel by the people scurrying about their business. Also representing the America Cobb eventually vindicates in the end are three major characters in the novel: leader of the Corn Roast Club Jake Mayo, police lieutenant Shigley, along with the majority of the police force, and Miss Petunia Pratt. Mayo is the boss of the Republican political machine who manages the corrupt dealings with the Democrat machine and with the hordes of corrupt businessmen and gangsters. Cobb's genuineness, innocence, sincerity, virtue, and growing wisdom — made manifest as he puts into practice the philosophy of Ling Po — redeem Mayo from his past and makes of him a loyal ally and friend of Cobb through all his troubles. Mayo represents an American who is honest by nature but corrupted by the system. In keeping with his Chinese education, Cobb sees Mayo's true nature. Shigley's case is particularly revealing of the corrosive effects of rule by a corrupt elite on otherwise good people.

"Thirty-five years on the force and a lieutenant," he said. "That's what you get for bein' a square cop in a crooked town. They can't retire me, but I don't get no show and never will. I could have owned apartment houses like I know some of, but neither me nor the old lady could sleep comfortable with money got that way. I see young bulls shoved past me that I could teach to suck eggs. And I ain't never given no jobs to do, because I do 'em."²⁹

He continues later:

²⁸ Ibid., 238–239.

²⁹ Ibid., 46.

“You take a young cop comin’ on the force,” he said. “He wants to be square. He is all steamed up with idees of duty. Take the rank and file. They’re honest men. But where kin they git? Nowheres. And even as it is the force gives the town a break for its money. It’s the big shots and politicians, with their influence and their money, that keeps things the way they are. Let the cops alone and they’d clean up.”³⁰

Miss Pratt represents disinterested wisdom. She is a smart, sassy woman of humble station — she says of herself “a cigar-counter girl isn’t anyone”³¹ — who is unafraid of offending people who cross lines with her or cross her moral sense; she sees right through the pretenses of the politicians and right into the corrupt reality behind the deceptions. She is very literate and aware of literature as a guide to practice. She acts as Cobb’s muse and guide, and he marries her at the end of the story.

This is the world Cobb sets about to reform. At one point early in the story, Cobb has a crisis of confidence, as he knows nothing about running a big city. When he is told in no uncertain terms that he had better obey the dictates of the machine bosses, he falls back on his Chinese education and tells the press reporters about his experience with corruption in China, quotes Ling Po about the dangers of power, and vows he will not be a mayor in name only:

I have seen the governors of provinces [in China], and how they ally themselves with bandits, and how they send out their own retainers to loot the people. I have seen thousands of starving because the governor extorted an unjust tax and robbed the farmer of what was left when the tax was paid. I do not want to be that kind of mayor. I will quote to you what the sage Ling Po says of persons in authority: “That man who rules not another can be just; if he has authority over one, a shade is upon his eyes; if he be set above ten thousand, it were easier to empty the sea with chopsticks than to be just in the face of his own power and vanity.”³²

³⁰ Ibid., 46–47.

³¹ Ibid., 115.

³² Ibid., 58.

The first image of China that Kelland creates treats the perennial problem of how a person in political authority can deal with a corrupt political system and still preserve his own integrity and sense of justice. This is precisely the problem Cobb faces in Middlesex. The corruption of Chinese governance is a direct analog for the American boss system. We can also see right off that this is no copy of the idealized Jesuit image of China but rather a more realistic one that works as a direct figure for the corruption Kelland was aiming at. At the same time, the Jesuit model, as transmitted by the Enlightenment writers, provides the ideal China image that becomes a rhetorical and philosophical device used to advocate American reform. Cobb's answer to the problem of personal integrity comes in the form of the Chinese tradition of drawing inspiration from history, which is cast as a morality tale of Confucian education. Cobb explains:

“Consider the Prince Chan, for he so governed his province that upon his death not a scholar remembered the ideograph for the word ‘injustice,’ because it had neither been spoken nor written for the span of a long life.”³³

This mode of just governance turns out to be a form of enlightened despotism, unafraid to employ harsh punishments, that aims at just and ethical ends in the interest of the people. As Cobb says, “If it was in China I would know what to do. First I would cut off a few heads. In China is it quite necessary to cut off heads to impress people with your sincerity. Then I would say I was quite ready to cut off more heads, and the worst of it would be over.”³⁴ The problem for Cobb is that it is not China but Middlesex, America, where there are democratic norms, however corrupt, and laws that preclude the Chinese option. In the end, as we shall see, he will adapt a rather creative variation of the Chinese model to clean up his city. But such power can only be exercised by one who is aware of the problem of power and its tendency to corrupt the individual who holds it, as Ling Po teaches. For Cobb, it is a question not just of maintaining a sense of honesty in office but of moral purpose: “It looks like more

³³ Ibid., 68.

³⁴ Ibid., 68–69.

than being honest. Being honest means not doing things that are dishonest. But a mayor ought to do a lot more than that. He has to do things. He has to do things that benefit the people he rules over.”³⁵ This philosophy begins to exert a salutary and reforming influence on the people around him when the honesty and goodwill manifest in Cobb’s character as a Chinese gentleman persuades Mayo to redeem himself by throwing off his corrupt alliances with gangsters and politicians and deciding to back Cobb’s reform program.

This philosophy of government, and its explicit critique of American democracy in the age of corrupt city machines, is reinforced by another contrast between the machine and pictures of a highly cultured and civilized Chinese community in Middlesex, figured as a civilized and humane enclave in an otherwise barbarous town. The Chinese community is present as a support for Cobb from the very beginning of the novel. Cobb’s trip from Chengdu to Middlesex is arranged by a network of Chinese merchant-gentleman who run shipping companies and import-export businesses. Cobb is received upon his arrival in America by a particular gentleman, the owner of a Chinese antique store, one Tien Wang. Wang himself is a continuous source of sage advice for Cobb. Tien Wang’s Chinese antique shop serves as a civilized refuge for Cobb and his allies. It stands as a representation of all the best features of Chinese culture. At one point, escaping an attempt to frame him for taking bribes, Cobb and his friends, Miss Pratt, and their driver De Lancy Jones flee to Tian Wang’s shop. After the party is received with great civility by their Chinese hosts, the following scene is described in Cobb’s autobiographical voice:

...we found ourselves in a room of simplicity and great beauty. I quite caught my breath as I saw the few articles our host permitted to be displayed. There were two jars of the Hundred Butterfly design, a piece of black hawthorn over which two provinces would go to war, and a scroll painting from the early Ming dynasty depicting that scene in which Hong-Wou saved the eldest grandson of Chunti from his victorious and vengeful generals.

³⁵ Ibid., 76.

"May I hope," said Tien Wang when we had seated ourselves, "that you have brought to my door an opportunity to perform for my friend some slight service?"

"I would lay a matter before the eyes of your wisdom," said I.

Out of the corner of my eye I could see how Miss Pratt regarded Tien Wang with something like astonishment, and how even the volatile Mr. Jones seemed somewhat sobered in demeanor. They were impressed by Tien Wang, as well they might be, for there is in the world nothing which one may compare to the serene graciousness, the courtly manners of a Chinese gentleman.³⁶

This scene is developed beautifully again toward the climax of the story when Cobb appears to be at a dead end and about to be arrested as a result of a successful plot by his enemies to frame him for corruption. Once again, he returns to Tien Wang for advice:

We were now in that room where we sat during our former visit. This time the jar of black hawthorn had given place to a Buddha carved from ivory by the hand of a master, the lotus upon which he sat so deeply undercut that it seemed a breath must break them at the stem. Tien Wang saw the admiration in my eyes and smiled.

"Beauty," he said, "refreshes the soul as water is grateful to parched lips. The ivory was part of the treasure of Choo, who assumed the style of Hong Wou and founded the dynasty of the Ming. A gift to my father from his friend Li Hung Chang...."

"You do not ask if I am guilty of the acts charged against me," said I.

"There is no need," he said. His presence, the robes he wore, his kindly, wise eyes, the soft coming and going of servants of his race, soothed me and made me calm as I had not been since daybreak.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., 132–133.

³⁷ Ibid., 222–223.

This vision of China is clearly a foil Kelland uses to highlight the crass and barbarous picture of American society characteristic of the culture of the boss system in politics. There are two points of contrast. The first is that between the elevated and cultured Tien Wang and the self-centered, tyrannical former mayor and head of the Democrat political machine, Morgan. A number of scenes could be adduced as evidence of Morgan's character. The one that stands out most clearly, though, occurs just before the election that Morgan loses to Cobb, an incident that actually does much to cause that defeat. Cobb and Miss Pratt go out to the theater and at the end of the show encounter the current mayor, who is drunk, at the front of a hotel:

We paused until the way was clear, and it was evident that my opponent was in an evil humor. He spoke harshly and scowled as he walked slowly down the stone steps. I had seen him only once at a distance — a big, rather handsome man with a bullying way. As I studied him now I was at a loss to discover any source of popularity.

“Half seas over, as usual,” said Miss Pratt.

Then the thing happened!

On the sidewalk stood a newsboy, a little fellow with a withered leg and a crutch. As the mayor descended, this little fellow hobbled up so that he blocked the way.

“Paper, mayor? Buy a paper?” the boy asked in a reedy voice.

Mr. Morgan looked down savagely. “Get the hell out of the way!” he said harshly and, when the boy was slow in stepping aside, struck him on the side of the head so that the little fellow went to the walk with a wail of fright. Then Mr. Morgan kicked him.

It is at this point that Cobb jumps to the boy's defense and almost instinctively “struck him [Mayor Morgan] with considerable force on the chin, so that he went down upon the walk beside the newsboy, who lay there writhing and groaning.”³⁸ Cobb and Miss Pratt pick the boy up and take him to

³⁸ Ibid., 48–49.

the hospital. This all takes place in full view of the many newsmen who follow the mayor around town. The publicity of the incident seals the election in Cobb's favor. The quite obvious distinction between the American political boss who treats his own people with contempt and derision, and the urbane, wise, and philosophical community leader that is Tien Wang could not be clearer. Morgan represents all that is wrong with America, and Tian Wang represents the rule of virtue that America once had in its past — the past of Washington and Lincoln — that Americans have forgotten. Tien Wang and the Chinese community here are examples of virtuous and good government that have not been lost in China. The example remains available for American reformers to emulate.

The second contrast is that between the depiction of Chinese society as figured in the scenes in Tian Wang's antique store and a scene depicting a cocktail party, a scene which follows immediately after the first scene in Tien Wang's shop quoted above. It therefore draws a stark contrast between the subtle sophistication of a meeting of virtuous Chinese gentlemen and the boorish and uncouth American party, where Cobb gains "knowledge of life."

Mr. Jones started my education by conducting me to a cocktail party, so-called. This form of entertainment, indigenous to the soil, consisted in providing the guests, who thronged the apartment at five o'clock, with extremely inferior caviar spread upon stale biscuits, and providing unlimited quantities of an unappetizing but potent beverage which caused the guests to drop lighted cigarettes upon the rugs, and to discuss in loud tones subjects normally mentioned only in the consulting room of one's physician. The din of conversation was irritating, there was neither dignity nor decorum nor graciousness, and it gave to one acquainted with the forms of manners of the ancient civilization of China a certainty that we of the West were too newly emerged from barbarism to make it advisable for us to excite ourselves by stimulus to a point where we lay aside our very recently acquired inhibitions.³⁹

³⁹ Ibid., 143–144. The echoes here of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and Walpole's "A Letter from Xo Ho" are unmistakable.

The picture here is of a society, dominated by the self-interested political and business elite, unable to rise to the level of true civilization, with its sensitivity to the humanizing influence one gains with the contemplation of subtle beauty, and unable to exercise the full potential for human social and political civility. The Chinese example contained in the antique shop scenes — even the fact that it is an antique shop emphasizes both the antiquity of the Chinese political model and the possibility of a commercial order based on culture and art rather than corruption and political influence — stands as a model for the values forgotten by American society.

Finally, the most important aspect of the China image is how it works in the actual conditions of a corrupt political system in dire need of reform and restoration. Cobb and Shigley plan to take the unprecedented action of suspending *habeas corpus* and carrying out a simultaneous arrest of all the corrupt officials and gangsters of the city at seven o'clock in the evening. Cobb models this action after the example in Chinese history of Fou Wang:

“Commissioner,” said I, “I want to stay within the law if I can, but I’ll step outside it if necessary. Myself I cannot save. A man has but one head. You can cut it off but once, whether he commit one crime or fifty. Perhaps I’m uncivilized. I have considered the acts of Fou Wang, the Dreamer, who, when about to be taken and executed by the corrupt mandarin, Li, seized the city by a sudden onslaught, imprisoned Li and, before the city and the army recovered from its surprise, took and executed dishonest and cruel and tyrannical officials until the city was clean. For forty-eight hours he reigned.”⁴⁰

But Fou Wang is willing to accept the consequences of his actions.

“Fou Wang gave himself up to the emperor, saying, ‘I have stolen and purged your city. For a day and a day I ruled it without leave or warrant. I was a rebel, but your city of Gang-Wa is clean as the snow upon the mountain top or the waters of a brook flowing

⁴⁰ Ibid., 228–229.

through placid fields. Unlawfully I have cured the unendurable, and I am content to die.”

Cobb goes on to explain the fate of Fou Wang, which he emulates even down to the act of turning himself in to the state governor for punishment for illegally suspending *habeas corpus*. Fou Wang is rewarded by the emperor for his service, but right thereafter “the law having been broken and rebellion having raised its head, the emperor executed Fou Wang honorably.”⁴¹ Similarly, Cobb knows he will be found guilty of breaking the law in carrying out this action, and he asks Miss Pratt to write a letter for him to his father explaining the Chinese culture of honor.⁴² He then articulates his plan as an American adaptation of Fou Wang’s action:

“I propose,” said I, “to arrest and imprison every known gangster, every known racketeer in the city. I propose to arrest every known or suspected grafter, with or without sufficient evidence. I propose to shut them in cells and to hold them, even against the operation of *habeas corpus* in so far as possible. There will be excitement. Public sentiment will be aroused. These men cannot all escape, and it may be that so, as I come to an end myself, I shall destroy the system that destroyed me.”⁴³

In the end, the mass arrest comes off without flaw, and the weakest of the gangsters, under the threat of execution, confesses to all. This squeezes confessions out of all the others. Cobb, having turned himself in, awaits his punishment by the governor, just as Fou Wang awaited his. But the governor, upon reading all of the confessions, vows full support for the action. The press, seeking a word from the hero, mobs Cobb for interviews, which go on all night. He goes to Tien Wang’s for refuge at dawn and wakes up in the afternoon to a bright new world.

⁴¹ Ibid., 229.

⁴² Ibid., 234.

⁴³ Ibid., 224.

THE CHINESE PHILOSOPHER EZEKIEL COBB AS AN AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEAL

Now that we have described the Lincoln type character of the 1930s, traced the history of the use of the China image as a rhetorical device in European and American political culture, and thoroughly discussed the images of Ezekiel Cobb and China in *The Cat's-Paw*, we are prepared to place Cobb in the culture of the day, guided as it were by the Lincoln ideal, and to delineate the meaning of the China image in the American context.

First, Ezekiel Cobb exhibits all of the same character traits as the other Lincoln figures with which he is so closely associated — Longfellow Deeds, both versions, and Jefferson Smith — even down to the pithy expressions of common sense uttered by all of them, including Lincoln in the two films discussed above. Cobb's quotes from Ling Po are written to sound like Chinese aphorisms. But they are extremely similar in substance and in their importance to characterization to the speech patterns of Deeds and Smith. For Cobb, "they embody the tested wisdom of the ages."⁴⁴ He also follows the same pattern as Deeds and Smith in that he is framed for corruption and crime, and he uses his sort of wisdom alien to the sophisticates of high society and with it defeats them. He also represents the simplicity, honesty, and integrity of the Everyman figure. This last point is figured not only in Cobb's Lincolnesque humility and awkwardness, but also in his steadfast relationship with the smart but humble cigar girl who counts herself as "not anyone." But there are some key nuances of difference as well. For instance, there is reverence for history in all cases. For Longfellow Deeds and Jefferson Smith it is reverence for American history. In Ezekiel Cobb's case, however, the historical instructor is Chinese history. And the political example is Chinese. Thus, he is a hybrid Lincoln character with Chinese characteristics. Given these characteristics, we must ask, what political idea does he represent?

We have already answered this question in part. As we have seen, Kelland's book is a uniquely American development of the use of the China image in European political debates, the device of seeing one's own society through Eastern eyes. The Walpole and Goldsmith letters are clearly meant to be reform critiques that use an analogous republic of virtue, the China image of the Jesuits, to

⁴⁴ Ibid., 90.

criticize and combat the corruptions of English politics. Voltaire's and Quesnay's use of the China image plays the same role in the French case. Both sought reform of the French monarchy and the Catholic Church by praising an idealized form of rational and virtuous political philosophy and government found in China. It is significant that the early practitioners of taking the East as a critique of the West were not advocates of a wholesale adoption of Chinese or Persian civilization in France or England. They were in the main republican critics of their own polities. As Gordon Wood puts it: "Classical republican Rome, like the South Sea tribes for twentieth century anthropologists, became the means by which enlightened eighteenth-century Englishmen could distance themselves from their own society and criticize it."⁴⁵ Classical Rome and Confucian China as envisioned by the early Jesuits were parallel rhetorical devices to the point where the visions of China used in the West became literary and philosophical figures for a republican political idea. This becomes clear when we juxtapose the ideal republican virtues and ideas with those of the composite China image created by the Jesuits, the French philosophes, and the English writers discussed above.

[Republicanism] recognizes man's social nature in feelings of sympathy and benevolence, classical politics requiring citizen participation, public education and economic independence linked to more centralized republics through a "natural aristocracy," and those elements of modern economics contributing to American virtue and self-sufficiency.⁴⁶

This system was to rely fundamentally on certain institutional arrangements such as mixed popular, aristocratic, and monarchical branches of government as in the English Constitution and in the political thought of such American statesmen as John Adams (1735–1826). Eventually it was embodied in the checks and balances of the American Constitution. But such a system of balanced government

⁴⁵ Gordon S. Wood, "Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution," *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 66, no. 1 (1990): 20.

⁴⁶ Garrett Ward Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991),

was seen as impossible without a moral foundation among the political and economic elite in what was called public virtue, which

entailed firmness, courage, endurance, industry, frugal living, strength, and above all, unremitting devotion to the weal of the public's corporate self, the community of virtuous men. It was at once individualistic and communal: individualistic in that no member of the public could be dependent upon any other and still be reckoned a member of the public; communal in that every man gave himself totally to the good of the public as a whole. If the public virtue declined, the republic declined, and if it declined too far, the republic died.⁴⁷

These ideas closely parallel the Jesuit composite image of China, especially as developed by Voltaire in the *Philosophical Dictionary* and *The Ignorant Philosopher*. They are also of course the same values that the Lincoln figure embodies, as enumerated above. And this is the same problem, the decline of the American Republic into a corrupt state of machine politics, that is the central issue of all the films and books considered here that comprised a cultural response to the crisis of machine politics in the Great Depression, a cultural response in no small measure created by Clarence Budington Kelland. By Kelland's time, the idea of an enlightened Chinese monarchy, with strong analogous features of republican virtue, was well known and well used. Kelland uses it brilliantly in *The Cat's-Paw* in two ways. The first is as a method of humane virtue to clean up the corruption and destroy the political machine Middlesex had descended into under Morgan's rule. The second is as a vision of a virtuous society represented in the Chinese community and in Chinese history — a moral and political revival of classical republicanism as a critique and model for an American reform agenda, figured as a model Chinese society. Most of these urban political machines were run by the Democratic Party. In *The Cat's-Paw*, though, it is not only the Democrats that are lifted to the light of criticism but also the Republican Party, which Kelland depicts not as a true opposition party offering an alternative vision

⁴⁷ Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 70–71.

for politics, but as a willing and corrupt collaborator in the perpetuation of the machine and its criminal dealings. Thus, Kelland's use of China and the figure of Ezekiel Cobb is to depict a true alternative politics that looks back, figuratively, through the image of the virtuous Chinese sage to deeply rooted ideas and ideals from a neglected American political tradition — classical republicanism. Kelland's portrait of China is nuanced and works well as an analog of the American political scene in its corruption, while offering an example of how virtuous men and women might go about solving the problems — offering a vision of virtue in politics and a cure, perhaps periodically necessary, for the defects of democracy that devolve into machine politics. What we have in *The Cat's-Paw* is a vision of the virtuous society envisioned by the classical republican heritage of American political thought, figured as a vision of a virtuous society in China. That society is not a utopia. It contains a vision of human failures and evil along with a vision of how a hybrid classical republican-classical Chinese virtue overcomes that evil.

ERRATA

Table of contents: at chapter 9, the author, Qianshen Bai, is at Zhejiang University.

p. 16, 4th line from the bottom of the page: the three characters should read 磨難曲.

p. 24, center: the bibliographic item whose title begins “Inculturation versus Evangelization...” should not appear twice.

p. 26, at the end of the bibliographic section titled “Articles, Essays, Book Chapters, Short Monographs” (just before the section titled “Selected Original Poetry”), this item should appear: “Wu Li’s Vision of Zither Music as Resonating with Christianity: Tones of Western Wonders,” *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal*, vol. XXXVI (2014): 7–13.

p. 123, 7th line from the bottom: 嶽飛 should be 岳飛.

p. 125, 10th line from the bottom: 黃娥 should be 黃峨.

p. 129, l. 1: 陸遊 should be 陸游.

p. 133, ll. 2–3 of the epigraph: the single word *ch’ü* should not be split into two.

p. 147, n 46: the author’s name in the reference should be Wang Wencai.

p. 317, l. 4, of the long indented quote: “flowing” should be “following.”

p. 133, n. 4, has the wrong publication date. It should be 1982, not 1882.

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