

THE BARNHART-CAHILL-ROGERS

CORRESPONDENCE, 1981

Institute of East Asian Studies

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## PREFACE

What follows is a slightly edited but essentially faithful text of a series of letters exchanged during the period June to September, 1981, between myself, Richard Barnhart, and Howard Rogers. The correspondence was occasioned by Dick's review of my *Parting At the Shore* which appeared in *Art Bulletin* (vol. LXIII, no. 2, June, 1981, pp. 344-45). A xerox of that review, and of another by William Watson (for a different opinion on the book), precedes the letters. Howard was drawn into the correspondence when, in a letter to me, he responded to Dick's review and to my first letter to Dick, of which I had sent him a copy. I sent a copy of Howard's letter (with his permission) to Dick, in turn, and the correspondence from that point became three-way. I should note, however, that Howard's letters to me are represented here only by excerpts which pertain to the ongoing arguments; much more that does not has been omitted.

In addition, I circulated copies of my first letter, and of some of those that followed, among a few of my former students, and permitted others to read them in our study room, believing that apart from the specific problems in Ming painting that we argue, the broader issues raised in the letters were of sufficient general interest to warrant such a limited exposure. The letters, which in the end were read by more people than any of us intended, have indeed excited interest, enough to suggest that they should be given still wider distribution. Dick and Howard have agreed to this, with some reservations (as stated in their letters of May, 1982, which are appended).

I hope that the mutual respect felt by the three of us comes through in the letters. If I write sometimes, for instance, in rather strong language to Howard, it is because some residue of the old teacher-student relationship remains, even after he has become a well-established teacher and scholar in his own right, with published writings and a wealth of unpublished, privately-circulated manuscripts that have already enriched our field of study substantially more than the published *oeuvre* of some better-known specialists. I address him as a colleague and peer, even when the professorial tone breaks through.

In arguing the directions of scholarship in our field, we have inevitably referred to the writings of colleagues, sometimes with rather negative appraisals. Some of these references have been altered to prevent identification; others have been left. All, I think, are of the kind that are natural and proper to scholarly controversy. I assume that others in the field make similarly critical observations about my own writings in their private correspondence, and would in fact feel somewhat slighted if this were not so.

Included as Appendix A is an essay by Howard which bears on our discussion of the problem of schools and their evaluation in Ming painting. I have also added, at the risk of some repetitiveness, three appendices, recent theoretical statements of my own, delivered orally on particular occasions and now transcribed. These, like the letters, were not really meant for publication, and would not otherwise be exposed to a wider audience. The third (Appendix D) consists of remarks delivered at the conference "Theories of the Arts in China," York, Maine, June, 1980; I am grateful to Susan Bush, the organizer of the conference, and to the American Council of Learned Societies which funded it, for permission to include these remarks here. A brief, partly facetious addendum completes the series.

The three of us engaged in the correspondence hope, of course, to convince, or persuade (while recognizing that there are no absolute rights and wrongs on these issues); but more importantly, we hope to set forth positions that can be the basis for discussion, however clumsy our articulation of them may be. The letters were written (if I can extend my case to the others) at electric-typewriter speed, without time for careful formulation and heavy qualification.

JAMES CAHILL, *Parting at the Shore. Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368-1580*, New York and Tokyo, John Weatherhill, Inc., 1978. Pp. xiv+281; 14 color and 135 black-and-white ill. \$32.50

This is the first systematic study of Ming painting since Osvald Siren's *Chinese Painting* of 20 years ago. It is also the second of a projected five-volume history of later Chinese painting that is certain to hold for years to come the authoritative position Siren's work has occupied these two decades. It is a distinguished achievement, of enduring value, that greatly expands upon Siren, and a richly rewarding general history that is now the basic source for the art of its period.

The plates are well-chosen and of good quality, offering overall a fair and balanced survey of Ming painting to 1580. First-hand access to the Shanghai handscroll (pl. 48), only possible after the book went to press, has now persuaded Cahill and others that the painting is not by Wu Wei, and should be dropped from his oeuvre. The two large-scale landscapes bearing Wu's signature (pls. 45 and 46) are also dubious attributions, in my opinion. My only serious quarrel with the plate selection is the inclusion of *Detroit's Early Autumn* (color pl. 8) which I find here at least as uncomfortable as he has found it to be within the oeuvre of Ch'ien Hsüan. Until there is better understanding of this kind of painting in the period late Sung to early Ming, *Early Autumn* should be attributed to Ch'ien Hsüan and dated ca. 1300; it is certainly not a monument of Ming painting, and does not belong in a book of this kind.

A very few minor points of fact or interpretation should be corrected. Popular legend to the contrary (the Ming was a great era in the evolution of fictional writing), Tai Chin is not likely to have died in poverty (p. 47), but as the most celebrated artist in China. The National University attended by Chang Lu was that in Peking, not Nanking (p. 129). The scenery of Yen Tsung's landscape handscroll (pls. 19-20) is more probably that of northern China, where he lived, than the south, where he was born (p. 54). The association of Shih Chung with Chiang Sung (p. 140) is anachronistic; Shih was 21 years older than Wu Wei, and was probably a major formative influence, along with Wu, on the distinctive Nanking tradition that later included Chiang Sung. Tung Ch'ü-ch'ang wrote nothing at all like the observation on the decline of the Che School attributed to him on page 128 (following Siren). This is simply a mistranslation of the passage read more accurately by Susan Bush (*The Chinese Literati on Painting*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971, 174). Ch'iu Ying was not illiterate (p. 202), an assertion contradicted by the material referred to in note 16. And finally, the Tai Chin painting in Shanghai (p. 51) is dated 1449, not 1445.

The period covered in *Parting at the Shore* was the heyday of the Che and Wu schools. Although Cahill grants to the Che School masters a more serious role than many of his colleagues, it is nonetheless in weighing the achievements of the professionals that I find myself most annoyed with the story of Ming painting otherwise so effectively presented here. The author's bias on behalf of the Suchou Scholar-painters was amply demonstrated in the first volumes of this series (*Hills Beyond a River*, 1976), in which nearly all of Chinese painting except that of the southeastern literati was ignored. In the present volume, about

equally divided among the Che School, the Wu School, and the independent professional painters of Nanking and Suchou, a more even intent is seen, but a none-too-subtle preference is also easily discerned. The claim that the professional, Ch'iu Ying, was probably illiterate may be considered symptomatic of Cahill's basic viewpoint.

There is first the question of seriousness. The works of the professional masters, he writes, contain no deeply felt emotion, have no relationship with reality of either person or place, and are ultimately hollow, "escapist" productions meant only to entertain and amuse (p. 103). The arrogance of this reading of the work of serious artists is dumbfounding.

Second, the vast bulk of Che School painting is "routine" and "stereotyped" (p. 100). This is precisely as true as the same observation would be if made of the paintings of the scholars—but the latter observation is not made.

Third, the majority of professional masters conform to the same "type" of low-born, brilliant, eccentric virtuoso typified by Wu Wei, a kind of inevitable persona somehow taken on by these men, their styles too falling into predictable patterns and shapes (pp. 163-66); this example of "lumping" does nothing to confirm the author's description of himself as a "splitter" (p. 163).

Finally, Cahill resurrects the notion of a "Heterodox School" (pp. 128-134), to which such "depraved," "vicious," and "immoral" painters as Chang Lu, Chung Li, Chiang Sung, and Chu Pang are said to have belonged. He takes the curious view that although the paintings themselves show no signs of either heterodoxy or depravity, nonetheless they are heterodox and depraved. Such analysis reminds us that among certain scholar-connoisseurs in China, art history has been a minor form of religion since the late Ming period. It also instructs us of the danger of relying more heavily upon words than paintings in writing art history.

One might also hope that a book about Ming painting would offer concrete descriptions of the achievements of Ming art, and a clear assessment of its character. Cahill apparently wished to avoid such statements, leaving them instead implicit in his survey, and so one turns to his descriptions of style for a glimpse of his ideas about the period. Thus, on Wen Cheng-ming (p. 220): "[*Verdant Peaks and Clear Springs*] is an essentially two-dimensional creation." On Chou Ch'en (p. 190): "The empty area ... is here irredeemably blank paper ... this is, in the end, essentially a Ming painting." On Wang E (p. 125): "... his forms are indeed flat ... [which is] characteristic of most paintings of his time." On Chang Lu (p. 130): "Such a visual approach to landscape, evoking an immediate sense of time and place, had seldom been seen since the Southern Sung period." And on Sun Lung (p. 137): "[His effort to] create a pictorial approximation of visual perception ... was an effect contrary to the whole direction of Ming painting."

From such comments, we conclude that the primary direction of Ming painting was toward flatness, two-dimensionality, and artificiality both of vision and of technique. However commonplace this view may have become, I believe that it is inadequate and probably harmful, formed only comparatively as a kind of negative image that is neither Sung-Yuan nor Ch'ing, and yet has

JAMES CAHILL: *Parting at the shore: Chinese painting of the early and middle Ming dynasty 1368-1580*. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 281 pp., 106 plates. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1978.

This book, following Cahill's *Hills beyond a river* (painting of the Yuan period), is no less brilliant. He carries every point: a thorough historical treatment, instructively punctuated by regnal periods (an innovation in studies of this kind) and readably tied to excellent illustrations; passages of new perspective in which the achievement of some painters is assessed more convincingly than hitherto; a brave attempt to make sense of the social factor; and everywhere glimpses of an emergent philosophy of style reached independently of the obsessive Chinese categories. For the first time in Western writing he seriously questions the pretension to exclusive merit claimed in the post-Yuan period for the practitioners of *wen-jen-hua*, the scholars' style, and the easy assumption of sinological values is replaced by something more critical. A predecessor in this line is Suzuki Kei, whose conclusions regarding the Ch'ê school are here enlarged upon with fresh insight. Cahill speaks of the interwoven dualisms which are characteristics of Chinese thought, whether touching style, social status, affiliation of painters or application of method, and makes it his aim to reveal the middle ground between polarities, a task for which his incomparable command of the material qualifies him well.

Basic to his history is the recognition that the legacy of Southern Sung academic style is not confined to the work of the Ma-Hsia group so much castigated by the Ming scholar-painters, and that other trends lasted through the Yuan period to inspire the major non-scholastic movement in Ming painting: 'In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, in particular, the Academy style attained a point of equilibrium that established the basic conservative manner and canonical models for professional artists in all the centuries to follow.' He directs attention to two matters which have not had their due, the failure, though not an unhappy one, of the Ming emperors to organize a coherent academy whose activity might have channelled the development of professional style more rigidly (for all the talk there has been of a 'Ming Academy' we find painters merely summoned to court for work and there only too often given miserable treatment); and the hiatus in the development of style, including the style of *wen-jen*, and in the product of painters during the century following 1370. It was at the beginning of this interregnum that the principled versatility of Wang Fu blended and tempered the extremities of the new Yuan styles to a mode which made their invention palatable to and imitable by academic and other non-scholastic painters. Wang painted 'while travelling, and especially after drinking', and so also pioneered the social mode of the eccentric, whom Cahill will define as more

than the non-establishment roisterer. It is curious, and one of the paradoxes Cahill is so good at catching, that Wang Fu in one branch of his experiments subtracted from, rather than elaborated, the format of the typical *Ni Taan* composition, and so eased the way equally for the simpler kind of scholars' painting. In trying to give more convincing content to the Chinese dismissive concept of eccentricity Cahill is evidently in a quandary, on which he does not dwell. Eccentricity is perhaps only a convention after all, he opines, for the painting styles which it engenders show a certain sameness. But this sameness might be questioned.

To the Ch'ê school Cahill allows more historical coherence than does Suzuki, even speaking of its internal contradictions as responsible for its decline. He demonstrates rather clearly that the disintegration of Ch'ê values must be viewed closely with the growth of the methods which replaced them, however wide the rift between the two was rated by theoreticians. The work of the Soochow gentleman and professional artists, even that of Shen Chou, is not accountable without reference to the practice of Tai Chin and his associates. More historical reality is given also to the record of Tai Chin's doings and personality than derives from Suzuki's account; but both authors make of the Ch'ê school a much wider concept than the influence of one man or of any close-knit group. Cahill speaks of a Sung tradition persisting in Fukien, while Suzuki considers the possibility that Ch'ê style is essentially the continuation from an early time of local pictorial tradition to which Sung academic canons need not have contributed overmuch. On the paradox of Tai Chin's late-Ming reputation Cahill's remark suggests a depth of perspective: 'It was already difficult, a century after Tai's death, to reconcile an admiration for his painting with an all-but-obligatory condemnation of the tradition he belonged to.'

The long texts on Shen Chou and T'ang Yin show the first indebted to the broad post-Sung tradition as much as to the Yuan example, and the second as striving to equal the work of artists in both the camps, para-academic and scholastic, which were becoming increasingly defined aesthetically and socially. T'ang Yin's achievement is seen as an injection of clarity and order into Ch'ê practice, partly through a return to the methods of Li T'ang. The comment on T'ang Yin's *Poetic thoughts: travelling by donkey* speaks of the insecurity and instability of the landscape, with the cautious suggestion that this quality must relate to the artist's emotional state. The idea that landscape should be subjected to *expressionist* treatment in this way, made the vehicle of quite subjective emotion in a decidedly untraditional mood, is not one on which the author enlarges, although a number of the paintings cited, beside T'ang Yin's, lend themselves to this interpretation.

Cahill necessarily attributes the febrile disorder of Hsü Wei's flower scroll in the Nanking Museum to the temperament of an artist whose irascibility was repeatedly vented in self-mutilation. But in the strict terms of

the aesthetic tradition the gross distortion of landscape, in defiance of natural *li*, offered more telling expression to intellectual malaise than outrageous brush-style. Such a theme will no doubt figure in Cahill's next volume, but the roots of this *formal* dissidence are surely to be found already in an exceptional mode in the period reviewed here, in the work particularly of Wang Li and Wu Wei, in Chiang Sung and Shih Chung's strange excerpts from the classical formula, and acknowledged on occasion even in Shen Chou's *debonair* repertoire. Cahill's principle would appear to be that the critic, at least the Western critic, should not read into a painting more than has been verbalized by the artist himself or his associates, the painting remaining, as always in Chinese theory, an adjunct to literary expression and, irregularly, a reflection of the outer 'life-style'.

What is most intriguing in Cahill's writing is a kind of critical brinkmanship. For example, he draws back from defining the anti-establishment stance of the artist as intellectual protest of a rational stamp, though he would like to do so, and in a Marxist vein. What in this connexion might be seen as expressionism in brush and form he is inclined to note briefly as calligraphic versatility, scribbling, or the 'relaxation of kinesthetic control'. Apart from its scholarly abundance it is the great merit of his book that such questions are brought to the fore in a text where lesser artists are carefully assigned to their places and the greater are better connected than has been done hitherto. His characterization of Ch'iu Ying's work will amuse and satisfy: the sophisticated were prepared to 'savour a bit perversely, by a turn-about phenomenon of aesthetics familiar to anyone who follows even superficially the fashions of art in our own time, a technically superior but otherwise only slightly altered form of a "vulgar" style at which, in other contexts, they would scoff'.

WILLIAM WATSON



biases. If I point out that the Che school masters don't write poetic or other lengthy inscriptions on their works, this is a simple and (generally) objectively true observation; if some Chinese critics associate negative judgements with that observation, that is their problem, not mine. The line you quote on Chou Ch'en's 1534 picture ("the empty area . . . is here irredeemably blank paper") was quoted in Sullivan's review as an example of perceptive stylistic analysis, where you take it as negative; he wrote (I don't have the review handy) that reading this account and looking at the painting, he could see exactly what I meant. And that is just what I aim at; it's an analysis, not a judgement. (I gave a lecture today on Rimpa painting in Japan, which is for me one of the high points of Far Eastern art; if I say they are quite flat and spaceless, is that a put-down? Only if someone chooses to read that into the observation. Actually, I talk about tensions between flat pattern and implications of depth.) That both Tai Chin and Shen Chou tend to compose in large flat forms, or that Wen Cheng-ming's "Verdant Peaks" is "an essentially two-dimensional creation," seems likewise to be simple, and true, stylistic observation saying something basic and important about the paintings and their differences from the Sung and Yüan works that they partly imitate. That other artists of the time are doing other things is pointed out over and over throughout the book; period style, for me, doesn't mean what *everybody* has to do to qualify for the period (as the now-abandoned Princeton formulation of Yüan painting style argued). So where is the disagreement?

What bothers me especially is your quoting a lot of statements of this kind and saying or implying that they are *biased* without showing that they are in any way *wrong*, as it would seem to me to have been incumbent on you to do. You seem to say: these observations are true enough, but also contain negative implications, so they shouldn't have been made. But much of the time, I think, the statements are not only true but quite devoid of the negative meanings you attach to them. You seem to have read, and written, in a heated state, finding offenses where none were meant. I would be surprised if any reader without an axe of his own to grind would find my use of the terms "scribbly" and "splashy" any kind of put-down; they seemed to me useful (if slightly facetious) characterizations of the styles, and were used of artists whom (as the text makes clear) I admire greatly. (Your contrast of these with my characterization of the "scholarly" brush-work of Shen Chou in his cypresses breaks down on two counts: I don't, and wouldn't, write that way of Shen's brushwork in his more typical works, the landscapes; and I wrote more or less the same, but more enthusiastically, if anything, about T'ang Yin's "Trilling Bird" and Hsü Wei's Nanking scroll.)

So, I think you have indulged in a good deal of distortion of what I write, and tend to ignore what seem to me the new and useful contributions of the book. I took what I thought was a new approach to Hsü Wei; no comment. Also for Ch'iu Ying: ditto, except to object to the statement that he was probably illiterate. (I assume that you've read the recent writings that qualify the criteria of "literacy" in China to include a more widespread kind of functional literacy, the ability to write and read letters and accounts and such practical things without having the specialized *wen-jen* kinds of literacy needed for the poetic and essayistic inscriptions in good calligraphy written on paintings. I should have made the distinction, and will in some future writing.) I put forth, first at the Wen Cheng-ming symposium in Ann Arbor and later in this book, a thesis that I hoped would be challenging: that we can observe a close correlation between the patterns of the lives of certain artists (at least as they reach us in biographical accounts) and the subjects they paint and styles in which they paint them. You asked me, after that session, whose writings I had in mind; surely that was a disingenuous question, since writings on Ming painting around that time are full of what I call "lumping," i.e. refusing to recognize distinctions and arguing that they can't or shouldn't be made—some of Dick Edwards's writings, and Marc's and K.S. Wong's *Friends of Wen Cheng-ming* are examples that come immediately to mind. And, once the thesis had been presented, since its intention was obviously revisionist, I would have thought that *some* useful response to it would be in order; if the correlation doesn't hold, where doesn't it? If it is real and you disagree with my understanding of it, what alternative understanding can you offer? But you only allude to it as another example of bias (unfairly, again, considering my treatment of the artists involved, Tu Chin and T'ang Yin and Hsü Wei etc.) and—willfully?—miss entirely the point of the splitter/lumper

All the best to you and Joan. I'll see you, I assume, in NYC next week; but perhaps we shouldn't upset the felicitous tone of the occasion by arguing? It will be a time for harmony, in which all Sung-Yüan pictures are as attributed and all are masterpieces simply by the virtue of hanging there on the Met's walls.

Yours,

James Cahill

## II. BARNHART LETTER TO CAHILL, JUNE 9, 1981.

Dear Jim,

Probably most scholars who write books in this field end up feeling frustrated by what seems to be a general failure to acknowledge anywhere in print the contributions and strengths of the book. Maybe if more of us wrote reviews the situation would improve. No reviewer can adequately cover all of the merits of a substantial book along with any perceived shortcomings, but more reviewers each concentrating on particular aspects of the work would help. On the other hand, I think I may give them up. [X] gave them up for good after writing his first, when he saw how many people he offended. In a field this small, we are all too close.

Also, the author of a book obviously reads a review differently. I, for example, thought John Hay's review of *Hills* was very positive, and left the impression that the book was not only very good, but stimulating and representative of the best the field has to offer. I thought that in writing my review of *Parting* I was making a similar attitude clear. It is not very useful to add laudatory sentence after sentence, and I tried to avoid that by stating my overall assessment of the book clearly at the outset. I then went on to what I would have called quibbles if the word weren't so overused—matters of interest mainly to specialists in the field.

In the end, the virtues of the book will speak for themselves, primarily in the ways they guide the field in the years ahead. It seems to take about five to eight years for the impact of scholarship to spread throughout the field, and to give it shape. I have no doubt—and I think I made this very clear in my review—that *Parting* will set the standard and the direction of Ming painting studies for a long time to come. I chose the word "distinguished" very carefully, and I would be sorry indeed if it is overlooked by readers of the review.

As to some of the specific matters you raised, on one point you are completely wrong. The review was not written in a heated state. It was written over a period of months as I read the book slowly, punctuated by a trip to China, and rewritten repeatedly. My initial reading was almost completely uncritical, but the longer I spent with the book the more I came to see certain underlying assumptions and values that I found vaguely disturbing. There is a pattern to the writing of history that moves and changes very slowly, but which has a certain logic and interest of its own. For years in the West only Sung and Sung-inspired painting was understood and appreciated. Then, in the 50s and 60s we began to learn about and admire *wen-jen* ideals in the Yüan, Ming, and Ch'ing periods. You and I grew up in that era, separated by ten years or more. Then, later, we all began to dump on the professionals. We are at a stage now in which there is some visible rejection of this attitude, with recognition of its sources and limitations. I think we are approaching a more balanced and idiosyncratically Western understanding of Chinese art history, and just at the time that native Chinese scholars have rejected their own

be fair and balanced, and go the logical extreme of lumping *all wen-jen* painters in one camp and all professionals in another and use the pattern of your structure to make final judgement. If you don't think scribbles and splashes next to your appreciative description of Shen Chou's mystical powers is stacking the deck, I wonder what you would do with the gloves off! Reduced to the terms of predictability and inevitable shallowness of thought and style somehow conditioned by low birth or other social limitations the case is closed on the professionals. I just don't buy any of this.

But we do come from different directions in this. You have been concerned with a tendency toward "lumping" that I have not worried about. So for you this life styles analysis is a corrective; to me it is just lumping. It is, of course, an approach that has been tried in more limited form. I wrote about the virtuoso image in my old NPM figure painting article; Kohara wrote about it in his Ch'en Hung-shou paper some years back. You go much further, I don't need to emphasize, but I don't find the extension, as you do it, to be very useful. It has the effect of belittling artists, by making what they do or become merely a repetition of a pattern.

Ditto for your description of Ming flatness, and here as elsewhere I'm as guilty as anyone. We all do it, but I've begun to realize that it is an inadequate formulation. It might be useful to graduate students trying to distinguish between Sung and Ming, but it is not suitable for a general history that seeks to give historical place to artists who were not thinking about flatness or two-dimensionality as we describe it. It belittles them, again. There must be a better way, and I did suggest one possibility among many.

As to Ch'iu Ying's illiteracy, if you are using the word in the sense of being illiterate in composing classical poetry then you should make that clear. An American reader reads it differently. I can't greatly admire your very full treatment of Ch'iu Ying when it is built upon what seems to me to be a fundamental misstatement that colors everything else. I do admire your chapter on the Nanking painters, and do acknowledge that it is the first such identification of the school in an English language book. But I don't much respond to the curious statement of Wilson/Wong that you quote. Their wild enthusiasm for Suchou can be easily ignored as a natural product of their project, and no one would take it very seriously anyway. But the Nanking painters have been written about for some time, both in Japan and in China. Here again I wonder what you would expect of me: do I praise you for doing what you should do? I said, I believe, that your book is the most complete such history we have, without specifying all the ways this is true. Or, should I comment upon some of the things that I find dubious or questionable?

I don't think you can throw much of what I do object to back on the Chinese critics. In fact, you several times attribute ideas to them that you cannot accept. But you still often come back finally to the idea that they were right—e.g. the heterodox painters.

Anyhow, I am not attacking your work in the review. If I were to try again to phrase my idea of the balance that exists in my mind, it would certainly be entirely positive, with a few reservations as to particulars, none of which detract from the overall assessment. And at the end of the review I might have said something like "These reservations do not in any way lessen my admiration for the author's achievement, which is to have written the definitive volume on the history of Ming painting to 1580." Except that I felt to write something like that would have been trite, and unnecessary. Perhaps I underestimate my readers. I agree with you about the state of the field, and the need for new ideas and direction. That the book is a major step forward will emerge in the next few years, and will not be hindered by my review. Your reputation as the most productive, knowledgeable, and creative scholar in the field is undoubtedly intact. But, I will still quibble with you, publicly and privately, whenever I believe that you are either wrong or misguided.

You asked about my ideas of Wu Wei. He is the major painter treated least well by you in *Parting*, in my opinion, although there are mitigating circumstances. Most of the paintings around attributed to him are dubious, and first-rate works have only recently come to light in substantial numbers. The NPM hanging scroll you reproduce is no good, and the Shanghai handscroll. Perhaps your plate 46 is genuine; I would love to see it. It may be just a



think; this letter will be fairly short, and will try only to identify the points on which we seem still to disagree. Let me thank you for the complimentary things you say in the letter about my writings; I'm sure you intended to be equally positive, on balance, in the review. Sometimes we don't realize the real effect of what we write; we can be openly out to devastate a book (as I tried to do years ago with Mai-mai Sze, in a way I wouldn't now) or can have the fairest of intentions and still come through quite negative. Our department chairman, reviewing my writings and responses to them recently in making a case for advancement, expressed some bewilderment over the disparity between the generally favorable assessments in popular reviews and the rather negative tone of the scholarly ones (Hay, Sullivan) as he read them, with no influence from me. What's up? he asked, and it was hard to explain. I feel secure enough, in a situation of mutual esteem with my colleagues from knowing them over many years, not to be bothered much by this, but an outsider gets a different impression. I firmly believe that you wrote with a good feeling about my Ming book, as you say; I also believe (with some evidence from outsiders who have read it) that the review doesn't come over that way. But enough of that; we've exhausted the subject, as I say, and still remain good friends and affectionate colleagues.

As for points where we differ (and I don't mean to have the last word—you can correct my formulations if you want):

-You believe, or write as though you believe, that all well-recognized artists are more or less equal in the amount of good and duller work they produce. You say you rate Shen and Wen, T'ang and Tung, highest in the Ming—I think I'd agree—but object to my saying that the late Che people produced far more routine and repetitive work. I believe that they did—Chang Lu, and even more such painters as Chung Li and Chiang Sung, who seem to devote much of their oeuvre to repeating a few themes and compositions, judging from extant works. So I think what I said is an objectively observable aspect of late Che painting, just as the extraordinary inventiveness and *lack* of routine production is an objectively observable aspect of Soochow painting from, say, 1470 to 1550, and is a good part of what makes the artists of that time superior, including three of your four Ming favorites (and mine). And true of Chou, T'ang, and Ch'iu as much as Shen and Wen—the professional/amateur thing isn't even to the point here. You seem to believe that making observations of this kind constitutes bias, and misleads the reader or student. I believe that it is exercising critical judgement, as we must do if we are to proceed further beyond the Siren stage than we have.

-You believe that my book represents a less "balanced, intelligent assessment" than we have had in the writings of "Siren, or Max Loehr, or Sherman Lee." I would defer immediately in the cases of Loehr and Lee, highly respected older colleagues; but using Siren as an example of the "balance" of older writings, would argue that that kind of balance is just what we don't need any more. It was based on a state-of-the-field in which he (or we, collectively) had not yet seen and studied and assessed enough Chinese paintings in the originals (in spite of Siren's continual travelling and looking), and devoted enough single-minded time and energy to the study, to allow us (him) to discern either the finer discriminations or the larger patterns, as I (and others) are now trying to do. Siren, fine Theosophist that he was, elevated everything to some lofty plane on which it was all more or less the same. True, he would dismiss minor masters with curt words; but he was never good at assessing the real strengths and weaknesses of major ones. We must do better, and exercise critical judgement on particular paintings, artists, even schools or phases of schools, knowing that there will always be exceptions to what we say, and that we will annoy those whose judgements are different.

-You believe that making the kind of correlation I attempted between "life patterns and stylistic directions" is another example of bias and "stacking the deck," and you don't find it "to be very useful" because "It has the effect of belittling artists by making what they do

University of California, Berkeley. Then, however, I realized that almost nothing less than quoting your book in its entirety, or writing another, would provide sufficient background for the Western art-history readership to properly evaluate the review. Having—as always!—my own points of view, I was moved to express those bearing on the issues raised by Dick and had intended then to send copies to each of you in an effort to become part of the dialogue and to extend it as you suggested in your reply to him. But fearing that my unsought-for contribution might not be appreciated, I am sending only you a copy (mailed separately)—which you are of course welcome to send on to Dick—for your comments.

V. H. ROGERS TO BARNHART AND CAHILL, JULY 2, 1981.

Dear Richard Barnhart and Sensei,

On reading Dick's review of *Parting at the Shore* I was first struck by the sheer impossibility of anything found to be so obviously flawed and biased to ever "hold for years to come the authoritative position Siren's work has occupied these two decades," and so decided to examine the major points of the review in an effort to determine the extent to which they were valid or themselves flawed and biased.

The 8th century figure painter Yang Sheng was very much later credited with having developed a landscape style which utilized heavy application of opaque colors; many of the extant works used to represent that style have recently been convincingly related to the 17th century following of Lan Ying. While there is still much that remains to be clarified about the development of painting during the 8th century, that clarification as well as increased understanding of late Ming painting can only be retarded by retaining the old attributions and refusing to consider those paintings within their proper context. While the Detroit picture may not be by Sun Lung himself, it far more certainly does not belong to Ch'ien Hsüan. Further, the stylistic evolution of the P'i-ling school from the 13th to the end of the 14th century precludes inclusion of the scroll within that development. The recently published handscroll by Sun Lung (in *Hua-yüan To-ying* 6) suggests a further loosening of the style evidenced in the Taipei and Shanghai albums, a change which anticipates the freedom of Hsü Wei in the 16th century. The more careful structuring of forms seen in the Detroit picture would seem to precede by some decades the mature work of Sun Lung, and could thus be an early work by him.

Sun Lung was born around 1390, and served as Prefect in Anhui during the T'ien-shun era (1457-1464). His daughter, also a painter, married the artist Jen Tao-hsün (1422-1503). Sun's plum-blossoms were praised together with the bamboo of Hsia Ch'ang, and Tai Chin owned paintings by both Sun and Hsia. Wang Shih-chen praised Sun as "excelling in using ink-wash to make clouds and waves appear and disappear . . .," and Chan Ching-feng commented: ". . . [I have] seen his feathered [birds], furred [animals], grasses, and insects. He studied the boneless conceptions of Sung men, but perfected himself another style, for his evocative, free, and uncolored forms were new conceptions, not derived from the ancients." The new conceptions so evident in Sun's paintings are very close to those of "Early Autumn," and the latter picture should be associated with Sun Lung until there is better understanding of the kind of painting done in the period late Sung to early Ming.

During Tai Chin's years of activity in Peking and association with high court officials he could certainly have been characterized as the most celebrated artist in China. The exact circumstances in which he lived after returning south to Hangchou are in fact unknown. However, according to Tai Chin's earliest and most complete biography, that written by Lang Ying (1487-ca.1556), Tai died in poverty. While we do not know the reason, it is the height of arrogance and—even worse—scholarly irresponsibility to dismiss that record as "popular legend"

contemporaries admired his technique over his person is attested by the wealth of information on what he painted as opposed to a dearth of comment on his person so complete that for him alone of the "Four Great Masters" we know his birth and death dates only approximately through calculations based on his works. While Ch'iu Ying was of course literate in a limited, technical sense, one explanation for his lack of inner resources might well be his "exclusion by birth and upbringing from the literary culture that shaped . . . sensibilities" in Ming China, and to define that as "cultural illiteracy."

I yesterday asked the students in our seminar—who know 15th but not 16th century painting, and who know Cahill's book but not Barnhart's review—two questions: "If you were a painter coming to maturity in the early 16th century, which of the two general trends of 15th century would hold most promise to you for further development," and "Does the esteemed author of *Parting at the Shore* hold any discernible bias for either of those schools?" The answers were immediate and unanimous. To the first they answered that they would follow the trend begun by Tu Ch'ung, Liu Ch'ueh, and Shen Chou because that seemed far more susceptible to further development than the other, which seemed to have most permutations already explored. And to the second question they responded "Yes! For Suchou painting!" The reasoning behind their response to the first question (along with changes in critical standards to be mentioned below) to some extent mirrors that followed in fact by 16th century artists; the styles of Chang Lu, Chung Li, Chiang Sung, and Chu Pang were already individual re-workings of earlier 15th century styles—and especially that of Tai Chin—and however creative and interesting we may find them today—and I include myself among their numerous admirers here—the fact remains that at least in comparison to the untapped resources of the Suchou style the Hangchou vein was very nearly worked out.

An approach to understanding what has been called Jim's "bias" for Suchou painting can perhaps be made through his analogy with Florentine (and I would also include here that of Rome) painting of the 16th-17th centuries. Writing with foreknowledge of 17th century Baroque art, Jim would emphasize the special qualities of Correggio which were appreciated only later but then had wide importance. At the same time he would point to stylistic elements of later Mannerist art which, however appreciated and influential they were in their own day, represented stylistic extremes which could not with aesthetic profit be pushed even further and hence were discarded by the early 17th century painters. Dick, on the other hand, seems in the position of one insisting that we are not really looking at the Mannerists and properly appreciating their achievements; he would have us dig in our feet around the year 1585 and give not only such as Primaticcio but also his followers their just and historic due.

Writing as historians, we could indirectly describe the temporal and stylistic changes between 15th and 16th century Chinese painting by mentioning empirical facts—Li Chu changed from following the style of Shen Chou to following that of Wu Wei; Yen Sung owned more paintings by Tai Chin than he did of Shen; Chiang Ch'ien followed the Wu-school style rather than that of his father, Chiang Sung—and conclude that Tai was held more important or popular than Shen by their contemporaries, and that "Che-style" was more important or popular than "Wu-style" until around the middle of the 16th century. Positioning ourselves around the year 1535, we could further note: that "at that time those with red sashes [i.e. the officials] all commended and honored" Chang Lu; that Chang's pupil, Juan Fu, was doing wall paintings in a Peking temple with "greens and reds of a freshness and brightness not attained by Chiang-nan" painters; that Chiang Sung had recently been highly honored by the Emperor himself and was known for an art based on the atmospheric scenery of Nanking; and that Chu Pang was writing poetic appreciations on a Sung landscape painting (by Ma Yüan).

In Suchou, on the other hand, "our scholars at the beginning of the dynasty still had the air of the previous generation and all liked to study painting . . . After them, from the generation of Chu K'ung-yang, Hsia I-p'ing, Chin Wen-ting, and Ku Ying-wen, paintings are still extant today, but the brush and ink are entirely turbid . . ." And in Sung-chiang "Chu Meng-pien and Chang I-wen painted landscapes which, while good, were merely plays and not necessarily serious. . . . In Wu, Shen Chou is regarded as a Sage of Painting, but among his



specify the style in which the work would be painted, for that remained the means by which the artist expressed his response to the stimulus. Nor would the patron have wanted to control style, for what they wished to possess had much less to do with Tiger Hill or Hsü Yu than with Shen Chou and Tai Chin themselves.

Just as there are major differences between Sung and Yüan painting, so too are there between Yüan and Ming painting of whatever persuasion. For the Yüan period John's contention on the very real importance of *feng-shui* to painting is amply substantiated by Jao Tzu-jan and Huang Kung-wang: the latter states quite plainly that "a painting still has *feng-shui* preserved within it." That means that the forms of nature maintained still an objective reality separate and apart from the artist even when they are embodied in a painting. By the 15th century, however, Truth and Reality were held to be found not in forms or systems external to the perceiver but rather within himself, and when every person carries within him the seeds of enlightenment, the result is to increase the importance of each and every individual and to make his individual perceptions of interest and value. My own assumption is that this is just as true of Hangchou artists as of those from Suchou, and that Chiang Sung's scenes of Nanking are—potentially, at least!—as valid, personal, and expressive as Wen's or Shen's of Suchou.

A further complicating factor is that of the non-artistic modes of expression used by some artists but not by others. Thus, for example, Shen Chou's picture of his "Night Vigil" is found to be fraught with deeply felt and special emotional associations while Tai Chin's "Men in a House over a Stream" is a dazzling virtuoso performance with technical brilliance bordering on the showy and expressing no satisfaction with the here-and-now of either audience or artist. (That's *really* loading it, isn't it!) The point I am trying to make is that it is the combination of Shen Chou's words and image that results in the tremendous impact of that painting, and that the picture without the words is not really all that good as a painting alone. (Compare it, for example, with the Shen Shih in pl. 128 of *Parting*, which is far superior as a painting in that style.) Tai Chin does not tell us who the four men in his pavilion are, but if we had been informed that they were Tai himself together with the two Yang's and Wang Chih—as is certainly possible—would that not change our evaluation of the picture to some considerable degree? The scrolls by Tu Chin and Shih Chung also include calligraphy whose style and content potentially enrich those viewing experiences but the paintings do very well on their own—at least as well as Shen Chou's "Landscape for Liu Chüeh."

A third difficulty in understanding the 15th century Hangchou or Che-masters is brought about by the present scarcity of first-class works to illustrate their achievements. Significantly, I think, enormous numbers of them were collected by Yen Sung, a man whose position enabled him to buy—or to coerce collectors to present—almost anything he desired in the way of painting. His collection was built up around the middle of the 16th century, when critical opinion was just turning against the Che-styles, and he very likely was able to obtain the best of the lot. After his collection was confiscated it entered the Imperial Household Agency treasury. The Chia-ching emperor cared little for painting and calligraphy, and gave many away—in lieu of salary!—to his officials and later the rest were sold. By that time, however, critical opinion had definitely turned against Che-styles, and the paintings then bought, treasured, and preserved were *not* those masterworks of 15th century Che-painting we should so like to find today. One has only to read through the various lists of Yen's collection to find that the range of acceptable subjects in the Academy and Che-school repertory had not narrowed after Tai Chin and that there were indeed works which dealt with the here-and-now of Che-school artists—Tai Chin's "Scenes of West Lake," for example. Some part of the paintings which flooded the market in the 1560s and 70s must simply have perished in neglect; others were brought to Japan (along with *kinrande* and *akae* ceramics) and preserved until the present, some very likely acquiring attributions to Sung painters in transit.

The achievements and value of Che-school painting can to some extent be suggested by their great attractiveness for the Japanese of that time. A great majority of the extant works by "heterodox" masters were found in Japan while very few of those by Suchou masters came over. Nor can this be ascribed simply to availability, for Chan Ching-feng had seen over two



by Wu Wei in *Parting*. But that is *not* an associational group, or we should include Shen Chou and Tai Chin, and is *not* occupational, for their statuses vary, and is *not* geographical, and is *not* organized by biographical similarity, or we should include Tu Ch'ung, but is stylistic and artistic in nature. And, like all such groups, its basis had better be sought in their artistic training and personal psychology rather than in their social, economic, or geographical backgrounds. Each of the artists included in that group received basic training in calligraphy, and as painters, when they chose to "trust their hearts and free their hands" it was as calligraphers that they did so. Shen Chou and Wu Wei, I agree, could not have painted each other's pictures, but because of their different personalities and not at all because their social positions constrained them in any way. Shen Chou, after all, towards the end of the 15th century when rising land taxes made it necessary for him to seek additional income elsewhere, was in the position of selling not only his own works (when he could) but even important earlier paintings in his collection to the Duke of Ch'eng-kuo in Nanking at precisely the same time that Wu Wei was living a privileged life within the Duke's household. There is no conceivable reason to think his "Small Immortal" name was given with anything less than full seriousness, nor that he was exploiting the popularity of any romantic, bohemian image of the artist, for such did not then exist.

That the notion of a "heterodox school" in *Parting* was a resurrection of any kind came as nearly as great a surprise to me as that whatever underlying preferences there may be in the book have prevailed among historians of Chinese painting only since 1950; surely both the "heterodox school" and those "preferences"—which are after all two sides of the same thing—have been in continuous existence since around 1550. It is hardly likely that many readers of the *Art Bulletin* will know much about either Chinese history or Chinese art-history—which is why that journal seems such an unsuitable and even unfair venue for a serious critique of *Parting*—so it would have helped to point out that much of Chinese historical writing has a moral aim: to assess and apportion praise and blame. To a mid-16th century critic, Chang Lu, Chung Li, Chiang Sung, and Chu Pang were indeed "depraved" and "immoral," for they lacked affiliation with a recognized tradition as well as the personal character held necessary for the required transformation of that received heritage. I don't say that that is the only way to evaluate those artists, or even the best way, but then neither did Jim, which is what the review implies. "Rich, flowing ink wash and quick-silver brushwork" is truly a just description of the styles of those artists at their best, but that description in no way explains why such supremely skilful art was not continued, and any art-historian of 15-16th century Chinese painting may be well advised to retain some "scribbles" and "splashes" for use in the 16th century segment of his text.

With all best regards,

Yours,

Howard Rogers

discouraging to find even one's slow steps resisted so mightily by some who should take them seriously, and the old, standard ways reasserted. (Not everybody, of course—I've had good conversations on these matters, with large areas of agreement, with Wai-kam, Kohara, Kuo Chi-sheng, Rick Vinograd, others.) And the most discouraging is the tactic of looking always for the exception, and going to great lengths to find it, or seem to find it, and then producing it as though it invalidated whatever I was trying to say. It is like (I pull an analogy out of the air by looking out of my study window at the trees) someone pointing out that the coast redwoods grow mostly near the coast while the Sequoia gigantea grow mostly up in the Sierras, and somebody says: yes, but what about this Sequoia gigantea growing in Codornices Park? See, you were wrong. Sigh of despair.

For instance, on Che/Wu subject matter. Dick responds by finding a Chang Lu painting of Kaifeng scenery—I look forward to seeing it, and meanwhile accept his report of it. OK, that's one. You pull from the literature something about how Chiang Sung painted Nanking scenery. But the paintings as we have them are preponderantly on my side, I think: you know as well as I that the happy fishermen and woodcutters and virtuous hermits and recluses and all that are typical of Che school painting, and that one finds very little there to compare with the large number of paintings by Soochow artists devoted to particular places, gardens, villas, etc. Why work so hard to avoid the obvious? Do I have to make a statistical study? (We can computerize Chinese painting and do that, and no doubt will, in time.) But observations of this kind are worth making, and shouldn't occasion such resistance, as though in making them I were running down the Che school. Once having made them, we can then investigate why such subjects were chosen. Or commissioned, or whatever it is. Scarlett Jang, one of my students, has been working on a masters thesis on the meanings of the "calling the hermit" and related themes, something I speculated on in writing about Tai Chin, as you recall; she's getting beyond speculation, by reading a lot of literary works etc. and finding out how such paintings functioned, when they were presented to people etc. From the point of view you are arguing throughout your letter, she would have to assume that these were all chosen because the artist felt that way, and it is pure chance that Che school artists felt that way more than others. Which would reduce the subject to meaninglessness, and shut off any progress toward further understanding.

Most disturbing is your arguing against my correlations between style (and subject) and status. You do this at several points, and in different ways. At one point you simply jumble everything together, listing Wen Po-chen, Wen Chia, Wen P'eng, Wen Cheng-ming and Shen Chou all together as "professionals," presumably implying that there is not only no significant difference between them in this regard (they all "sold paintings," or can be suspected to have done so—this is like the old sophomoric argument that all women are whores because at some point in their lives they barter sex for something, even if only a good dinner and a seat at the opera) but also are indistinguishable in this regard from the out-and-out professionals, except in social standing. By that kind of forced jumbling you can indeed discredit any attempt to understand their real status and how it affects their paintings. But that seems to me quite contrary to the evidence we have; they *weren't* all the same in status. At other times you make the argument that all artists are different from each other. True enough; but the corollary isn't, as you and Dick seem to believe, that all artists are therefore equal in respect to professionalism, originality, choice of styles and subjects, etc. And to argue that way doesn't get us anywhere—any study that attempts to define schools, trends, categories, *anything*—must take as the basic assumption that while no two artists or paintings are exactly alike, there will be discernible and definable affinities in characteristics of their paintings or their lives that can be correlated with factors outside "personality." Studies of patronage assume that, as do studies of local movements (such as our Anhui catalog) or any study that tries to relate art to intellectual history or anything else outside the mind of the artist. But you seem to be fighting that at every point. This is hard to understand: why so rock-bound? I am not inventing something, I am pointing something out, and trying to understand it; it is *there*, if you look with some purpose other than trying to find an exception.

intent." I agree, and don't think I denied "serious aesthetic intent" to the many good Che school works I reproduced and discussed, and if I characterized them that way, it wasn't to devalue them. One could say the same, not only about much 20th century painting, as you point out, but also about some of the best Sung painting.

As for the "common, subjective approach" (better without the comma) you argue for paintings by Tai Chin and Shen Chou: I suppose one could make that argument. But can you look over Tai's works and find pictures that seem, by any objective criteria (if such exist), to convey personal experience with the immediacy of Shen's "Gazing at the Mid-Autumn Moon" in the BMFA (cool as that is, in its way) or "Rainy Thoughts" or others? I don't think so, or at least I don't think I could. You suggest that this is only because we have inscriptions associated with the latter; again, I don't think so. Surely we can manage to distinguish between relatively conventional themes, however well painted, and relatively personal and immediate ones? And again, this isn't just a matter of quality (you write, truly enough, that Shen's "Night Vigil" is a less than great painting, as though that were an argument against what I wrote about it). A painting by me of some personal concern would be vastly less good and interesting than one by Ch'eng Shih-fa (in his best manner) of something dictated by his circumstances, as indeed his subjects were/are, most of the time.

John Hay's crusade for *feng-shui* in landscape painting is an interesting approach, and will be illuminating if he can avoid the overstatement he's been prone to. Huang Kung-wang's remark is pretty isolated, isn't it? John's *feng-shui* interpretation of the Fu-ch'un scroll as the fundamental meaning of the painting founders on the fact that in the whole literature on this painting, from Huang's inscription on, he wasn't able to find anything (well, one very minor bit) that interprets it that way. Nor, to my reading, can we find much in other writings on landscape painting that would support such interpretations of them. That some writers from late Ming on use *feng-shui* terminology is interesting, but they use it to set forth compositional concerns, and as part of their desultory efforts to give an old metaphysical basis for landscape painting that is actually going in quite other directions.

This is going on too long; it is very late. I would argue with you, another time, about the Japanese view of Che/Wu; my own recent studies should have established that there were lots of Soochow paintings around for artists to see in Japan, and I don't believe that they had the opportunity to buy real Shen Chous and Wen Cheng-mings and chose not to do so. For that matter, their part in the choice was quite limited, I think; Chinese dealers were bringing through Nagasaki paintings they could get cheap in China and felt would appeal to the Japanese. And they understood well enough how Sung-style pictures, those with strong design and certain decorative values etc. would appeal. But yes, Che school painting was appreciated in Japan after it had become unpopular in China; true enough.

Your material on Chan Ching-feng (see Appendix A) is very interesting, although I'm not sure at every point what you mean by introducing it. Similarly with the long passage on Wen Po-je; is it different, basically, from what I wrote about him? He is indeed a crucial figure in the process of decline that late Ming writers saw Soochow painting as having fallen into, and apart from the Tokyo National Museum series, seems mostly a fairly dull and derivative painter. All the stuff on the relative evaluations of Che and Wu in the 16th century is of great interest. Should I suggest that because you have found and read these pro-Che references, your own positive evaluations are derived from them? I wouldn't; but that seems to be what Dick, and to a lesser degree you, are charging me with. I thought I had made enough unconventional re-evaluations of artists and paintings over the years to be free from suspicion of slipping back into accepting established Chinese evaluations now, and that my judgements could be accepted as reflecting many years of looking at and studying and in a few cases buying paintings, and having strong ideas on what is good and what less good. (Svetlana Alpers, with whom I lunched a few days ago and who had read the review and later the correspondence I gave her—she came to me asking "What has this Richard Barnhart got against you?" a reaction I've had a number of times, although Dick persists in being blandly mystified over my belief that it doesn't read as a basically favorable review—Svetlana, to continue, felt that I had been



P.S. Let me use this space at the bottom of the page for a further attempt at clarifying what I am talking about. You did your masters thesis on Ni Tsan, his stylistic development, authenticity questions, etc. Fine. I wrote about him, in the Skira book, etc., in ways that related his style to his personality/psychology etc., *p'ing-tan* and all that. It was fresh and interesting then, and one level of understanding. More recently I ask other questions: OK, Ni Tsan creates the style; how does it become so popular and prestigious that everybody has to have one? What were the implications of the style for people then, and later? What is behind the popularity of similar styles in Anhui in early Ch'ing and the news that then, similarly, having or not having a Hung-jen determined your level of taste and culture? Is it significant (correlations again) that these purist, "literary" stylistic tendencies flourish in urban settings in times of affluence? Questions discussed, but not resolved, of course, in the late Ming book and the Anhui catalogue. And again, your response was to try to find flaws in the arguments. I am not so much bothered by your arguing against my positions as by your disinclination to offer alternative understandings of the phenomena to which I've called attention. All this is, as I said, quite unworthy of your vast knowledge of Ming-Ch'ing painting and your inquiring mind and your originality of thought; it would seem to be contentiousness carried beyond the point where it is productive.

#### VII. ROGERS LETTER TO CAHILL, JULY 26, 1981.

Dear Sensei,

Your last letter arrived before I had time to reply to the earlier one, but you really needn't have worried; I would have complained only that you seem not to have read my comments slowly enough, for in your response to them you have me saying things which I find very strange and improbable! But for the rest, I find myself in complete agreement with Joan Hartman's comments appended to the end of her review of James Watt's jade exhibition: "There is a disturbing tendency of late, in publications as well as the conference room, for ideas to be presented without comment. Needless to say, unchallenged scholarship does not always represent the truth. Yet one senses an unstipulated understanding that to question is to attack. It is, after all, incumbent upon the scholar to defend his thesis, just as it is incumbent upon his peers to ask him to do so. . . ." New ideas, new approaches, and new research are of course not only desirable but are essential to an increased understanding of our subject, but, like the older work they attempt to supplant or build on, they too must be subjected to close scrutiny so as to determine the degree to which they are founded on fact and the extent to which they answer the problems posed by the material itself. And in this process exceptions to our general theories cannot be dismissed as mere aberrations and of no consequence, but should rather be used to refine and correct the general theories. For example, my earlier comments on the Anhui school should not be taken as any kind of attack on the *concept* of a school—how ridiculous that would be!—but rather in many cases on the consistent implication set forth in those essays that the school was somehow called into existence by the demands of patrons, a position for which no evidence at all was ever presented.

You wrote of Ch'en Hung-shou as one who "understood very clearly the significance of his position in art and society, and did articulate it," which of course is true—but you are the one who argues that professional artists such as Ch'en were entirely outer-directed. I assume you would include Ch'en among the class of "people educated as if to office-holding who don't make it into officialdom. . . , and that they are using the form to articulate the particular concerns of people in their position, and writing for people who will recognize what they are up to in bending or subverting established types and conventions." Such seems a reasonable



those of a pragmatic Chinese!) I think that progress in the field would be best served by apportioning tasks internationally according to talent and approach: the Chinese could supply the source material—the books and paintings—along with their humanistic ethos to be used by all scholars involved in the project; the Japanese would computerize all the paintings, inscriptions, seals, etc. with their admirable patience, accuracy, and thoroughness; and we Americans could then apply our abundance of theories and ideas to that organized material with unmatched enthusiasm, adjusting our conflicts with Japanese sensitivity over Chinese dinners!

But what I want to make clear above all else is that whether or not I agree completely with everything you write, any comments I have or will make are *not* intended simply to "tear to shreds" what you have written, but rather to attempt to strengthen the writings of one I admire above all others in the field.

We do look forward to having you here and being able to talk with you directly and at greater length about many things, even including Chinese painting!

With warmest wishes,

Yours,

Howard

P.S. On your contention that the Japanese had no access to paintings save through Nagasaki: the various Japanese embassies to China in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries—especially those sponsored by the Oouchi and Hosokawa families—are well-documented, and they brought back *akae* but not *i-hsing* wares though both were then readily available, a clear aesthetic choice on their part. Paintings by Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming were then *not* so highly priced as they would become by the end of the sixteenth century, and what evidence I have come across suggests quite clearly that they were readily available for anyone who appreciated their very special qualities.

VIII. BARNHART TO CAHILL, JULY 21, 1981.

Dear Jim,

Here I am, trying very hard to sit at my desk six or eight hours a day/night grinding out page after page on Lung-men and other stony matters, and yesterday brought Howard's long and interesting letter, which required a suspension of more financially rewarding efforts; and now today I get your letter to him: ditto. I'll never make my deadline!

As you again explain it to Howard, this interest in identifying common patterns of life and art seems to me very primitive. You look at two men, and say, look, they both have two eyes and two ears and hair on their heads, and so they are exactly alike. OK. You would perhaps say, "They resemble each other." In human psychology and physiology I presume that identifying common traits is clinically important and necessary; it is diagnostic, helping us and those who study us realize what we have in common as human beings, and thus helping us to deal with our problems. But what makes us each ourselves is in any case unique, and only the most penetrating understanding of our individuality can reveal anything truly significant about any individual person. When one tries to translate these matters into the realm of art and artists, it is easy (for me) to see that while we need to be concerned with how one painter resembles

most useful work in art history these days is being done in rather traditional ways. It is the questions we ask ourselves that account for the interest, and I like and am stimulated by the questions you are asking—without always agreeing that the approaches you take toward finding the answers are the most fruitful. You are undoubtedly advancing the field in ways it is too early to predict. For the time, at least, I will continue to maintain less inventive methods in the belief that they may still provide useful answers to questions worth asking. The CAA panel next year is not concerned with painting only—or so I hope—nor is the point merely to once again elaborate Western methods of formal analysis in the service of Chinese art. I hope rather to have papers that deal with stylistic and formal matters in Chinese art from an intrinsically Chinese standpoint, that is, Chinese rather than European definitions of formal meaning. I will give a paper on Wang Shen and the notion common among admirers of his art of a "dream landscape" that is formally and expressively quite different from the moral landscape of the earlier Sung period. I am hopeful that Judy Ho will give a paper on native traditions in the earliest caves at Tun-huang. I may also persuade someone to try once again to define a Taoist style in Yüan painting. I would be very interested to hear more about Rick Vinograd's ideas of dream visions in painting; I gather his interest lies in the projection into art of actual dreams? John Hay has been interested in that idea too, in a vague way.

Well, so long until tomorrow!

Best Regards,

Richard Barnhart

P.S. I am thinking of writing a little essay on how James Cahill's methods, views, and activities are conditioned by his California background. It is well known how life patterns and stylistic directions are formed by the California syndrome. Ha ha!

#### IX. CAHILL LETTER TO BARNHART, JULY 24, 1981.

Dear Dick,

Our correspondence has really been very interesting, I think, and valuable in obliging or allowing both of us to define our positions. I do think that some portions of it, at least, should be distributed in some way—my students found it interesting reading.

Your position becomes clearer in your July 21 letter. At the same time, I must say that I can't believe you have thought through its implications, because if you carried out those implications, you could not be a practicing art historian. Art critic, perhaps, art biographer yes, but not art historian.

Yes, of course every artist and every painting is unique, unlike every other, and of course the differences are most interesting, and so forth. And T'ang Yin and Wen Cheng-ming no doubt felt, as artists do, that they had perfect freedom and were painting differently, as you suggest, as a matter of choice. All that is unobjectionable as far as it goes; but it doesn't go far enough. If you set yourself up as opposed to defining what artists of similar social status or life-pattern have in common in their works, you will be obliged, by the insistence that

can explain anything (the artist felt that way, the artist was that kind of person) ultimately doesn't explain anything. Even in relating Ni Tsan's landscapes to his personality, as I and others have, we do this in a framework of understanding of what the possibilities in landscape were, how the paintings related to the precedents of Huang Kung-wang and Chao Meng-fu etc. in dry, spare landscapes, what the alternatives were and *their* significance. Ni Tsan didn't—couldn't—simply create a landscape type or style out of thin air to express his particular feelings and personality; he had to utilize, and alter, and re-combine, elements of style that already existed and (most important) already had meanings attached to them that were intelligible for the people who saw his paintings. Otherwise, the paintings wouldn't "work" expressively.

On other things in your letter, I will simply have to disagree without arguing at length. I *do* see things of great interest being done by Western colleagues outside the traditional style and iconography framework. I think patronage *is* fruitful and interesting. Semiology is *not* a bust, although it has been carried to absurd ends, used for obscurantist stuff, etc., and in spite of the recent panel at the CAA in S.F. which ended in shambles and could have persuaded anyone who based an opinion just on that session that it is indeed useless. Svetlana would be very pleased at your view that she is extraordinary (she is) and appalled at the news that she is quite traditional (she isn't). Anyway, I will make no further efforts to convert you—example is more useful than arguments anyway, and you either will or won't be persuaded and affected by my various writings that will be coming out in the next year or two. But quite apart from what you think of my efforts, I will be very surprised if, ten years from now, you still think that the traditional stylistic approach is, then or now, the way to go. I will note the date and put the question to you then. Or maybe five years will do.

One last note: you say you'll try to find someone to "define a Taoist style in Yüan painting." Another set of coordinates for style—religious. You seem to accept all of them except the social-economic, while making arguments that would in fact invalidate all the others as well. I mean: in speaking of "a Taoist style" in Yüan painting you are presumably saying that artists who were also Taoists tend to paint pictures with certain definable characteristics. If you were to try to make the definition by *subject* you would be in trouble—the same landscapes, ink bamboo, plum branches; and if you try to see it as some natural expression of the Taoist temperament or whatever, you are in *worse* trouble. So it has to be, I think, based on the assumption that certain traits of style had come to be associated with Taoism and Taoists, which is what I would suppose. How they came to be so associated is a different question, and one usually not answerable. And if you grant that, I don't see how you can continue to deny that certain traits of style, choices of subject, etc. were similarly associated with artists who occupied particular positions in Chinese society, fitted certain patterns in their careers, etc. As indeed they were. And if you say, as you seem to be now, this is true but not important, or not what we should be looking at, then: why do you want someone to define a Taoist style? or any other style that extends over more than one artist, or more than one painting?

Anyway, it sounds as though it may well be a more interesting session than the announced subject might promise (as I assumed would be the case) and I hope I can get there.

All the best to you and Joan.

Yours,

James Cahill

sought his paintings considered even a single brushstroke as precious as gold." The high regard for Tai Chin among the scholar-gentry comes not from the *Chin-ling so-shih*, but from the collected writings of a large group of the most influential men of the time, from Tu Ch'ung and Shen Chou to Li Tung-yang and Li Meng-yang, Wang Ao, Yang Shih-ch'i, and on to Chu Yun-ming and others. In Li K'ai-hsien's *Hua-p'in* of 1545 Tai is unequivocally the greatest painter of the dynasty, and even Wang Shih-chen a little later maintains that view. There is nothing remotely fictional about any of this; it is a matter of record.

The fiction begins in the sixteenth century, among both Tai's admirers and his critics, and this of course is the very age in which the issues of professionalism, correct traditions, orthodoxy, academicism, and good breeding were at their peak. All of the main 16th century biographies of Tai Chin were written around the same time, including those of Lang Ying, Lu Shen, and Li K'ai-hsien, and as Ch'en Fang-mei and others have established these stories are full of chronological, geographic and other impossibilities that render them dubious insofar as historical fact is concerned, the more so when such matters as his poverty seem clearly contradicted by earlier, more dependable evidence. Why this fiction began is the question, and I am convinced the reason is closely tied to other issues current in the sixteenth century. One can only guess, at this time, but I suspect that Tai's admirers were seeking to heroicize his life and to clearly separate him from the court and the "academy," since both had been newly set up as the abode of merely "capable" painters in the Southern Sung academic tradition. It is really too much to have all of the key Hsüan-te academicians jealous of him (but what better way to indicate that he had nothing in common with the court painters), threaten to have him killed, and then a short while later welcome him back to good grace—after fleeing in the night to Hangchou, hiding out in temples there, then running all the way to Yunnan where, of all people, Shih Jui, who tried to have him killed in Peking, now praised him, securing his reputation and saving his life. Just trying to reconcile the contradictions in all of this is a fictional game in itself. Hsieh Huan, learned and affable companion of the Yangs, and their portraitist, attempts to kill Tai Chin. Tai escapes and returns to Peking and who are his mentors and patrons? The Yangs! All in all, it is undoubtedly best to look benignly at this sixteenth century baloney, and see it as a product of precisely the same mentalities and critical directions that produced a "wild and heterodox school" at about the same time. Jim says it best (p. 258, note 14): "This chronological disparity is difficult to resolve; Lang Ying, writing about a century or so after the events, must have had faulty information."

That the National University attended by Chang Lu was that in Peking, and not Nanking, can be stated with a good deal more certainty than the reverse, as you put it, since it is a fact that he attended, indeed bought his way into, the National University in Peking, not Nanking. Check Chu An-k'an's biography in *Ming Wen-hai*, ch. 419.

Can you really mean that because an old painter and a young painter were both alive at the same time that they were therefore contemporaries? By that measure Mozart and Beethoven were contemporaries. Why get worked up about a simple factual correction? Shih Chung was a mature man and painter when Chiang Sung was a young man.

On the very large matter of the decline of the Che School and the term "Wild and Heterodox" you offer a lot of useful observation and information. I would have stolen some of it when I wrote the "Wild and Heterodox" paper I enclose a couple of years ago for the Breckinridge conference. It sounds as if you hadn't seen it, but if you had, no harm done in mailing you a copy. Just throw it away. It is a very superficial treatment of a fascinating critical question that can and should be more seriously examined—as you seem to be doing. Someone at Columbia—I always forget her name [note: it is Louisa Ting]—is also working on 16th century theory. Mostly, of course, I agree with what you are writing about the sixteenth-century Che and Wu schools and their merits and demerits.

I don't think you quite understand what I am saying in the review, however. The term "Wild and Heterodox" was not originally used for only late sixteenth century Che School painters. Its initial formulation included both fifteenth and sixteenth century masters, and quickly, by the seventeenth century, the "Heterodox School" simply meant the "Che School."



more dramatic and charged than they have any reason to be. Perhaps, therefore, public scholarly disagreement honestly expressed has more bad than good effect, and comments like mine would be better put into a personal letter. I'm not convinced of that yet, but, seeing the reaction to the review, pro and con, it is something that I am giving much thought to. I remember well how aroused and angered I was at Max Loehr's review of Chu-ting Li's *Autumn Colors* when I was a graduate student in the mid-sixties. Loehr was quite right in almost everything, however, and Li's book has survived and endured very nicely. Was anything accomplished? I think we were all sharpened a bit, and thought about things we might not have otherwise. We'll see. If the wagons are drawn up in all camps and the rifles loaded, as almost happened—or perhaps did!—back in the early sixties, we shall all withdraw into our studies and write quiet books on quiet subjects.

I enjoyed your letter—mostly—and benefited from it. I don't have your address, so will send this through Jim.

Best regards,

Richard Barnhart

#### XI. BARNHART LETTER TO CAHILL, AUGUST 7, 1981.

Dear Jim,

Joan has been teaching and playing at the Yale summer school of music and art in Norfolk, Ct. for the past month (a chamber music semester, playing mostly with the Tokyo Quartet, who are in residence there each summer). I've been running back and forth, occasionally picking up my mail, and trying to finish my book ms. I understand that you are off to the Far East soon? So this will probably be the last exchange.

I've benefited from it, and it might be worthwhile to distribute some parts of the correspondence. Most of what we have both been saying is old hat, though, and would be of the most limited interest outside a narrow sphere. The essentials have been said better by other art historians for a long time, and will come as no surprise to our colleagues.

The trend of art history these days is to take a keen interest in virtually everything except art, and I see your views on our tendencies as a part of this general trend. I can certainly not do anything at all to prevent what is obviously a wholesale pattern of art historical scholarship, but I will continue to point out, whenever possible, that most of the generalizations based upon these kinds of research do not hold water, and do very little—at most—to illuminate the meanings of art and artists. Classical art history has become so rare that, to hear something like the paper [x] read at CAA—a straightforward formal analysis and description of a well-known American painting aimed at demonstrating how much could be learned just by looking at a work of art—was, for me, like hearing some kind of poetry. I literally shivered at the beauty and effectiveness of it. Formal and iconographic analysis—both in the broadest and deepest sense—are the only things an art historian can do with a truth and intellectual rigor that no one else can approach. Iconography may take him into religion, literature, social history, philosophy, and much else, but if those aspects of culture do not actually bring meaning to the work of art or to the artist, then they are so much smoke. Your concern for the state of art history is shared by many, if not most of my colleagues at Yale. It is not shared by me, because I see lit-

entirely different periods. Why not compare Ma Yüan with Hsia Kuei? Or Hsü Tao-ning with Kuo Hsi? Your approach can tell us nothing useful about why they are both similar in certain superficial respects, and totally different in all essentials. And if you cannot tell us how and why they are different, then you are not writing art history at all, but perhaps some kind of social history that does not bear upon art. It is ridiculously easy to point out all of the things shared in common by Hsia Kuei and Ma Yüan, or by Wu Wei and T'ang Yin. But Hsia Kuei is not at all like Ma Yüan when it comes to painting, and Wu Wei is not like T'ang Yin. So what's the point?

Yüan Taoist painting, if there was such a thing, is potentially interesting and fruitful as a subject for study because it may be the one discrete religious-philosophical phenomenon that can be isolated and described. Ch'an painting in the 13th century is possibly another, but the coordinates, as you would say, are difficult to document. There does seem to have been a range of ideas and ideals tied to stylistic preferences that were shared by a small group of Taoist painters in the mid-14th century. They, the painters, were all closely connected by friendship, master-student lineage, and geographical affinities. To identify such a group would be no different from identifying a late Yüan Suchou group of *wen-jen*, art historically, and is unrelated to your effort to characterize widely divergent artists as somehow all motivated in art by the same social-economic factors. Neither the Yüan Taoist painters nor, need I say again? your Ming painters are alike in any final sense. What you attempt fails because of the value judgements implied, the intrinsic artistic elements that are neglected or confused with other things, and the claim that very different artists are alike. None of this need be implied in the definition or description of a discretely related, short-lived group of Taoists who created a distinctive style, or range of style, peculiar to them. If there was such a thing. In other words, we know how certain groups of *wen-jen* artists shared certain ideals; we know how certain groups of court painters shared certain ideals. But we don't yet know how certain groups of Taoist or Buddhist painters shared certain ideals. Right?

You miss the point of my joking suggestion about a study of your background and its affect on your thought. That might indeed be interesting to someone. What you have done, in effect, is to say that you and I are identical, because there are so many common factors in our lives, when it is clear to anyone that this is false. You and I have just about as much in common as Wu Wei and T'ang Yin (I'm even Anglo-Irish), but it would be manifestly ridiculous to claim that any of those common bonds are relevant to an understanding of why we are different. That is what you do with Ming painters, except that you don't even ask how they are different, only what makes them similar. It's as if you set out to ask and answer the question, "Why are Dick Edwards and I so similar, seeing as how we're both historians of Chinese painting of a certain background, certain social-economic position, certain shared beliefs, etc." when the very question is based upon false assumptions: what matters is how you differ. Even if we follow close patterns of relationship, you and Loehr, I and Fong, Fong and Rowley, Howard and you, John Hay and Fong, we will soon realize that whatever shared values there are, it is finally the differences that matter, and this is absolutely clear right now. Just because 500 years from now the distinctions will be blurred does not make them less real; it will in fact make the blurring a falsification of reality, an accident of time, not to be dignified by your espousal of the blurring as some kind of admirable historical scholarship. Scholarship of that kind is just a game, playing around with bland, empty ideas.

Now I feel as if we are flowing along with the arguments, and have left whatever started the flow far behind. It does seem to me that you have become reluctant to deal with art as art, preferring instead the play of ideas drifting around art and artists. Since so many art historians are taking the same approach (they are not the same!) perhaps we can simply attribute this to a series of social-economic-cultural-intellectual coordinates, and let it go at that.

Is there any way I can persuade you to be the one and only discussant at the CAA panel? I ask knowing that you are not sympathetic to the general approach through form and style, and

In the following paragraph you provide a perfectly good outline of what I have been arguing, and then say that *if* I had said that, you wouldn't object. "If you, in your definition of life patterns and stylistic choices, had concluded that a number of painters with certain common elements of background and social position held to the distinguished ideal of the Sung (and even T'ang) tradition and emulated the artistic model of the virtuoso rather than the cultured scholar . . ." If you can find anything I wrote that is inconsistent with that, let me know. The marvel is that you can write it and then go on to argue that the "certain common elements of background and social position" had nothing to do with the fact that they all made these particular choices, while other artists with other common elements made other ones. You would permit me to make the observation, but not to try to understand it; that reduces it to insignificance. It is not insignificant.

It wasn't "a few" painters who followed Yüan period *wen-jen* models in the Ming, nor can this properly, I think, be characterized as a "kind of classical orthodoxy" in this period. Maybe early Ch'ing, not now. These models were a great enriching force in the works of Shen and Wen and their predecessors and followers, and no more an orthodoxy than Sung was for the Che school. (The latter more so, it would seem to me; but there we get back to our argument about the incidence of stereotyped compositions etc. in later Che school painting.)

Yes, Ma Yüan is different from Hsia Kuei, and T'ang Yin from Wu Wei; but unless we can define what the two former have in common that distinguishes their works profoundly from the two latter, we are scarcely fulfilling our responsibilities as art historians. This is another basic theme in all our correspondence; since no two artists or paintings are just alike, you argue, "What's the point?" in trying to define the characteristics that hold together a school, or help us to understand, in the broadest way, a period. If you can't or won't tell your students what characterizes Southern Sung academy painting, I wonder what your lectures are like. (A rhetorical question; I'm sure they are very perceptive and good, far beyond what your theoretical position would properly allow.)

And again: if your study of Taoist painting, or the study you think someone should do, concludes by suggesting that it is all a matter of the painters having been "closely connected by friendship, master-student lineage, and geographical affinities," it will fall considerably short of what a study of Taoist painting in Yüan should be, it seems to me—it won't consider the question, that is, of what the painters being *Taoists* had to do with it, and why their works can be distinguished (as they must be, if the subject is to be interesting at all) from those of their friends and townsmen and fellow-students who *weren't* Taoists. If Yüan Taoism is "the one discrete religious-philosophical phenomenon that can be isolated and described," as you write, and then it turns out that after isolating and describing it, you find it has nothing to do with the paintings—well.

Another issue that keeps coming up, or another kind of argument you have used throughout, is the one that says: we can't really know everything (T'ang Yin doesn't tell us why he paints in Li T'ang style; we don't know how Taoist or Buddhist painters shared certain ideals; etc.) and therefore it is useless to try to understand these phenomena on what evidence we have. Baxandall wrote of this kind of argument, in a short piece on directions in art history, as the equivalent of saying to a runner: since you can't get from here to there in *no time at all*, it is useless to run fast. A common, and fallacious, kind of argument.

So: if I have "become reluctant to deal with art as art" it is by a pretty narrow definition of art and how it operates. Or works, conveys meaning, however you want to state it. I have on the contrary become very enthusiastic about dealing with Chinese painting as art in the way I now want to understand art. Time will tell whether this is found useful by the profession at large.

I would like very much to agree to your invitation that I be the discussant at your session in the CAA panel. The problem is that my university funds us to learned gatherings only when we are giving papers; also, that I decided some years ago (at a particularly depressing meeting in Chicago) that I wouldn't go to CAA meetings for a while; I did go to a few sessions when it



sion of major masters in the Yüan provided it; and this provides the rich heritage (no, not an orthodoxy) that the Ming masters could draw on. And very high-class work could be done *either* under self-motivated, expressionist circumstances or outer-motivated ones, commissions, production of functional pictures, etc. The huge Yin Hung birds-and-flowers bought by Cleveland some years ago—I saw it in a Tokyo dealer's and recommended it to Sherman—is a splendid picture; but if we were to see it as Yin Hung expressing himself and choosing the subject and style (Sung) in the same way that Shen Chou chose to paint sometimes in the Ni Tsan manner, we would be distorting the character of the picture terribly. But if I were to write that it had a function similar to that of the Japanese screen, and fulfilled it excellently, and was full of auspicious symbolism and wasn't exactly meant for quiet aesthetic contemplation etc.—all perfectly true observations—you would jump on this as biased and unfair, since *you* (not I) see these as unworthy objectives. Or, if you allow these for Yin Hung (hard to see how you could avoid doing so) then where to draw the line? Lü Chi? Lin Liang? The fact that it isn't a clear line, and that a great deal of artistic production partakes of both, i.e. is more complexly motivated than the simple models at the extremes, doesn't by any means invalidate the attempt to locate a painting or an artist within this issue, understand how he stands in relation to it. In fact, once you acknowledge that it's possible for artists to work under non-self-motivated circumstances, and have their subjects and styles in large degree imposed on them (which is, of course, still far from determining altogether the outcome of the painting) I don't see how you can *avoid* trying to understand where the artist stands in this respect. And if you go on arguing that nothing but self-motivation and self-expression produces good painting, as you seem to be, you will eventually find yourself (not me) in the position of downgrading a lot of very good painters who aren't doing that.

### XIII. BARNHART LETTER TO CAHILL, MAY 14, 1982.

Dear Jim:

Reading through our correspondence after a long absence I find it occasionally interesting and quite distant—another time, other people. One thing that struck me is how often we all chose to misunderstand one another.

The fascination these days among art historians with structural-linguistic models and socio-economic theories of causation has given us much benefit. Such work possesses intellectual interest, but by my yardstick—whether it aids my understanding of Chinese art—I have not found it useful.

The problem is simple. We cannot transfer—however much we may wish to do so—the state of European art studies into Chinese art history. All, or nearly all, of the basic work of documentation has been done thoroughly throughout most of the span of Western art. There is a vast and solid body of scholarship resolving most of the essential historical questions of biography, documents, monuments, meanings, and context. Therefore, one is naturally drawn to sophisticated critical interpretation and deep theories of structure and causation. They are the logical interests suggested by the state of the field.

In our case, consider the differences. To an embarrassing degree we still don't know who painted what or when. Our understanding of meanings is minimal. We deal with a tradition whose later history is the product of something less than an even remotely unprotective point of view. These, therefore, are the issues that demand our attention.

Some of what you are doing these days is out of sync with the necessities of the field; there is no basis for it yet. Perhaps in a generation there will be, but for now "life patterns and stylistic directions" and the "Heterodox School" are theories built upon unacceptable attribu-



Yet even if everyone could eventually be convinced that each approach had its own value, and all had a clear understanding of the nature of the insights yielded by a given methodology, disagreements over conclusions would still occur. There would, I think, be differing opinions not only over procedures to be followed in applying these varying methods but also over the extent and nature of the material to be considered adequate for the purpose. At what point, for example, is a trend confirmed; when do exceptions cease to prove but rather to disprove the rule; how is relative weight to be apportioned between contemporaneous accounts which differ from one another; to what extent must the abstract theories with which we determine artistic significance be relatable and related to extant or recorded paintings? The answers cannot of course be quantified, and we all of necessity formulate hypotheses on the basis of what paintings we have already seen or read about and on what we know or think we know about the process of artistic creation in general and any given context in particular, and then change or refine our ideas as we see, learn, and think more, but seldom do we explicitly state the assumptions which underly our so-firm conclusions. Differing assumptions may thus guide our interpretations, and these in turn lead to different conclusions, and then we are faced with the problem of choosing between competing solutions to art-historical problems. For example, someone might carefully study all the records concerning Mi Fu and Kao K'o-kung and conclude that they both painted the way they did because they were of Central Asian origin, or study Tung Pang-ta and decide that the primary artistic determinant in his case was the fact that his surname was the same as that of Tung Yüan and Tung Ch'i-ch'ang. Those conclusions would then rest on facts of a certain order (not, I quickly agree, of the kind we normally think of artistic significance but yet of possible consequence in any particular case), but we would still probably want to oppose those solutions even while recognizing the importance of geographic or blood relationships in other cases. Conclusions may thus be in accord with certain facts without being especially persuasive on any other grounds, but do we then dispute the conclusion itself or the particular methodology which yielded it? In sum, to cut this short, the correspondence seems to me too often to confuse disputes over conclusions with those over methodology, and to mix-up disagreements about the latter with differing interpretations of source material because of dissimilar basic assumptions held by the interpreters.

A re-reading of the exchanges between you and Dick and what I have of my own letters does, however, turn up what I do find of some potential value to others, and that is the strong and obviously genuine expressions of concern for the accuracy and depth of our perception of the development of Chinese painting. The message communicated most strongly is that such questions *matter*, and while those problems may elsewhere, at another time, be argued with greater accuracy and insight, they will not likely be treated by any with a greater degree of commitment. Since it also occurs to me that without my contribution some part of the responses make less sense, I will, against my first inclination, agree with the idea if you still want to go ahead with it, but would suggest that very little editing be done (beyond leaving a blank for the names of your colleagues who might indeed be unhappy at times) so as to retain what may be the chief value.

With warm regards to you and Dorothy,

Yours,

Howard

### Chou Ch'en's

"landscapes were modelled on all the famous masters of the Sung and Yüan, but those modelled on Li T'ang were most excellent. His brush methods were maturely-diligent and antiquesly-elegant, somewhat lacking only in ripe unctuousness and that was all. However, the classical canons of the ancients are all present, and even when he 'trusted his heart' and freed his hand very seldom were his ideas not realized. His arrangements of scenery and figures are most exciting yet stable, extremely subtle and profound . . . Those that I have seen of Shun-ch'en's small scrolls, long handscrolls, fan-faces, and small albums—work after work is linked with destiny. Only in large scrolls are some unpraiseworthy."

Comparison of this judgement with that rendered on Shen Chou suggests that Chan Ching-feng was concerned not with status nor with elevating one stylistic tradition over another—Sung over Yüan, for example—but rather with artistic approach and with the technical competence necessary to support that approach. Chan believed that "painting studies begin with tracing and copying." Shen Chou excelled in this stage of the approach, but, unlike Chou Ch'en, failed to effect the transformation that would result in paintings that were "exciting" and individual while yet preserving traces of the "ancients' footsteps." Technique was to be mastered to the extent that when the artist chose to expressionistically "trust his heart," the painting would still express the artist's ideas rather than being only "disorderly and rough."

"Wen Cheng-ming's small-scale landscapes were modelled after [those of] Tung Yüan, Chao Ch'ien-li [Po-chü], Tzu-chiu [Huang Kung-wang], and, in some cases, Wu Chung-kuei [Chen]. His brushwork is clear and lively, suffused with ripeness, and is pleasantly loose; other brushwork is fine to an extreme degree . . . Although not skilled in figure-drawing his conception still reaches antique elegance, and, moreover, he himself relied on awkwardness to bring about their subtleties. The orchids, bamboo, narcissus, and plum blossoms that he did are also pure and excellent. It is only in his large scrolls that the strength of the aura is rather weak, and then it seems that he was unable to compose and arrange. This is like taking a ball of silk wadding to represent the great parade-ground's target; even if one bores the wadding he will not be called heroic and remarkable . . . In this [Ming] dynasty, among small format landscapists, Cheng-chung [Wen Cheng-ming] is the foremost; in large scrolls, on the other hand, Shen Ch'i-nan [Chou] and Tai Wen-chin [Chin] together are number one."

The point of Chan's analogy seems to be that within certain limits Wen Cheng-ming was an excellent artist, but that precisely because of those limitations he could not be placed on a par with those who were not so limited. None the less, Chan listed, and praised, many of Wen's seemingly innumerable students, friends, and followers, but from among all of them singled out two as being the best: Ch'ien Ku and Chu Lang. In Chan's scheme of things these latter two are paired with the two foremost students of Chou Ch'en: Shen Shih and Ch'iu Ying. "This was Wu's time of florescence; after Shen and Ch'ien left the world, painting in Wu then became desolate and empty."

Today, any scheme that lumps Wen Cheng-ming with Chou Ch'en, or Ch'ien Ku with Ch'iu Ying, is immediately open not only to doubt but to ridicule. Chan's evaluations, however, were based neither on status nor on style *per se*—though his stylistic acumen is readily apparent in his characterization of that of Hsieh Shih-ch'en as "thirty percent Hsia Kuei, seventy percent Wu Chen"—but, as was suggested above, on the historical knowledgeability, on the technical competence, and on the inventive capacity of the artist in question. Chan's standards, though derived basically from his study of calligraphy, applied equally well to painting: "I say: painting that does not enter the patterns and tracks of T'ang and Sung men is like calligraphy which does not enter the patterns and tracks of Chin and T'ang men. If it only enters the 'vulgar eye,' in the end it will not be orthodox and correct." For Chan, true expressiveness and real greatness were possible only through initial subservience to the past, through serving an apprenticeship of a kind that would internalize the ancient canons of style and technique and

Cheng-ming subjected to some of the criticisms leveled at Ch'iu Ying and Chou Ch'en. If the distinctions were not drawn on the basis of style, was it then on the basis of economic standing—Ch'iu, Chou, and Hsieh sold their paintings for cash, while Shen and Wen did not? Chan Ching-feng commented:

"[Wen Po-jen's] character was most mean and vulgar. Depending on whether the coins given by the customer were many or few, the scenery done within the painting was greater or less. Thus among his paintings are those that reach the disorderly roughness of common and inferior [work]. Those not worth looking at in all cases are those for which the customer gave few coins. However, this is solely limited to small scrolls."

Chan's censure was given here not to the fact of Wen's selling his paintings—suggesting that the practice was unremarkable at that time—but rather to the meanness of Wen's approach to filling commissions.

If we assume, as seems reasonable, that Wen Po-jen was considered one of the most eminent members of the Suchou school, and if, as Chan clearly states, Wen painted for his living, then Chou Ch'en's Suchou critics—whose ranks may well have included Wen Po-jen himself—can hardly have faulted Chou Ch'en in retrospect for a practice that in their own time was acceptable. Having eliminated artistic style and economic status as prime determinants, we are thus left with scholastic attainment or social status as the principal criteria applied to their own by critics in Suchou.

Two other anecdotes concerning Wen Po-jen, recounted by Chou Hui in his *Chin-ling So-shih*, bear on late sixteenth century attitudes in Suchou:

"Wen Po-jen, Heng-shan's [Wen Cheng-ming] nephew, in painting was famed not lower than Heng-shan [himself]. He was easily offended, and would curse and sit [in a sulk]. Men for the most part were unable to bear [him]. He lodged in the Hsi-hsi Temple's White Deer Spring Retreat for several years. There was one from East Mountain surnamed Hsü who ceremoniously invited Po-jen to come to his home and, in a waterside pavilion, to do paintings. The waterside pavilion abutted on Lake T'ai. The guest and host were conversing when they had some slight disagreement. Po-jen proceeded to raise his hands to one side and loudly curse. Hsü, unable to suffer in silence, then said: 'Wen Po-jen, in my house how dare you misbehave like this! If today I throw you into Lake T'ai, who would know it?' He hastily summoned the household servants, and several came and bound Po-jen. Reckoning that there was no way out, [Po-jen] prostrated himself and begged for forgiveness. Hsü, in the upper seat [of honor], took a large stone and pressed it on [Po-jen's] head; enumerating the successive events of [Po-jen's] life, [Hsü] spat at and cursed him. Po-jen could answer 'Yes! Yes!' and that was all. Hsü then exempted him from acting as fish and turtle bait."

Wen Po-jen again appears as a professional artist working on commission, but again that fact excites no special notice, suggesting yet again that such a practice was considered unremarkable at that time. However, Hsü's initial invitation to Wen was most respectful, which indicates that Wen's social status was above that of a common artisan who presumably would have been "hired" to come and do the pavilion paintings rather than "invited." None of Wen's biographers suggest in any way that he was particularly refined or learned; quite the contrary, they universally proclaim him a boor. It is thus quite probable that Wen commanded such respect as he did not through any individual merit of his own but rather through his familial connections to the gentry family of Wen Cheng-ming. Such respect was conditional, however, upon Wen Po-jen's espousal of the standards of etiquette of that class, and when his behavior failed to conform to that pattern he had no protection—legal or otherwise—against the rage of Hsü.

The other story told by Chou Hui relates to Wen's knowledge of historical styles:

"Wen Po-jen, in his youthful years, engaged with his uncle, Cheng-chung, in mutual litigation and was imprisoned in jail. His illness at a crisis, in the night he dreamed

would have been unacceptable in the early sixteenth century, but which, in the seventeenth century, became almost inextricably enmeshed with more pertinent artistic criteria, and which still bedevil modern evaluations of the status of those artists.

In view of the heights to which the Suchou school had risen, the finale, as suggested in Chan's remarks on two of his Suchou friends, is almost painfully sad:

"The two men [Mo Shih-lung and Ku Cheng-i] both studied Huang Tzu-chiu [Kung-wang]. When on the one hand they only paint fan-faces as well as small scrolls seven or eight inches wide and two or so feet high, then these are superior and distinctly elegant, whole and complete without flaw and worth preserving. If the scroll is rather wider and longer, however, then in mountain after mountain the shape is the same, and in tree after tree the appearance is similar. Hanging these reveals their miserable impoverishment—unworthy of having their grade determined. Yet these two masters perversely enjoy doing large scrolls for people and unfortunately do not know themselves [and their limitations]. Once they asked me: 'Will the paintings of your two younger brothers be perpetuated or not?' I answered them saying: 'The scrolls of my two elder brothers are 'the smaller the better, the better the more perpetuation.' The two masters also agreed, but sighed and said: 'There is nothing for it when people ask us to do large scrolls!' "

Just as the Suchou school in its ascendancy under Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming had replaced the Che-chiang school of the Yüan and early Ming periods, so now was the stage set for the replacement of the impoverished Suchou school by the rising Hua-t'ing school of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang. As documented by Chan Ching-feng, a school that had achieved its eminence through dual emphasis on historical studies and on the development of technical skills ended in technical incompetence and supine acceptance of outer demands.



it; for a time, the issue of "sinology vs. art history" was argued. It is no longer argued; everyone seriously involved in the field is expected to have some competence in both.

Around this time also, some Chinese scholars and collectors came to the U.S. who were to have an important impact on our studies. Chi-ch'ien Wang came in the late 1940s, bringing great paintings and also a great tradition of connoisseurship. Scholars from China included Chu-ting Li, Wai-kam Ho, Ju-hsi Chou; and from Japan, Kiyohiko Munakata. In the late 1950s, Shujiro Shimada joined the faculty at Princeton, bringing the best of Japanese scholarship in Chinese painting to the U.S.

From the early 1950s a number of doctoral dissertations in Chinese painting were written. Some took single artists as topics: Richard Edwards' Shen Chou, my own Wu Chen, later Martie Young's Ch'iu Ying, Anne Clapp's Wen Cheng-ming, etc. Michael Sullivan wrote on early landscape painting in China (later published as *The Birth of Chinese Landscape Painting*), followed more recently by a volume on Sui-T'ang landscape. Wen Fong wrote on the Daitokuji's 500 Arhats series. Still others did translations with commentary as dissertations, especially Loehr pupils—Thomas Lawton on An Ch'i and his catalog, Robert Maeda on 12th Century Texts, Susan Bush on Literati Painting Theory. Other dissertations included Chu-ting Li's on Chao Meng-fu, which he followed by other major studies of Yüan painting; Nelson Wu on Tung Ch'i-ch'ang; Harrie Vanderstappen on Ming court artists. Princeton dissertations have typically taken a single painting as a subject: Richard Barnhart's on Li Kung-lin's *Hsiao-ching t'u*, Roderick Whitfield on Chang Tse-tuan's Ch'ing-ming scroll, John Hay on Huang Kung-wang's Fu-ch'un Mountains scroll, etc.

In the mid-1950s, Sherman Lee and Wen Fong published *Streams and Mountains Without End*, a book about a landscape handscroll recently acquired by the Cleveland Museum of Art. They used a new, stricter methodology in determining the date of this unattributed work, combining sinological and art-historical criteria. They studied inscriptions, seals, etc. as before, but also tried to fix the date by comparison with other, more safely datable material. This was another landmark. Wen Fong had begun teaching at Princeton, and had a number of students who went on to become teachers themselves, and form a kind of "school," although all have since diverged into individual paths. The method they advocated was basically as follows:

1. Set up a series of key monuments, more or less safely datable.
2. Through stylistic analysis of these, derive "visual and structural principles" for each period. (The assumption is that certain structural characteristics will be common to all paintings from a given period.)
3. Use these principles to determine the date and authenticity of other, more problematic works. For instance, a work ascribed to a Yüan dynasty master but exhibiting the "visual and structural principles" of Ming obviously is not genuine.

All this is sound, methodologically; but the application of it was not so easy. Most people would now feel that the early attempts to apply it were too rigid and restrictive; they reduced early Chinese painting to a few genuine works (seldom more than one per artist) and a great unmanageable residue of copies and forgeries. But the debate over the "Princeton approach" was the big issue of the later 1950s and early 1960s. My own approach was then regarded as (and indeed was) rather loose, even sloppy. More recently, Wen Fong and I have tended to switch sides, he (and those who follow him) accepting a great deal more as genuine, I becoming more suspicious.

Osvold Siren's *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* was published in seven volumes in 1956-58, a massive compilation of a great deal of information (not all reliable) and hundreds of plates (not all well chosen.) It is still useful, but must be used with caution. There is not enough critical sense behind the discussions of artists and paintings, and they are not very penetrating. My own popular book *Chinese Painting* (Skira) appeared a few years later, in 1960; it is a general account with a brief text, far less ambitious than Siren's, and also flawed in

out the problems and issues raised in the early period, the late 1950s and early 60s. Perhaps we can mark some slowing-down of activity, which probably reflects a general decline in support for the humanities and in the number of people who undertake careers in them. I suspect that our present situation will be seen in the future as the end of one long phase in the history of our study, and that it is about to give way to another.

II. This part of my talk will be a somewhat theoretical statement of the changes I believe are happening in Chinese painting studies and will happen even more in the future. It may be difficult for some listeners to understand, but should be clarified somewhat by the examples I will offer in Part III.

All through the period discussed above, up to the present, studies of Chinese painting have concentrated on certain aspects of the materials:

- Gathering information on the artists and paintings, through research in texts and through study of the paintings themselves.
- Translating texts and studying the theory of painting.
- Understanding the individual development, and individual contribution, of each important artist, emphasizing style as an expression of artistic personality.
- Understanding the whole historical development of Chinese painting, mainly, again, in terms of style. We have proceeded as though the whole history of Chinese painting could be constructed by studying each artist and then putting them all together.

These approaches are not by any means wrong, and we will continue to use them, and to make further advances on these fronts. But we will also, I think, supplement them with another kind of approach.

Our way of dealing with religious painting, chiefly Buddhist, has been different; we realized that Buddhist paintings, wall paintings, etc., were usually done by anonymous artists, and that for these, the artist's identity and character were not so important to the meaning of the paintings. We studied them, instead, chiefly in terms of *iconography*. (Alexander Soper and his pupils have been outstanding in this area.) Now we begin to look more to secular painting also for meanings that are separate from the artist's individual personality and feeling.

Two relatively new currents of thought, closely related, have become well established in other fields (literary criticism, anthropology, etc.), are coming to be used in art history, and are just beginning to affect Chinese painting studies. These are *structuralism* and *semiotics*. I won't try to explain the former; it is too complicated, and I am not the one to explain it in any case. Semiotics, at least in the simplified form of it that I will describe here, is easier to understand. It is the study of *signs*. According to this belief, all the objects and events that make up human culture are signs that are "read" by the people of that culture; that is, they *signify*, or communicate meaning. Sometimes the meaning is inherent in the object or event; but more often it is *conventional*, agreed-on: people accept a certain sign as carrying a certain meaning, and understand it, even though they would find it difficult or impossible to explain *how* it carries that meaning.

Signs can have inherent meaning, "natural" to them: a portrait of a person means (= stands for) that person to anyone who knows him, because of resemblance between picture and person. They can also be purely conventional: a word, for instance, has no real resemblance (barring onomatopoeia) to the thing it designates. These are extremes; between them are all the cases in which the sign has both inherent and conventional meaning, as is usually the case with images in art.

*Semiotics* doesn't deny all this, but adds that in order to communicate these ideas and feelings, the artist must (whether he realizes it or not) make use of a system of conventional signs; otherwise, his paintings won't be intelligible, or understandable, to people of his time. The actual creation of new symbols or signs by an artist is a relatively rare occurrence; mostly, artists use an established repertory of images and styles, to which particular meanings have come to be attached by convention.

Seeing art in this way allows one to understand better how art functions in society. In a sense, this development may bring our studies closer to those in the P.R.C., where art has always been seen in a social context, and where individuality in art has tended to receive less attention than with us. There are differences between this approach and yours, however; but I don't mean to try to define them here.

A common objection to such an approach is that it may seem to remove the element of originality and creativity from the artist's activity. Artists themselves sometimes object to such a formulation, preferring to believe that they are acting in perfect freedom. And those who hold romantic views of art that see it as the product of some kind of divine inspiration in the individual artist will object also. But in another sense, seeing art in terms of a system of conventions allows us to identify more clearly the real creative achievements, the creation of a new style or new mode of expression, by recognizing everything that is conventional and not new. A good artist will always strain against the conventions, trying to bend them to new purposes; a great artist will eventually subvert them or undermine them (always risking unintelligibility) and replace them with fresh forms of his own creation. These are then conventionalized, in turn, in works of his followers and imitators.

As an example, let's take the case of Ni Tsan and his followers (slides). As everybody knows, this great Yüan dynasty landscapist was considered to be a person of lofty character, who associated only with people whom he felt to be free of "vulgarity," and was obsessed with cleanliness, washing all the time. His paintings (although not without established conventions) generally reflect his personality in their austere, purist style and imagery; they also express his high level of literary culture, and so forth. So the paintings can be seen as direct expressions of the man, as Chinese critics all maintain. His style was not supposed to have much popular appeal; he intended his paintings for appreciation by equally cultured and high-minded people; it was an elitist art, in the extreme.

O.K. so far. But: we read that shortly after his death, the level of culture (*ya*, "refinement," or *su*, "vulgarity") of a family in the Chiang-nan region depended on whether or not they owned a painting by Ni Tsan. Now, this is a different kind of conveying of meaning: the paintings have come to signify, or stand for, the high literary culture and pure-mindedness for people who may not have had that status themselves, but wanted to be associated with it.

Among the many later artists who imitated Ni Tsan's style and imagery was Hung-jen, the leading Anhui school (Hsin-an p'ai) master of the mid-17th century (slides). The same things are said about him, by his contemporary Chou Liang-kung: the refinement or vulgarity of a family was decided by whether or not they owned one of his paintings. We can say simply, if we wish, that Hung-jen was also a person of very pure character, and admired Ni Tsan, and also painted this way, so that the painting is still an expression of the artist's nature. And that is the traditional Chinese explanation, still followed by most people today.

But (slides): Hung-jen's older contemporary Hsiao Yun-ts'ung also paints this way, much of the time; so does Cha Shih-piao, in his works of this period; and so do others of the Anhui school. Are we to suppose that this is because they were *all* people of lofty literary character, expressing their personalities in similar forms? Or that Anhui in the 17th century happened to be peopled entirely by men of noble character? The whole idea of style as a direct expression of the artist breaks down over the existence of stylistic schools. However, if we adopt the viewpoint of semiotics, we will recognize that this style had come to carry a certain significance by convention, and was understood that way by all those who looked at it. Then the problem disappears; artists who wanted to project this kind of meaning in their paintings chose this style. And then a different question arises: why did 17th century Anhui artists choose this style?

to do this without losing proper regard for the more specifically aesthetic properties of the objects; but we will recognize also that the aesthetic and the semantic impinge on each other, so that any treatment of the former which doesn't take sufficient account of the latter will be inadequate.

(The third section of the lecture was made up of examples, with slides, of ways in which such an approach might be put into practice. They included the study of virtuous hermits or recluses in Ming academy painting by my student Scarlett Jang; my Fa Jo-chen paper for the Cleveland symposium last year; a brief mention of Jerome Silbergeld's paper on willows in Kung Hsien's landscapes; my lecture on the so-called Madame Ho-tung portrait in the Fogg Museum and images of women in Ch'ing painting; and some thoughts on topographical painting in China. The lecture took several hours, but that, apparently, is what is expected of a lecture in China—or at least they are inured to it.)



This is a more or less obsolete way of thinking anyway, at least about art and surrounding circumstance.

How do we analyze the work of art so as to understand these connections? A thorough familiarity with the material should allow us to understand period style, school style, individual style. (Style, in this usage, means a set of common characteristics—not style in the broad Loehrian sense.) And we can then see how these correlate with other factors. A period style may be affected by political, social, or other change. (Painting in Florence at the Time of the Black Death.) Individual style can correlate with the status of the artist, patronage, etc., as well as with individual character. And so forth. We proceed, always, by recognizing the correlations (whether or not consciously, and whether or not we call them that); certain characteristics in works of art are observed to correlate with certain situations; we note these, and then ask why and how. Noting the correlations isn't an end, but only puts us in the position of being able to ask the interesting questions and make the really interesting observations.

Our assumption is always that meanings attach to conventions; that paintings are not the one-time products of inspired encounters between the artist and nature or some other subject, as the popular view has it. In this popular view (as often argued by Chinese writers) the message or meaning is produced by the artist's spontaneous expression of his feeling/situation, and received by the viewer of the painting through some spiritual meeting (*shen-hui*). If we leave aside mysterious affinities, however, we are brought to another, sounder basis for expression in art: shared assumptions, established conventions, allow the communication of meaning.

Since works of art are our ultimate concern, all studies of peripheral matters—the artist's biography, theory, the circumstances surrounding the creation of the work, etc.—are done with the implicit assumption that these somehow affected the work. We don't say: Ma Yüan was a late 12th century court painter *and* he painted these pictures; but: Ma Yüan, being a late 12th century court artist, painted these pictures. (If we were to say "because," we would be back in the deterministic trap.) But we can then point out that Hsia Kuei was *also* a late 12th century court artist (younger?) who painted quite different pictures. Hsia was, more than Ma, the kind of artist who will strain against what is "natural" for him to do, in his time and situation—which is another way of saying that he was a more original master. (We can demonstrate this, ideally, by defining his early style—he begins from a base not unlike Ma's—and seeing how he develops from there. This is the value of studies of that kind, to which I am especially partial.)

Similarly, we have to understand Ma Lin in relation to his time, court service, etc.; but also in relation to Ma Yüan. His position in art history as son of an eminent father gives him a certain poignancy; one tries to grasp his dilemma, and find it somehow reflected in his paintings. A study of the sons of famous artists might be illuminating—cf. Wen Chia, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Shunkin—such studies allow the humanizing of art history.

To ignore or deny all this is not only wrong, in being untrue to the reality of the material and what we know about it, but also dumb, in that it cuts off much of the most interesting and valuable kinds of understanding of art. The conception of pure quality as an eternal absolute is another popular delusion, which can be refuted, I think, on a variety of grounds. *Qualities* in art is a better concept to work with—but then we are back with characteristics, traits of style, etc.

we had best see it, I think, as a pervasive ideal, in relation to which we can try to understand the intent and achievement of many of the finest artistic creations of China. It would be a mistake to try to see *all* Chinese art in these terms; simpler, lower motivations, other kinds of art, can't be ignored. Tu's is not, that is, a universal theory of art in China, which should lead to statements of the type: "In China, art was . . ."

Much of what we have read and heard here helps to suggest resonances that were in the minds of artists and viewers, between art and other areas of Chinese thought and culture; I would prefer not to think of this always as a one-way flow, with art being given meaning from outside, or "receiving influence" from outside it, but rather to attempt a more organic understanding. Some of John Hay's formulations, in his paper for this conference and elsewhere, are suggestive in this regard: a painter of landscape, or a viewer of a landscape painting, might have as one element in his understanding of natural landscape the set of ideas and attitudes expressed in geomancy, *feng-shui*, and these could carry over into his creation or appreciation of landscape paintings. The question of how much stress to give to this element, among others, we decide on the basis of our reading of relevant Chinese writings, and, more importantly, our readings of the paintings.

These considerations come to mind especially in considering the papers by Susan Bush, Lothar Ledderose, and Kiyo Munakata. These, and some other recent writings on painting, seem to represent a "new wave" in Chinese painting studies, one that will probably continue strongly for the next few decades. Over the past thirty years or so, those of us writing on the subject have tended to be pulled toward secular, non-religious interpretations; I have been one of the principal malefactors, largely, in the beginning, in reaction to some silly overstressing of Buddhist and Zen elements in Chinese art, and to varieties of popular mystification. Now we seem to be swinging the other way for a while, and will for a time be pulled toward Buddhist and Taoist readings. This is healthy; new insights, new and closer approximations of the truth, will result. But we should stop at some point and think about the implications of these arguments, how we should formulate the relationships, what kind of relationship a doctrine or idea from religion or philosophy *can* have to a work of art (other than in cases where the one states the other in some simple, literal way), how one can "express" the other. These difficult questions underlie much of what we are doing here, and we seldom confront them directly.

In suggesting and discussing the question of Buddhist/Taoist content in painting (other than in simple and obvious cases of Buddhist/Taoist subject matter, I mean) we are raising an issue similar to the one the Chinese raised concerning didactic content and literature; we are not asking only, is it there? but also, usually, should it be there? In both cases, different answers are possible; the view of Chou Tun-i and others (as in Pauline Yu's paper) that literature embodies the tao, as against more aesthetic views that concentrate on form rather than the meanings attached to the image. We can, like Chou Tun-i, feel somehow that Chinese art *should* be religious, out of some general sense of the nature of Chinese culture, or we can take the opposite view, out of a different sense. In either case, we can take the position without making the mistake of believing that in doing so we are setting forth some objective truth about our subject. We can, within limits, determine the meaning of a Chinese text; we can't define in this sense, at least so clearly, the meaning of a painting, especially a landscape painting. And the problem is obviously even more difficult for calligraphy.

One subtle approach to the problem would be to extend to Buddhism, Taoism, etc. the view of art that Tu Wei-ming presents, in which art embodies or conveys the quality of Confucian self-realization. (Tu actually avoids, wisely, trying to distinguish different kinds of awareness or enlightenment.) The deepest definition of Ch'an or Zen painting, surely, after one has gone through those based on subject matter or context or function, is one that sees it as communicating through forms, through the way the subject is perceived and pictured, some quality of Ch'an enlightenment. Can landscape painting convey, in this way, some Buddhist or Taoist mode of understanding and experiencing the world?

Tsung Ping's essay suggests, however, a simpler relationship than this between image and religious content, the iconic: images of mountains and rivers, like images of sages in Confucian

All these—extant works, literary accounts, theories—provide us with a rich range of possibilities for landscape in China, and should warn us against reading too quickly Buddhist or Taoist or any other symbolism into any landscape representation we come upon, in the absence of clues or evidence. If we should, miraculously, find (in a tomb) Ku K'ai-chih's painting of the Cloud Terrace Mountain, which he describes in a short essay, it would contain identifiable elements—Chang Tao-ling and his disciples, etc.—to tell us how to read it. But what of a Six Dynasties landscape without such clues, supposing we find one? Are we to take it for a Taoist paradise, or a Buddhist object of meditation? We can only say that it might have been understood as either by the artist or his audience, but needn't be either.

The point of these remarks may seem too obvious to need statement, but isn't, in view of some tendencies to be marked in writings about Chinese painting. In a shift paralleling the Southern Sung shift in the nature of literary criticism (as defined at the beginning of Lin Shuen-fu's paper) we should probably move from a stage of trying to define what Chinese landscape painting as a whole means to one of trying to say how particular Chinese landscape paintings should be understood, using our grasp of theories to clarify the structure of options. What I speak of as applying ideas from writings too quickly and loosely to paintings would be comparable to our colleagues in literature studies deciding that they must find moralizing and didactic content in poetry because so many Chinese theorists have insisted it's there, or should be there. They don't do this (nor should we); instead, they try to read the poems for what they are, and recognize how far this insistence on didactic content results from the special Chinese need to justify (validate) literature and art on moral, or broadly cultural, grounds. And they recognize that this urge may not go in the same direction as the urge that motivates the actual production of art. The history of art provides numerous cases of non-correspondence between what theorists write and what artists do.

Much theorizing about art in China seems to reflect a recognition of a possible and actual tension between the practice of the art, as it was going on in the writer's time, and the humane, moral values that it *should* display; the practice, much of the time, fell short of what the theorists believed it should be. We, in turn, can recognize this and try to see the works of art in terms of their actual achievement, as closely as we can discern it, instead of adopting, ourselves, the Chinese theorists' view on what it *should* achieve. The Chinese could be dogmatic on these matters; we shouldn't. When Tim Wixted said that "our job here is to try to discuss in analytical language, not to make more poetic constructs about art," I felt myself vibrating in mystic harmony.

An objection to that argument, of course, is that some Chinese modes of understanding art, and some modes of understanding Chinese art, can only be grasped or arrived at through a kind of intuitive, holistic approach, a kind of lyric metacriticism (practiced in emulation of the Kao/Chang-defined mode of lyric criticism) that experiences the idea or object from inside instead of considering or analyzing it from outside. We try, of course, to use both approaches, but ultimately realize that we can't, really; it is the same dilemma that we encounter in trying to talk about Zen. Our choice is between joining the succession of Chinese theorists, and holding ourselves a bit distant from them and trying to be analytical. The latter, it will be charged, leads to an incomplete or inaccurate understanding; to that charge there is no good answer, except one like Don Munro's "flippant" answer to Su Tung-p'o in his remarks yesterday: if intuitive criticism and un-analytical approaches to Chinese art are turned loose, they will lead to disarray in their practice by the common people . . .

Returning to landscape painting: such meanings as Susan's and Lothar's papers suggest for it are most characteristic of the early periods; in later centuries, middle Sung and after, the tendency was rather to dissociate the content or meaning of a painting from its imagery, at least for some kinds of painting, and associate it rather with the nature and feelings of the artist, in ways that Susan and I have tried to trace in our studies of literati painting theory. This new way of reading a painting can still be reconciled with older views by the idea of art as embodying the self-cultivation of the artist; the painter's religious or philosophical grounding in this way affects the content of the painting, or becomes part of it. This process is implied in what



virtually impossible to argue a truly non-objective position, concocted theories about how their paintings expressed profounder and more universal truths about the world than did representational painting; or (a random choice) Salvator Rosa, who "is a good example of discrepancy between theory and practice in the Seicento. Who would suspect from his use of the brush (in a way so obviously suited to his temperament) that in theoretical matters he was an advocate of 'erudition' among painters, that he himself aspired to fame as a monumental painter, and that he considered decorum a matter of some importance?" (Denis Mahon, *Studies in Seicento Art and Theory*, p. 190).

Writings on art take their own course, have their own urgencies and inhibitions. Marilyn and Shen Fu say of writings on calligraphy that they are "organically related to the social, intellectual, and cultural climate and are true expressions of the era. How could we expect their writings to be what they cannot and do what they did not set out to do? It seems justified to propose that ways of thinking have their own evolution . . ." To say this defines the strengths of the writings, but also their limits. And the failure of Chinese writers, for these reasons, to raise and discuss some issues that interest us shouldn't convince us that we are wrong, or imposing our ways of thinking on the works of art, in turning our attention to those issues. The problematique of Chinese theorizing and criticism did not correspond neatly with that of painting. A question of the kind John Hay frequently raises, e.g. "Did the artists ever think of themselves as solving problems?" can only be answered: we don't know, because this wasn't within the terms in which the Chinese discussed art; which is not to say that the Chinese artists didn't think that way. (There are some indications that they may have, but that's another problem.) Similarly, I am not persuaded that we should refrain from discussing abstract tendencies in painting, or feel guilty and culture-bound in doing so, because Chinese discussions don't use this particular concept or word. (They seem often to be saying essentially the same thing in more roundabout ways.)

Finally, two examples from the conference papers of the kind of problems raised in not keeping painting (or calligraphy) separate from writings about it.

Hay (p. 3): "We might be tempted to use the figures of Ku K'ai-chih and Yen Li-pen as evidence that Chinese art had an innate and ancient tendency toward non-physicality—toward abstraction—and that the importance of calligraphy is the supreme expression of this. I think this would be quite wrong." (I think so too, but for a different reason.) Hay continues: "The complement to the *apparently* disembodied figures of Ku and Yen is the frequency of good and solid, flesh-and-blood terms appearing in texts on calligraphy." Hay's paper on these latter is (as always) stimulating and in itself convincing, but this argument is not. To rephrase it: we might be tempted to think that paintings have quality X, but they don't, because *writings about calligraphy* have an anti-X quality. This won't do.

Dick Barnhart, again in a paper I admire generally, studies Ming critical reactions to the "wild and heterodox" painters, but also offers a strongly negative assessment of those critical reactions, with the implication that the painters are in fact better than we have taken them to be. This is all right, I suppose, if the writer and his readers are clearly aware that he is operating on this double level; it is not all right if (as I suspect may be the case) he assumes that one follows from the other. It is quite possible—I offer myself as an example—to admire and agree with his study of the critics, but not sympathize with his effort to rescue the painters from the low critical evaluations they have received. It is quite possible, that is, for weak or bad paintings to be criticized on weak or bad grounds; proving the badness of the latter doesn't make the former better. *Our* evaluations of the paintings must be our own, based on the paintings; and there Dick and I would differ somewhat.

But we have all committed the same mistake, the same implicit equation of theorizing and painting; I certainly have, often enough; I feel nevertheless that it is useful to warn against it.



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