

Lecture Notes, by James Cahill

Note: The image numbers in these lecture notes do not exactly coincide with the images onscreen but are meant to be reference points in the lectures' progression.

Lecture 9B: Political and Poetic Themes in Southern Song Painting

As we move into a period from which more reliable work survives, we can begin to address big concerns such as political themes in court painting, and poetic painting. The latter, poetic painting, means different things to different people; I myself gave a series of lectures that turned into a book titled *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Harvard University Press, 1996). As I acknowledge in that book, there are a number of ways one can define poetic painting in China; I certainly don't claim that mine is the only right one, or even that it's the best way. In a broad sense, a lot of Southern Song Academy and academy-style painting can be called poetic, either because it was done in response to couplets and quatrains of poetry presented to the artists by the emperor or others in the court, or simply because they knew that their imperial patrons preferred paintings that could be called poetic. I will develop that theme more as we move further into Southern Song painting; but I want to keep it always problematic, not a quality that one can define clearly or identify easily in paintings.

Political Themes and Dynastic Restoration

9.13.1: *The Virtuous Brothers Po-I and Shu-ch'i in the Wilderness Picking Herbs*, early copy after Li Tang, handscroll, Palace Museum, Beijing. Reproduced in Siren, Pl. 251.

Two virtuous brothers living at the beginning of Zhou dynasty, withdrew into the wilderness and eventually starved to death rather than change their allegiance and serve under a new ruler whom they saw as lacking in virtue. The brothers served as paragons of unchanging loyalty, an idea important to the new Southern Song ruler still intent on establishing his legitimacy.

9.14.1: *Duke Wen of Jin [Jin Wengong] Recovering His State*, probably close academy copy after Li Tang, handscroll, Metropolitan Museum, Ex. Coll: C. C. Wang Family, 1973.120.2.

Depicts narrative scenes of a text from the Zuochuan, about the exile and return of the 9th son of the ruler of the state of Jin, making it relevant to Gaozong's situation at the beginning of

the Southern Song. Please see *Beyond Representation*, pp. 195–206, for Wen Fong's full and enlightened treatment of the painting.

Political themes, and much of the rest of the thematics of Chinese painting, especially academy court painting, is to be understood in relation to the demands and situation of the *clientele*, or *recipients*, of the paintings, *not* of the artist. The same is true in later times; recipients often wanted paintings to hang or present as gifts to others. This is a big area of controversy. Still, a few scholars are enamored of the idea of the independent artist painting what he pleases. However, Li Tang didn't wake up one day and decide to draw Duke Wen, and painters of buffaloes and herd boys did not do so because they were out in the wilderness and decided to paint the countryside scenes they saw. Romantic notions of this kind are inapplicable here, to court painting especially and professional painting in general.

9.15.1: *Tao Yuanming Returning to Seclusion* 淵明歸隱圖/淵明归隐图, attributed to Li Gonglin 李公麟 (ca. 1049–1106), handscroll, ink and colors on silk, 37 x 521.5 cm., Freer Gallery, F1919.119.

Now I want to show, as a painting with a political content and function, a handscroll in the Freer Gallery, purchased by Charles Freer in 1919 as a work by Li Gonglin. It's highly unlikely that it was painted by Li Gonglin, however; I would rather see it as the work of an anonymous professional master. This is the title, the first thing one sees on unrolling the scroll—by an unknown calligrapher, with false seals. Old scroll labels, probably formerly pasted on the outside of the scroll, are at left.

Mounted after the paintings is an inscription by the calligrapher Li Peng 李彭 (ca. 1060s–after 1110s), written in 1110, and if the paintings originally went with this inscription, that would provide an early 12th century date for the paintings, maybe still Northern Song. Li Peng tells of seeing a screen painting of the same subject at the home of the great calligrapher Huang Tingjian, and on this basis attributes the paintings in this scroll to Li Gonglin; but they don't resemble any of the paintings more reliably associated with Li Gonglin—as we're seeing, his name is attached to lots of old pictures to make them more valuable. I put this scroll here among the paintings with political themes because we know that scrolls of this subject were sometimes presented to officials on their retirement. Scholar-officials, even when they were serving enthusiastically in the court or in provincial posts, were always supposed to be longing to be back on the farm—this is an enduring political myth in China.

This is the *Homecoming Ode* 歸去來辭/ 归去来辞 by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明/ 陶渊明 or 陶潛/ 陶潜 (365–427), as written out by a later calligrapher named Shen Hao 沈顥/ 沈颥 (1586–after 1661) in one of the colophons to the scroll.

Tao Yuanming composed his "Homecoming" poem in AD 206, as he himself retired from office and returned to his home in the country; it's one of the most beloved and best-known of all Chinese poems. I'll read the translation provided in the Freer Gallery's documentation for this scroll, while showing the seven successive paintings that make up the work and commenting on them.

First Section:

Oh, to go home!
Field and garden will be weeds, how can I not go home?
Since I made my mind my body's thrall,
How very sad and sorry I have been.
I know not to blame what is done and gone,
And am aware I must follow what's to come;
As I've not strayed too far from the path,
I feel today is right and yesterday wrong.
Far, far, fares my boat with the gentle breeze,
Wind whirls and swirls, flapping my robes;
I ask other travelers about the road ahead,
And grudge that morning's light is still so faint.
Then I glimpse the eaves of home,
I leap for joy and start to run,
Serving boys welcome me with cheer,
My young sons await me at the gate.
The three trails are all overgrown,
But pine and chrysanthemum remain.

In this long first section of the Freer scroll, we see first Tao Yuanming arriving by boat—seen in his familiar image, as if he were walking through the forest, not as standing in a boat—and then, on the shore, servants and others greeting him, one pulling the boat in by a rope,

another with a mallet, perhaps to drive in the peg for fastening the boat. Then, at the gateway of the house and in the courtyard, his wife and children coming to greet him. And behind, the pine trees, and presumably the chrysanthemums, although it's hard to make them out in such a picture.

Second Section:

*Leading my children I enter the house,
Where a pitcher is brimming with wine.
Pulling toward me cup and jug, I pour myself a drink,
Spying the trees in the courtyard, I am happy of face;
Leaning at the southern window, I convey my pride,
How easy it is to be content with just a little space.*

In this picture Tao is shown in his house, along with his wife and children, presumably having a drink, while two figures outside in the courtyard are doing something—I'm not sure what, a woman approaching a young man, one of his sons, carrying something on a tray.

Third Section:

*I pass my days in the garden doing what I please,
And though I set a gate there, it is always shut;
An old man leaning on his cane, I stroll and rest,
Lifting my head at times to gaze into the distance.
As clouds aimlessly emerge from the peaks,
Birds weary of flying know it is time to return;
But until the sun is covered and almost gone,
I stroke the bark of a lonely pine and linger on.*

In the picture, Tao appears on top of a small hill in his garden, behind a huge structure of garden rocks, leaning against a pine tree, presumably watching the sunset. He is on a kind of island, separated from the rest of the garden by streams at left and right with bridges over them.

Fourth Section:

Oh, to go home!
I will cancel my friendships and cease to roam;
The world and I shall put each other aside,
Were I to yoke my carriage, what should I seek?
I'm happy having heartfelt talks with kith and kin,
Dissolving my cares in the joy of zither and books;
The farmers tell me that spring is near its end,
And there's work to do out in the western fields.

The picture accompanying this stanza of the poem shows Tao Yuanming seated in an open building with a number of people, presumably his "kith and kin," enjoying food and drink; a *qin* or zither is beside him on the floor; servants stand in front of the building, and at the left, outside the fence, are people with horses and an ox, maybe farmers come to see him. A man, perhaps a visiting friend, is seen arriving in lower left.

Fifth Section:

At times I order up my covered cart,
At times I row upon my lonely skiff,
Exploring up the canyons, hidden and secluded,
Or taking rough and rugged paths across the hills.
As trees happily approach the time of blooming,
And the fountains bubble up and start to flow,
Glad the myriad things have each their season,
I am moved that my own life must have an end.

In this picture, Tao is seen in his ox-drawn "covered cart," accompanied by servants carrying luggage; in front of them, a wood-gatherer with a load of branches is seen coming out from the trees. Beyond, in the upper center, a boat moving off along the river or canal, presumably carrying Tao Yuanming in his "lonely skiff" — actually it's a comfortable passenger boat rowed or poled by servants.

Sixth Section:

*All is over and done!
 How much longer will my body sojourn in this world?
 Why not let my heart decide whether to leave or stay?
 Why hustle and bustle about? Where is it I would go?
 Wealth and station are not what I desire,
 And I have no expectation of reaching Heaven,
 But I cherish going out alone on a fine morning
 And planting my staff at times to weed and hoe.*

Tao shown here as a gentleman farmer.

Seventh Section:

*I climb the eastern bank, whistling loud and long,
 And overlooking the clear stream, compose a poem;
 I shall ride with the changes until the final return,
 Happy in heaven's decree, what is there to doubt?*

Tao appears twice: once where he's climbed the western bank and again sitting by the stream.

First Inscription, by Li Peng:

Once, at Shangu's [Huang Tingjian's, 1045–1105] place I saw a small [painted] screen with Going Home done by Boshi [Li Gonglin, ca. 1049–1106].⁹ Its concept was simple but far-reaching, and in atmosphere it was generally similar to this [painting]. Shangu pointed at [the figure of Tao] Yuanming and said to me: Boshi's figure painting is at its best in this [screen].

Whether, as I said before, this inscription originally went with the present set of paintings, and whether the text of Tao Yuanming's poem that precedes each of the paintings is also written by the same Li Peng, is a much-debated matter—you can read about it all on the Freer's website for Song-Yuan paintings,¹ or in Tom Lawton's *Chinese Figure Painting*. I'm not

¹ Editor's note: <http://www.asia.si.edu/songyuan/> and <http://www.asia.si.edu/songyuan/F1919.119/F1919-119.Documentation.pdf>.

taking any stand on those big issues, only presenting this as a fine early version of a famous set of pictures, of which several later versions survive. Tom Lawton, in his treatment of this scroll in his book, makes it a 12th century painting, as I would, and notes that the style is completely unlike that of any painting reliably associated with Li Gonglin, so that old attribution is to be completely discounted. As we've seen already and will see more as we go on, Li Gonglin's name was attached to lots of old paintings to increase their value. That's all for this scroll.

9.16.1a: Anonymous Song album leaf depicting sericulture, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

"Pictures of Tilling and Weaving" (*Gengzhi tu* 耕織圖/ 耕织图) is a big theme, especially in court painting. The original *Gengzhi tu* was Gaozong's project, but repeated in the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Qing dynasties. I proposed in the "Political Themes" chapter of *Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting* (University of Washington Press, 1988), that these were rulers asserting their acceptance of the settled ways of the Han Chinese and also separating themselves from the nomadic peoples (Jin, Mongols, Manchus, respectively).

9.16.1b: Hanging scroll painting, ink and colors on silk, 163 x 92 cm., National Museum of China.

A particularly fine example of *Gengzhi tu* theme. Trees, architecture, figures consistent with Southern Song style. *Gengzhi tu* paintings usually in handscroll or album format; this is unusual in crowding it all into a single hanging scroll.

9.16.2–3: *Spinning Silk*, anonymous artist, hanging scroll, late 12th–early 13th c., inscribed by Emperor Ningzong 寧宗/ 宁宗 (reigned 1194–1224): "Spinning Silk." It shows and praises village industry-women working late at night, rather than resting. To be read as an assertion of the values of village industry.

9.16.4–5: Album leaf, Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Woman spinning silk in front of a cottage as one son helps (?) and the other feeds the baby. A poor family making a living doing sericulture. Possibly a later date than the Southern Song, based on the heavy contours and mechanical drawing.

9.17.1: Anonymous hanging scroll, Shanghai Museum. Close in style to Liu Songnian 劉松年/ 刘松年 (ca. 1150– after 1225).

According to Shanghai Museum's interpretation, which is the standard interpretation, the painting is on the theme of "Meeting the Chariot at Wangxian." The White-robed figure is Tang emperor Minghuang 唐明皇, returning after the dynasty was restored by his son. Re-

establishing dynasty an apt theme for Southern Song. An alternate explanation interprets the painting as "Han Gaozu and His Father." The Han emperor's father was too frail to return to his old village, so the emperor brought all the members of the village to the palace for his father to meet again. Painting reproduced as color frontispiece in *Three Alternative Histories*.

A fine example of political painting done in Southern Song court:

9.18.1: *Breaking the Balustrade* 折檻圖/折檻图, anonymous, hanging scroll, ink and colors on silk, 173.9 x 101.8 cm., National Palace Museum, Taipei. Reproduced in Skira 60, CAT 44, Possessing Pl. 82.

The loyal minister Zhu Yun, serving under the Han emperor, was so angry at a political opponent that he asked to use the imperial sword to put him to death; the emperor, angered, ordered that Zhu Yun be beheaded. Zhu Yun clung to the balustrade, protesting his innocence. Another minister, seen in the foreground, interceded on his behalf; the emperor relented, and commanded that the balustrade, broken in the scuffle, be left unrepaired as a memorial. This is a positive expression of an actually terrible aspect of Chinese imperial rule: the emperor encouraged criticism, but in fact, exacted terrible penalties if you did it in a way that seemed threatening to the emperor—you and your entire family could be wiped out. Can be compared to China's recent history, such as Mao's Hundred Flowers campaign.

Political Implications of Buffalo and Herd Boy Paintings

Redux of image 9.6a.1.2, *Buffalo and Herd Boy Beneath Autumn Trees*, hanging scroll, signed Li Tang, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Lowling of the buffalo along with the susurrations of the leaves blowing in the wind create a melancholy pastoral effect.

9.19.1a: *Buffalo and Herd boys*, attributed to Yan Ciping, hanging scroll, Sumitomo Collection, Kyoto.

Southern Song Academy-style. Buffalo with calf lying down; other buffalo wandering away. Quiet mood pictures.

9.19.1b: *Buffalo and Herd boys*, attributed to Yan Ciping, handscroll, Nanjing Museum.

Four sections to the handscroll, one for each season. Section 1: Like previous painting, some buffalo lying under the trees as another wanders off. Loose drawing of leaves and dots characteristics of Southern Song Academy landscape. Section 2: Two buffalo, with herd boys on their backs, swim in the river. Theme of rusticity and bucolic ease, and closeness to nature made

buffalo paintings ideal political gifts given to officials upon retirement, with implication that they will now be leading an untroubled life, away from the city and administration, like the cowherds. Or given when an official takes up a post, conferring wishes that the official will give loving care to the people he administers, as the herd boy does the buffalo. Section 3: Winter snow scene.

9.19.2: Fan-shaped album painting, anonymous. Older man fetches water from the stream to give to his buffalo standing on the bank. The wind moves quietly through the trees.

9.19.3a: Hanging scroll, formerly attributed to Ma Lin 馬麟/ 马麟 (but ignore this attribution), Japanese collection

Buffalo and herd boy returning in the evening. The season is late autumn or early winter.

9.19.3b: Hanging scroll, also attributed to Ma Lin, Japanese collection

Stylistically very similar to previous painting, but shorter in size (but possibly cut down). Some significant differences in the way the hooves and tail are drawn, so not by the same hand as the previous work.

9.19.4a: *Fourth Stage: Catching the Ox* from series *Ten Ox-herder Pictures*

Will be discussed further in lecture on Chan/Zen Buddhist painting. The series represented the stages to enlightenment.

9.19.4b: Painting of secular figure meeting a Chan adept riding on the back of a buffalo. Buffalo Chan paintings found almost exclusively in Japan. These Chan paintings are to be understood very differently from the political messages in Chinese buffalo painting.

9.19.5: Sequence of album leaves of buffaloes and herd boys:

9.19.5a: Fan-shaped album leaf, Seattle Museum. Strongly modeled buffalo.

9.19.5b: Fan-shaped album leaf, Tokyo National Museum, attributed to Xia Gui 夏圭.

9.19.5c: Fan-shaped album leaf, National Palace Museum, Beijing, anonymous. Late Song work in the Fan Kuan manner.

9.19.5d: Album leaf, Freer Gallery, purchased 1911.

9.19.5e: Fan-shaped album leaf, Freer Gallery, purchased 1915. A mood picture.

9.19.6f: Fan-shaped album leaf, National Palace Museum, Taipei. Also mood picture without distinctive style, featuring wind in the willows.

Fish Painting

9.20.1: Attributed to Zhao Kexiong 趙克復, *Fish at Play* 魚戲圖/ 鱼戏图, album leaf, ink and colors on silk, 22.5 x 25.1 cm Metropolitan Museum of Art, 13.100.110. Reproduced in Wen C. Fong's *Beyond Representation*, Pl. 23.

Chinese artists especially adept at capturing the fluid movement of fish in three dimensions, their escape from the inhibiting force of gravity. Please see the famous "Joy of Fish 魚之樂/ 鱼之乐" chapter in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 between Daoist philosophers Zhuangzi 莊子 and Huizi 惠子.

9.21.1: Attributed to Liu Cai 劉棻 (d. after 1123), fan-shaped album leaf, Palace Museum, Beijing.

These long, slender fish are *tiaoyu* 條魚/ 条鱼 of the minnow family, and are specifically mentioned in Zhuangzi's anecdote. This painting depicts, like the one ascribed to Zhao Kexiong, larger and smaller fish swimming among water plants. But in spite of the different attributions, the two could be by the same painter. Is it likely that either Zhao Kexiong or Liu Cai painted both of them? That's the wrong question to ask, because in fact neither attribution means much. Zhao Kexiong was a member of the Song imperial house active in the Northern Song period; he specialized in paintings of fish. Liu Cai lived and worked a bit later, during the reign of Emperor Shenzong in the late 11th century; he died after 1123. And there is a third Song artist who specialized in paintings of fish, named Fan Anren, nicknamed Fang Laizi or "scabby fellow"; he came from the Qiantang region where the Southern Song capital was located, and attained the rank of *daizhao*, Painter-in-Attendance, in the Imperial Academy. Most Song paintings of fish that we have are attributed to one of these three, and the attributions seem to be made more or less arbitrarily—we can't identify an individual style for any of them. Do we have any work by any one of these three that bears a signature or seal of the artist and is safely by him? No, they are all just attributions.

We can say that most Song-period paintings of fish we have are essentially anonymous, and most if not all of them are anonymous Southern Song Academy-style. What we have is a small but very impressive body of fish paintings with no single artist clearly responsible for any part of it. The whole group is best seen as a grand collective achievement of these extraordinary masters—these three and others, since we know that the works of Song Academy artists were copied in large numbers outside the Academy, and none of these paintings bears seals or inscriptions indicating that it was done *within* the Academy. Should all these factors and circumstances diminish the pleasure we take in the paintings? Should it make us less happy? Of

course not. It should be apparent by now that recognizing individual hands, and admiring originality or striking departure from the inherited style, needn't have any place in our appreciation of Southern Song Academy painting, and the pleasure we take in it. Once more, forget all that stuff the literati critics and theorists have been telling you. Just look long and hard.

9.22.1: Horizontal painting of two fish, old attribution to Lai-an 賴菴, ink of silk, 27 x 48 cm. *Sogenga* exhibition, no. 38. Yabumoto Sogoro Collection.

Nothing is known about Lai-an; he is unrecorded in Chinese sources, but mentioned in a Japanese text, the *Kundaikan Sayu Choki*, as an artist of the Yuan period who specialized in fish. This painting, however, looks more like a work of the late Song. It features two large fish (carp), powerfully shaped with light undersides and darker, more scaly backs; their passage through the water seems to be swaying the water grasses, which bend as they pass by. Altogether, a striking image of two fish caught in motion. A detail shows even more strongly how the artist has observed and captured their bulging eyes, the open mouth of one of them. One can almost feel their scaly surfaces.

9.23.1: Painting of three fish, anonymous, hanging scroll. Yabumoto Sogoro Collection

The fish in the upper left is portrayed with special skill as seen from above, turning in the water.

Wen Fong points out that the cultivation of rare aquarium fish came into vogue in the time of Emperor Huizong, and suggests that this must have encouraged the painting of fish. Huizong's catalog, the *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜, has an essay on fish and dragons; these could be classed together because, in popular lore, the one turned into the other. Dragons could come down to earth in storms and live as fish in lakes and ponds, while the fish could become dragons and disappear into the sky.

For more about political meanings in Chinese paintings of fish, please see the last chapter of Hou Mei-sung's *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting* (Yale University Press, 2009). In the Southern Song, images of certain kinds of fish became symbolic of the "unbound joy of the free and unburdened life of a great man." In the Ming, the upward leaping carp symbolic of the aspirations of the official.

9.21.2: Liu Cai 劉棻, *Fish Swimming amid Falling Flowers* 落花游魚圖/ 落花游鱼图 (c. 1075), handscroll, ink and color on silk, 26.4 x 252.2 cm., St. Louis Art Museum, 97:1926.1.

This painting is a particularly fine and important example among surviving fish paintings by Song period artists. A similar scroll, closely similar in composition so that the one

appears to be a copy after the other, is in the Palace Museum, Beijing. This one bears imperial seals and was in the Qianlong Emperor's collection. A section of it is reproduced in *Siren*, Vol. III, Pl. 361b; I put it beside the opening of the St. Louis scroll so you can see the similarity. As I've said often in this series, old and fine compositions in Chinese painting frequently exist in two or more versions; copying was a widespread practice.

The St. Louis scroll is reproduced in *Three Thousand Years of Chinese Painting* (Yale University Press, 1997), and Richard M. Barnhart gives a good description of it on p. 119 there, so I will read his long paragraph about it:

Fish Swimming amid Falling Flowers is a quiet symphony of rhythm and movement, the effect of which is attained precisely through the many ways the painter creates the impression of swimming, darting, drifting fish and schools of fish. It opens with a branch of blossoming peach flowers that touches the water like the entrance to the fabled "Peach Blossom Spring" and informs us that in some important way, we are about to enter a realm where time stands still. A small school of slender fishes fights for the bits of pink blossoms that fall into the water, and one fish swims quickly away with its prize while the others circle and fleetly follow. Below, we see the water grasses that grow from the mud, and here and there a shrimp or other crustacean. The dense, sheltering thicket of water plants that follows is a breeding ground for the large fish that surround it. Swarms of newborn fish are visible, and above, on the surface of the water, flat, brilliant green lily pads appear. In the third section a garden of water plants becomes the center of focus, a bouquet formed of exquisitely subtle tonalities of ink wash and pale green and brown colors. Suddenly, a brilliant orange goldfish appears, then jade green leaves and more goldfish, as the composition comes to a close with the appearance of the patriarchal figures in this watery world, several huge carp, who appear to the lesser fishes we have seen as kings to their kingdom.

That's the end of Dick Barnhart's very good passage on this painting. He goes on to write about how the dream of "losing all memory of things deep in the waters of the rivers and lakes" becomes the "always desired but rarely attained dream of the busy official. Before Liu Cai there was no visual correspondence to this ideal," he writes, "and it quickly became a popular theme in painting. Thirty scrolls by Liu were in the government collection by 1120, and fish subsequently acquired many other symbolic forms and functions."

9.24.1: Zhou Dongqing 周東卿/周东卿, *The Pleasures of Fishes* 魚樂圖/鱼乐图 (1291), handscroll, ink and color on paper, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 47.18.10. Reproduced in Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation*, pp. 380–383.

This is a signed work by an artist named Zhou Dongqing. His inscription at the end of the scroll includes a date corresponding to 1291, so it's just over the edge into the beginning of the Yuan dynasty. I include it here as the first Chinese fish painting known to me that bears a reliable inscription identifying the artist and giving the date; and I want to use it to show how already, in that age of Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫/ 赵孟頫 (1254–1322) and the emergence of literati painting to the forefront, the very nature of the painting was already changing. The main part of his inscription is a poetic quatrain that reads, as translated by Wen Fong:

*Not being fish, how do we know their happiness?
We can only take an idea and make it into a painting.
To probe the subtleties of the ordinary,
We must describe the indescribable.*

Now, how is this already different from all the fish paintings we have seen up to now? First, the artist not only identifies himself and gives the date in an inscription, but reminds the viewer—unnecessarily—of the well-known Zhuangzi anecdote in his quatrain. The work contains, then, what are sometimes called the "Three Perfections": painting, calligraphy, and poetry. Secondly, it is painted on paper, which was ordinarily used in preference to silk by the literati artists because its surface transmitted better the subtleties of the artist's brushwork. And finally, it has reduced the power of the work to draw the viewer's gaze down into the depths by flattening the scene, reducing the setting of water plants, making the fish more uniform in size and type.

We know little more about Zhou Dongqing than we do about the others; he was a painter of fish, and a friend of the famous scholar-general Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236–1283), who had led troops against the invading Mongols and had died in 1283 after being captured by the Mongols and refusing, even under torture, to renounce his loyalty to the Song and change sides. Already, then, we are in a profoundly different world than that of the Southern Song Academy we have been following, a world in which personality matters more and painterly skills less, in which the artist asserts himself in other ways than just as a fine painter, in which idea is taking precedence over image. But happily, we still have several lectures to go before we get there. And with that I end this section on fish paintings.

9.25: Ma Hezhi 馬和之/ 马和之 (active mid-12th century)

See also: Julia K. Murray (teaches at University of Wisconsin), *Ma Hezhi and the Illustration of the Book of Odes* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

I will talk about *Illustration of the Books of Odes* series as a whole, while showing examples, with brief comments. I won't try to identify them all, or argue about which are earlier or later.

The *Book of Odes* (Shijing 詩經): oldest collection of Chinese poetry, 305 pieces, dating from late Shang (11th c. BC) to late 7th c. BC. Compiled ca. 600 BC.

Ma Hezhi: native of Hangzhou. One source (early 13th c.) says he achieved the *jinshi* 進士/ 进士 degree in the mid-12th c., and held high official rank, meaning he wasn't properly an Academy painter, but an official who painted, largely as an avocation. Uncertain whether this is reliable. If so, he could be called a literati painter, although his works have a high technical finish. Emperor Gaozong admired his painting, and took part with him in a joint project: handscrolls with texts of poems from the Shijing (or Maoshi 毛詩) "Book of Odes," written out by emperor, illustrations painted by Ma Hezhi. Emperor wrote out about 300 of the poems, leaving space for Ma Hezhi to add paintings. He died before he had finished all of them. This was a political project, part of a claim of legitimacy.

Many scrolls purporting to be from this series survive; but close court copies were made, making it all but impossible to sort them out now; a lot of controversy. Among the strong contenders are a scroll in the Boston MFA, one in the Fujii Yurinkan, Kyoto, and a scroll in Palace Museum, Beijing. I won't try to distinguish originals from copies. Murray assumes they were all joint productions and thus avoids the question of the hand of the artist.

The plan of the paintings is deliberately old-fashioned, with text and pictures alternating, like the *Admonitions* scroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi. The figure style is described as "light & fluttery." Brushstrokes said to be like willow-tendrils, or the leaves of orchids, thickening and thinning rhythmically. Later critics say he imitated Wu Daozi 吳道子 (act. ca. 710–760), which is probably not a very accurate observation in art-historical terms, but only designates the general tradition of drawing with certain rhythms of swelling and thinning brushstrokes. There is nothing of the force of Wu Daozi; his brushstrokes are rather delicate, more than a shade precious. He is praised in Yuan literati texts—that otherwise despise regular Academy masters—as an artist who stands apart from those, and above them. The brushwork has an individualized

look without being personally expressive—no gestures, no distortion of form for expressive purpose. So, academic in the end.

The poems often open with an evocative image that sets mood of poem. Ma Hezhi always illustrates this. Poems go on to express human emotion, which is harder to depict, so Ma often represented a figure in each painting, as if the figure were the one reciting the poem, taking on the role of an implied speaker.

Emperor Gaozong admired late Northern Song calligraphy—Mi Fu 米芾, Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅/ 黃庭堅, Su Dongpo 蘇東坡— but went back to the "orthodox tradition" of the Two Wangs: Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361) and his son, Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344–386), who formed the mainstream tradition in China.

These scrolls are ink-and-colors on silk, but Ma Hezhi is said to have also worked on paper.

9.25.1: *Illustrations to Shijing* (Book of Odes) or *Maoshi*.

9.25.1a: *Odes of Pin*, handscroll, ink and color on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing.

9.25.1b: *Illustrations to Six Texts from the Xiaoya Section of the Book of Songs*

小雅南有嘉魚篇書畫 卷/ 小雅南有嘉魚画卷, handscroll, ink and color on silk, 27 x 383.8 cm., Boston MFA, 51.698. Reproduced in *Siren*, Vol. III, Pl. 275–8. Wet, rather vague treatment of landscape forms, absence of clearly-defined features.

9.25.1c: Yurinkan (Fujii Collection), Kyoto. Dissolution of solid form into clouds of particles; reliance on visual perception, rather than reproducing what the artist intellectually *knows* is there (solid hills, trees.) If you want to compare this with Impressionism or pointillism in Europe eight centuries later, please do. (Not untrue, but with important differences.)

9.25.2: In the style of Ma Hezhi, fan-shaped album leaf, Liaoning Museum.

Inscription by Zhao Mengfu identifies it as an evening scene in autumn. Scholarly gentleman seated on tiger skin gazes across river. Early and fine version of Ma Hezhi manner.

9.25.3: *Illustrations of "Seventh Month" from the Odes of Bin* 邇風七月圖/ 邇风七月图, attributed to Ma Hezhi, handscroll, ink on paper, 28.8 x 436.2 cm., Freer Gallery, F1919.172.

Agriculture paintings, attributed to Ma Hezhi in a colophon by Wen Zhengming 文徵明/ 文徵明 (1470–1559), but no signatures or seals of artist or calligrapher. Alternating between painting and text. Figures actually more in style of Li Gonglin's *baimiao* 白描; only landscape elements in Ma's style. In second section, text and picture mismatched. For translation of the

accompanying poems, please see the Freer Gallery's *Song and Yuan Dynasty Painting and Calligraphy* website.²

9.25.4: Ma Hezhi, *The Red Cliff*, handscroll, Palace Museum, Beijing.

Ma's poetic manner really fits here: soft, distant hills; figures of Su Dongpo and guests turning to look at cliff; beautiful waves that suit Ma's poetic and moving style.

Landscapes

9.26.1: Li Sheng, *A Dream Journey on the Xiao-Xiang Rivers* 瀟湘臥游圖卷/ 瀟湘卧游图卷. Tokyo National Museum, TA-161. T&V 7–22. (See my *Index of Early Chinese Painters & Paintings*, p. 202).

Not an Academy painting, but one of my personal favorites of Southern Song painting. By an anonymous 12th century artist named Li from Shucheng 舒城 in Anhui Province, painting in the 1160s. Old, wrong attribution to Li Gonglin 李公麟, false inscription with "signature" of his at end. Formerly in collections of Xiang Yuanbian and Qianlong Emperor, because of Li Gonglin attribution, who was also from Shucheng.

Artist referred to as "Li sheng" ("Mr. Li) in one of the early colophons (earliest dated to 1170). The painting was done around the 1160s, as a work commissioned by a Buddhist monk. So the painting is in some sense a professional work— we would know this anyway from the sheer technical accomplishment exhibited in it, which was beyond what amateur painters could do, and beyond Li Gonglin. This is one of the great works of the Southern Song, and significantly, not by a recognized, famous artist. And it was preserved only because it was fitted out with the spurious signature of Li Gonglin, who commanded near-worship in later times, beyond what I take to be his real achievement. (Others differ strongly on that appraisal.)

Opens with distant, misty mountains and open water; initially unclear why this is a scroll of interest. Detail of foreground trees, however, reveals great skill in manipulation of ink tonality without showing calligraphic hand of artist. Perception of distant scenery through mist. Main scene: interlocking mountain ridges and rivers.

For more about the Xiao-Xiang region and related poetry/paintings, please see the works of Alfreda Murck.

The Xiao-Xiang is properly the convergence of the two rivers in Hunan province, but in practice, refers to Southern Hunan up to Lake Dongting 洞庭湖, north of Changsha. Lush, watery

² <http://www.asia.si.edu/SongYuan/contents.asp> and <http://www.asia.si.edu/SongYuan/F1919.172/F1919-172.Documentation.pdf>

scenery, associated with Qu Yuan 屈原 (3437–278 BC). Distant contemplation of landscape; the painter captures the *experience of gazing at scenery through atmosphere at a distance*.

This kind of achievement not entirely unrecognized in its time: late 12th century writer quoted by Max Loehr (p. 210):

Mountains in rain, mountains in sunshine: the painters have no difficulty in depicting them. But [phenomena like] fair weather turning to rain, or rain about to cease, the fog at night, the mist at evening as it parts and then closes again; a vista obscured, appearing no sooner than being submerged into nothingness: these are difficult to depict. Unless it be an artist of marvelous ability [recognized] in the world, one whose concepts transcend the ordinariness of things, he certainly cannot attain it.

But the painter of this work *wasn't* recognized; he is known only through the early colophons on this marvelous work. And the painting itself was preserved, and highly praised, only because it was falsely turned into a work of Li Gonglin, an artist who, for all his other strengths, was way short of ability to paint something like this. Chinese collectors were deliberately gullible in accepting misleading attributions and signatures; they wanted big names. C.C. Wang always told me: if it's a great painting, it must be by a great artist—by which he meant a *recorded* big artist. To me it seems that some of the best paintings are, in fact, done by anonymous, unrecorded artists.

9.27.1: Attributed to Li Gonglin (also incorrect), *A River in Shu* 蜀川圖/蜀川图, handscroll, ink on paper, 32.3 x 752.1 cm., Freer Gallery, F1916.539.

A River in Shu and *Xiao-Xiang Rivers* were formerly paired together, but the *Shu* painting is much less interesting. It is a panoramic landscape of the Yangtze River, like a picture-map, and is interesting in that way. “Shu” refers to Sichuan, and we are seeing the upper reaches of the Yangtze where it begins. This is probably an anonymous Song work. Villages and places of interest along the river are labeled.

9.28.1: Hu Shunchen 胡舜臣 (12th c.), Handscroll, Osaka Municipal Museum.

Included in this lecture on political themes because of its depiction of an official departing on a diplomatic mission to the Northern Song court. Bears colophon of Prime Minister Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047–1126). Probably presented as a gift to the official upon his departure.

Hu was a painter in Huizong's Academy. Inscription by the artist, dated 1122, to the left. The inscriptions of Hu Shunchen and Cai Jing, both representatives of the court, glorified imperial service, in contrast to literati attitudes that expressed longing for the simple life on the farm.

Reading the painting backwards, from left to right, we see the official's comfortable home, but the road leads him into successively harsher hills and up a mountain and under pine trees. Envoys of this time were often sent to negotiate with the Jurchens in the north.

See also: works by Elizabeth Brotherton (Professor of Art History, SUNY, New Paltz)

9.29.1: Copy after Wen Tong, handscroll, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Example of landscape in reclusion type. See also *Three Alternative Histories*.

9.30.1: Series based on the *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute* 胡笳十八拍, poems about the Han dynasty Chinese woman, Wenji 文姬, who was married to a Xiongnu ruler.

Exists in a number of old versions; best by far in Boston MFA:

9.30.1a: *Lady Wenji's Return to China: Encampment in the Desert* 文姬歸漢圖 殘卷

第三拍：原野宿廬/ 文姬归汉图 殘卷 第三拍：原野宿庐, section of handscroll mounted as album leaf, 24.7 x 49.8 cm, ink, color, and gold on silk, Boston MFA, 28.62.

9.30.1b: *Lady Wenji's Return to China: Encampment by a Stream* 文姬歸漢圖 殘卷

第五拍：水草卓歇/ 文姬归汉图 殘卷 第五拍：水草卓歇, section of handscroll mounted as album leaf, 25 x 46.6 cm., ink, color, and gold on silk, Boston MFA, 28.63.

9.30.1c: *Lady Wenji's Return to China: Parting from Nomad Husband and Children* 文姬歸漢圖

殘卷 第十三拍：惜別返國/文姬归汉图 殘卷 第十三拍：惜別返国, section of handscroll mounted as album leaf, 24.8 x 67.2 cm, ., ink, color, and gold on silk, Boston MFA, 28.64.

9.30.1d: *Lady Wenji's Return to China: Wenji Arriving Home* 文姬歸漢圖 殘卷

第十八拍：歸來故鄉/文姬归汉图 殘卷 第十八拍：归来故乡, section of handscroll mounted as album leaf, 25 x 55.8 cm, ink, color, and gold on silk, Boston MFA, 28.65.

Done by Academy master in Liao style. For another version, see Wen Fong, *Beyond Representation*, pp. 209–215.

Khitans, who called their dynasty the Liao, were originally a nomadic people who settled in regions north of China, in Mongolia, Manchuria, down to site of present Beijing, which became their southern capital.; Northern Song paid tribute to them, to pacify them. They were succeeded in north by Jurchens, Jin dynasty; these were conquered and displaced by Mongols, who eventually founded Yuan dynasty. Were presumably paintings done for people who were somehow engaged in "foreign relations", such as emissaries, or done as gifts to foreign, non-Han people.