CLP 4

~~The Uncouth Rains~~ Awkwardness and Imagery in the Landscapes of Fa Jo-chen

One of the most interesting painters of secondary rank in the seventeenth century is Fa Jo-chen (1613-1696). To say that of an artist may seem like saying of someone: He is one of the largest dwarfs of his time; if Fa Jo-chen is of secondary rank, what makes him so interesting? This paper attempts to answer that question. A provisional answer might be that while Fa's limited technique and habit of either repeating compositions or improvising them, often in a somewhat slapdash manner, keep him out of the first rank of masters of his period, the power of the disturbing visions he presents in his best paintings makes him stand out even in an age of compelling landscape images.

Enough information on Fa Jo-chen is recorded, and enough dated works survive, to permit any of the kinds of standard treatments that we have customarily accorded to individual Chinese artists: the heavily biographical study, the year-by-year guided tour through the painter's stylistic development, the study of how his works relate to schools and trends of his time. While all of those still seem to me worth doing, none of them will be attempted on this occasion. Instead, I want to concentrate on the two aspects of Fa Jo-chen's painting just mentioned: the technical ineptitude of much of it, and the extraordinary version of the world that his landscape pictures offer.

For the former, the issue of skill and awkwardness, we have a relevant statement by the artist himself, an essay titled Hua-shuo or "Essay on Painting." It is preserved in his own calligraphy in a handscroll dated 1667 in the collection of John M. Crawford, Jr. (Fig. 1-5). It has not been completely translated, and has so far, because of the writer's scarcely legible hand and idiosyncratic prose, resisted efforts even to decipher it completely; only a tentative summary of its contents can be offered here.[1]

It begins: "Someone asked the painter, 'Is it true, sir, that you are the most skillful person in the world?' The painter [who must be Fa Jo-chen himself] answered, 'Not at all. This isn't what the world calls skillful; on the contrary, one has to be the clumsiest person in the world, and then take this up [i.e. painting.]'" He goes on to say that the most skillful are the great ministers of state who guide the affairs of the

[1] It was written while he was between ~~official~~ posts (Fa, scholar-official); in the following year he was to become ~~serving as~~ lieutenant-governor of Anhui Province. The essay

country and benefit the people without seeking rewards or fame for themselves. Next are the dukes and nobles, who recommend men of learning and talent to the court. Having paid this conventional tribute to the powerful, and so avoided offending them, Fa Jo-chen ~~then~~ directs a diatribe against the greater number of officials who pose as heroes while stealing ~~the~~ talents ~~of~~ others and enriching themselves. They own huge estates, he says, dress their children and servants in silk and jewels, and club together as though no one else existed. They can be called "the most skillful people in the world," he comments bitterly.

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Seeing that he is of no use in this great world of affairs, ~~our speaker~~ the writer turns to the classics, then to poetry, and finally to painting, where at last he finds a place for himself. His accomplishment there cannot be considered in the same category with success in the great world; he says it is rather a matter of "the most clumsy man in the world devoting himself to the art of painting." The painter then sighs deeply and says, "Even though my paintings are unskillful, at least I escape being killed." (2)

Then, the text continues, he took his paintings to show to Mr. Hsing of Shantung, a grandson of the calligrapher Hsing T'ung (1551-1612). Mr. Hsing "thinks of hiding his skills in the capital," or undertaking an official career; he "must be the clumsiest person in the world, since he doesn't know how to employ his skill"--that is, for his own benefit. Hsing has been able to realize the virtues of his extreme clumsiness in painting, suggests Fa, who exhorts him "not to give up our [kind of] clumsiness in exchange for what the world calls skill. Hsing and I are more or less two of a kind," he concludes.

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The association or near-equivalence of clumsiness with virtue and benevolence was, of course, centuries-old in both Taoist and Neo-Confucian thought; we can recall, in this connection, a passage in the writing of the eleventh century philosopher Chou Tun-i which Fa Jo-chen's essay seems to echo: "Skillfulness is what I detest. Moreover, it grieves me to see so much skill in the world . . . The skillful are the thieves, the awkward are the virtuous. The skillful bring misfortunes upon the people, the awkward bring their happiness. . . (3) The thought was not new; what is interesting is how Fa Jo-chen builds on it in his curious version of the relationship between official and artistic careers. In the great affairs of the world, the highest skill belongs to those at the top, the truly effective ministers and nobles who benefit the country; below them are the

crowd of selfish and ambitious officials who harm it, and who are only ironically termed "most skillful." At the bottom, lack of skill, or refusal to employ it for such unworthy ends, moves one out of this sphere of activity altogether into others, including painting, where clumsiness, if not a positive virtue, at least does not seem to be a serious drawback.

Fa's view of clumsiness in painting will remind us immediately of Ku Ning-yüan's well-known statement about the superiority of clumsiness to skill, and his warning that when one has once lost his clumsiness (which Ku sees as a kind of innocence) it can never be regained.(4) However, the unproblematic assertion of clumsiness as a positive quality in painting was by no means general in the seventeenth century. On the contrary, other writers were subjecting the ideal of amateurish awkwardness to increasingly critical scrutiny. No doubt they were alarmed by the growing practice in the late Ming of a sketchy, calligraphic, often undisciplined kind of painting among scholar-officials, whose status as administrators insured that their paintings would be admired, sometimes beyond their true deserts. High-level examples include Ni Yüan-lu, Huang Tao-chou, Wang To, and Yang Wen-ts'ung; low-level examples abound, although their works have mercifully not been preserved in any numbers. A quick survey of some reactions to this situation among writers of the time will serve to put Fa Jo-chen's statement in context.

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A brief "Essay on Painting" by Li Jih-hua (1565-1635) sets the historical background for this issue:(5)

"The ancients esteemed pictures and writings equally. They made pictures to preserve normative models; therefore, they were methodically done, never carelessly. . . Wang Wei and Li Ch'eng were brilliant landscapists, concentrating their energies on composition, on washes and texture strokes. They wrought them for years, refined them for months. When they weren't in an inspired mood, they wouldn't paint frivolously; if their paintings weren't highly accomplished, they wouldn't show them to anyone. 'Five days for one mountain, ten days for one stream'--this was true of all the artists, not just of Wang Tsai.

"When we come to the Su Tung-p'o and Mi Fu circle, however, artists suddenly begin to rely on their talents to flourish [the brush] in a bravura manner, taking brush and ink as playthings. These artists did their pictures when tipsy, or while engaged in conversation, following their inclinations.

Nothing they did was less than marvelous; still, this was like the working of heaven, or the performance of an illusion--not, in the end, true painting. One can liken them to Buddhist priests who become saints outside the monastic discipline--they eat meat and get drunk on wine, spitting out dirt which all turns to gold. When other people try to imitate them, however, they end up as nothing more than monks who have broken their vows."

Li Jih-hua continues with pithy critiques of more recent artists. Chao Meng-fu, he says, "preserved the methods of the old masters, but without breaking free of the aristocratic air"--presumably, of Southern Sung painting. Huang Kung-wang and Wang Meng were scholars-in-retirement who, while they only approximated the traditional styles, set up new rules and standards of their own; their paintings were always profound and treasurable because they worked on them for months and years, while concealing their efforts in the finished work. Ni Tsan, paying no attention to skill or awkwardness, only (as he himself put it) "writing out the untrammeled feelings in his breast," was in the end like the artist who tries to paint a tiger and, failing, produces a good likeness of a dog. In the Ming, Shen Chou and Wen Cheng-ming dominated their period, but their works cannot compare with those of the old masters. Ch'iu Ying can catch the richness of old painting, but misses its simplicity and plainness, and in the end fails to attain a high level of quality.

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The implications of all this for Li Jih-hua's own time are clear. The painstaking and methodical kind of painting practiced by the early masters had now been discredited by the uninspired efforts of later practitioners. But those who tried to imitate the spontaneous creations of the great early scholar-amateurs were in no better position, since the achievements of those masters were, by their very nature, inimitable, and the fine freedom one could admire in their works could too easily degenerate into simple sloppiness. Li Jih-hua's statement is in fact a recognition of a crisis in painting. That the crisis produced, in its turn, brilliant new solutions in the works of the Individualist masters and others of the middle and later seventeenth century goes without saying; it was nonetheless real for artists and critics of the period.

Prominent in seventeenth century theorizing are probing reconsiderations and reformulations of the amateur-professional problem. Chan Ching-feng

in a colophon dated 1594 that closely parallels (and probably precedes) Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's "Northern and Southern Schools" theory established two long lineages of artists which he termed the i-chia and tso-chia or "liberated masters" and "makers" or "workers," equating these with the amateurs and professionals, respectively.(6) This was a relatively simple formulation, following a long-established mode of thought on the matter. Ch'en Hung-shou, writing in the last year of his life, 1652, addressed the problem as it existed in his own time, and recognized that the "amateur ideal" was being exploited by men who had gained some standing through the official examinations as a crutch for undistinguished and inept paintings which could not stand on their own merits. He writes:

"Artists today don't follow the old masters. Relying on a few phrases borrowed from old writings [to pass the official examinations], they embark on careers [as scholar-officials], perhaps attaining some trivial and transient fame for themselves. Therupon, they begin to wave the brush and do paintings. But their brushwork and ink-control aren't equal to the demands they place on them, and also in terms of verisimilitude their paintings, alas, don't bear comparison [with their subjects]. And yet these men use their trifling fame [as officials] to offer their works for criticism [expecting to be taken seriously as painters]. Moreover, they ridicule and criticize older and accomplished artists. That is what makes me, Old Lotus, most dissatisfied with these 'illustrious gentlemen.'"(7)

At the same time, Ch'en Hung-shou chastizes the professional artists for "failing through [excess of] artisan skill," and exhorts them to study more ancient styles than those of the Sung. Those who imitate Yüan painting, he says, "fail through [excess of] rusticity."

A related and particularly perceptive statement of the matter is provided by Fang I-chih, who uses the terms chiang-pi or "artisan's brush" and wen-pi or "litterateur's brush" for his dichotomy, and says of them: "People regard the artisan's brush as being impeded by method (or methodicalness), and the litterateur's brush as being impeded by lack of impediment."(8) In another passage he writes that the scholar-amateurs are "naturally endowed with culture and refinement, but don't devote enough strenuous effort" to painting, while the professionals are "practiced in artisan techniques, but deficient in remote harmonies and gracefulness." He continues: "If the artist is not rooted in the highest [standards], how much of spiritual enlightenment can he expect to attain? There are 'wild fox' artists who, con-

cealing their deformities, falsely attach themselves to the Southern School and boast of their lack of study as if it were the highest form of study. Is this to be tolerated?"(9)

Finally, we can recall, without quoting here at length, Kung Hsien's several statements on the matter. Most relevant to our concern and our artist, perhaps, is Kung's observation that paintings by the tso-chia, "workers" or professionals, are "stable but unremarkable," while paintings by the scholar-officials are "remarkable [or strange] but unstable."(10) No paintings can be better described as "strange but unstable" than Fa Jo-chen's.

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Taken together, these statements express a widespread mistrust of the ideal of inspired freedom from rules and conventional standards that was current among the amateur artists and their apologists, a suspicion that it was far from being such an unmixed good as had often been claimed. The truth of these perceptions is borne out by the later history of painting: one way of accounting for the falling-off in quality after the seventeenth century is by pointing out that the later artists too seldom "devote enough strenuous effort" to their art (as Fang I-chih puts it). They tend to rely too much on improvisation and the willingness of their audiences, who are dissuaded by critical pronouncements from applying old standards, to accept their casual productions as a higher form of art. With such models as the late works of Shih-t'ao as sanction, they are encouraged to paint pictures that require less time and planning than had been expected before; and, while they continue to create interesting and attractive pictures, they seldom (as we all know) create masterpieces. Fa Jo-chen, for all the originality of his work, exemplifies this unfortunate trend at an early stage. On one simple level, then, we can understand the argument of his Hua shuo as a justification for his own painting. We will return to it later, however, to consider other implications.

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Fa himself, in an inscription added to his 1682 album of landscapes ~~in the Kurokawa Institute of Ancient Culture~~ (Fig. 6), quotes Su Tung-p'o as saying "I have no talent for painting, I have only ideas in painting," and continues: "I am old now, and have come to understand what he said. My own painting also emphasizes ideas, just as white clouds bestow parental affection."

such as

The meaning of this last phrase is somewhat obscure, but the meaning in which I would like to take it will emerge in what follows. The admission that he has no talent for painting could, of course, be taken as one of those

self-deprecatory statements meant to be understood as conventional modesty, and so to disarm anyone who might think of saying the same thing seriously and critically; the strategem was a favorite one among Chinese artists. But Fa repeats the statement in a later inscription; and it seems to reflect some real awareness of his limitations as a painter. What, then, did he mean by "ideas"? Did they consist only of a novel manner of painting, and an unfamiliar vision of the world? He gives us both of those, certainly. But I believe that his "ideas in painting" are more than those, and want to explore the implications of one "idea" or theme which seems to have obsessed him in his later years and to supply a clue to the understanding of many, or even most, of his typical landscapes.

A painting in the same album (Fig. 7) represents nothing more than an expanse of soggy ground, devoid of any prominent terrain feature; where and when else but in seventeenth century China would this have been accepted as a picture at all? The inscription on it reads: "T'ao Yüan-ming often heard the sound of water on his farmland. Leaning on his staff, he listened and sighed, 'The stalks of rice are flourishing; everywhere it is green. It [water] always shows its ambition to wash away thorns [i.e. difficult situations]. Water can be my teacher.'"

It is surprising to find, when we pursue this theme, how many of Fa Jo-chen's paintings and their inscriptions prove to be somehow concerned with rain and its nurturing or healing powers. A landscape of 1692 (Fig. 8), for instance, inscribed as having been painted in the rain, may affect us as dismal and depressing, with its somber colors and lifeless brushwork, its puddles of water on the ground, its disordered and illogically crossing trees bent by the elements. This vision of rain could scarcely be further removed from the more familiar, exhilarating Southern Sung and Ming academy images of sudden showers with supple, wind-tossed trees (Fig. 10A, B). But the meaning is also very different. Fa Jo-chen's painting does not present rain as a transient atmospheric event, sweeping briefly over the terrain, but as a long-continuing phenomenon that changes the very condition of the land.

Closer to Fa's painting in composition and mood is a picture by Ting Yün-p'eng reproduced by woodblock in the Ch'eng-shih mo-yüan of 1606, titled "Prolonged Rain After a Great Drought" (Fig. 9). The accompanying poem supplies the associated meaning: After the archer I, in the time of the legendary Emperor Yao, had saved the earth from burning by supernumerary suns, violent winds and

poisonous fogs still darkened the land, and the people suffered. Then three days of sweet, drenching rain turned everything to muddy confusion. But out of this the world seemed to be created anew.

In the Confucian classics and other early writings, the terms lin-yü or "prolonged rain," kan-yü or "sweet rain," and shih-yü or "timely rain" appear more or less synonymously and as similes or metaphors for benevolent actions by rulers and officials that relieve the sufferings of the people. There is evidence that in later centuries, clouds and rain in landscape paintings sometimes carried the same significance. The Ming statesman Yang Shih-ch'i (1365-1444), for instance, inscribed a painting of "Hills in Clouds" (Yün-shan t'u) by his contemporary Ho Ch'eng for the Imperial Censor Hsiao Ch'i as Hsiao was leaving for Shantung to take up an official post. Yang's poem describes the painting, and ends: "Now, on his piebald horse, he rides eastward again,/ And from the horseback gazes toward the mountains of Ch'i and Lu./ When the mists of T'ai-shan arise,/ Every inch offers nourishing rain to humanity." (13) It was to T'ai-shan and its deity, we should remember, that the emperors of China prayed for rain to relieve the suffering of their subjects.

We cannot see Ho Ch'eng's painting, but, considering that he was a scholar-official artist who followed Mi Fu, it is not inappropriate to introduce here the Freer Gallery's "Hills in Clouds" attributed to Mi Fu, and to note that the couplet inscribed in the upper right, purportedly in the hand of Emperor Hui-tsung, reads: "Heaven sends down timely rain; the hills and rivers emit clouds." (Fig. 10).

The same set of images is employed by Fa Jo-chen himself to the same purpose in a dedicatory inscription written in 1695 on one of his landscapes for some high-ranking, aged official whom he calls Wu-weng. The inscription begins, "Prolonged rain, how nourishing!" and goes on to present the metaphor of clouds over T'ai-shan, and to praise Wu-weng's benevolence, his assistance to the emperor, and his personal virtues, ending: "I sing the praises of peaceful administration." Fa Jo-chen in his signature gives his own age as 83 (he notes his age on most of his late works) and adds the line: "I have no talent for painting, I have only ideas in painting," this time without crediting Su Tung-p'o. (14)

We needs not pursue this subject at length, but it is worth recalling that the hero of Shui-hu chuan, Sung Chiang, had as his hao Chi-shih-yü or "Auspicious TImely Rain," in recognition of his Robin-Hoodish exploits on

behalf of the people; and that the authors of the Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting catalog interpret the first line of Ting Yün-p'eng's poem on his 1614 "Morning Sun Over the Heavenly Citadel," reading "Clouds arise from the dale of the Dark Plateau" to mean: "The gentleman's compassion as a government official was like the clouds that herald saving rain for the farmers."

A quick survey of Fa Jo-chen's dated works will reveal the pervasiveness of this theme among them. Two landscapes dated 1673 and 1676 can represent his early phase--early, that is, within his body of extant work, which, with only two or three exceptions, is dated after 1670. The 1673 and 1676 landscapes are in the most routine Southern School manner; if Fa had continued in this direction, he would have joined the company of inconsequential seventeenth century amateurs who have slipped into deserved obscurity. But a work dated still earlier, in 1667, reveals that he had already by then turned his brush to rainy landscapes. This one, inscribed with a poem beginning "Rain falls drippingly on the lofty mountains," can scarcely be called a good painting--~~several years ago it was offered at a low price by a Hong Kong dealer, and I, for one, although accepting it as genuine, left it there~~--but it is not dull.

~~The long handscroll painted for his son and~~ the Kurokawa album, ~~both shown earlier, are~~ dated ~~1681 and~~ 1682, ~~respectively~~. From the same middle period are two landscapes alike in composition, representing mountainsides cut by rivulets after heavy rain, with steaming groves of trees below. The geometricized earth forms in both presumably betray Fa Jo-chen's contacts with the artists of Anhui, where he had served as an official and where he was now living in retirement. The poem on one, which is dated 1683, begins with the image of white mists rising after rain. The long poetic inscription on the other is dated 1682, and begins: "After six months of drought, we see rain at last . . . " The old people repair their thatched roofs, it continues, and forget their suffering. Fa Jo-chen expresses ~~the~~ admiration for a certain Ch'i-fu, to whom the painting is dedicated. Ch'i-fu serves the emperor devotedly, sacrificing personal gain, renouncing fine clothes, eating plain food. Whenever he speaks, it is to benefit the people (literally: "he spits forth a rainbow from his tongue.") Fa Jo-chen wishes that he could serve him. The familiar symbolism here is turned to rather fawning praise for Ch'i-fu, and what seems to be an appeal for employment. As we will note

later, Fa had attempted the Po-hsüeh hung-tzu examination three years before this, but it had failed to lead to the resumption of his official career, and he was still out of a job.

In works of the middle and later 1680s, Fa seems to experiment with looser, unconventional modes of brushwork, pursuing his "ideas" at the sacrifice of traditional compositional structure and brush disciplines. He was not, of course, alone in that pursuit--other artists of the time were venturing into the perilous realm of "brushless" painting, as we might term it--but he goes further than most others in the dissolution of distinct brushline and form. The landscape portrayed in a hanging scroll of 1685 appears itself all but dissolved by the storm, its grasses and trees whipped by the wind, its earth eroded by flowing water. The inscription contains the usual imagery of white clouds and heavy rain, but is otherwise mostly illegible, in reproduction,

Fa Jo-chen's inscription on a handscroll of 1687 is uninformative as to subject, but the drizzly appearance of the trees and the hills behind leaves little doubt that this, too, is a landscape seen through rain, which blurs and fuses the forms into almost incoherent jumbles of wet brushstrokes. Another handscroll painted in 1685 portrays, for a change, the destructive power of rain. The inscription speaks of forty days of unceasing summer torrents, which prevented the ears of wheat from ripening and half drowned the other grains. The people complained and appealed, and Fa did this picture to pray for their relief.

With this period, from the late 1680s to his death in 1696, Fa Jo-chen has moved into his last and strongest manner, in which he seems to achieve best his expressive purpose. The effect of instability in these late landscapes is not limited to rivulets running down among geometric forms; the entire terrain seems now to flow, to slip sideward as though it were itself in a semi-liquid state. Even when snow is depicted instead of rain, as in the 1690 handscroll "Snow Coloring the World White" in the Cleveland Museum of Art or the similar scroll of the same year in the Tokyo National Museum, the effect is the same.

A hanging scroll of 1690 bears a poetic couplet reading: "A rainbow arches over T'ai-shan;/ Where water flows, it turns to sweet drenching rain." Although relatively tame in itself, the painting can be seen as a point of departure for the transformation that led to the creation of the two most impressive of Fa Jo-chen's landscapes. One was painted two years later, in

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1692 (Fig. 23); the inscription contains no reference to rain, but the nearly identical composition and the streams of water running down the slope suffice to add it to our series. The uninscribed landscape in the Stockholm Museum (Fig. 24) ~~which we began~~ must be still later, near the end of his life, and a still more radically expressionist reworking of the composition, carrying the same meaning powerfully intensified. Here, too, it is a mountainside after torrential rain that we see, with water still pouring down its tortuously convoluted surface. Heavy mists drawn up by the sun obscure parts of it, while other parts have been perversely left blank, and cannot easily be read as either solids or voids. The spatial incoherence is compounded by a quasi-illusionistic shading, probably derived from some contact with European pictures. But these are matters outside our present concern, which is the interpretation of the picture toward which all the foregoing has led. If we are to follow the indications of Fa Jo-chen's own inscriptions, this finest of his landscapes does not, as I once understood it, present "some vast convulsion of nature," or reflect "the Chinese scholars' response to the shock of the Manchu conquest,"[15] but rather portrays a landscape undergoing regeneration through healing rain.

At this point we had best relax our determination to avoid biographical interpretations of Fa's works and introduce in outline the facts of his life, which will allow us to tie these strands together.[16] The son of a scholar-official of Chiao-chou in Shantung who retired after the fall of the Ming, Fa Jo-chen became a licentiate (chu-sheng) in the last years of the dynasty. After harrowing experiences during the transitional years, he passed the first provincial examination under the Manchus in 1645 and was given the chin-shih degree or doctorate and an appointment to the Hanlin Academy. He later served in administrative posts in Fukien, Chekiang, and Anhui, the last as lieutenant governor. The period of the 1660s, the peak of his career, was a difficult and dangerous time for Chinese scholars; the Manchus, wary of sedition, began a literary inquisition and a large-scale persecution that led to the deaths of hundreds. Fa Jo-chen survived, but was removed from office in 1670 for allegedly concealing a shortage in the accounts of Chou Liang-kung. Although he attempted the Po-hsüeh hung-tzu examination of 1679 in Peking, he was never restored to favor or to office, and spent his remaining years in retirement, mostly in the vicinity of Huang-shan in southern Anhui.

Fa Jo-chen was thus one of the group of Chinese scholars, including Chou Liang-kung, Ch'ien Ch'ien-i and others, who chose to accept office under the Manchus almost immediately after the conquest. We think of artists of the Ming-Ch'ing transition as typically adopting the stance of i-min or loyalists, and preserving as recluses their devotion to the fallen dynasty while declining to serve the new. The praise accorded them by later writers for this political choice has enhanced their reputations as painters, even affecting the appraisals they enjoy today.[17] The moral ambiguity of Fa Jo-chen's choice, by contrast, may have affected his reputation negatively (just as adherence to Wei Chung-hsien's faction harmed Chang Jui-t'u's in the late Ming): Chinese critics virtually ignore him. His position during his lifetime must have been especially difficult, in those years of tensions, recriminations, and charges of collaboration; he cannot have escaped being subjected to such charges himself. The traditional answer to them was the protestation that one was not serving the new regime only in order to advance one's own career, but because the country, at such a time, needed all the more to be governed, and well governed. The Confucian ideal of service to the state and the people could still, from this standpoint, be legitimately invoked.[18]

At this point, biography, theory, and paintings converge. The aspects of Fa Jo-chen's painting on which we have concentrated, its awkwardness and its distinctive imagery, can both be read (with some support from his own writings) as assertions of the ethical rightness of his own position. When he composed the Hua-shuo in 1667 he was in the last phase of his official career, and only beginning to paint seriously. His admission of his own and Mr. Hsing's clumsiness in practical affairs was in fact an oblique claim to their being innocent of self-seeking manipulation. His admitted technical failings in painting, in the statement that he "had no talent" for it, is similarly an appropriation to himself of a higher purpose, the use of landscape as a vehicle for "painting ideas," particularly the moral theme of the "timely rain" which he took as a metaphor for the course of action that he and others had adopted. His paintings as he saw them transmit and uphold an ethical ideal "just as white clouds bestow parental affection."

Fa Jo-chen was prolific as a poet--his printed collection contains over four thousand poems--and probably also as a painter, with countless

examples no doubt lying still unpublished in Chinese collections. He must have spent most of his time, in his late years, producing poems and paintings at a rate too fast to allow careful construction in more than a few individual works. Most of the paintings bear dedicatory inscriptions, and those we have cited indicate that many of the dedicatees and recipients were men who shared his attitude toward service under the Manchus, and also in some cases, no doubt, his experience--men such as Wu-weng and Ch'i-fu, both of whom were devotedly serving the Manchu emperor, or Mr. Hsing, who had "thought of hiding his skills in the capital" (that is, undertaking an official career) but who now was "nurturing his clumsiness" in Shantung. For these men, the "timely rain" image in Fa's landscapes must have been trenchant and poignant. For Fa himself, the production of this series of paintings, the major part of his output, can be recognized as having been an obsessive re-enactment of his personal struggle within the imagery of a landscape, and a continual reassertion, throughout his late years, of the rightness of his earlier choice.

A parallel might be seen in the case of Jen Jen-fa, who pursued an official career under the Mongols in the early Yüan period, and who offered a pictorial justification for this course in his handscroll representing "Fat and Lean Horses."(18A) The fat horse, according to Jen's own inscription, stands for the official who enriches himself at the people's expense--the Yüan predecessors of those castigated by Fa Jo-chen--and the lean horse for the official who, like Jen in his self-image, grows thin in dedicated service. We can recall that the same horse in Kung K'ai's famous painting had been used as a symbol for the opposite, i-min stance. This pairing can remind us of the multivalence of images in China, and serve to warn against the mistake of interpreting all landscapes with clouds and rain, in the absence of such evidence as has been offered here for Fa Jo-chen's, as necessarily carrying the same meanings as his.

Insofar as landscape paintings can be taken, then, as images of the world as the artist experiences it, or chooses to present it--and the landscapes of the seventeenth century Individualists seem richly to justify that kind of reading--Fa Jo-chen's can be understood as intended to portray a severely shaken, damaged world that is undergoing healing under the benign attention of devoted administrators, the "timely rain after long drought." It was a

theme well suited to the age, the early K'ang-hsi era, a time of recovery and reconstitution for China, especially after the suppression of the Wu San-kuei rebellion of the 1670s, and the Po-hsüeh hung-tzu examination of 1679 which seemed to welcome Chinese scholars back into the administration. But our first, immediate perception of Fa's paintings as expressions of terrible instability are not invalidated by this recognition of the artist's intent in painting them, since his intent cannot simply be equated with the true meaning of the work. ~~In ways we could analyze and demonstrate, if time allowed~~, the paintings themselves amply support the first, intuitive reading of them as images of a land riven, unreconstituted, still essentially uninhabitable. However committed Fa Jo-chen might have been intellectually to the project of restoring China to a condition of ~~normalcy~~ stability, his best and most typical landscape paintings reflect powerfully the still unresolved tensions both in his public life as a failed official and in his inner life as an artist, between the ideal of public service and frustration in the event, between the ideal of charging landscape paintings with moral meaning and a residue of turbulence and intense bitterness that continued to break through in them.

Whatever the inscriptions may say,

James Cahill
March, 1981

Notes

[1]I am grateful to several of my students, especially Scarlett Jang, for help in reading this and others of Fa Jo-chen's handwritten inscriptions. Miss Jang has given me valuable assistance also in other parts of this paper.

[2]The summary of this cryptic passage by Shujiro Shimada (Chinese Calligraphy and Painting in the Collection of John M. Crawford, Jr., New York, 1962, p. 153) takes it to mean that "if [the scholar] fails to attain distinction in this field, he should then turn to painting; if still unsuccessful, he may then retire and apply himself to the craft of an artisan-painter." Interesting as this sequence is, I am unable to derive it from the text as I read it.

[3]See my "Confucian Elements in the Theory of Painting," in: Arthur F. Wright, ed., The Confucian Persuasion, Stanford, 1960, p. 137.

[4]Ku Ning-yüan, Hua yin (Mei-shu ts'ung-shu, Part I, no. 4), p. 20.

[5]Li Jih-hua, "Hua-shuo yü Tai Chih-pin" (Essay on Painting, addressed to Tai Chih-pin), in: T'ien-chih-t'ang chi , ch. 39, p. 8b ff.

[6]Chan Ching-feng, colophon to Jao Tzu-jan's Shan-shui chia-fa, quoted in Ch'i Kung, "Li-chia k'ao" (researches on the term li-chia or "amateurs"), I-lin ts'ung-lu, no. 5, 1964, pp. 196-205.

[7]Ch'en Hung-shou, Hua lun (Essay on painting), 1652, in: Pao-lun-t'ang chi, lun (essays), pp. 1a-2a.

[8]From the biography of Chang Erh-wei in Chou Liang-kung's Tu-hua lu; quoted by Jao Tsung-i, "Ming-chi wen-jen yü hui-hua" (Literati of the Late Ming and Painting), Renditions, no. 6, Spring 1976, p. 211; English translation p. 140.

[9] Fang I-chih, Hua kai (General Notes on Painting), quoted in Jao Tsung-i, "Fang I-chih chih hua-lun" (Fang I-chih's Painting Theory), The Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, vol. VII, no. 1, December 1974, p. 114-115.

[10] Inscription recorded in P'ang Yüan-chi, Hsü-chai ming-hua hsü-lu, 1924, ch. III, pp. 3a-b.

[11] Yang Shih-ch'i, Tung-li hsü-chi, ch. 57, pp. 12a-b.

[12] Ch'en K'uei-lin, Pao-yü-ko shua-hua lu, 1915, ch. II, pp. 47-48.

[13] Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting, Cleveland, 1981, no. 203, p. 260.

[14] A painting of cypress and cranes dated 1643 in the collection of Laurence Sickman seems genuine, but irrelevant to our present concerns. A landscape of the same date reproduced in Shina meiga senshū (Kyoto, Tokasha, 19, pl. 9) seems impossible for that date, resembling too closely the works of Kung Hsien decades later, and fitting into no phase of Fa Jo-chen's development.

[15] Fantastics and Eccentrics in Chinese Painting, New York, 1967, p. 64.

[16] This brief account is taken from the biography by Dean R. Wickes in Arthur Hummel, ed., Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, Washington, D.C., 1943, p. 226. I have found little to add to this excellent short treatment of Fa's life. The "chronological autobiography" titled Huang-shan nien-lüeh mentioned by Wickes (as "not consulted") has not been available to me; this should allow a fuller account.

[17] See Proceedings of the Symposium on Paintings and Calligraphy by Ming I-min, Hong Kong, 1976.

[18] For discussions of this alternative of service or seclusion for the Yüan period, see Frederick Mote, "Confucian Eremetism in the Yüan Period," in

Arthur F. Wright, ed., The Confucian Persuasion, Stanford, 1960, pp. 202-240; note especially (p. 218) the contentions by Liu Yin and Hsü Heng that they both were, in their different ways, serving the tao. For the same issue in the early Ch'ing period, see Lynn A. Struve, "Some Frustrated Scholars of the K'ang-hsi Period," in Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills, Jr., eds., From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, Region, and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century China, New Haven, 1979, pp. 323-365.

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~~143~~. See Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan zuhan mokuroku; Chūgoku kaiga-hen (Illustrated Catalogues of the Tokyo National Museum: Chinese Paintings), Tokyo, 1977, no. 140.