

9B talking
head

9B.TH: Political and Poetic Painting of Southern Song

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, or 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. As I acknowledge in that book, there are numbers 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. Now, on to Lecture 9B.

Lect.notes.9Ac, Buffalo & Herdboys

- 9.8.1- Buffalo & Herdboys, attrib. to Yen Tz'u-p'ing. Handscroll in Nanjing Museum, four sec's (four seasons); hanging scroll in Sumitomo Col., Kyoto.

- Photos: buffalo in fields; boys. Story (w. C.C.Wang).

= Return, for comparison, hanging scroll w. Li T'ang signature.

Subject w. associations of rusticity, bucolic ease, closeness to nature: used as political gifts etc. So later, at least, as attested by inscriptions—given to people retiring, with implication of: Now you will be leading an untroubled life, away from the city and administration, like the cowherds. Or, (Ming example) presented to official going off to take a post as prefect, w. attached poem suggesting that the man will give loving care to the people he administers, as the herdboy does the buffalo.

Subjects chosen for depiction by Acad. artist chosen acc. to understood demands or wishes of his patrons or clientele, produced ptgs for their use, either to hang or (more often) to present to others. Choice of subjects by artists of this kind not to be accounted for by circumstances of artist's own life or experience—he was out in countryside and saw water buffalo & boys, and—etc. Romantic notion completely inapplicable to Ch artists of this kind.

9B on fish
(missing p. 1)

go back to the beginning," and it goes on from there. That's close enough.

- 105683 beside BW 6.

A fan-shaped leaf similar in subject and style, this one in the Palace Museum, Beijing, reproduced in the big book of 100 Song Album Leaves as no. 6. This one is attributed to a different artist, Liu Cai. It 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 ptgs 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-Waiting, 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.

So: one can say that all the Song-period paintings of fish we have are essentially anonymous, and most if not all of them Anonymous So. Song Academy-style. What we have is a small but very impressive body of fish paintings, then,, with no single artist clearly responsible for any part of it. The whole group is best seen, ~~then~~, as a grand collective achievement of these extraordinary masters--these three and no doubt 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? 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 experience of Southern Song Academy painting, and the pleasure we take in it. Once

The attributing of names to them is so often in Chinese painting is so often an acknowledgment of the fact that the Chinese have no way to the ptgs they owned.

proper

from

let me say!
more: forget all that stuff the literati critics and theorists have been telling you.

- BT 9 or BT 7, alone on screen

✓
Here is a horizontal painting of two fish, ink on silk, 27 by 48 cm. in size, that was in our *Sogenga* exhibition as no. 38. It was owned by the dealer Yabumoto Sogoro, and bore an old attribution to an artist named Lai-an. Nothing is known about him; he is unrecorded in Chinese sources, but mentioned in a Japanese text, the *Kundaikan Sayû Chôki*, 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, powerfully shaped with light undersides and darker, more scaly backs; their movement through the water seems to be swaying the water grasses, which bend as they pass through. Altogether, a striking image of two fish caught in motion. *swim by*

- BT 6

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. *we*

- BT 11 or (less good) BT 12

Another fish painting in the collection of Yabumoto Sogoro, this one anonymous, no attribution that I can remember, and representing three fish, the one in upper left portrayed with special skill as seen from above, turning in the water.

pt 7 & 8
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*, 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.

- BT 10, detail

Fish paintings also had political meanings and usages, which are discussed by Hou-mei Song in her recent book *Decoded Messsages*. (etc., fill in)

Then: Long handscroll of fish & water weeds attrib. to Liu Cai in the St. Louis City Art Museum

A particularly fine and important example among surviving fish paintings by Song period artists is the handscroll depicting "Fish Swimming amid Falling Flowers" in the St. Louis City Art Museum. It was acquired in 1997, and is --- in length. 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 the *Three Thousand Years* book, pages ..., and Dick Barnhart gives a good description of it on p. 119 there, so I will read his long paragraph about it while Rand Chatterjee puts on the appropriate images of sections and details from it that we have. So, here we go:

- From here on, it's up to you, Rand, to change & manipulate the images while I read Dick's text

"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 inkwash 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" became 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."

- Images you made of Chou Tung-ch'ing "The Pleasures of Fish" in the Met, plus detail in two parts. Use these appropriately as I talk.

To conclude this section on paintings of fish, I want to show briefly a handscroll painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, discussed and reproduced by Wen Fong in his *Beyond Representation* book, pages 380 to 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 and the emergence of literati painting in 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 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,

scholar-amateur

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, 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. And with that I end this section on fish paintings.

But happily we still
have several features
to go before them

Freer Tao Yuanming Scroll

INSERT IN 9B, AT 21:14, BEFORE MA HEZHI (FOR WHICH I GAVE YOU EXTENSIVE REVISIONS/ADDITIONS), AND AFTER "BREAKING THE BALUSTRADE" PTG, WHICH I END WITH "OK, anyway, let's go on." insert:

IMAGES: F1919.11, IMAGES 01 to 13= sec.01 (R), sec.02 (L) (title)

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.

- sec. 12, alone on screen.

Mounted after the paintings is an inscription by the calligrapher Li Peng, 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.

- sec.13 (R), sec. 14 (L)

This is the Homecoming Ode by Tao Yuanming, as written out by a later calligrapher named Shen Hao in one of the colophons to the scroll.

Tao Yuanming composed his “Homecoming” poem in A.D. 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 successive paintings, seven of them, that make up the work, and commenting on them.

- sec.03 (R), sec.04 (middle), sec.05 (left), all one—move slowly over them as I read the first stanza of the poem.

Section 1

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.

- sec. 06

The second painting in the scroll illustrates this next passage in the Ode:

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 the 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.

- sec. 07

Section 3

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 sun set. He is on a kind of island, separated from the rest of the garden by streams at left and right with bridges over them.

- sec. 08

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 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..

- sec.09

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 upper center, a boat moving off along the river or canal, presumably carrying Tao in his "lonely skiff"—actually a comfortable passenger boat rowed or poled by servants.

- sec. 10

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?

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, or in Tom Lawton's book. I'm not 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 *Chinese Figure Painting* book, makes it a 12th century painting, as I would, and notes that the style is completely unlike that of any painting reliable associated with Li Gonglin, so that 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.

IGNORE WHAT FOLLOWS

(First inscription: by Li Peng 李彭 (ca. 1060s–after 1110))

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]. The reason is because [although Tao appears] in several groups of different size, his demeanor is always the same. Seeing by his mood that he disdained setting forth, how could the wealthy and powerful of the time hold him back? || Still, some people in the world compare Yuanming and the two [tutors surnamed] Shu,¹⁰ saying that the two Shus left [home to accept official employment], but knew when to return, while Yuanming never actually left, and that leaving and knowing when to return is like getting well after an illness: one's sense of taste is better than if one had not at first been ill.¹¹ I do not think this is right. As the two Shus served as tutors by [imperial] favor, they were [astute] enough to plan their times of going and staying, and although they experienced the problems of the world, they never felt sick [of it]. But as soon as Yuanming left [home], he was indeed sick of [the world], and as he knew that he could not help being sick of it, it wasn't really worth [going on]. Observing Tao's deportment and manner, I am not willing to place him too hastily below the two Shus. When the

9B addition
(Ma Hezhi)

Ma Hezhi Redux (from 9B)

- 22:40 to 28:39: Move from X12 to X13. (They go together, although they don't properly connect—fault of photographer.) Showing X13, with landscape, most of time.
- 28:40, "Here's two more . . ." Put on both, but then quickly (at 28:49) pull up X14 to fill whole screen.
- 29:05, "And here, another one . . ." Pull up X15 to fill screen, to 29:57, "OK, next please. . ." As now, showing X17 to 31:02.
- 31:02 to 31:46: as now, fine.
- 31:47 to 32:06: "Quite remarkable, really." As now; then cut out, eliminate altogether, what follows, up to 32:23, "Quite damaged, by the way."
Continue with "But really quite a remarkable style . . ." with Boston MFA leaf, either A11B or X09 (same leaf) still on screen, to 33:19, (Zooming in, pulling back, is fine.) To 33:19, then insert this, with X24 on screen:
- AddAudio 1.

This is the landscape section that ends the Ma Hezhi scroll in the Fujii Yurinkan, which, in my memory, is one of the convincingly old ones, perhaps from his hand. And here we have a fine example of mid-12th century misty landscape, with a river flowing out of the middle ground, tree groves in fog, mountains towering above, all made more mysterious by the fluid, unclear rendering. The scroll has been badly damaged and needs a good remounting.

Then continue as present 33:19 ff, “Finally, for Ma Hezhi, I’m going to show a handscroll . . .” On screen: X26 and X25, Red Cliff scroll in reproductions, right and left,, both on screen together.

From 34:00, “OK, I have some pretty good slides . . .” Put on X15, X23, X20, X18, X22, X21, in that order as I talk. (You can tell when to change from what I say.)

- 36:58 to 37:05, “OK, now then . . .Here is something outside the Academy . . .”: eliminate this altogether. Then, from “I should say before going on . . .” to 37:20, “OK, now we come . . .” For this, bring back X26, X25 together, whole of Ma Hezhi Red Cliff scroll reproduction.

Then on as now, with Xiao-Xiang Dream Journey scroll.

- 38:29, “the various writings on the scroll, such as the inscription by Dong Qichang you see partly here at the far right. . .” For this we need to bring back the old opening from my slide, 21340, maybe cutting off damaged part at left. Then go back to better image of opening, continue.

But. At 40:54, I refer again to Dong Qichang’s inscription: bring back 21340? And before that, I’m talking about my old slides, damaged but still . . . etc. Handle this as you think best, back & forth between my old one and the new one.

And so forth, through the rest of this great scroll. Using the new, complete images and my old details together produces a terrific visual account of this superb work, we can be proud. Nothing like this has ever been done before, and others who try to follow us in future will have a hard time (but some of them will succeed all the same—happy thought.)

- 56:49: “OK, the next please. . .” I put on the wrong image here—it should be AC29, the one with the written place-name labels all over it (it presently comes on at 57:53). This to -57:45, “. . interesting as that.” From “Here’s another section of it.. .” eliminate, to 58:20, “. . dealt with picture-maps of this kind>” All cut out. Instead, put on AC31 (left) and AC30 (right) together—they don’t connect, but almost—and insert:

- Add Audio 2. Another, similar scroll is also in the old Freer collection, 11.168 (purchased in 1911), this one on silk and similarly with an absurd attribution, this time to the tenth-century artist Juran. Among the colophons on it is one by Dong Qichang making this attribution—they really insisted on big names, couldn’t tolerate fine old anonymous works, had to make wrong attributions like this one.

Then from 58:20, as before, all OK.

- 01:25 ff, “. . better probably is this color reproduction. . “ Put on 088, same in color. Then change to detail, as now.

So to end. Then go back to 22:40, “OK, going on . . “ Between that and “The next artist . . “ INSERT section on buffalo & herdboys, as more So. Song Academy political painting.

- 01:47:29: Then, as I say “We saw before. . “ etc., about Li Tang hanging scroll with signature, instead of image of buffalo now on screen (belongs later), put on (from 9A) images 104935, A132, U49 (all images of whole ptg, you choose) and details U48 and A122, details. This to 02:25, “OK, here’s another one now . . .” OK from there, as is.

-04:51, "OK, here's the water buffalo. ." Here, put on the image you wrongly had on before, 10532. So to 05:05, "OK, as we go on now," shift to new image as now.

- 06:02: you shift to detail here; OK, but image is reversed (compare with whole, which preceded it.)

So to end, at 09:07, "OK, enough for that section." Then we continue with rest of 9B as before.

Lots of work to do on this one! Mostly my fault, for being so unclear about what image goes where etc. Do all this and I'll go through it again.