QIAN DU (1763-1844) AND THE SENSES IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY
CHINESE LITERATI PAINTING

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ABSTRACT

The works of the literatus painter Qian Du 錢杜 (1763-1844) are examined in this dissertation for their particular use of sensuous allusion to secure social relationships. Qian Du was considered by his contemporaries to be one of the most renowned artists of his generation. But that generation has been overlooked by modern historians of Chinese art who have preferred to write about artists involved in stylistic and political revolution.

A fundamental aspect of literati painting culture that those historical biases have encouraged us to forget is the role of the senses. As this study of Qian Du shows, literati paintings were keystone objects that secured social relationships within networks of elites in early nineteenth-century China, and sensuous allusion was a central tool for referencing the knowledge and experiences shared among those elites.

Chapter One lays the groundwork for this argument with a biography of Qian Du followed by a historiographic critique of modern literati painting scholarship. Each of the next three chapters isolates a literati material culture with which Qian Du’s painting intersected and shows how painting could document the senses of touch, smell, and hearing experienced in the practice of those material cultures. Chapter Two describes the prominent theme of tea appreciation in Qian Du’s painting and the ways in which the fleeting fragrances, sounds, and tastes of tea could be cued in a literati painting. Chapter Three isolates the haptic qualities of the “archaic and awkward” brushwork adopted by Qian Du from the study of epigraphic inscriptions. Chapter Four describes the ways that Qian Du alluded to fragrances in his plum blossom paintings in order to describe the upstanding character of his fellow literati.

Combined, these chapters draw from recent work on material and visual culture in order to redirect the insights of those fields back onto painting studies, unsettling it from myopic
interests in stylistic precedents and avant-garde political messages by telling the story of an underrated artist and his depictions of the sensuous experiences of the early nineteenth-century literati world. The dissertation concludes by asking what a sensuous history of literati painting could look like.
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INTRODUCTION

This is a dissertation about the senses in literati culture and about the role of sensuousness in the making and appreciation of paintings by the literati of early-nineteenth-century China. Literati paintings are filled with allusions to the senses of sound, touch, smell, and sight. But scholarship on literati painting has traditionally focused on the powerful role of historical citation in these works, of allusions to past painters and paintings, poets and poems, historical events and historically significant places. As a consequence, those periods of painting that appear to offer no new developments in historical allusion, such as the early nineteenth century, have been ignored by most scholars.

The following chapters examine the life of the literati painter Qian Du 錢杜 (1763-1844) and the paintings, poetry, and inscriptions affiliated with him. By choosing a painter from a period commonly described by historians of Chinese painting as moribund, derivative, and ossified, this research demonstrates that the appeal of literati painting to its viewers was not limited to historical allusion, but was also founded on an appeal to the senses and to the body. On close inspection these paintings, and literati paintings in general, vibrate with a sensibility that draws its power equally from historical and sensuous allusion.

The sensuousness of literati painting of the nineteenth-century, and of literati painting in general, has also been obscured in twentieth-century scholarship that has preferred to analyze such paintings through their relationships to political or stylistic change. Once these biases are recognized and put aside, the prominent role that the senses played in captivating the attention of its literati audiences becomes apparent. By extension then, this project is also about the role of the senses in the greater structures of literati knowledge-making.
Whereas the name Qian Du is not well recognized by most art historians of China today, his contemporaries considered him one of the most noteworthy artists of the generation. Commentators of the era were enamored with his works to the point of professing addiction to them. Even after his death, and up until about 1900, he was revered as one of the best painters of the early nineteenth century. His work was collected alongside paintings by more canonical masters and it was inscribed with poetic responses inspired by his paintings. This dissertation aims to recapture an understanding of the reverence these collectors and commenters held for Qian Du’s work. What in the work inspired these feelings? How were viewers drawn into the paintings of Qian Du?

To arrive at that understanding, it is just as important to ask questions about the nature of the decline in his reputation. How does an artist go from being one of the most famous painters of his era to being virtually unknown, and what are the terms of such a decline?

Qian Du’s fall from grace over the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century was part of the decline of a whole class in China, that of the literati, the educated elite whose families dominated the cultural production of Imperial China. Qian Du was one of these literati, and it was his painting that had cultural value among them.

Literati identity was founded on the ideal of serving in the government bureaucracy. To pass the examinations for a government job, a mastery of the classic texts of Confucian philosophy and history was necessary. That education was expensive, difficult, and time consuming, but it united a class of powerful men across the country with the same foundation of knowledge. By Qian Du’s era, it was nearly impossible to acquire such a position in government. The overall population had increased drastically, but the number of government postings had not.
Among the educated elite who found no work as scholar-officials it was therefore popular to commit one’s time to the extended possibilities of literati culture available to someone with an elite Confucian education. Non-degree holders became poets, painters, and historians, and were supported by those who did hold degrees. One popular trope among these under-employed literati was to take on the airs of historical hermits who were exemplars of noble literati character. To refuse government service and retire to a simple life could be the ultimate political statement. It was within this lifestyle of educated would-be-hermits of the early nineteenth century that Qian Du’s paintings operated, and it was these identities that his paintings reinforced, even if the lives of these men were not as rustic as their hermit exemplars.

The change in attitude toward Qian Du’s paintings and the accompanying change in who constituted the elite in China were caused by major shifts in power and politics in the nineteenth century. Part of what forced that change was the modernizing of China, not just through technological innovation or the general acceptance among the people of a need to be modern in the sense that Enlightenment philosophers and historians meant it, but also through the forcible introduction of China into a system of nation states for which the idea of Modernity was essential. In the mid-nineteenth century this force came in the form of the Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1860) and the resulting unequal treaties levied against an already failing central Chinese government. Another part of that change was a series of internal rebellions, the most significant of which, the Taiping Rebellion, practically destroyed the heartland of China and saw 20-30 million dead by its end, making it far deadlier than any war in the world outside of China until World War Two.

Over the course of the nineteenth century the Chinese empire fell apart, and most historians of China have been content to blame at least some of the problems that led to that
disintegration on that withdrawn elite literati class and their frivolous tastes for paintings like those by Qian Du. Among the criticisms leveled against the literati class of the nineteenth century was a shirking of responsibilities, a willful ignorance of the mounting economic and social problems, an apathetic attitude toward their abilities to better the situation, and a selfish indulgence in leisure activities.

Just looking at literati paintings of this period would seem to confirm those accusations. Rarely is any of the strife and calamity of the nineteenth century shown either directly or indirectly. Instead, and as with most earlier literati painting, a typical scene shows a few select figures wandering in bucolic landscapes defined by lush trees, flowing water, and tightly gathered rocks. Additionally, instead of making direct reference to the events of the present, these paintings continuously indulged in citations of famous past paintings, painters, histories, and poems. If one wanted to tell a story about poor governance and the coming changes of modernity, then these paintings could easily be made to seem foolish or escapist. And that is the story that has been told with these paintings.

In short, images like Qian Du’s, which were influential among the elite class of educated bureaucrats in 1800, differed radically from the kinds of images that were important to the changing elite and new public audiences in China in 1900, when government structure was on the brink of a complete change and mass media was beginning to define a public space that was unthinkable in Qian Du’s time. How then did the criteria for judging an artwork change over the nineteenth century and what did this mean for the way people looked at images like Qian Du’s?

An expectation that style should always change, evolve, or undergo revolution underlay the criticism of repetitiousness that has been leveled against the painting of the early nineteenth century. But derivation was at the core of Chinese literati painting practice, and it was inflected
with a positive understanding. The expectation for stylistic change in Chinese art has had its shallow roots in the imposition of Western theories of history and art history that sought to chart moments of evolution and revolution. But what happens when we take away the prerogative for revolutionary change and then take a second look at a period that does not appear to show great change?

Analyses of early nineteenth-century art have been plagued by a sense of responsibility toward explaining the lack of another kind of revolution as well, this time political or governmental. The period between the height of the Qianlong emperor’s power in the mid to late eighteenth century and the destruction of the civil war caused by the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, a period roughly corresponding to Qian Du’s lifespan, has been defined as an era of slow degeneration in the Qing empire and as the root of its eventual disintegration.

However, once political and stylistic revolution are reduced as priorities for understanding artwork, new aspects of early nineteenth-century painting, and literati painting as a whole, become visible. By way of example, consider three poems written by Qian Du in 1804 while visiting friends at Baling, near Xi’an, and later inscribed on a painting titled “Resentment at Baling”\(^1\):

> From the south the half-moon clings to the wall top, and as blossoms fall on the pavilion the water flows chaotically; without a headwind the willows and poplar trees still bend, as pipa strings are played in autumn at the Baling tomb.\(^2\)

\(^1\)《灞陵怨別》. Baling was the tomb of emperor Wen of the Han dynasty.


Hereafter Qian Du’s two written texts, *Song hu hua zhuí* 《松壺畫贅》[Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting] and *Songhu hua yi* 《松壺畫憶》[Songhu’s Reflections on Painting] will be referred to in abbreviated form as SHHZ and SHHY.
Between the trees the Yellow River winds itself long, while on the banks the wind blows around the bend and over boundless waters; West of the pass, the old general, with his snow-like hair, drunkenly leans on his bow and sword, telling stories of the battlefield.³

The winds from the east descend in a chill over the ten thousand willow threads, as the departed soul lingers long on the bridge; traces of wine are scattered about, wetting my spring vest; how could I suppress these exquisite words I stop to sing out?⁴

We know from Qian Du’s prefacing remarks to these three poems that he was passing through the ancient capital of Xi’an in 1804, on his way to the far southern province of Yunnan, and that he and his companions were moved by the recent destruction of the Xi’an area by “bandits,” presumably during the recent White Lotus Rebellion. In keeping with a typical response to political strife in literati culture, there was no direct reference to that destruction. Instead these men communicated those emotions to one another through poems and references to the past, in particular the Baling tombs of Emperor Wen (202-157 BCE) of the Han Dynasty, an emperor renowned for his benevolence and thriftiness, and for the stability that his rule brought.

But these allusions to the past were wrapped in images that were overtly sensuous, in that they made a direct appeal to their audiences through poetic images of sound, touch, and motion. Rough winds and rushing waters framed the echoing sounds of the pipa, the stories of the old general, and the last backward glances of a recently departed soul. The power of these images compelled the player to pluck his instrument, the general to speak, and the narrator to sing out his poems.

³樹裏黃河繞塞長邊風吹角水茫茫關西老將頭如雪醉倚弓刀夢戰場. SHHZ, 48.
⁴冷落東風萬柳絲銷魂橋上立多時酒痕狼藉春衫溼休唱何戡絕妙詞. SHHZ, 48.
The role of the senses in compelling such responses has gone unnoticed in scholarship of this period and in literati painting at large. Instead, historians of Chinese art have prioritized the kinds of analysis that depend on identifying repetitions of scholarly tropes that had been established in literati painting centuries before. However, we stand to learn more by celebrating what the paintings and their inscriptions did convey, rather than what they did not, and these undervalued sensuous aspects in particular can offer to the history of early nineteenth-century Chinese painting something that it has been lacking: a reason to believe they were compelling to their contemporaries and that they can be compelling to us today.

As Susan Stewart argues in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, “aesthetic activity viewed in the light of the history of ideological ends is no longer aesthetic; it erases the free activity of pleasure and knowledge that the aesthetic brings to human life.”5 Viewing early nineteenth-century painting, and literati painting at large, through the history of ideological ends offers an important perspective on the history of ideology, certainly. But in doing so, we lose a sense of the direct means by which these paintings could actually capture attention. Paintings are visual objects, but furthermore they also allude to and ignite the other senses. In literati paintings, inscribed as they are with poems by both painters and later viewers, the aspects of touch, sound, and smell6 are much more apparent than have heretofore been appreciated, and this dissertation goes on to offer as explanation to the conundrum of early nineteenth-century painting the idea that there is a sensuous mode of viewing literati painting that we have yet to fully discover.

Chapter One offers a description of the literati lifestyle at the end of the history of imperial China with the biography of Qian Du as a case study. It then segues into a historiography of Chinese painting history in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, plotting

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6 Although tea and wine are often mentioned, the sense of taste associated with imbibing them is not often emphasized.
the decline of Qian Du’s reputation in order to understand the terms of that decline and the nature of the tension that exists between the apparent awe in which Qian’s contemporaries held his paintings and the evident distaste for them formed over the next century. This chapter concludes by proposing the conditions for an alternative story about Qian Du, one that alleviates this tension by paying attention to the priorities of literati community founded in an appeal to the senses.

That story is told over the next three chapters and forms the core of this dissertation: an assertion that a sensuous mode of viewing was just as important to understanding the reception of literati paintings as were the political or stylistic modes of viewing that have dominated Chinese literati painting studies. By turning toward a mode of seeing these paintings that prioritizes their sensuous aspects this dissertation recaptures a perspective on why these paintings were special that has been lost in modern histories of Chinese painting; because an engagement with the senses could be just as powerful as political and historical allusion.

Each of the latter three chapters thus covers the sensory experiences of one kind of literati material culture as captured in and triggered by literati painting. Chapter Two shows how smell, taste, and sound were all very present in paintings that illustrated the consumption of tea, that were inscribed with references to tea, or that alluded to tea in other ways. Chapter Three draws parallels between Qian Du’s brushwork and concurrent trends in epigraphy studies, asserting that both relied on a mode of haptic viewing. Lastly, Chapter Four describes how paintings of plum blossoms emphasized the barely perceptible or not yet visible in their references to the faint fragrances of their distinctive blossoms. These senses were cued in painting materially and poetically, and were the immediate means by which literati painting attracted viewers.
A secondary contribution that underlies each of these chapters is the idea that while the literati arts had their own material manifestations, they were also unified by metaphorical language that defined the general ideals of literati culture, so that principles of “clarity and quietude” (Chapter Two), the “antique and awkward” (Chapter Three), or of “sparseness” (Chapter Four) could be applied to the forms of painting as well as to other forms of literati practice. The over-arching concern was to emphasize the high quality of the character of all involved parties, and each aspect of painting worked toward these unifying literati ideals.

The articulation of this sensuous mode of viewing also leads to a shift in literati painting studies, one that comes in the form of a redefinition of the roles that literati paintings played among the literati class. Painting was, on occasion, painting for painting’s sake. But as the work of Craig Clunas, Jonathan Hay, and Anne DeCoursey-Clapp has more recently shown, paintings were more often objects of gift exchange, of individual and group identity formation, and of networking potential. Until now, scholarship in this anthropological vein has emphasized the way in which inscriptions documented social interactions by providing the names and dates necessary to anchor the objects to specific networks of power. But paintings did not make their appeal through names and dates alone. The question of how these objects participated in the linking of like-minded individuals can best be answered by a study of the sensuous information embedded in the inscriptions and the styles of literati painting. Literati paintings were social objects that documented the ephemeral sensations of the literati world, and those sensations could be reactivated with each subsequent viewing. Sensuous viewing was therefore about securing experiences in time, about recording the feelings and sensations at the moment of creation, and about returning to that moment to re-enliven and re-experience it in each
subsequent viewing. This is what kept the medium compelling even as its forms were repeated generation after generation.

A brief conclusion takes the lessons learned from this study of an underappreciated period of Chinese literati painting and proposes a broader history of literati painting as a sensuous art, not in order to challenge the more academic and intellectual accounts of how to look at literati painting, but to enhance them with the observation that a sensuous viewing both reinforced the historical citations and also anchored the experience of the painting in a particular moment, one of the present viewing. The sensuous qualities were what kept these paintings engaging, and understanding that would allow us to experience these paintings to their fullest.
CHAPTER ONE: QIAN DU, A LIFE AND AN AFTERLIFE

—The Compelling Early Nineteenth Century?—

When Mr. Qian Songhu was young he read and wrote among the mountains and rivers of Xiling [West Lake, Hangzhou], where he had gathered together large groups of rare texts. He had outstanding skill in poetry and excelled at painting. He traveled from Yantai in the north to Xiang County in the far South, and passed from the end of Liaoning Province to the edge of India. The more broadly he travelled the more unrestrained his writing became and the more refined was his art. In 1844 my close friend Qiachuan shangren asked me to write a colophon to this handscroll and so I wrote this record, which has only fallen short of the mists and clouds that (Qian) Songhu has achieved here with the end of his brush, encompassing the hills and valleys of his heart. But why would anyone who can claim to have seen and admired [the painting] with their own eyes waste their time reading my humble remarks?

—Zhang Yingyun 張應雲, in a colophon to Qian Du’s “Discussing Chan by a Cool Stream” 《冷泉禪話》1844

The Chinese paintings that stand with the finest achievements of world art, the truly compelling images, end with the early eighteenth century.

—James Cahill, The Compelling Image, 1982

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7 錢丈松壺少時讀書西泠山水間博綜群籍尤工詩畫及其壯也北邁燕臺南過象遼海極印度期游益廣而文益肆華益精…甲辰長愛洽川上人以是卷屬題因述余之綠慳于松壺者如此至其筆底煙雲悉其胷中邱壑 所謂有目共賞者奚俟鄙人言之邪. Zhang Yingyun, 張應雲, 1844 colophon to Qian Du 錢杜, “Leng quan tan hua”《冷泉禪話》[Discussing Chan by a Cool Stream], 1841, Ludwig Collection, Rheinische Bildarchiv, Cologne, Germany. Though information on Zhang Yingyun is scarce, based on other inscriptions he made on paintings by Dai Xi 戴熙 (1801-1860) and Huang Jun 黃俊 (1775-1850) he was part of the mid nineteenth-century social circle of the calligrapher Zhao Zhichen 趙之琛 (1781-1860) whose colophon also appears on this Qian Du painting.
Qian Du (1763-1844) was a painter who enjoyed the highest reputation among his peers in the nineteenth century and yet by the twentieth century he was estimated by historians to be of little or no importance to the greater story of Chinese art. The contrast between the above two opinions is startling. When in 1844 Zhang Yingyun could ask how anyone seeing Qian Du’s paintings could ever hope to write anything that would not fall short of them, only to be answered in 1982 by one of the most accomplished American historians of Chinese art with the response that these paintings are not worth writing about at all, then difficult questions arise about how the history of Chinese painting has been written.

Cahill was not alone in his low opinion of painting from the late eighteenth through nineteenth centuries. His contemporary, Sherman Lee wrote, “from about A.D. 1800 on, painting in China became repetitive,”9 and both Lee and Cahill were preceded by Osvald Sirén’s 1956 Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles, the entire text of which ends with the comment that, “further discussion of the various currents and tributaries of the widely spread though shallow flow of painting after the close of the Ch’ien-lung period would lead us beyond the limits of the present publication and hardly enhance our appreciation of Chinese painting as a whole.”10

When writing the history of the art of the early nineteenth century, whose judgments should we use and how do we most responsibly use them? What is worth looking at and who decides? When the opinion of the nineteenth-century contemporary commentator Zhang Yingyun stands in such stark contrast to those of the twentieth-century art historians Cahill, Lee, and Sirén, the simplest conclusion to be drawn is that each judgment is predicated on a different

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set of priorities for looking at paintings. Good painting in 1844 China was different from good Chinese painting in 1982 America.

In order to recuperate a sense of what made early nineteenth-century painting appealing by using Qian Du’s life and work as a case study, it will be necessary to also define the path by which Qian Du’s painting became unappealing. Understanding the nature of this difference in visual priorities between the early nineteenth century and the twentieth matters to the history of Chinese painting not only because it allows us to reimagine a whole period of painting history whose dominant narrative until now has been one of decline, but also because it promises to reveal aspects of making and seeing painting in China heretofore under-appreciated.

Beginning with a brief history of Qian Du’s life, this chapter goes on to map a historiography of his reputation in his afterlife, describing how he went from a position of renown to one of near anonymity. Defining the terms by which Qian Du was judged, both in his moment and after, helps to articulate the contours of the fault line that appeared in the appreciation of painting in China at the turn of the century. As such, this chapter sets the ground for the following chapters, which propose the recuperation of a mode of viewing Chinese painting that has been lost in modern histories of Chinese painting.

Materials for the history of Qian Du’s life will be drawn from painting inscriptions (both his own and others’), mentions of Qian Du found in contemporaneous writing, and Qian Du’s two written texts: “Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting” Song hu hua zhui and “Songhu’s Reflections on Painting” Song hu hua yi. 11 The historiography of

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11 See Appendix 2 for a publishing history of both texts. Although the two earliest editions of Qian Du's writings are Pan Zuyin's 1880 edition and Xu Zeng's 1888 edition, I have relied on the 1896 editions found in volume 11 of Qian Xibing 錢錫賓, Hushe Qian shi jia ji《湖墅錢氏家集》(1896) as well as a modern edition of Songhu's Reflections on Painting that has been edited together from the 1880, 1888 and 1896 publications by Zhao Hui: Qian Du 錢杜, Songhu hua yi《松壺画忆》, Zhao Hui 趙輝, ed. (Hangzhou: Xiling yin she, 2008).
Qian Du’s afterlife will be cobbled together from colophons to his paintings, mentions of his work in later collector catalogs, prefaces to re-printings of his writings, and then his eventual absence from histories of Chinese art written in the twentieth century.

An Overview of Qian Du’s Life

Qian Du was born in Hangzhou in 1763 as Qian Yu 錢榆, the seventh son of the high-ranking government official Qian Qi 錢琦 (1709-1790), a native of Qiantang, in Hangzhou. The

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12 Cheng Zuqing 程祖慶, Lianchuan Mingren Huaxiang《練川名人畫象》(1849), supplementary volume 2, 13.
13 Chiu Shihhwa argues in her master’s thesis “Qian Du hui hua yan jiu” [Research on the Painting of Qian Du] 《錢杜繪畫研究》(PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 2001) for a 1763 date, as listed in Jiang Liangfu 姜亮夫, Li dai ming ren nian li bei zhuang tong biao《歷代名人年里碑傳總表》[Comprehensive tables of dates of eminent people of different epochs] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937). Chiu argues persuasively that the 1761 date listed by Jiang Baoling 蒋寶齡 in Mo lin jin hua《墨林今話》, Vol.11, 2, is problematic because Qian Du’s older brother Qian Lin was not born until 1762. A 1764 date is listed in some sources, but would contradict Qian
advantages that Qian Du appreciated in his early life were largely due to his father’s position in
the Qing government, and in his later years the network of friends that Qian Du came to rely was
built off of these family connections. His life can be divided into seven broad sections:

— A leisurely youth spent partly with his father at various governmental postings and partly in
the capital with his paternal cousin Qian Shi

— A brief careerist period of 1794 to 1803 where he served as a low-grade secretary in Hunan
under General Fukang’an and in Yunnan with his friend Chen Xiaosheng

— The bohemian years in Yunnan from 1803 to 1808

— A return to the heartland from 1808 to 1820 or so, spent in Jiangsu province in the social
circles of Yuan Mei’s son, Yuan Tong, and the Chen cousins, Chen Wenshu and Chen
Hongshou

— A period spent in Henan from about 1820 through 1834, painting largely for his patron
Zhang Jing

— A return to his childhood home of Hangzhou from 1834 to 1840

— And his late years under the care of his nephew in Yangzhou, from 1840 until his death in
1844

Qian Du’s father, Qian Qi, had a government career that began in the National Academy,
where he was a Compiler of the Second Class. But by the end of his career he was General-in-
Chief at Fuzhou, which was among the highest-ranking positions an official could hold. Qian

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Du’s claim that Jin Nong held him as a child because Jin Nong died in 1764. Additionally, Qian Du records a
painting made on his fortieth birthday in the year 1803, putting his birth at 1763, see SHHZ, 33.
Qian Yu appears to have changed his name to Qian Du sometime between 1791 and 1803, based on painting
inscriptions.

14翰林院编修
15福州将军
Qi was the prototypical example of a man who had bettered himself and his family position through hard work and government service. His father, Qian Yongxian 錢永賢, had managed the family money poorly and as such Qian Qi had grown up with an education partly funded by help from relatives. He passed his *juren* and *jinshi* examinations in 1735 and 1737, and by the time of Qian Du’s birth in 1763, Qian Qi was 54 and had held positions in Henan, Taiwan, and Jiangsu, and would soon rise to the highest ranks of service, with eventual postings as Lieutenant-Governor of Fujian, Governor of Fujian Province with a simultaneous appointment as Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces, and finally General-in-Chief at Fuzhou.¹⁶

In the late eighteenth century the Qian family ranked among the best connected and most successful families of its era. Two of Qian Qi’s sons, Qian Mei 錢枚 and Qian Lin 錢林 were successful *jinshi* examinees, as was one of his nephews, Qian Shi 錢栻. Qian Qi’s eldest son, Qian Shu 錢樹 also held rank as Department Magistrate in Guizhou and Kaizhou, despite not being a degree holder. Four of Qian Qi’s nephews were *juren* degree holders and held government positions. The influential poet and official Yuan Mei was among Qian Qi’s closest friends, and the painter Jin Nong was well known enough to the family to have held Qian Du as a child.¹⁷ In his reminiscences of his childhood, Qian Du spoke of the luxury to which he was accustomed: “Savoring Lychee in the Shade of the Banyan Tree— In Fujian the lychees are the best under heaven. In the Maple Pavilion on the first day of summer we would pick them and soak them in the Western Pavilion in large glass bowls.”¹⁸ Exotic fruits at full ripeness, rare glass bowls, and pleasure gardens defined the environment of Qian Du’s youth.

¹⁷ SHHZ, 30.
¹⁸ SHHZ, 46.
Qian Du followed his father’s postings for much of his childhood, living with him as he was moved to Sichuan (1765), Jiangxi, and Fujian (1778). Indeed, it seems that until his father passed away in 1790, Qian Du was largely dependent on his family for support. Aside from his father, Qian Du was also particularly close to his next oldest brother, Qian Lin. When Qian Lin was preparing for the imperial exams he and Qian Du lived at the home of their older cousin, Qian Shi. It was in Beijing in the summer of 1781 that Qian Du met Chen Wenshu (1775-1845), who was staying just a few houses down the same street at the house of Zha Danyu (查澹餘). Chen Wenshu and later his cousin Chen Hongshou （陳鴻壽，1768-1822）would become two of Qian's closest associates throughout his life.

Qian Qi retired from service after his posting in Fujian and until his death in 1790 he spent his time in Hangzhou feasting with friends such as the famous poet Yuan Mei. One year later in 1791, already at the age of twenty-eight, Qian Du painted “Jade Trees along a Limpid Lake” [fig. 2], which is currently the earliest known painting by him. By this time several of Qian Du’s older brothers and cousins had already found work within the bureaucracy. But instead he was boating the lakes of the south, drinking with friends, and writing verse about it, as evidenced in the poem inscribed on this painting:

We burn incense for Monk Huiyuan at the waterside pavilion,

The ten thousand fates approach and my glass of wine is empty,

The lake is clear and as the sun sets far away we look to one another,

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19 See Qian Du’s preface to Chen Wenshu 陳文述, Yi dao tang shi xuan《頤道堂詩選》, in Xu xiu si ku quan shu 《續修四庫全書》, Vol. 1504 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2002), as well as SHHZ, 46.
20 As in Chen Wenshu, Yi dao tang shi xuan, vol. 5, 1.
21 See Chen Qiyuan 陳其元, Yong xian zhai bi ji《庸閒齋筆記》 (Shanghai: Da da tu shu gong ying she, 1936), 10; Yuan Mei 袁枚, “Fujian bu zheng shi Qian gong mu zhi ming” 福建布政使錢公墓誌銘 [Epitaph for Gentleman Qian, the Governor-General of Fujian] in Xiao cang shan fang shi 《小倉山房詩文集》 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1988), 1719; Qian Qi 錢琦, “Chi hui shi” 齒會詩 [Poem about an gathering of aged men], in Cheng bi zhai shi miao 《澄碧齋詩鈔》 vol. 3, 91.
A bank of clouds descends between the jade-green trees to the east.\(^2^2\)

The tone of Qian’s inscription is forlorn and indulgent, speaking of an imminent parting for two people whose future fate seems unclear, and who would prefer nothing more than to drink away their uncertainties while boating along historical sites such as Donglin Temple, where the famous Monk Huiyuan had lived. This reference to Huiyuan also carried with it a tone of resistance to authority; the fourth-century monk famously wrote the text “On Why Monks Do Not Bow Down Before Kings,”\(^2^3\) and by referencing it, Qian Du seems to have been making a gesture toward the trope of refusing the call to government service, either for him or for his friend, Lanfu, to whom this painting is inscribed.

[Figure 2] Qian Du, “Jade Trees along a Limpid Lake,” 1791, ink on paper, Shanghai Museum

At some point though, Qian Du did try his hand at bowing and serving the bureaucracy, despite the youthful posturing of his poem attached to “Jade Trees along a Limpid Lake.” As the seventh son, and with two older brothers already serving in government, there was not a great

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\(^2^2\)水閣焚香對遠公萬緣多向酒盃空澄湖日暮遙相望一片閒雲碧樹東. In the Collection of the Shanghai Museum. This is the only painting known to me that Qian Du signed with his birth name, Qian Yu.

\(^2^3\)《沙門不敬王者論》
expectation that he become an official. He is not recorded as having passed the jinshi examination, or even the juren examination. Nonetheless, in his family genealogy he was listed as an “Expectant Candidate” and a “Second Class Secretary,” minor posts that did not require advanced degrees, and which were likely bought, as was common practice in this period.

Sometime between 1791 and 1794 Qian Du was also married, but he immediately took a dislike to his wife and to married life in general. According to his later friend Cheng Tinglu, this was due in part to an illness in Qian Du’s youth that caused him to be sick when he smelled even the fragrance of women’s hair. Another friend, Ye Yanguan 叶延琯 called the problem a personality incompatibility. Either way, and although she bore his daughter Qian Pei 錢佩, Qian Du did not stay with his wife, a fact that Chen Wenshu referred to simply as “avoiding his obligations.”

For the next several years Qian Du would pursue an official career with some earnestness. Between 1794 and 1795 Qian Du served under general Fukang’an 富康安 (1753-1796), who was at that time charged with assisting the suppression of the Miao rebellion in Hunan. In his relationship with Fukang’an, Qian Du came as close as he would in his adult lifetime to the axis of political power represented by the central government. As the general who led the repression of Taiwan rebels in 1787 and the routing of the Nepalese Gurkhas from Tibet in 1790, Fukang’an was one of the Qianlong emperor’s most valued public officials. During his time accompanying Fukang’an, Qian Du kept up with his painting, making among other

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24 候選主事, as listed “Hu she Qian shi jia ji xiao zhuan” 胡西湖氏家集小錄 [A Brief Record of the Collected Works of the Qian Family of Hush] in Qian Xibing, Hu she Qian shi jia ji, v. 1, 1.
25 See Cheng Tinglu’s account of “Various Anecdotes (in the Life of Qian Du)” 《軼事》, in SHHZ, 7; also Chen Wenshu, Yi dao tang shi xuan, 17; Qian Pei had the moniker Chuzhang 楚長.
26 As recorded in Chen Wenshu, “Xu Zhixian Xizang cao xi yang ge” 徐芝仙西藏草檄硯歌 [Ode to the Tibetan ink stone used by Xu Zhixian for drafting proclamations]. Yi dao tang shi xuan, vol. 25, 25.
paintings a Buddhist image of a man riding an elephant in a southern landscape, which was inscribed later by both Qian’s brother Qian Mei and his close friend Chen Wenshu. When Fukang’an died in 1796, Qian Du withdrew from his clerkship and returned to the lower Yangzi River delta, where his family connections served him well. During this period he spent several years at the “Suiyuan,” Yuan Mei’s home, which was inherited by Yuan Mei’s son Yuan Tong (1775—1829), who was Qian Du’s contemporary. Yuan Mei was a friend of Qian Du’s father, and Qian Du’s sister, Qian Lin, was one of Yuan Mei’s disciples in poetry. While at the Suiyuan, Yuan Tong requested that Qian Du paint a picture on the occasion of the renaming of one of Yuan Tong’s courtesans. Qian Du honored her new name “Sparse Fragrances” with a painting of a plum blossom. Qian Du also made several paintings for other resident guests at the Suiyuan, including three paintings for the calligrapher Guo Lin 郭麐 (1767-1831).

Soon after, Qian Du also found himself boating through Danyang, a city in Jiangsu Province between Zhenjiang and Changzhou. While there he made a painting for his young

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27 As described in: Qian Du, “Bai man qi xiang” 百蠻騎象 [Riding an elephant among the southern tribes]. SHHZ, v.2, 47; Qian Mei “Ji ti Shumei qi di qi xiang bai man tu” 寄件叔美七弟騎象百蠻圖 [Sending and inscription to younger seventh brother Shumei for his image of riding an elephant among the southern tribes], Wei bo ci 《微波詞》, 4, 4, 54; and Chen Wenshu, “Ti Qian Shumei (yu) qi xiang tu” 題錢叔美榆騎象圖 [An inscription for Qian Shumei (Yu)’s image for riding an elephant] in Yi dao tang shi wai ji 《頤道堂詩外集》, vol. 4, 18-19. To my knowledge the painting is no longer extant.


30 See Guo Lin, Ling fen guan shi hua 《靈芬館詩話》 in Xu xiu si ku quan shu 《續修四庫全書》, vol. 1705 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2002), v. 7, 6, and Ling fen guan shi er ji 《靈芬館詩二集》 (1808), vol. 6, 1.
daughter Qian Pei. This is one of the few times Qian Du ever mentioned his daughter, whom he never seems to have helped raise, and whose eventual fate is unknown. 31

For the next few years, Qian Du travelled in social circles both in the southern Yangzi delta area and in the north. Two ambitious paintings from this early period point to the fact that he was moving in the upper circles of official patronage. The first, an exact copy of Dong Qichang’s (1555-1636) 《婉孌草堂》[fig. 3 & fig. 4], done in 1803, is unique among Qian Du’s work. Nowhere else is there evidence that Qian ever made an exact copy of a painting, much less an already canonical one that had been in the collection of the Qianlong and Jiaqing emperors. 32 Furthermore, Qian was later known as a voice against the dominance of Dong’s theories about painting style and their later proponents. 33

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31 For mention of the painting, a hanging scroll after Li Cheng, see SHHZ, v. 2, 48. Chiu Shihhwa hypothesizes that Qian Du’s daughter was looked after by his family or possibly his friend Chen Wenshu, Chiu, 13.

32 The journey of Dong’s painting out of the imperial collection and into private hands is an unknown story. The last imperial seal it bears is from the Jiaqing reign, and it has been out of the imperial collection since the late nineteenth century. It is possible that Qian Du’s copying of this work coincides with the removal or gifting of the painting from the imperial collection. Qian Du’s brief inscription of the work reads, “As requested by Laosong of the previous generation.” Additionally, the painting is made strange by the copying of both Dong Qichang’s and the Qianlong Emperor’s many inscriptions, as if the collector who wanted it copied (Laosong 老松, a sobriquet I have yet to identify with a name) wanted to prioritize the fact that it had been owned by the emperor. Yet despite this strangeness, the painting is almost certainly by Qian Du. The calligraphy of his small inscription is authentic and the handling of dry ink and washes is characteristically his as well.

33 SHHY, 82, 112.
The second painting [fig. 5], also from 1803, was done as a gift for the famous official and scholar Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) on the occasion of his departure from Zhejiang to Beijing for an imperial audience. Ruan Yuan was then residing in Hangzhou and was serving as Governor of Zhejiang. Qian Du’s painting documented a send-off gathering of Zhejiang’s elite at the Dingxiang Pavilion 定香亭 on Ruan Yuan’s estate.34 This is the first extant handscroll in Qian Du’s oeuvre, and it shows the direction that Qian Du’s style would take for the rest of his career, away from the early nineteenth-century followers of Dong Qichang, often referred to as the “Orthodox School,” and toward delicately colored landscapes in the tradition of the “Wu School.” This painting also marks the beginning of a trend that would mark his career as a whole: the painting of private pleasure gardens and estates for officials and patrons whose friendship he sought to secure.

34 Ding xiang ting bi ji [Notes from the Dingxiang Pavilion] 《定香亭筆談》 was the title of a group of essays by Ruan Yuan written during his time as governor of Zhejiang. Recent work on Ruan Yuan includes: Betty Peh-T’i Wei, Ruan Yuan, 1764-1849, The Life and Work of a Major Scholar-Official in China before the Opium War (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006); Stephen Miles’ account of Ruan Yuan’s southern academy, The Sea of Learning: Mobility and Identity in Nineteenth-century Guangzhou (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006). Ruan Yuan also features largely in Benjamin Elman’s account of Chinese adaptations of Western sciences, On Their Own Terms: Science in China 1550-1900 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). The painting was not inscribed by Ruan Yuan, but at the request of his younger brother Ruan Chong 阮充, who also gave a short undated inscription, the Manchu official Qishan 琦善 wrote a colophon in 1854, just months before he died in the defense of Yangzhou during the Taiping Rebellion.
Around the beginning of 1803 Qian Du moved to Kunming in Yunnan Province, attempting an official career one more time by taking a low level military post there. He took his time in traveling to Kunming, departing from Xi’an and lamenting the destruction he saw on the way that had resulted from the chaos of the still ongoing White Lotus Rebellion, an uprising in in Sichuan, Hubei, and Shaanxi Provinces that preoccupied the Qing military from the late 1790s and the early 1800s. Among Qian Du’s friends in Yunnan was Chen Xiaosheng 陳孝昇 (?-1803), who was serving as the Lieutenant-Governor of Yunnan. Almost as soon as Qian Du arrived at Kunming however, Chen was recalled to the capital to stand trial on impeachment charges. Chen died soon after returning to Beijing and not long after that Qian Du decided to renounce his career within the government system, writing in 1805: “To be an official is to be a money-grubber, or to be a dog in the market of the capital. It only restricts a man in this mortal life, binding him in an official’s cap and robes like a common slave.”

Qian Du stayed in Yunnan however, and fell in with the official and scholar Gui Fu 桂馥 (1733-1806), who introduced Qian Du to a larger circle of friends, including Li Hongxin 李宏信, Huang Zhencang 黃震蒼, Cha Douyi 查斗一, Yun Xie, 惹彥, Guo Lin 郭麐, Shi Lansheng 史蘭

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35 Chiu, 13-15. The rank and exact position are not specified by Chiu and she notes that has not yet found a clear indication of his rank.
36 There is some uncertainty about the date of 1803, and he could have been traveling on his way to Yunnan as late as 1804. On the colophon to an 1803 painting he wrote that he celebrated his fortieth birthday on his way to Yunnan. But on an 1804 painting he writes that he was traveling from Xi’an to Yunnan when he stopped at Baling, outside of Xi’an with his friends He Boyin, Zhuang Xuehong, and Li Sheng. SHHZ, 48. Chiu Shihhwa believes he moved to Yunnan as early as 1802, as this was the last possible year he could have been there together with Chen Xiaosheng, but all of Qian’s own writings put him on the road to Yunnan in 1803.
37 云南省长. 38 See SHHZ, 49, for Qian Du’s inscription to a commemorative portrait of Chen Xiaosheng, titled “Lieutenant-Governor of Yunnan Mister Chen (Dongtian) Xiaosheng,”《云南省长陈公東田孝昇》. 39 拜官當拜執金吾不然長安市上作狗屠安能跼橘在塵世衣冠束縛如庸奴. SHHZ, 45.
Qian stayed in this milieu until about 1808, and it was in this environment that he committed to his life as a painter. A great portion of the inscriptions that he recorded in *Songhu’s Reflections on Painting* recall this period. A typical entry from this time reads:

I was with Gui Fu at the Qingxue Temple and we made a fresco for the Abbot. After getting drunk we brought out our brushes made the painting “Clearing Snow in Autumn on the Shu River,” and as night came around and it became very cold, we finished the inscription by candle light. The two of us made a mess of our sleeves, staining them with alcohol ink like as if we did not know what we were doing. We were like Kumarajiva in the purified realm, repeating the karma of brush and ink.40

Qian ended this description by comparing his lifestyle of drunken painting in monasteries to the life of Kumarajiva, a monk from Central Asia who settled in China in the early fifth century to translate Buddhist texts from Sanskrit to Chinese. In this analogy Qian and Gui became revered scribes devoted to the transmission of their brushwork and perhaps equally as devoted to the enjoyment of alcohol. In contrast to the government work Qian Du had arrived in Yunnan to undertake, the lifestyle described in these inscriptions was about doing away with decorum. Qian Du presented an almost euphoric carefree lifestyle in which he was drunk, both literally and figuratively, on the freedoms of painting. The rest of his life was spent more or less in this fashion. There was a distinct decrease in any direct connection between Qian Du and politics after this point, as if in his few years of low level clerking he had contributed a proper amount of Confucian service and was now ready to paint and enjoy the network of friends and patrons that his upbringing had allowed him.

40 與未谷在青雲庵為怡上人畫壁醉後放筆作蜀江秋霽時夜寒甚燭見跋矣而吾兩人衣袖間猶狼藉酒痕墨漬不知作何生活當是鳩摩羅什清淨域中一重翰墨緣也. SHHZ, 29.
In 1808, after his mother died, Qian Du returned to Hangzhou, via Sichuan, to go into mourning. While there he was reunited with his family and his childhood friends, the Chen cousins, one of whom who had built up a reputation as a premier poet while also working as a government official in Nanjing, and the other of whom was governor of nearby Liyang, in Zhejiang Province. Settling in the Taogu district of Nanjing, he purchased a small home with the advice of Chen Wenshu and Chen Hongshou, and he stayed here in this urban center on the lower Yangzi River area for more than a decade.41

During this period Qian Du consolidated his identity as a painter and as a poet among the social circles of his family, the Chens, and also of Yuan Tong, son of the poet Yuan Mei. One of the earliest paintings he made upon his return was “The Pristine and Verdant Garden” 緑淨園 [fig. 7], for Wang Shitai 汪世泰, Yuan Mei’s son-in-law. In his inscription to the painting Qian Du writes that he stopped at Wang’s “Pristine and Verdant Garden” on his way back from Yunnan and lingered there for a month writing poems, drinking, and relaxing. When one day Wang brought out Xi Gang’s painting of 1800, “Mountain Retreat of the Jade Tung Trees” 碧梧山館圖 [fig.6], an image of one of the most remote pavilion of the garden, Qian saw that there was extra paper mounted with the handscroll and decided to paint an overview of the entire garden to accompany Xi’s painting.

41 see Qian Du’s preface to Chen Wenshu’s Mo ling ji 《秣陵集》 [History of Nanjing], dated 1819.
Qian Du’s style of painting stands in deliberate contrast to Xi Gang’s. In terms of compositional choices, Xi created a sense of extreme seclusion, beginning his handscroll with a sharp, and downward-thrusting hillside, met at its base with a tall standing stone and a grouping of trees that tightly frame the opening of the image, reaching from root bases at the bottom of the image to branches and foliage that extend beyond the topmost edge of the image. These framing devices are foregrounded as well, setting up the middle ground of a clearing in front of the small pavilion that carries the name “Mountain Retreat of the Jade Tung Trees.” Moving left through the handscroll, this pavilion scene with a scholar at rest with his books is immediately screened in again by a muscly outcropping of boulders that converge from the foreground at left. Boulders and trees impinge from both sides of the pavilion, hiding it and its patron in the deepest folds of the landscape.
In terms of brushwork, Xi used monochromatic application of relatively moist and heavily textured brushwork, building up his rocks in the angular texture strokes of Ni Zan with a healthy mixture of wiry diagonal texturing associated with Wang Meng. In short, Xi Gang was participating in the lineage of what is often described by art historians as “Orthodox Painting,” the generative theory of which was Dong Qichang’s “Northern and Southern Schools” of painting. We know that Qian was critical of “Orthodox Painting,” finding particular fault with the lack of “transformation” 變 in Dong’s painting and of his followers in Qian’s own era. In *Songhu’s Reflections on Painting*, he wrote: “In my opinion, from the Yuan and Ming dynasties onward, no one was as adept at transformation in painting as Wang Meng, and no one was less able at transformation than Dong Qichang, who is today followed by Wang Zhen and Gao E.”42 Xi Gang, evidently, did not qualify for this criticism, perhaps because of the dynamism of the brushwork in this painting, or perhaps because to Qian Du, this sort of factionalism was uninteresting. In the preface to *Songhu’s Reflections on Painting* he wrote, bluntly, “As for the origins of the northern and southern schools, and the methods of texturing and washing landscapes, this has already been detailed in the words of my predecessors.”43

By contrast, in Qian Du’s overview of the garden, the brushwork is tight, miniscule, light, and intentionally awkward. Forms stand in stark contrast to their neighbors, and are differentiated by texture, pattern, and tone so that rather than blending together to create a cohesive landscape, as in Xi Gang’s work, the overall image reads as a tightly accumulated collection of curious forms. Qian Du alluded to this stylistic strategy in his inscription:

> At the end of the handscroll there was extra paper and so I made this overview of the whole garden, with its elegant and steep cliffs and rocks, its deep and remote waters

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42 余謂元明以來善變者莫如山樵不善變者莫如香光嘗與蓬心蘭墅論之, SHHY, 82.
43 至南北兩宗之源山水皴染之法則前人已詳言之矣. SHHY, 1.
and bamboo, and with the trees, high and low, wending and bending among these pools, terraces, and pavilions. What Tiesheng (Xi Gang) imaged did not cover these, and so I added in each one, (though) my grip on ink and brush was sparse and poor, like those of a lesser artist. Looking at [Xi Gang's work] I am self conscious at the ugliness of my forms, and later observers will no doubt find this awkward and mechanical.\footnote{卷後尚有餘紙更為作此蓋園之中巖石秀峭水竹深邃與夫池臺亭樹高下拗折鐵生象想之所未到者皆一一補為之持筆墨荒劣如小作之見大巫自覺形穢後之覽者勿異工拙計也.}

Qian Du described each kind of form with distinct adjectives, and emphasized “adding in each one” of the separate spaces of the garden as if the painting were an aggregation of separate images. When these compositional choices are seen together with his refined and thin brushwork, it is clear that Qian Du’s stylistic choices aligned him with the “Wu School” of painting, particularly with Tang Yin and Wen Zhengming, two of the painters he most frequently cited as influences.

During that period Qian Du also painted at least twice for his brother: “An Image of Jinsu Temple” 金粟庵圖 and “An Image of Jade Mountain Thatched Hut”玉山草堂圖.\footnote{The second is in the collection of the Zhejiang Provincial Museum, the first is listed in SHHZ, 54.} The former was done in emulation of an atypical painting by Mi Fu that Qian Lin had heard was in Yunnan and asked Qian Du to search for. Qian Du came across a tracing copy and from it he painted a version for Qian Lin.\footnote{原蓋世傳米氏雲山特海岳庵一種耳遂以潑墨模糊為米家宗派不亦傎乎是本藏滇中某氏東生兄書來索畫不已適病後無佳興因檢滇中摹本略如点染寄之. SHHZ, 54.} The latter work was a portrait of Qian Lin’s studio.\footnote{Qian Lin’s collected writings were titled with the name of this residence as well: \textit{Yu shan cao tang shi ji} 《玉山草堂詩集}.} Qian Du describes his older brother as an avid practitioner of Chan Buddhism, and in these this held him up as a sort of role model.\footnote{五兄習禪悅破得清淨理自營尺五庵森沈遠塵市 檐前金粟林階下虎跑水。早起頭嬾梳清齋時隠几牆陰昨天夜雨滿院落松子疑有潭上。僧叩門秋樹底舊年辭故山遠索長安米多病每繙經一官閑若此聊復歸繩牀臥遊圖畫裏。天香染衣袖妙悟從滋始.}
Another way in which Qian Du consolidated his identity as a painter at this point in his
life was to publish a record of his paintings and the inscriptions or poems on them, *Songhu’s
Superfluous Words on Painting*. Although no early copies remain, the first preface, by Chen
Wenshu, was dated 1812 and tells us that, “these last two years (Qian) Shumei has collected and
compiled his painting inscriptions and poems and will have a blockcutter. He has asked me to
assess it, and I have only written a poem.”

The image of Qian Du presented in these collected poems and painting inscriptions was
one of a well-traveled man of the world. Rather than describing the way the paintings looked, the
entries of *Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting* were expressive only of the titles,
inscriptions, poems, and circumstance of the creation of Qian’s paintings up to the 1810s. These
entries charted Qian’s youthful travels with his father as well as his journeys to the far south, and
they mapped out his network of relationships to famous scholars, generals, and officials of his
era. This book was a sort of curriculum vitae for his reentry into the social circles of Nanjing,
Hangzhou, Suzhou, and Yangzhou. It also served to redefine his identity as that of a painter and
a poet, not as an aspiring official.

In the decade after his return from Yunnan, from 1808 to 1818, Qian Du spent a great
deal of time in the social circles of the Chen cousins. The inscriptions on his paintings during this
time most frequently listed his location as either in Nanjing, where he was often in the company
of Chen Wenshu, or as in Liyang, Zhejiang Province, where he would spend time with Chen
Hongshou and his coterie. From 1815 to 1816 in particular, Qian Du spent a great deal of time in
Liyang and it was here that he first collaborated with the painters such as Gai Qi (1774-

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49 The dates for entries in SHHZ span from 1780 to 1805. See Appendix 2 for a history of Qian Du’s publications.
51 See Chiu Shihhwa’s description, 24-25.
and potters such as Yang Pengnian (1796-1850). The most concrete document of this network of friends is neither a painting nor a book, but a teapot, commissioned by Chen Hongshou, crafted by Yang Pengnian, and inscribed by Guo Lin with the names of the dozen literati who gathered on a fall day in 1815 to savor tea together. Qian Du’s name was listed second among the noted personalities present on that day, attesting to his relative importance within this circle.\textsuperscript{52}

In 1818, with the help of the Chens, Qian Du found a small house in the Taogu district of Nanjing and settled there in order to be near his friends. Outside of the house he was delighted to find a flowering plum blossom tree that he identified as being from the sixth century. Qian Du began to be known for his plum blossom paintings, a reputation he encouraged. He studied old paintings of plum blossoms to absorb their styles, and would recreate paintings of flowering plums for his friends and patrons, each inscribed with a poem and often with notes on the history of plum blossom painting.

But he would not stay put in Nanjing long. In the next phase in his life, from the early 1820s through the early 1830s, Qian Du was largely in Henan Province. This period was defined by his patronage by three consecutive Directors-General of the Conservation of the Yellow River and Grand Canal. The responsibilities of the Director-General of Waterways included management of flooding along the banks of the Yellow River and maintenance of the sluice gates long the Grand Canal, the artery of north-south transportation in the empire. This was a high-profile position and in the 1820s and 1830s in particular the responsibilities of the Directors-General of the Conservation of the Yellow River and Grand Canal were at the center of major policy debates within the factionalized court in Beijing. The tensions of these debates

\textsuperscript{52} In contrast, Chiu Shihhwa sees Qian Du as relatively low within the hierarchy of these literati, a group that was headed by the Chens.
helped to set the ground for the conflict of the first the Opium War (1839-1842).\(^53\) Qian Du was invited to Henan by Director-General Yan Lang 嚴烺 (1774-1840) and then became very close with Yan’s successor Zhang Jing 張井 (1776-1835). After Zhang Jing retired, Qian Du also painted for Zhang’s successor, the Manchu official Linqing 麟慶 (1791-1846).\(^54\) While in Henan Qian Du spent time with his nephew Qian Tinglang 錢廷烺, who been posted to Hua County in Henan to help repress a revolt there.

Of these three consecutive Directors-General, Qian Du was closest to Zhang Jing. The paintings that documented Zhang and Qian’s friendship range in date from 1822 to 1835, and throughout their thirteen-year friendship, Zhang Jing favored Qian Du with the most commissions of any of his patrons. Based on some of these paintings, their relationship seems to have been one in which Qian Du was offering various forms of cultural knowledge to Zhang Jing.

This trend began with one of the first works done by Qian Du for Zhang Jing, an album of twelve “Landscapes and Figures” [fig. 8] from 1822. Technically, this album is among Qian Du’s most diverse and accomplished, and it shows the pedigree of stylistic ancestors that Qian was most known for: Song, Yuan, and Ming masters, with a preference for the refinement of the “Wu School” masters Wen Zhengming, Shen Zhou, Tang Yin, and Ju Jie. In Qian Du’s dedication of the album to Zhang Jing he wrote that he had, “combined various ideas of the marvelous ink of the masters of the Song, Yuan, and Ming, transcribing them together here in an album for the pure enjoyment of Mr. Jiehang.”

\(^{53}\) See: Randall A. Dodgen, *Controlling the Dragon: Confucian Engineers and the Yellow River in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001); and James W. Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), for descriptions on court debates on governing the waterways.

\(^{54}\) For a description of Qian Du’s relationship with Zhang Jing see Chou Ju-hsi, “Qian Du to Zhang Jing,” *Phoebus* 8 (1998): 38-66, which is the only article about Qian Du that has been published in English.
Beyond educating Zhang Jing in the brush styles of past masters, Qian Du’s work for Zhang also tended to illustrate specific locations, real and historical, which Zhang had not seen himself. Zhang commissioned a series from various artists under the overall title, “Longing to Roam.” Qian Du contributed to this series by painting the first, fifth, and tenth handscrolls: “West Lake” (1823), “Viewing the Waterfall at Mt. Tiantai” (1826), and “Wangchuan Villa” (1832), respectively. Qian Du’s inscription makes it clear that Zhang Jing was looking to Qian Du for a kind of cultural knowledge that he may have lacked:

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55 These paintings are in the collection of the Phoenix Art Museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and a private collection in Taiwan. See Appendix 1.
My native Zhejiang is famous for the beauty of its scenery of lakes and mountains. Mr. Jiehang [Zhang Jing] regrets never having visited the place. In autumn of this year I met him in a tavern in Daliang [Kaifeng]; he asked me to paint Longing To Travel as something to be enjoyed lightly on one's travels.\(^56\)

In his other work for Zhang Jing, these themes of literati travel destinations are repeated, as in “Picture Recording the Visit to Shugang” (1833) and “Sound of Bells at Mt. Taihua” (1833).\(^57\) By his late career then, important officials were turning to Qian Du as an authority of sorts on painting and literati knowledge at large.

Not long after Zhang Jing was relieved from office in 1833, Qian Du returned to his ancestral home of Hangzhou, where he lived in his “Wild Gull Manor” 野鷗莊 from 1834 to about 1840. It was in this stage of his life that Qian Du met both Cheng Tinglu 程庭鷺 (1796-1858) and Jiang Baoling 將保齡 (1781-1840), the two men who would be most responsible for establishing Qian Du’s reputation immediately after his passing.\(^58\)

Jiang Baoling wrote one of the earliest biographies of Qian Du, which was included in Jiang’s posthumously published compilation of stories about painters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *Mo Lin Jin Hua* 《墨林今話》. Jiang wrote of Qian, “In the year 1835 I began my acquaintance with [Qian Du] at the Wild Gull Manor on West Lake. At that time he was already seventy-five and his spirit was hale and hearty, he could still do fine brush landscape and fly-headed small clerical script, just like Wen Zhengming.”\(^59\) Whether at age seventy-five Qian Du could paint with the fineness of “fly-headed small script” or not, at this point in his life


\(^{57}\) These paintings are in a private collection in Taiwan and the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum.

\(^{58}\) Cheng Tinglu was introduced to Qian Du by Chen Wenshu in 1835, see Cheng Tinglu 程庭鷺, *Meng na ju shi zi bian nian pu* 《夢盫居士自編年譜》 in *Nian pu zong shu* 《年譜叢書》, vol. 29 (Taipei: Guang we shu ju, 1971), 7.

he also had an assistant and disciples, who may have helped with his painting. Li Fu 李馥 has been described as Qian Du’s qingyi 青衣, or “disciple,” and also as his daibi 代筆, or “ghost painter,” whose hand was indistinguishable from Qian Du’s. Cheng Tinglu counted himself as a pupil of Qian Du, and Jiang Baoling’s son, Jiang Chaisheng 將茝生, was also one of Qian Du’s later students, painting several works after Qian Du in 1838.

By this point, late in Qian Du’s career he was renowned among his contemporaries as a painter and also as a connoisseur. An inscription appended to Wen Zhengming’s album “Garden of the Unsuccessful Politician” 《拙政園》 attested to his status as a connoisseur. In his inscription, Qian Du gave a long description of the qualities of the painting and of Wen Zhengming’s style in general, signing it with the verb guan 觀, used most to indicate a studious observation of something. The owner of the album at that point, referred to by Qian as Zhongqing 仲青, had also brought the painting to the painters Dai Xi 戴熙 and Wen Ding 文鼎, who was the descendant of Wen Zhengming. Both painters inscribed and also painted additional leaves in response to the album.

In 1840, Qian Du moved to Yangzhou, where he remained in the care of his nephew until his death in 1844.

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60 For mention of Li Fu see: Chen Wenshu, Hua lin xin yong 《畫林新詠》, in Zhong guo shu hua quan shu 《中國書畫全書》, vol. 14 (Shanghai: Shanghai shu hua chu ban she, 2000), 599; Cao Yunyuan 曹允源 ed., Wu xian zhi 《吳縣志》(China: Wen xin gong si, 1933), vol. 75, 6248; and Peng Yuncan 彭蘊燦, Li dai hua shi hui zhuan 《歷代畫史彙傳》, in Zhong guo shu hua quan shu 《中國書畫全書》, vol. 11 (Shanghai: Shanghai shu hua chu ban she, 2000), 311.

61 See Sotheby’s Chinese painting catalog, New York, March 2015, lot 479. One leaf of the album is dated wuxu 戊戌, which Sotheby’s has dated 1898, but which is more likely 1838.

62 There are two versions of this album, one in the Metropolitan Museum Collection, and another published by Kate Kerby and Mo Zung Chung, An Old Chinese Garden: A Three-fold Masterpiece of Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting (Shanghai: Chung Hwa Book Company, 1923). The Qian Du colophon is part of the latter album, the whereabouts of which are currently unknown.

63 See the 1844 colophon by Zhang Yingyun 張應雲 to Qian Du’ painting 《冷泉禪話》[Discussing Chan by a Cool Stream], 1841, Ludwig Collection, Rheinische Bildarchiv, Cologne, Germany.
—An Overview of Qian Du’s Afterlife—

The above account gives the fundamental details of Qian Du’s life, describing the people, places, and dates that constituted his core relationships and events. There were many ways Qian Du’s story was told in his late life and afterlife, and for the two generations following Qian Du’s death, this story was mainly told in positive terms. Then, at the turn of the twentieth century, Qian Du, and his generation at large, began to disappear from writings about Chinese painting.

Among the first overviews of Qian Du’s life occurred in his own preface to the 1830 reprinting of his Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting, done in Nanyang, Henan Province. In it he described an idle youth of study, middle years spent at the beck and call of others, and an old age of diminishing capacities:

When I was young I resided on (the) south (end of West) Lake. There were no random guests, the collection in my studio was very abundant, and in my leisure time I was unrestrained in my investigations, I met with the ancients every day, and that encouraged me to put my brush to (paper/silk), and my studies were certainly not contaminated by the ill habits of the time.

I spent my middle years hurrying about in every direction, acting cloying and superficial as I passed through these places, a beggar by brush and ink, collecting up the dust, led along and harnessed in order to entertain over and again, and therefore my time to flourish was cut short.
After I reached sixty I became old and lazy, my hands stiff, my eyes gummed and dim, afraid of approaching the brush and inkstone.⁶⁴

This version of Qian Du’s life was naturally a bit dramaticized. The number of extant paintings from his later years alone would corroborate the idea that even at age seventy-five he could still write “fine brush landscapes and fly-headed small clerical script, just like Wen Zhengming,” as Jiang Baoling had said. One begins to question how “gummed and dim” Qian’s eyes could have been.

Cheng Tinglu, Chen Wenshu, and Jiang Baoling all described the life of their friend Qian Du in more glowing terms than Qian Du’s self-assessment, elaborating on his story with a mixture of mythologized anecdote and praise. At times, these friends of Qian Du even quoted one another in their praise. Jiang Baoling, in his 1852 *Mo lin jin hua* 《墨林今話》, wrote, “Yunbo [Chen Wenshu] has also said that among all the poets in the land none is as transcendent in peace and spaciousness or as able as [Qian Du].”⁶⁵

In *Mo lin jin hua* Jiang Baoling collected biographies of the painters of his time, providing a portrait of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century arts world of the lower Yangzi River. Published in 1852 with the help of the painter Cheng Tinglu, who had published Qian Du’s collected writings only two years prior, Jiang’s text was organized as a series of biographies filled with anecdotes meant to reveal the characters of the painters. Jiang’s goal was to provide for his generation a continuation of the biographies of Qing dynasty painters offered in Zhang Geng’s 張庚 (1685-1760) *Guo chao hua zheng lu* 《國朝畫徵錄》 and Feng Jinbo’s

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⁶⁴余少時居南湖上門無雜賓。中收藏甚富暇則恣意探討日與古人晤對興到下筆頗不為時習所染中年奔走四方浮名纏縛所經之地乞筆墨者坌集牽率酬次故寄興時絕少六十後老且嬝手鬚目眯畏近筆硯。SHHY, 74.
In addition to Jiang’s praise of Qian Du in the biography format, Jiang also wrote an encomium in verse form. Jiang’s assessment of Qian Du used familiar formulas of literati identity but remained poignant:

He grasps a scroll and leans against a tree, as the moon shines yellow in the mist;
A hidden crow cries the hour, drawing awareness to the empty altar of the immortals;
A pure sound echoes in return, swiftly following away on the heavenly breeze, washing clean all that is ordinary and unrefined in the heart and mind and striving to the marvelous essences of the world,
Like listening to the ancient jade zither, the sound rings through the wintry ravines.  

Jiang’s poem for Qian Du was filled with evocations of sound and a celebration of the effects that a proper attention to world can bring to the heart and mind. They painted an idealized and melancholy portrait of a scholar, at the end of his days, enjoying communion with the world.

In 1864, just after the conclusion of the Taiping Rebellion, and only a few years after the conclusion of the Opium Wars, the collector Qin Zuyong described Qian Du as such in his Debates on Painting from under the Paulownia Tree:

Qian (Songhu) Du had poetry that was pure and painting that was elegant and refined. He was truly without match. His inscriptions were also unrestrained and beyond conventions. In my old collection I had a small ten leaf album [of his] on the poetic theme of fishing on the vast seas. Its concept was supremely idle and leisurely, of the kind highly treasured by intellectuals. Although [Xie He’s] Six Laws are not evident in

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66 As explicitly stated in Jiang Baoling’s preface to Mo lin jin hua, v. 1, 1. See also Lee Chi-kwong, “Jiang Baoling and His Molin Jinhua: A Study of the Commercialization of Painting in Jiangnan Region during the Jiaqing-Daoguang Era of Qing” (PhD diss., Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004).
this work, there is a kind of literary flavor that exists outside of the ink and brushwork.

This is what is called the poet’s leisurely style.\textsuperscript{68}

Qin Zuyong added marginalia notes that continued:

The paintings of poets are pure, their nature reaching to the limits of nature’s own
fascination. Connoisseurs thus record their traces and hold on to their intentions.\textsuperscript{69}

The superlative quality of these remarks attested to the sustained reputation of Qian Du in
the generation after his death, and also asserted for him a position outside of the history of
painting alone, linking him instead with poets. Particularly interesting is the comment about
Qian’s lack of adherence to Xie He’s “Six Laws.” The “Six Laws” constituted one of the earliest
theories of painting and was considered a foundational set of maxims for the production of good
painting. To lack in these methods and to have “a literary flavor that exists outside of the ink and
brushwork,” was a high compliment for a literatus painter.

In 1880, the renowned Suzhou statesman, scholar and publisher Pan Zuyin 潘祖蔭
(1830-1890) republished Qian Du’s writings and admitted to a similar passion for the work of
Qian Du in his postscript to the text:

Protect me from my addiction to the paintings of Mister Songhu; his are the paintings I’ve
collected the most. His poetry and painting are the work of someone above the material needs
of the world. None of the three editions of his collected works existed after the conflagration
of war but for one copy from an old collection, and I asked my disciple the official Xu
Huanong to write it out by hand and have it printed along with \textit{Hua yi} and included
anecdotes. In my humble room I have written out the \textit{Xuan zhe xuan tie kao}, the \textit{Geng zi xiao}

\textsuperscript{68} 詩情畫筆雅秀絕倫款題亦瀟灑拔俗余昔藏小冊十幀補漁洋詩意思致閒逸頗為識者珍重六法雖未到家而一

\textsuperscript{69} 詩家之畫純是性靈天趣饒者當界其迹而取其意. Ibid., vol. 2, 19.
xia ji, the Zhi ya tang za chao, and Biography of the Bai Na Zither, but without regrets I can say that none of these is as precious as the jade disc that is the knowledge [I have copied from] Shumei.\(^70\)

Pan’s professed “addiction” was perhaps the zenith of Qian Du’s posthumous appreciation. Pan was the grandson of the former Grand Secretary Pan Shi’en 潘世恩 (1770-1854) and was among the most powerful men of his day, serving as a Grand Councilor during Guangxu Reign. No later words in favor of Qian Du’s work would reach quite the same degree of fever as Pan’s admission. Additionally, Pan’s reference to the after effects of the war between the Qing government and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom draws a sharp awareness to the effects of that war on the heritage of Qian Du’s generation. Were it not for the cultural conservation efforts of late nineteenth-century literati like Pan Zuyin, texts like Qian Du’s may have disappeared entirely.

Yet, even in Pan’s era attitudes toward the past and toward the habits appropriate to a literati lifestyle were beginning to change. Among the clearest signs that ideas about painting were changing was the fact that painters of Qian Du’s generation were less frequently emulated than painters of earlier eras. One of the ways in which a painter’s reputation was maintained in his afterlife was the citation of his style by later painters, both in visual style and in the reference to a painter’s name in inscriptions. Qian Du’s style was never truly canonized in this sense. Nor was the style of any of his peers. There are only a few scant examples of painters in the late nineteenth century citing his paintings as influential on their own or directly emulating his style. In 1875 the Grand Secretary Zhang Zhiwan made one of the few paintings that emulated Qian

\(^70\)蔭酷嗜松壺先生畫所收亦最多先生詩畫非食人間煙火者所能也 集凡三刻兵燹後皆不存隱有舊藏本屬門人 徐花農太史手書付剞劂而以畫憶及逸事附焉太史書畫篆隸皆工妙今手録是集亦猶林吉人畫午亭漁洋堯峰詩文余秋室書聞者軒帖考庚子銷夏記志雅堂雜鈔百衲琴之例傳之後世能勿珍若球璧乎叔美有知其無憾矣. SHHZ, 9.
Du,\textsuperscript{71} and as late as 1930, Ding Fuzhi cited Qian Du along with Gai Qi as models for the emulation of plum blossoms.\textsuperscript{72} By contrast, among Qian Du’s contemporaries, it was relatively common to cite early eighteenth-century artists such as Jin Nong, Hua Yan, Yun Shouping, Wang Hui, etc.

One of the last testaments to a passion for Qian Du came in the 1896 compilation of the Qian family’s collective literary output of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the \textit{Collected Writings of the Qian Family of Hushu} 《湖墅錢氏家集》, by Qian Du’s grand-nephews, Qian Xibin 錢錫賓 and Qian Xiji 錢錫銈. The work spanned the literary output of the Qian family from the patriarch Qian Qi to his great grandsons and was meant to bolster the Qian family name. Volume eleven of the eighteen-volume text was devoted to Qian Du’s writing, and brought together much of the collective praise of Qian Du up to that point.

Each of the above-mentioned writers, politicians, and painters who eulogized or emulated Qian Du did so in glowing terms, praising the literary character of the man and his spirit foremost. But at around the turn of the century that praise began to diminish, and Qian Du’s name was rarely found in the new histories of Chinese art that were being written at this time. In 1911, just sixteen years after the publication of the \textit{Collected Writings of the Qian Family of Hushu}, the Republic of China was founded, instigating a decline in the forms of literati sociability immortalized and maintained by such efforts. It was at this moment that Qian Du’s name began to disappear, an event that paralleled changes in the constitution of the elite literati class at large.

\textsuperscript{71} Collection of The Guangdong Provincial Museum. Zhang’s painting, titled “Pavilion of Today’s Rain” 《今雨樓》 was done for the descendant of one of Qian Du’s patrons, for whom Qian Du had painted “Pavilion of Old Rains” 《舊雨軒圖》 in 1841. The original building was destroyed in the Taiping Rebellion and his descendent rebuilt it, asking Zhang to paint an image. Zhang wrote, “my spare and awkward brush is not equal to the dust kicked up by [Qian Du’s] steps. I also added a poem using the same rhyming as [Qian Du].”

\textsuperscript{72} Sold at Sotheby’s New York, March 18, 2015.
The literati class had traditionally supplied the corps of bureaucrats to serve in government posts. To pass the examinations for a government post, it was necessary to have an elite education that included a mastery of the classic texts of Confucian philosophy and history. That education was expensive, difficult, and time consuming, but it was what united the literati class at large. A common knowledge of a core group of texts that ranged from legendary histories to Confucian norms of ritual supplied the culture of allusion and citation that underpinned both government communication and literati sociability.

As the seventh son of very successful bureaucrat and as the brother and cousin to many other Qians with government posts, Qian Du was not pressured to compete for one of the meager positions that might have been available. The Qian family name and heritage was secured. So, he did what many other young men of wealthy families did in social class, and used his elite education toward the production of more objects of literati sociability.

Even if Qian Du had sat for and passed the imperial exams, there was no guarantee he would have secured a position in government. Over the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, the elite class suffered from population growth that was unmatched by a growth in the number of government postings, leading to a surplus of overeducated candidates with an equal surplus of time.

Furthermore, the Qing government structure itself was proving to be increasingly cumbersome and structurally difficult. The corruption of the late Qianlong court was never fully routed in the Jiaqing court, and the priorities of factionalist politics decided court politics and obscured more pressing social and governmental needs. Increasingly, foreign powers were also pressuring the Qing government to engage in direct international trade.
Then, during the mid nineteenth-century the devastation of the Taiping Rebellion sapped the strength and resources of an already strapped central government. The effects of this civil war were compounded by the financial penalties and forced trade imbalances resulting from the Opium Wars. Late nineteenth-century reformers tried to adapt to the changes that came with the forced introduction of China into the web of international trade and politics of the post-Enlightenment and proto-nation state period. In order to shore up the stability of the empire, Western-style arsenals and navies were built, a bureaucratic structure, the Zongli Yamen, was established in order to process dealings with foreigners, and other reforms were established under the Tongzhi Restoration of 1870s. But by the turn of the century the Qing government was fragile and military power had been decentralized into regional militias. The place of a traditionally trained literatus within this environment was becoming precarious. The skills necessary to serve well in government in 1800 were drastically different than those that were becoming obviously necessary by 1900.73

When the imperial examination system was dissolved in 1905 the expectation that the elite shared a common knowledge changed. This shift in the understanding of what constituted elite knowledge occurred just six years before the dissolution of the Qing empire and its rebirth as a new nation, a change which brought on further redefinitions of social and cultural priorities. New modes of writing history were adopted and the first nationalized histories of China were created. New reformers such as Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei were especially interested in cultural reforms and in defining the new national public of China. History as it had been written in the imperial era was re-organized to tell the story of the new China. Models for the telling of

73 For background on the shift in expectations of elite education and mentality around 1900, see Hao Chang, Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis: Searching for Order and Meaning (1890-1911) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) which focuses on the transition among elites from the coveted identity of the literati to that of the public intellectual.
history changed in kind. Late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century reforms of Chinese
government and culture were guided by Hegelian models of history. As Prasenjit Duara has
argued, the impact of this “linear” or “Enlightenment History” on the history of China was to
arrange events teleologically, in a progression of stages based on the development of human
reason, one that saw its proof in technological and scientific innovation.74

When this historical mode was applied to the writing of Western-style art histories of
Chinese painting it resulted in new canons of painters and new priorities for those painters. Pre-
modern histories of Chinese painters were for the most part organized as biographical sketches
ordered chronologically by dynasty, with little interlinking commentary. But in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intellectual-politicians like Liang Qichao and artist-art
historians such as Pan Tianshou began to organize history into larger epochs of Ancient 上世, 
Medieval 中世 and Modern 近世 that cut across dynastic periods with a rise and decline model
that set up nineteenth-century painting as the nadir before the eventual progress of a new
modernized national painting.75

Following the decline of Qian Du’s reputation from the beginning of the twentieth
century through to the present demonstrates succinctly the impact of that “linear” history on the
art history of China. Indeed, the decline of Qian Du’s reputation happens precisely at the
moment these new histories are being written. While as late as 1880 and 1896 Qian Du’s

74 Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China (Chicago: 
University of Chicago Press, 1995).
75 These Enlightenment models of East Asian history were originally drawn from Japanese scholarship. For a study
of these dynamics in art history see Aida Yuen Wong, Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of 
National-Style Painting in Modern China (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), especially Chapter 2,
“Nationalism and the Writing of New Histories.” Also see Lang Shaojun’s historiography of scholarship on the
“Four Wangs” in the twentieth century, which describes their decline in popularity in twentieth century art histories,
Lang Shaojun 郎紹君, “‘Si wang’ sai er shi ji” “四王”在二十世紀 [‘The Four Wangs’ in the Twentieth
Century], in Qing chu si wang hua pai yan jiu lun wen ji《清初四王画派研究论文集》 (Shanghai: Shanghai shu
hua chu ban she, 1993), 835-868.
memoirs were still being reproduced with glowing prefaces, by the 1920s, in histories of Chinese art, Qian Du’s name was nowhere to be found. His was the generation of decline. Some of these histories even ended at the seventeenth century.

Broadly speaking, Chinese histories of the early twentieth century took on historicist attitudes, emphasizing the canonization of particular painters who epitomized the essence of their era. The events of each artist’s life were used to illustrate the development of larger social developments, and when it came to the Qing, that social development was considered one of decline.76

Complicating and amplifying this re-ordering of the history of Chinese painting was a contemporaneous interest on the part of Western scholars in the arts of Asia. Art histories of Asia written by Westerners began to be published at approximately the same time as Western-style Enlightenment art histories of Asia were being written by Japanese and Chinese scholars. This was not coincidental. Western theories of painting and the arts were introduced first to Japanese artists and educators through figures of academic exchange such as Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853-1908), who arrived in Japan in 1878 and started a new Western style-arts education at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. His Japanese companion in many of these efforts, Okakura Kakuzō (1863-1913) soon became the key international advocate for a pan-Asian concept of the arts of China, Japan, and India that was designed to compete with ideas of a Western art history.77 Chinese reformers such as Liang Qichao, who lived in exile in Japan from 1898-1912, brought these ideas back to China after the fall of the Qing empire.

Laurence Binyon’s *Painting in the Far East* (1908) was one of the earliest of these Western-style histories of Chinese painting. Although the book was not organized in a broadly...

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76 Wong, 41-50.
77 See in particular Okakura Kakuzō, *Ideals of the East* (London: J. Murray, 1903), and its bold opening line, “Asia is one.”
developmental model, Binyon’s assessment of the Qing period betrays the same progressivist attitudes as his contemporaries:

The slow, gradual, but steady ebb of animating glow and vigour, which had set in on Chinese art during the Ming period, continued into the eighteenth century, and has continued apparently to the present day. What was wanting was not skill or taste, but the fresh transforming impulse which inspires men to see earth and heaven with new eyes, an impulse needing, perhaps, to come form some deeper movement in the nation’s life; and no such movement came.\textsuperscript{78}

Binyon’s language of the ebbing of vigor, and its unnamed counterpart activity of vigour’s flowing, was akin to the developmental models later described by his contemporaries Petrucci and Fenollosa. Binyon’s metaphorical language of flow was also repeated a generation later in the words of Osvald Sirén previously quoted in this chapter. Elaborating on this idea, Binyon went on to write of the Ming and Qing periods, “in painting men’s faces turned to what was gone before, careless of what was to come after. Want of faith in the future paralyzed to great extent the energies of the present.”\textsuperscript{79}

Fenollosa’s 1912 \textit{Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art} was among the first Western-style surveys of East Asian art as a whole, and it was the most comprehensive art history of East Asia to have been written up to that date. Fenollosa’s aims, in his own words, were unabashedly aesthetic and dogmatic. He wanted to work against the presupposition “so generally and so lightly taken, that China has remained at a dead level for hundreds of years.” The idea of an unchanging China dominated Euro-American academic and popular discussions from the late

\textsuperscript{78} Laurence Binyon, \textit{Painting in the Far East, an Introduction to the History of Pictorial Art in Asia Especially China and Japan} (London: Edward Arnold) 1908, 210.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 211.
eighteenth century on, and Fenollosa’s effort to amend the arrogance of these claims was forward thinking for its time.  

His method for countering this bias was an emphasis on “elements of change and growth in Chinese culture,” a response that carried an equal bias toward Western prerogatives. Telling the story of East Asian art by describing only those “rare creative epochs,” Fenollosa promoted what he described as a “sound evolutionary doctrine,” priorities he clearly diagramed in the graph [fig. 9] included at the end of his introduction. Only one axis of the graph, the x-axis, was labeled, as a five-thousand year span of time that was then plotted with two lines, one for Chinese painting and the other, shorter line for Japanese painting. These lines rolled through a series of peaks along the y-axis, which, though unlabeled, can be presumed to mark those grand moments in “the power of the human imagination to change materials” that Fenollosa deemed the most suitable foundation for the history of art. According to Fenollosa’s diagram, the apex of Chinese painting occurred in the eighth century, after which a slow and steady decline set in. Fenollosa may have set out to prove that the arts of China had not been dead for hundreds of years, but he plainly contradicted himself in his arguments about the arts of the Ming and Qing dynasties, describing a “decay…most conspicuous in pictorial art—in all forms of art, in fact, that involve high imagination,” and further describing the painting from the mid-sixteenth century onward as “below the level of mention.”

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80 Ernest Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* (New York: ICG, revised 2000 edition), xxxii, xxxv; The work was edited and published posthumously by his wife from his collected notes for the text. See Mary Fenollosa’s “Preface,” xi-xxxviii.
81 Fenollosa, xxxii-xxxiii, xxxv-xxxvi.
82 Ibid., 519-520.
Fenollosa was driven by an evolutionary model of history that described rises and falls of political power and emphasized those moments of intense and drastic change above all. In his plan it was “not found necessary to dwell upon the persistence of old schools through the days of their successors,” a prerogative that clearly exempted for him the art of the “conservative” literati Confucians, or “Mandarins,” which he described as “a parasitic growth that chokes the life out of any effort at re-adaptation.” 83 Published in America at the moment of the collapse of the Qing government, Fenollosa’s book documented his unabashed distaste for the Manchus and their Qing dynasty, which he variously described as “degenerate,” of “low intellectual key,” “barbarous,” with a “love of crude ornament,” resulting in an “enormously evil...degeneration of art.” According to Fenollosa, the root of these deficiencies was the “stubborn and bitter opposition to growing European inroads,” an opposition which was also the root of Euro-American animosity toward China in the nineteenth century in general.84

Not long after the publication of Fenollosa’s book, Raphael Petrucci’s *Chinese Painters* continued this evolutionary model with particular attention to China and to the medium of painting. Its contents were structured into two parts, “Technique” and “The Evolution of Chinese Painting.” This latter part covered the development of styles alongside the progression of

83 Ibid., xxxvi.
84 Ibid., 520-533.
dynasties from the “origins” of Chinese civilization through the twentieth century. When it came to the Qing dynasty Petrucci wrote, “The Ch’ing or Manchu dynasty, whose downfall we have recently witnessed, brought no new vigor to China. The evolution of Ming tendencies continued. Thenceforward no great changes in the realm of painting need be expected. It only continued its logical evolution.”

Painting of the Qing period has not yet been able to fully leave behind this reputation of a decline in creativity that it acquired in early twentieth century scholarship of China, Japan, and Europe. The decline was considered steepest from the eighteenth century onwards, as demonstrated in the mid-twentieth century comments of Cahill, Lee, and Sirén that began this chapter. By the middle of the twentieth century, historians of Chinese painting felt justified in ignoring painting from the late eighteenth century through the late nineteenth century because it could not compete with the best of world art (according to Cahill), or because it was a shallower (Sirén) or repetitive (Lee) version of the painting that had preceded it.

Within these new models for history, the kind of art historical referencing that had defined literati painting to its artists and original audiences also made it seem repetitive, uninventive, or non-progressive. Artists like Qian Du, who modeled his style closely past painters such as Wen Zhengming did not offer any startling developments of style, and so they became redundant to the stories of art that were being told. The reforming historians of the early twentieth century were motivated by their political circumstances to search for reasons to explain the decline and disintegration of the Qing dynasty. Later literati painting such as Qian Du’s, with its repetition of elite visual and textual references, was a prime target. From the perspective of scholars in the early twentieth century and in light of the disunity of the nineteenth century that

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led to the fall of the Qing dynasty, nineteenth-century painters and their patrons appeared to only be concerned with the past, indulging in it as a means to avoiding their responsibilities.

But in pre-Revolution Chinese culture the impulse to look backward had not been tinged with negative connotations, and Enlightenment progressivist tendencies had not been at the core of literati painting theory. From as early as the sixth century, Xie He’s “Six Methods of Painting” prioritized a relationship to the painting of the past by “transmitting and conveying [earlier models through] copying and transcribing.” When Dong Qichang began to write his theories of art in the late Ming period, theories that would determine the tenor of Qing painting through the late eighteenth century, he conveyed a similar sentiment: “some say it is necessary to create one’s own school, but this is hardly so…How is it possible to abandon past methods and independently create one’s own?”

Expectations for stylistic development or revolution in its Western Enlightenment form entered the study of Chinese art in the early twentieth century and retroactively ordered a mode of painting for which the core ideal was actually connectivity to the past and reverential citation. The effects of this anachronism have not yet left the study of Chinese painting. As of 2000, art historians such as James Cahill were still emphasizing the role of style and innovation. From Cahill’s perspective, the originality and creativity of a Chinese painting were the essential aspects of judging its quality. He advocated what he called, “a plea for continuing the practice of making judgments in art, looking for certain qualities, including originality, something other than

86 轉移模寫.
the kind of repetitiveness one finds in certain Chinese artists who do the same thing over and over again without giving it much thought or creative energy.”

In Cahill’s Western formalism he was aware of the difference between an Enlightenment emphasis on stylistic change and classical Chinese connoisseurial criteria that emphasized brushwork. But he disavowed the latter, saying, “interestingly, I find myself more and more, as time goes on, getting away from the purely Chinese notion of brushwork as the criterion of quality, and getting back to rather Gombrichian representational concerns.” Going on in this vein he commented, “we have to recognize what are the real breakthroughs, the innovations that change the nature of painting, that set a new direction for a school. [Max] Loehr, in one of his methodological writings argues, very rightly, that what matters is the appearance of a style, or of some feature of style, and not the continuation of it.” As already evidenced in Cahill’s comments on the eighteenth century, this formalist concern resulted in a broad dismissal of early nineteenth century painting as unchanging and therefore un-compelling.

Similar biases in the field of Qing history studies were dispelled in scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s. First came what was called the “China-centered” approach, a shift toward the prioritization of Chinese source materials that were just becoming more available as mainland China opened to foreign scholars in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Scholars such as Paul A. Cohen criticized histories of the Qing that relied primarily on Western resources and which therefore harbored imperialist and modernist biases. In his book Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past (1985) Cohen targeted John K. Fairbank’s characterization of the Opium Wars as the major turning point in the modernization of China, calling this the “impact-response” model of the West on China. Fairbank’s sources

88 Jason C. Kuo, Discovering Chinese Painting: Dialogues with American Art Historians (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 2000), 72.
89 Ibid., 56, 69, 72, 98.
were largely drawn from the English perspective on the Opium Wars. But by re-examining the history of the Qing through the use of primary Chinese documents, Cohen favored finding local priorities and paradigms for change rather than imposing Western ones.90

The “China-centered” approach was followed by what was referred to as “New Qing Studies,” wherein historians such as Evelyn Rawski, Mark Eliot, and Pamela Crossley advocated for the study of the ethnic dimensions of Qing rule. Studying the persistent presence of Manchu culture and language in the Qing government, Rawski and her peers revealed that much of the success of Qing rule was based in a successful navigation of multi-ethnic identities rather than in the efforts to Sinicize, as previous scholars such as Ho Ping-Ti had argued.91

This positive view of Manchu identity worked against the narrative of decline that was attached to late Qing history and to the ethnicity of the Qing rulers in particular. Those ethnic dimensions of the decline narrative were distinctly present in early art histories of China, such as Fenollosa’s defamation of the Manchus as “degenerate,” of “low intellectual key,” and “barbarous,” as cited above.

As Joseph W. Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin wrote in *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (1990), local Confucian elites, sometimes described as “Chinese gentry,” were blamed by late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century scholars in both the West and China for a backwards conservatism that led to the decline of the empire. Esherick and Rankin showed, however, that the local elites were not a faceless conservative stereotype averse to change. Instead the local elites were a non-homogenous class of former and potential officials

who showed adaptability by using a diversity of strategies to accrue cultural capital within the cultural structures of Qing China.92

William T. Rowe has described the idea of “cultural stagnation” in the Qing as it was established in Euro-American scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and then taken up by twentieth-century Chinese historians. Stagnation served as a complement to early Chinese nationalist theories of feudalism, and allowed new nationalists to blame both the Qing Manchu rulers and Western feudalists for the suppression of Chinese progress.93

Very little of this reorientation of Qing studies has reached the study of Chinese painting of the same period. It has only been recently that scholars have attempted to clear away the narratives of stagnation and decline from the study of Qing art. Even so, the scholarship that has been done on Qian Du has positioned him largely as the stylistic inheritor of prior traditions. This continues to trap his story and that of his entire generation in a history of stylistic developments that does not suit the history of literati painting at large.

The most extensive work done on Qian Du, by the Taiwanese scholar Chiu Shihhwa, committed to a social and stylistic analysis of Qian Du’s life. Stylistically she described his style as dependent on three lineages: an early interest in the “Orthodox School” that derived from Dong Qichang’s theories of painting, a later gravitation toward “Wu School” painting of Wen Zhengming and his disciples or descendants, and lastly the infusion of a certain studied awkwardness of the so-called “Eight Eccentrics” of Yangzhou. She argued that Qian Du’s style was an idiosyncratic mixture of these three styles and concluded that the key to Qian Du’s later style in particular was his reconsideration of Dong Qichang’s style, of which he had been critical

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93 William T. Rowe, China’s Last Empire: The Great Qing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). See Chapter 4 especially.
in his early career. Likewise, other scholars who have turned their attention to Qian Du, such as Howard Rogers, Chou Ru-shi, Claudia Brown, and Wan Qingli, have also emphasized his stylistic heritage foremost.

That brings us to the question: if not stylistic change, then what? How can a painting or painter be considered important if they do not give us a new style? Are there new questions that arise in a period in which stylistic change seems to have no purchase?

In the 1980s and 1990s, scholarship of Chinese painting did turn away from stylistic development, moving toward the growing trend in art history at large for social and material histories of art. In scholarship by Jerome Silbergeld and Craig Clunas in particular, the priorities of painting history began to emphasize the political and social contexts of artwork over broad developments of style. But this turn away from stylistic change carried with it biases of its own, and for the large part social histories of Chinese painting have focused on direct relationships between painters and moments of high political tension, such as dynastic transitions or “foreign” rulership. The Chinese painters that received the most attention were those who painted around the Northern Song to Southern Song transition, during the Yuan dynasty, and in the seventeenth century, before and especially after the fall of the Ming dynasty. This is not surprising given the origins of the literati genre of painting among men of political exile in the Song and Yuan periods.

Silbergeld has discussed his own role in the shifting dynamics of the field of Chinese painting studies as a movement away from the more “romantic, transcendental vein” of thinking

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94 Chiu, Chapters Two and Three in particular.
about Chinese art that dominated in the 1960s and a redirection toward the “social and political dimensions of artists’ lives, especially during those great personal or historical crises that expose and reshape their deepest values.” Silbergeld recalled, “as quickly as I began to study social context, I began to appreciate how all this art was made for the relief of men of politics, meant to help smooth out the dramatic tensions and wicked realities of their political lifestyle. Western writers at that time had dealt with the aesthetics but very little with the social terms of Chinese art, viewing it as an isolated phenomenon, a Zen meditation, or as a moral self-cultivation.”

The effects of this social turn have led to some new scholarship of nineteenth century painting. But this work has only described the period in the broadest terms. The first book to give serious attention to the period was Robert Hatfield Ellsworth’s *Later Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 1800-1950* (1987). Ellsworth explained the larger social import of the art of the nineteenth century by means of its relation to a new bourgeoisie that was the main source of patronage for the innovative artists in the late nineteenth century. Although he was among the first authors who did not promote a narrative of decline, his interest in the arts of the nineteenth century was biased toward the obvious stylistic changes of the later nineteenth century. The early nineteenth century for Ellsworth was a period of only slow change, providing the roots for a more accelerated change in still during the late nineteenth century.

The most comprehensive work in English on the nineteenth century has been by Claudia Brown and Chou Ju-hsi. Their exhibition catalog *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire, 1796-1911* (1992) provided a broad comprehensive survey of the issues at stake and the players involved in this period of Chinese painting. A group of related symposium essays, *Phoebus* Vol.8 (1998), were later published and included focused analyses of several of the artworks and artists. Chu-tsing Li’s essay in that volume, “Looking at Later Qing Painting
with New Eyes,” gives the best overview of changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it only goes as far as a short essay is able, providing generalizations about social and visual changes and focusing largely on late eighteenth and late nineteenth century works, avoiding the early nineteenth century.

In Chinese, Wan Qingli’s book *The Century Was Not Declining in Art: A History of Nineteenth-Century Chinese Painting* 並非衰落的百年：十九世紀中國繪畫史 (2005) attempted an overview of the whole nineteenth century, arguing against the same stereotypes that this dissertation is interested in confronting. But his focus was set in a negative construction of “not declining,” perpetuating the negatively-inflected reputation of this period. More recently, in 2006, a bi-lingual conference held in Taiwan and sponsored by the collector Michael Shih produced a selection of essays titled, *Turmoil, Representation, and Trends: Modern Chinese Painting, 1796-1949*, offering some texture to the scholarship of the period, but little in the way of guiding principles.

These descriptions of the nineteenth century drew attention to an otherwise ignored period of art, but they were still fundamentally based in a relation to stylistic and political revolution, narratives inherited from Enlightenment histories written in the West as well as in China and Japan. From this political perspective, the texts and paintings that Qian Du and his contemporaries produced can only seem dilettantish or escapist in contrast to the events of extreme social unrest that unfolded in his lifetime.

Certainly, Qian Du’s story might be aligned to a political narrative. Growing up the son of a provincial governor, Qian Du’s childhood was structured by a certain involvement with politics. His father served in the heyday of the Qing empire, the middle to later years of the Qianlong emperor, and left service just before the years of the Heshen’s greatest influence at
court. Qian Du himself was even directly involved in serving as a secretary to generals and governors whose lives were mired in politics, including Fukang’an, Chen Xiaosheng, and later in his life, Zhang Jing. The careers of Qian Du’s closest friends of his mid-career, the Chen cousins, were supported by the patronage of Ruan Yuan, the most renowned scholar-official of the era. But even in these relationships with bureaucrats who were his friends, his paintings for them did not demonstrate any direct connection to the politics of suppressing rebellion, as in the case of Fukang’an, or a relationship to governing Yunnan, as in the case of Chen, or to negotiating the politics of waterway transport, as in the case of Zhang.

It was only in occasional moments that Qian Du made explicit mention of politics. At times Qian Du disparaged the role of government service as comparable to the life of “a dog in the market of the capital, or a common slave.” In another inscription (the poems of which were cited in the Introduction to this dissertation) he lamented the destruction of the Miao Rebellions as he passed through Xi’an on his way to Yunnan in 1804:

Resentment at Baling

In the spring of 1804, while traveling from Xi’an to Yunnan, He Boyin and Zhuang Xuehong accompanied me bringing wine to send me off from the wild cliffs of Baling. Bashang was overrun with bandits from 1800-1801 and we can no longer return to days gone by when together we meandered in the grassland, and sat together in the tangle of thorns. Li Sheng who was good at the Pipa, played “Autumn at Baling” as the four of us sat together on a watchtower sorrowfully. Li Sheng's old home at the Ba cliffs was overrun by bandits last year, and his current situation is like that of the people of old, [trapped behind] these city walls, no longer able to act as a host. We shed tears at this

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97 As quoted above, SHHZ, 45, 48.
98 Baling was the tomb of emperor Wendi of the Han dynasty and Bashang was the site where the first emperor of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang, was encamped when he accepted the surrender of the King of the State of Qin.
for a long time, and when time came to say our farewells, our sentiments were like these *ci* poems…

Qian Du’s thoughts on Baling were more of a lament for the loss of a certain way of life of leisure shared by him and his friends than they were political commentary. The loss of life, the disintegration of political structure, or the corruption of bureaucrats were not his direct concerns. His reaction to this destruction by bandits of the “scenery” of a historical place was to write a poem, and Li Sheng’s reaction was to pluck at the pipa. As Silbergeld commented on literati painting in general, these cultural forms were “made for the relief of men of politics,” and so politics is often only obliquely mentioned.

Like their predecessors, Qian Du and his cohort reacted to political and social instability with the tools of literati community: poems, paintings, and music that cited a shared cultural past in order to process the emotions of the tumultuous present. Yet when scholars have tried to align Qian Du’s story with major political events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century or when they have tried to tell his story as one of stylistic change, a narrative of failure has resulted. For art historians, the literati model that worked for earlier generations now appeared to be insufficient. In maintaining the status quo, these literati were unable to anticipate the rapid internal and external changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Conceptually, this is an interesting conundrum. If these painters were maintaining the status quo, coping with a changing world by turning inward toward the world of literati citation, then they might well be considered to epitomize the core of what literati paintings represented rather than its nadir. And if that is the case, then why has this period been so disparaged? Put

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99 甲子莫春自西安之滇中何子伯引莊子雪鴻偕客携酒送余至灞陵野岸灞上自庚申辛酉閒為賊蹂躪非復曩時風景相與徘徊荒草叢棘中座有李生善琵琶弾灞陵秋一闋四座感然李生舊家灞陵前年自賊中來頗能言其情狀今城郭如故人民已非坐客為流涕久之感時傷別情見乎詞. SHHZ, 48.
another way, why have historians viewed the time-honored literati methods of coping with turmoil though removal from politics as ineffective in this instance but not others?

If aligning Qian Du’s story to larger political and stylistic narratives leads precisely to the accusations that have sidelined Qian Du and his generation from playing a role in the history of Chinese paintings, then how might we tell his story in a way that reveals the reasons for the reverence that nineteenth century contemporaries had for these works? If we look at the activities described by Qian and his peers in paintings and inscriptions, they appear to have disengaged with the Confucian responsibilities of government service, perhaps out of an inability to secure positions in that service or possibly because a genuine feeling of responsibility toward that work was lacking. Either way, the default position was to a world that celebrated literati material culture, and their paintings and inscriptions offer us the immediate traces of that world. Rather than questioning the motivations for that choice, it seems more appropriate to ask how these modes of celebrating worked. Only by embracing the nature of this culture of painting can we understand what made it compelling.

Beginning from the premise that mid-nineteenth century commentators were not wrong in their positive judgments of Qian Du’s work, the research of the following chapters re-examines early nineteenth-century painting, using Qian Du as the case study in order to find a way of viewing these works that is not informed by the priorities of Enlightenment history. In such a historical narrative, grounded in schemas of political or stylistic revolution, Qian Du’s story becomes only a minor history. However, the advantage of engaging a minor history is the potential to critique the biases of major histories and to therefore provide an alternate history. Rather than making stylistic change and political involvement the structuring narratives then, the proposal that this dissertation puts forward is that we take the dilettantism and material cultures
of early nineteenth century Chinese literati on their own terms, asking what those terms were and how they functioned to ingratiate their viewers.

—New Modes of Viewing Literati Paintings—

Viewing literati paintings through their stylistic and historical citations or in relation to the political allusions found in those citations represent at least two modes of viewing literati paintings. These modes of viewing are academic, in the sense that they prioritize knowledge of the history of painting and of the fundamental texts of literati identity. But these were not the only ways that literati interacted with paintings.

Scholarship by Craig Clunas has revealed how paintings acted as commodity objects within a system of luxury exchange among the elites of imperial China. Paintings were only one among many other kinds of luxury production, and not necessarily hierarchically superior to other kinds of objects either. Luxury taste and literati taste were not directly opposed to one another, and literati paintings were designed in many ways to work within these systems of elite taste and luxury exchange.¹⁰⁰

Recent scholarship by Anne De Coursey-Clapp has accounted for the way that paintings were designed to suit the needs of specific social relationships. She designated the “commemorative handscroll” as a format that was meant to act as a biography for the patron, in that its styles and themes were shaped to the character, history, and ambitions of the patron, and moreover were made in order display those events to a select public. Adding to their biographical roles, such handscrolls were often accompanied by colophons written in the “preface” or

“record” format used for family biography. She compared such handscrolls to western portraiture but described them more as “pictorial monuments” than formal portraits.\(^{101}\) Clunas and De Coursey-Clapp have drawn attention to the social purposes of paintings, and to the relationship of choices in style and content to those social purposes. Their research has shown that literati paintings were objects that fit within networks of taste and identity and even helped to establish them. Recent work by Jonathan Hay on Ming and Qing period material culture amplified these themes and added to them.

Although Hay was primarily concerned with concepts of ornament, and therefore with art objects, his theories can also be extended to literati painting. He argued that following from a modern Western concept of the separation between mind and body, art that engages sensuous pleasures has often been considered meaningless. In contrast, Chinese concepts of the mind and body lack that hierarchy, so that intellect and pleasure were not necessarily opposed to one another, but could be continuous instead. Applying this insight to ideas of surface decoration on luxury objects, he argued that surface decoration engaged the senses in order to “think with” viewers materially, rather than acting as an image of something else. Decoration created pleasure in the beholder, connecting them visually and physically to the surrounding world. In such an understanding, decorated objects had affective potential, so that the surface of an incense burner could create a sense of “extreme stillness” in a viewer. For Hay, the embrace of pleasure and taste that decoration encouraged was part and parcel of efforts of self-fashioning in the market.

economies of Ming and Qing China. Luxury objects were crucial to the construction of a sense of self because they located the self within a network of hierarchical relationships.¹⁰²

Collectively, this scholarship by Clunas, De Coursey-Clapp, and Hay can be bracketed within the turn toward social history and material culture that marked scholarship of the 1990s and 2000s. Turning away from visual analysis that promoted stylistic development as the core contribution of a given artwork, these scholars demonstrated the power of paintings to work with other objects to engage the elite viewers of Ming and Qing China under the auspices of taste and self-fashioning.

In order to reassess the social roles of painting, Clunas and De Coursey-Clapp gave less attention to the analysis of style in paintings, and by focusing on decorative objects Hay dealt very little with paintings. But in this work by Clunas and De Coursey-Clapp there are insights that help us to understand how literati paintings could remain engaging even if they were not stylistically or politically revolutionary. Literati paintings maintained their relevance by sustaining literati taste and initiating new generations in the patterns of literati identity. Painting did not accomplish this alone, but did so in tandem with the other material cultures that reinforced literati selfhood.

Within Hay’s ideas about sensuous viewing there is also the potential to think about how literati paintings engaged the senses in ways that were similar to decorative surfaces. By embracing the material cultures of Qian Du’s generation as he and his peers embraced them, the remaining chapters ask how this idea of a sensuous mode of viewing decoration might be transferred to the viewing of literati painting in a way that then engages De Coursey-Clapp’s idea

¹⁰² Jonathan Hay, Sensuous Surfaces: the Decorative Object in Early Modern China (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press) 2010, 13, 31-32,40-42,75-78, 95. Hay’s central interest is subjectivity and he further differentiates between a shen 身 subjectivity which was personal, and bodily and a ren 任 self that was networked.
of painting as “pictorial monuments” to their patrons and Clunas’ vision of paintings as integrated with other luxury and literati material cultures.

Literati painting has traditionally been understood as a highly intellectual endeavor in which historical and stylistic citation were based in an academic knowledge of historical texts, Confucian philosophy, and classical poetry. The language used by classical painting theorists also emphasized the intellectual over the sensuous in a way that eschewed the most basic appeals of artwork to the body in favor of an appeal to knowledge. But Qian Du’s painting was not dry and academic. It was intimate. It helped to constitute literati identity in a time of growing disunity and it did so through a variety of means, not only through historical references, and less so through the political messages or stylistic revolution that some scholarship would ask of it. Looking closely for signs of other terms of engagement, we will see that these paintings are full of the traces of more momentary pleasures, of sensuous experiences shared between the painter and the patron, and between patron and viewer. This sensuousness helped to cement the impact of the painting at the time of its making and also on each subsequent viewing. By calling to mind the senses, a painter could anchor their image in a specific moment in time, to make it personal in a way that worked in comfortable tension with the historical referencing.

The nature of these sensory appeals in painting was political at the level of the person and the body. By working in tandem with poetic inscriptions and directly recalling the variety of literati material cultures intertwined with painting, literati paintings of the early nineteenth century helped to commemorate and then secure the connection between individuals or groups in a time of growing uncertainty. The memories of those meetings and events could only be re-

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103 Literati painting gained that reputation in the twentieth century in part due to the efforts of early scholars such as Binyon and Fenollosa to differentiate the arts of Asia as Art forms rather than European decoration. Binyon asked bluntly in his introduction to *Painting in the Far East*: “Do the vague associations of luxury and sensuousness which the ‘gorgeous East’ brings to our binds really represent all that is to be known of it?”
experienced in full through the sensuous engagement with the images that secured them, and the following chapters examine the nature of that engagement. Drinking tea, smelling plum blossoms, and engaging with rubbings of stone and metal monuments, each of these activities will be addressed in order to explore different sensory themes in Qian Du’s paintings, unpacking them from the baggage of both the art historical referencing that has dominated literati painting research, and the teleology of decline that stems from that research.
CHAPTER TWO: FRAGRANT SECLUSION AND THE SMELLS, TASTES, AND SOUNDS OF TEA IN PAINTING

Among the various literati practices that Qian Du invoked in his paintings, tea appreciation was the most sensual and the most social. Its sounds, fragrances, colors, and tastes were prominent in his poetic inscriptions, and almost invariably the mention of tea acted as an invitation to a guest with whom the broth would be shared. Images of tea objects outright defined some of his landscapes, while in other scenes they acted as minor themes that worked in tandem with the composition, brushwork, and wash to set an atmosphere of clear and pensive seclusion from the concerns of the world. Qian Du was so involved with the practice of tea appreciation that he even helped to create several Yixing teapots.

This chapter describes a method of viewing Qian Du’s painting that prioritizes this presence of tea imagery and vocabulary. While many of his paintings that feature tea also operated within obvious art historical lineages, a methodology that analyzes his paintings primarily through those lineages limits our understanding of how deeply these works were embedded within the various cultures of the literati lifestyle. By articulating the presence of tea in Qian Du’s life and work and comparing it to contemporaneous texts on tea, this chapter asks what these paintings would have looked like from the perspective of a tea aficionado rather than a painting connoisseur. How might the aesthetics of tea appreciation and the aesthetics of painting have reinforced and amplified one another to create an artwork that pleased literati on multiple levels?

—Documenting the Experience of Sharing of Tea—

It was not until Qian Du was about fifty that tea began to be a constant presence in his painting and poetry. This rise in the visibility of tea in his work coincided with Qian Du’s midlife
re-introduction into the social circles of the lower Yangtze delta, where the richest and most elite families in China lived. From 1815 to 1816 he lived with Chen Hongshou in Liyang, Jiangsu, where Chen was serving as district magistrate. Among the coterie of intellectuals that Chen Hongshou had invited to Liyang, Qian Du seems to have had a privileged place. Chen Hongshou was the cousin of his closest childhood friend, the poet and official Chen Wenshu, whom Qian had met when they were both young men in Beijing. Both Chens had advanced past the highest level of imperial examinations and had taken posts in government. Although Qian Du had not, he remained close with Chen Wenshu and his cousin throughout their lives. When Qian Du returned from Yunnan to the Jiangnan area in 1808, it was Chen Wenshu who introduced him to most of the patrons and friends that would support him through the 1810s. Of the two dozen extant paintings by Qian Du done in this decade, the majority were done for Chen Wenshu, Chen Hongshou, or for other friends in their circle.

One of the central documents of this group’s interactions was not a painting but an Yixing ware teapot made in 1815 by the potter Yang Pengnian [fig. 10]. It was inscribed in three places: a dedication by the maker along the top in seal script; a documentation of the place and year of production in standard script along the sidewalls; and a list of names along the bottom in standard script. The inscriptions were all equally terse. They simply listed or attested to the raw information of the object’s making, declaring that the pot was commissioned by Chen Hongshou and created at his “Hall of Interlocking Mulberry” by Yang Pengnian in 1815, and that the words were inscribed by Guo Lin. There were no extra poetics and the form was made to be very simple, unembellished except for the inscriptions in standard to archaic script.104

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104 The inscriptions, respectively: [along the top] 叔陶作壺其用寶用 “Shutao made teapots to be treasured and used forever” ;[along one side] 嘉慶乙亥秋九月桑連理館製 “Made at the Hall of Interlocking Mulberries in the ninth month of the autumn of the yihai year [1815] in the reign of Jiaqing” ;
Qian Du’s name stood prominently in the list of names along the bottom, coming second in the roster of fifteen names that preceded this brief comment: “…Together (we) savored (tea) and wrote and recorded (it here).” This simple dedication testified to the teapot’s status as an object that linked more than a dozen writers, painters, poets, and officials within Chen Hongshou’s inner circle at Liyang. For these literati, appreciating tea permitted an occasion around which they could gather to write, talk, and even participate in the production process of teapot design.

The inscription on this teapot documented the events of more than a dozen men enjoying tea and each other’s company in the autumn of 1815. However, it is not clear whether the pot was made in order to use it during this gathering or if it was made during or after in order to commemorate the gathering. The production process would have taken several days. In Liyang at this time Chen Hongshou was working closely with the potter Yang Pengnian to involve men of letters such as Qian Du, Gou Lin, and their group of friends in the production of teapots. Yixing teapots were first molded by hand by conjoining flat panels cut from pressed sheets of the clay
particular to that region, called *zisha* 紫砂 “purple sand,” due to its color and consistency. In the case of a round vessel such as this one, the pot may have also been finished on a wheel. The inscription was done by incising the surface after the clay had hardened to a leathery state, after which the vessel was finished by smoothing over its surfaces with a wet brush. Finally it was fired in long kilns built along hillsides, called “dragon kilns.”\(^\text{105}\)

The inscription was likely copied from calligraphy by Guo Lin and then incised by the artisan, Yang Pengnian. But there have been examples of pots directly inscribed by literati. Whichever the case, the inscription itself points to the communal nature of the production and enjoyment of this vessel. Furthermore, the original events of designing this teapot and then savoring tea with it could be reactivated in each subsequent steeping and pouring of tea, and it was designed with this intention in mind. With each conversation had between sips of pale broth poured from this teapot the users would be reminded of the gathering, even if only a few or perhaps none of the original participants were present. Like a literati painting, this teapot remained an object that first documented and then re-confirmed literati community long after its moment of creation.

Qian Du’s integration into the social network of the Chens was marked by his numerous works for Chen Wenshu, including a fan titled, “Purple Plantain Pavilion,” dated to 1814 [fig. 11]. Tea and painting intersected through the poems on the reverse side, which were originally written by Qian Du during his time spent in Yunnan in the first decade of the 1800s. By compiling these poems from his past travels on the back of a painting for his friend Chen Wenshu, Qian was writing his friend into his past life and simultaneously curating a portable

\(^{105}\) For a description of the process see Lo, 19-35.
object, a fan, that Chen could use to publicly display and advertise his friend’s twin talents of
poetry and painting to would-be patrons.

The first poem, which takes up more than half of the surface of the reverse side, was
originally written for Qian’s friend Gui Fu on a visit to see plum blossoms at Black Dragon Pool
near Kunming:

Last night a spring breeze rose up over the pool; Plum blossoms opened in the
Longquan Hut.

The purple clouds blow and their shade reaches to the bottom of the pool; Blue-
green glass soaked in red rose petals.
Wandering the mountains it is my habit to carry a white bamboo walking stick (so
that) no servant boys need come along (with me) when I go knocking at the door
(of a friend).

The man of the path welcomes his guest into the quiet of the mountain courtyard;
the stove roars and the tea water boils, rumbling like thunder.

The old branch must send forth from its pot, its hoary scales lie on the ground and
give rise to a bed of berries.
Once the hibernating dragon sleeps it does not rise again, when the iron flute blows
a thousand ranks of clouds break apart.
The setting sun wants to set and yet has not, blossoming rays and the shadows of
men linger together.
Mountain ghosts cry lustily as they guard the entrances of caves, their long whistles following the streams and returning on the winds.\textsuperscript{106}

This painting and its inscriptions presented a multitude of potential modes of access. It stood on its own as a delicately brushed image, a landscape of seclusion that engaged the eye directly through a contrast between dry, muscly rocks and light, buoyant plantain trees with bamboo. It was an image of a specific place as well as an emulation of a particular painting by Tang Yin, as recorded in a hanging scroll now in the Indianapolis Museum of Art of the same year and the same title. It was also combined with poems from Qian Du’s years of travel in the south, adding biographical and travel dimensions to the object. Yet, when it was seen through the lens of the tea imagery in the poem on the back it suddenly opened onto an experience that was

\textsuperscript{106}春風昨夜潭上來龍泉庵里梅花開紫雲吹影落潭底碧琉璃浸紅玫瑰尋山慣攜白竹杖叩門不許奚童催道人揖客山院靜風爐茶沸喧殷雷老乾盤空間鬚髮蒼鱗卧地生莓苔蟄龍一睡不復醒鐵笛吹破雲千堆夕陽欲落猶未落花光人影相徘徊欲呼山鬼守靈窟長嘯且逐溪風回.
not purely textual or visual, but one that further engaged the sensual aspects of sound, smell, and touch.

The poem was about two scholars sharing tea deep in the mountains, and tea was invoked not just in the moment when the water rumbles and boils, but also in the color of the water and the sounds of the iron flute and the whistling ghosts. In the painting, none of these evocative images were directly shown. The depths of the water were not cast in the shade of purple clouds. Nor was it colored blue-green with contrasting rose accents. The blowing wind and iron flute could not be shown, and neither could the rumbling tea water or the long whistles of ghosts that broke the silence of the courtyard. But once these poetic images were juxtaposed with the image, they resonated. The monochromatic scene of a single scholar shown in his remote streamside pavilion, framed behind by plantains and bamboo, could now take on the colors, light, sounds, and fragrances of tea in contrast to the wilderness.

In this painting, as in others by Qian Du, tea imagery appealed through the senses in order to emphasize the social nature of literati activities. Both the painting and the poetry acted by the advantages of their specific material means to invite another scholar into a shared experience or knowledge. In the 1813 handscroll, “Jade Mountain Grass Hut” [fig. 12], painted for Qian Du’s brother Qian Dong (1752-1817), this invitation of a guest into the home to share drink and conversation was both shown and described poetically.

[Figure 12] Qian Du, “Jade Mountain Grass Hut,” 1813, ink and color on silk, Zhejiang Provincial Museum
In the image Qian Du has painted a scholar paused before entering the gate of a small pavilion hidden in grove of tall trees and alongside a remote stream, far from other habitation, while the home’s owner has already sat and begun to talk with a guest over tea, ready to also attend to the arriving guest. The poem by Qian added to this handscroll reads:

A woven white bamboo fence, a stone-built wall, elms and willows at the front gate, and mulberry trees alongside the house,

A boat arrives to the village dock and the sounds of fishermen are heard, a lush green covers the lake and the sky, and this waterside pavilion remains cool,

Receiving guests it is my habit to wear high toothed clogs, embraced and surrounded by familiar books on the small couch.

The stove roars and the tea service is all arranged, reminding me of Lu Hong’s ‘Old Grass Hut.’

Qian Dong’s retreat was shown and described as ensconced in a small fishing town, with a triple barrier of walls, fences, and trees designed to keep the outside world at bay yet still give access to the cool tones of the lush lake and the sky blue water. In the poem and the painting Qian Dong was further buffered by the books he enjoyed. Within the protection of this space he was prepared to meet his guests with conversation and tea, providing for them and himself a rustic atmosphere reminiscent of the famous Tang dynasty hermit-painter Lu Hung’s “Old Grass Hut.”

—The Monk of Longmen—

107 白竹編籬石築墻門前榆柳來邨塢魚人響綠漫湖天水閣涼看客愛穿高齒屐攤書擁小匡床風蠟茶具都安置得盧鴻舊草堂.
Perhaps the most prevalent of Qian Du’s tea-related tropes was that of two scholars sitting in a retreat while a servant boy boiled tea water, an image he cultivated from historical paintings that he saw, including those by Wang Anshi (1021-1086), Ni Zan (1301-1374), Zhao Yong (1289-1363), and Tang Yin (1470-1524). The ur-motif for these works by Qian Du seems to have been a painting by Ni Zan, one renowned by Ming and Qing painting connoisseurs as the only genuine figure painting by Ni Zan: “The Monk of Longmen.”

Qian Du wrote about this work in his collected writings, and three versions of this theme by him remain, one titled “The Monk of Longmen” [fig. 13] and two others both titled “Longmen Tea Hut.” A poem included on two of these paintings reads:

The Longmen Tea Hut.

Autumn rains clear over Longmen, jade grasses send their fragrance to the heavens.

The hanging Big Dipper penetrates the azure sky, a white lotus opening on the lake of heaven.

The monk has been long in meditation, cross-legged, his shoulder bare.

Walking into the bitter bamboo forest, his hand draws from the cinnabar stream.

Pine flowers drop in the hard wind, the stone pot rings with the sound of water.

I would learn the methods of bodily transformation, shedding like the cicada in order to fly after the immortals.

There is poem by Zhao Yong; I enjoy its secluded elegance and so I rhyme with it here.

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108 Ni Zan’s painting is mentioned in several Ming texts from the late 16th to early 17th centuries, including: Wang Keyu 汪珂玉, Shan hu wang 《珊瑚綱》, Chen Jiru 陳繼儒, Ni gu lu 《妮古錄》, and Bian Yongyu 卞永譽, Wu gu tang shu hua hui kao 《式古堂書畫彙考》.
109 One painting was sold at China Guardian’s Fall 2006 Auctions in Beijing, another is in a private collection in New Jersey, and the third is in the Shanghai Museum Collection.
The variety of sounds, smells, and colors that Qian Du evoked with his poetic images were not directly illustrated in the painting, but they did resonate with the painting and amplify a sensory environment into which the viewer was invited: blowing winds, blossoms dropping their petals and scents, fragrant jade-green grasses, and the sound of rumbling water on a stove. Sight, smell, sound, touch and taste were all evoked. The desired overall effect of the poem, evidently, was to match Zhao Yong’s “secluded elegance,” and that sense of seclusion was accomplished in the painting compositionally. In the immediate foreground a stream empties out into the void of a larger body of water. A cluster of rocks above the stream is formed with tight, rounded folds of stone and textured with rubbed ink. Its density contrasts sharply with the open water. The rest of the composition is structured by two tall pines stacked one on the other in alternating grey tones, their shifting boughs punctuated by spiny sprays of pine needles stacked up and pointing in alternating directions. These two trees intersect with the X-shaped cluster of landscape elements that bind the scene at the top. The effect is a contrast between the open field of the figures and the water and the densely packed landscape forms that enclose them, creating a secluded space of unpolluted clarity.

110龍門茶屋龍門秋雨嘗香接天北斗掛青辟天池開白蓮道人入定久趺座袒右肩走入苦竹林手汲丹砂泉松花落風艱石銚聲泠然願學鍊形術蟬退追飛仙趙善長一詩愛其幽雅因並和之.
Qian Du very directly linked his painting with both a historical poem and a canonical painting. In his published notes on painting, *Songhu’s Reflections on Painting*, Qian Du described Ni Zan’s “Monk of Longmen” painting as well as related paintings, including, supposedly, one by Wang Anshi that he saw in the Yongfeng Temple in Yunnan. Qian Du’s description reads:

> At the center of the painting the laurel tree was done entirely in fine collected dots, the grass hut had three pillars, the posture of the master of this hut was relaxed and comfortable, and next to him a boy boiled tea, in the background was a mountain range, its texture method had the natural quality of the Northern Song dynasty painters, extremely turbid and lustrous.111

In the same volume, Qian Du described a similar scene in a Tang Yin painting:

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111《天香雲岫》圖中桂樹皆細攢點草堂三楹主人意態閑適旁一童子煎茶後為層巒皴法是北宋人本色極蒼渾秀潤. SHHY, 88.
Tang Zihua’s “Savoring Tea under the Pines” is a small work, scattered and sparse, secluded and quiet, foremost among his best quality works. An old pine, with two trunks, one bending down, one facing up, the pine needles extremely refined and long; under the pines three men sit and talk, one boy arranges the tea service. In the first work, Qian Du admired the main figure as “relaxed and comfortable” and in describing the second he used the phrase “scattered and sparse, secluded and quiet” to characterize the work as a whole. These adjectives and metaphors were familiar to anyone versed in literature on painting or in any writing about the literati arts. The repeated tropes of seclusion and relaxation underpinned the description of many of the paintings described in catalogs, collected notes, and other literary sources throughout imperial China.

This sense of removal from the concerns of the world and of sharing that seclusion with selected guests was invoked in Qian Du’s tea paintings through the visual means of composition, image, and spare brushwork. This was echoed and reinforced through the addition of poetry that stressed ideals such as clarity, quietude, lightness, and seclusion. These ideals had a parallel language and material manifestation within contemporaneous writings on tea, so that the practices of painting, poetry, and tea, all hallmark activities of literati leisure time, resonated at the level of these abstract and descriptive terms of connoisseurship and discourse.

—Literati Ideals between Painting and Tea—

In Qian Du’s time, texts on tea tended to fall into two categories: compendia of earlier texts and small treatises on specific aspects of tea appreciation. Some texts had sections

112《松塢品茶》小幀疏散幽靜逸品中之上乘也古松二株一俯一仰松針極秀挻松下三人坐談一童子理茶具. SHHY, 99.
specifically focusing on the relationship between painting and tea, such as *Secrets to Boiling Tea*

《煎茶訣》 by Ye Juan 葉雋, published sometime between 1751-1764 and then re-edited later in the 19th century. This text included advice on some very direct relationships between tea and painting. A section on “The Studio”, described the ideal spaces and conditions for enjoying tea: “The library should be bright and clean, and not too spacious, brightness and clarity can invigorate one’s heart and mind.” And in a section titled, “The Single Painting” the text continued: “a single painting should hang in any lofty studio or refined home.”

Beyond this direct reference to painting though, the vocabulary of tea revolved around words like “loftiness” 高, “brightness” 明, “clarity” 淨, and “invigoration” 爽, just like the vocabulary of painting. In a later 1878 preface to *Secrets to Boiling Tea*, written by Wang Zhiben, this parallel in the ideals espoused by both painting and tea aficionados was even more evident in the characterological metaphors and the focus on conserving the “energy” 氣 of tea:

Zhang Zhihe called “boiling tea among the bamboo” the epitome of elegance. Use a porcelain bowl as container and a bamboo basket to filter the leaves. Use clear water to instigate the tea, use gentle fire to boil it; its color should be pure and jade-like, its fragrance secluded and principled, its flavor pure and balanced. One can clearly consider poetry, and wash away troublesome thirsts. This is the beauty that is tea. It is (achieved) in boiling the tea well. As for the water, one must differentiate stream water from river water. As for the heat, one must pay attention to the nine stages of boiling and the nine changes. As for the tools, choose them based on cleanliness and not on expensiveness. As for the broth, use it when it is

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113 書齋書齋宜明淨不可太敞明淨可爽心神單條畫 高齋精舍宜掛單條. Ye Juan 葉雋, *Jian cha jue* 《煎茶訣》 in *Zhong guo li dai cha shu hui bian jiao zhu ben* 《中國歷代茶書匯編校注本》 (Hong Kong: Shang wu yin shu guan) vol.2, 850-856.
new and not when it is stale. By these means the energy in the water aids the 
energy of the tea, the energy of the heat develops the energy of the tea, the 
cleanliness of the implements prevents polluting the energy of the tea, and keeping 
the broth new prevents the loss of the energy of the tea. This is how the energy of 
the tea receives a complete and perfect color, fragrance, and flavor. This is why I 
say, “a man’s energy is best moderated by righteousness and principle, tea’s 
energy is best moderated by water and fire, with the right combination of water 
and fire then one gets the best out of tea, and comprehends the valuable secrets of 
tea.” 114

This text made a clear indication of the characterology involved in the preparation of tea. The ways of tea preparation and the tools of tea itself were permeated with literati ideals that 
transcended tea: elegance, clarity, purity, gentleness, and an unpolluted essence. The simple task 
of offering a friend a cup of tea was an opportunity to demonstrate one’s righteousness and 
principle. On bringing the broth into one’s body, the proper effects would include a washing 
away of troublesome thirst and clarity of mind. All of these benefits were offered by a cultured 
friend, and so the exchanges of tea were similar to the exchanges of painting: both were 
opportunities to test the character of a man, both were paths to clarity of mind, and both were 
discussed in bodily metaphors.

These themes of clarity and purity were continued in a colophon to The Secrets of Boiling 
Tea written by a monk named Busheng Daoren:

114 張志和所謂竹裏煎茶亦雅人之深致也磁碗以盛之竹籠以漉之明水以調之文火以沸之其色清而碧其香幽而 
烈其味醇而和可以清詩思以洗煩渴斯得其茶之美者矣是在煎之善至若水則別山泉江泉火則別詳九沸九變 
器則取其潔而不取其貴湯則用其新而不用其陳是以水之氣助茶之氣以火之氣發茶之氣以器之潔不至汙其氣 
以湯之新不至敗其氣氣得而色香味之美全矣吾故曰人之氣配義與道茶之氣配水與火水火濟而茶之能事盡矣 
茶之妙訣得矣. Wang Zhiben 王治本, Jian cha jue xu《煎茶訣序》in Zhong guo li dai cha shu hui bian jiao zhu 
ben《中國歷代茶書匯編校注本》(Hong Kong: Shang wu yin shu guan, vol.2, 850-856.
In a remote area of the mountain forest, clear and pure energy is measured in the unveiling fragrances. What cloud of steam sends forth from the reeds, this flavor that makes men quiet and content. This affair that I discuss is neither sweet and crisp nor fatty and dense. It is the flavor of answered offerings, of digestive benefits, of the defeat of cloudy thinking and the elimination of exhaustion; it can bring to a man the joy of Ch’an. So it is called the sandalwood knowledge, and its benefits allow one to come together with the flow of the way of all things.¹¹⁵

Very clearly, tea was not just about flavor, whether sweet or crisp, fatty or dense. There were greater effects, up to and including the benefits of enlightenment. Comparing this colophon to *Secrets to Boiling Tea* and the poetry on Qian Du’s painting there is a similar repetition of themes, from the invocation of Ch’an practice to the more sensory aspects of steam, fragrances, ringing pots, and the quiet contentment or clear and pure energy that they beget. Viewing Qian Du’s painting with this vocabulary of tea appreciation in mind, the ideal language of tea and the ideal language of painting can be found overlapping and amplifying one another, so that a viewer who was simultaneously a connoisseur of painting and of tea would have a multi-layered appreciation of Qian Du’s painting through their knowledge of the vocabulary and ideals relevant to both.

Whereas a scent of tea might be described as remote or pure, the overall composition of a painting might have the same description. When we look at images and inscriptions of tea in Qian Du’s painting, the relationship was not one of the simple illustration of a moment of enjoying tea. In fact, sometimes tea was only referenced in the inscription and not illustrated at

¹¹⁵ 山林絕區清淑之氣鐘香露茅發乎雲液使人恬淡是味此非事甘脆肥醲者所得識也夫其參四供利中腸破昏除睡以入禪悅之味乃所謂悉檀之益固可與道流者共己. *Busheng daoren 不生道人, Jian cha jue ba《煎茶訣跋》* in *Zhong guo li dai cha shu hui bian jiao zhu ben《中國歷代茶書匯編校注本》*(Hong Kong: Shang wu yin shu guan, vol.2, 850-856.)
all. To experience the painting primarily through the activation of tea appreciation a viewer could begin with the image of tea, or with a mention of tea in an inscription, and even simply by an image that shared the same core ideals of tea appreciation. Each material manifested these ideals of clarity, quietude, and remoteness differently, but because these ideals transcended media to define the discourses that of literati lifestyle as a whole, they could connect different material practices and amplify their meanings.

—Tea as an Escape from the “Dust of the World” in the Nineteenth Century—

[Figure 14] Qian Du, “Autumn Words by the Cold Stream,” 1836, ink and color on paper, Shanghai Museum

There is also evidence to suggest that after Qian Du died his reputation was linked both to tea and to an aesthetic lifestyle that resonated with these principles of tea appreciation. In 1872, a generation after Qian Du’s death, the painter and calligrapher Zhao Zhiqian wrote the following colophon to Qian Du’s 1836 painting, “Autumn Words by the Cold Stream” [fig. 14]:

This is a late work by Qian Du, in a similar style to Guo Xi, seen through the style of Wen Zhengming. The granary official Zheng Na obtained it and while viewing in his free time he has amused himself by stitching together these twenty eight words: “boiling the stream water to make it hot and yet still leaving the water cold, asking if the mountains really flew here then why do they not fly away, painting an
image that has a concept and yet still appeals to the eye; to these [paradoxes] only the monk knows how to reply.”

These somewhat elliptical analogies written by Zheng Na and transcribed by Zhao Zhiqian complimented Qian’s work for its concept, which was like the paradox of boiling tea but keeping the water cold. The further paradoxes brought up by Zheng made reference to a conversation between the Southern Song emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 and a Buddhist monk named Jinghui 净辉 in which the emperor asked why “Flying Peak” 飞来峰 in Hangzhou did not fly away again. The monk responded, “It is better to remain still than to move” 一動不如一靜. These paradoxical references by Zheng Na echoed the references to Ch’ an Buddhism found in Qian Du’s painting “The Monk of Longmen” and in Busheng daoren’s colophon to Secrets to Boiling Tea. But, more importantly, they drew a direct parallel between Qian Du’s style of painting and the methods for preparing tea. The paradox in a sensitively prepared cup of tea was in maintaining the coolness of the spring water in a hot beverage while the paradox in Qian Du’s sensitive style of painting was that it was driven by ideas and yet it was also appealing to the eye, like combining the styles of Guo Xi and Wen Zhengming.

An even more direct relationship between Qian Du’s reputation and the tea aesthetic was put forward in the 1870 frontispiece by Tan Zekai to Qian Du’s “Lush Shade of the Reed Hall” 《茅堂綠蔭圖》 from 1830, which reads:

“Energy uncontaminated by the dust of the world,” in the past this has been used to described Qian Du’s painting, and this scroll is poetic and painterly in just such a
sense, and so I write these words here as a frontispiece to this painting in the long summer of 1870.\textsuperscript{117}

While at first this is not obviously connected to the aesthetic of tea, Qian’s original inscription on the painting that follows Tan Zekai’s frontispiece made the connection plain:

During the long summer the daily breeze in the reed hut is excellent, concealed in the stillness of the green shade among the trees. The guest comes, parting the belt of new bamboo, swallows rise and alight on the baskets with their late flowers. Distant echoes sound like a boat on the stream, the strong fragrance emits from the tea in front of the two. On faraway roads horses and carts raise dust in an ocean, but it doesn’t reach this scholar’s home in the brush and mulberry.\textsuperscript{118}

The green shade that defined the atmosphere of “The Reed Hut” in this painting provided an escape from a world where “on faraway roads horses and carts raise dust in an ocean,” and Tan Zekai’s preface made direct reference to this when he described Qian Du’s work with the phrase, “energy uncontaminated by the dust of the world.” The idea of escaping the dust and dregs of the world was a metaphor that Qian Du also wrote about when he described how to paint like a scholar. He wrote in \textit{Songhu’s Reflections on Painting}:

Later painters who want to relish the teachings of Wen Zhengming must first be able to grasp his clarity and then exceed the spirit of his quietude, and after this the alignment of their hills and valleys will occur on their own, gradually escaping the dregs of the

\textsuperscript{117} 不染塵氣昔人評松壺畫語今此卷詩情畫意皆與恰合因拈題首庚午長夏. “Lush Shade of the Reed Hall”《茅堂綠蔭圖》 is in the collection of the Shanghai Museum, which has not yet published a reproduction of the painting. \textsuperscript{118} 永夏茅堂風日嘉綠隱寂歴樹交加客來解帶圍新竹燕起衡簏蹴晚花幽響似聞溪之艇濃香初試兩前茶元街車馬塵如海不到柴桑處士家.
world and leaving them clear and open; and this is truly following the way (of painting).\textsuperscript{119}

An escape from the dust and dregs of the world in an effort to clarify, purify, seclude oneself: this was what Qian Du sought out in life as well as in painting and in tea. For two or more erudite men, sharing tea, like sharing a painting, was an event that allowed for escape. The aesthetics of tea and painting overlapped in Qian Du’s work when his compositional choices were paired with poetic imagery to amplify a sensory environment that emphasized this escape into the pleasures of the literati lifestyle, whether it was by means of what Wang Zhiben called a “secluded fragrance” in his preface to \textit{Secrets to Boiling Tea}, or what Tan Zekai referred to as “energy uncontaminated by the dust of the world” when describing Qian Du’s painting.

Beyond tea, literati painting related to many other literati practices, and the following chapters go on to explore some of these practices through Qian Du’s work, including the appreciation of plum blossoms and the inscription of images onto objects, a practice that paralleled the contemporaneous rise in the use of epigraphic sources by calligraphers in this period.

All of these practices were overlapped in the production of another teapot that bears Qian Du’s name, titled the “Cold Jade Pot” [fig. 15] dated to 1816, and which was inscribed to Qian Du’s sister, Qian Lin, a poet, painter, and former student of Yuan Mei. Like the teapot described in the beginning of this chapter, “Cold Jade Pot” was crafted by Yang Pengnian, but this pot was also inscribed with the image of one of Qian Du’s plum blossom paintings and a poem, written on the reverse in seal script, which reads:

\begin{center}
\textit{Cold Jade Pot}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{119}后之人欲瓣香停云须先领会其清超静穆之神韵然后邱壑位置自然合格渐脱渣滓而留清虚则近道矣. SHHY, 83.
One branch, two branch, azure dragon shadow,
A thousand dots, ten thousand dots, spring vapor traces,
Suddenly remembering Xixi deep in the winter snow,
And a sound of oars as she knocks on my humble door.\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{teapot.png}
\caption{Yang Pengnian and Qian Du, “Cold Jade Pot,” 1816, earthenware, Tianjin Museum of Art}
\end{figure}

Qian Du’s poem and the image of a plum blossom painting by him were incised onto this semi-circular teapot during that fruitful period when he was staying with Chen Hongshou in Liyang. While this transcription flattened the dimensions of absorbency in paper and ink that the must have made a original plum blossom painting by Qian Du captivating, the image on the teapot gained the air of an archaic object through this flatness and the use of seal script for the poem. The branches of the incised plum blossom image were composed so that they moved beyond the frame of the fan-like face, up and over the top of the pot to wrap around the spout from which the tea was poured, taking advantage of the object’s dimensions to connect directly to the source of the fragrant tea. The first two lines of the poem further linked the branches and

\textsuperscript{120} 寒玉壺 一枝兩枝翠蛟影千點萬點春煙痕忽憶西溪深雪裏櫓聲伊軋到柴門松壺戲題丙子二月.
dots of the plum blossom to the smells and colors of the tea, and again refer to a visitor, this time making his way through the snow to share a cup of warm tea, poured from this object into which so many of the ideals of literati lifestyles were embedded.
CHAPTER THREE: EPIGRAPHY AND THE “ANTIQUE AND AWKWARD” TOUCH OF THE PAST

The Yixing teapot inscribed with a painting and poem by Qian Du was not the only carved object associated with his name. Qian Du’s painting and calligraphy can be found carved on over half a dozen objects, ranging from teapots to wrist rests, and from woodblock prints to boards and inkstones. With each object the thin, raspy quality of line that characterizes his brushwork on paper was transferred into lightly incised marks across a surface that had none of the absorbent qualities of paper. Whether in stone, bamboo, wood, or clay, these images were identifiable as Qian Du’s by his signature and also by the way that their cut lines imitated his brushwork.

[Figure 16] Wrist Rest Inscribed with Qian Du’s Painting and Calligraphy, undated, China2000 Gallery Collection, New York

It is unclear whether Qian Du carved these images, though the answer to such a question is likely no. Qian Du only ever briefly mentioned his involvement in the carving of images, and never described cutting an image himself. To further complicate the issue, aside from the teapots and the prints, for which inscriptions give some context, background information about the creation of these objects is non-existent. They may possibly have been done without Qian Du’s knowledge or even after his lifetime.
While it is uncertain whether Qian Du executed these himself or had an artisan to aid him, it is plain that there was a strong and intentional relationship between his brushwork and the stylus or chisel, as this chapter will show. This relationship was based in the epigraphic interest that dominated his era of literati visual and textual production. Qian Du’s painting drew on that interest even as that interest then encouraged the re-carving of his work into other media.

Qian Du lived within an environment of scholarship in which the study and collection of texts and images from ancient stone monuments was ubiquitous. The attention and value given to the various cultural products of this epigraphic interest (rubbings, prints of rubbings, books, seals, etc.) produced an epigraphic aesthetic in the arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The bold, dark, and fractured brushwork of eighteenth-century painters and calligraphers such as Jin Nong 金農 (1687-1763) and Luo Ping 羅聘 (1733-1799) showed a direct epigraphic influence.

But in Qian Du’s painting, those particular features did not make an appearance. Instead, the manifestation of an epigraphic aesthetic in Qian Du’s work was much more subdued, and can be characterized by his pursuit of the ideal of the idea of guzhuo 古拙, the “antique and awkward,” a principle that was central to epigraphy studies and to Qian Du’s definition of his painting as well.

This chapter will describe how Qian Du’s paintings operated within an environment of epigraphic interest and aesthetics and how they can be viewed through the visual and conceptual priorities of that epigraphic aesthetic. Beginning with a description of the epigraphic aesthetic in late eighteenth-century paintings by Jin Nong and Luo Ping, this chapter will then move on to isolate how those priorities of epigraphic viewing found a different form in the painting of Qian Du, particularly through the concept of the “antique and awkward.”

121 A term previously used by Aida Yuen Wong in regard to the later artist Wu Changshuo 吳昌碩 (1844-1927) that is also applicable to earlier periods such as the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. See Wong, 84.
As with tea, demarcating something as “antique and awkward” was a way of extending characterological traits from the description of the object to the description of the person appreciating it. The sense of touch and of the tactility of ancient stone and metal surfaces further permeated this language of viewing and appreciating epigraphic sources, and carried over into the viewing of Qian Du’s painting. The ideal of being “antique and awkward” also drew on inspiration from the deep and anonymous past, alleviating the author from the responsibility of citing specific canonical past exemplars. This relationship between Qian Du’s painting and this epigraphic aesthetic manifested not only in the brushwork of his paintings but also enabled their re-inscription into other forms. As such, this chapter will finish with a reading of those objects onto which Qian Du’s paintings and calligraphy were carved in order to ask what about them encourages this re-inscription.

—The Epigraphic Aesthetic in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century—

During the mid-eighteenth century, Hangzhou was a center for the trend of epigraphy studies that was dominating intellectual circles across the empire. Scholars in China began to use inscribed ancient stone and metal objects as resources for research as early as the Song dynasty. But it was not until China was under Qing rule in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the popularity of epigraphy studies became ubiquitous under the priorities of the “Evidential Research” 考正學 trend in scholarship.

The Evidential Research movement can be broadly described as an epistemological shift in scholarly writing and thought from the metaphysical arguments popular in the Song and Ming dynasties to arguments based on empirical evidence that rose in the Qing dynasty. Inscribed objects in metal or stone, especially those from early periods, were among the most desirable of
empirical sources for scholastic arguments focused on philology, etymology, history, and calligraphy. Their age gave them authenticity and the material solidity of their texts put them in contrast with printed versions of early texts that may have been polluted in multiple recensions and printings. They were positioned as impartial witnesses of the past.

The increased study of inscribed and early sources of calligraphy had a pronounced effect on calligraphic styles of this period, predominantly in the composition of characters, but also in brushwork that was raspy and broken-edged in order to emulate the material surfaces on which these ancient texts were carved. These changes comprised an “epigraphic aesthetic” in calligraphy and also in painting.

Visual citations of these epigraphic sources appeared first in calligraphy of the so-called “Metal and Stone School” 金石派. In the seventeenth-century calligraphers like Fu Shan 傅山 (1607-1685) began to advocate using Han dynasty (206BC-220) sources to inspire visual changes in calligraphy. But it was not until the eighteenth century, in the work of artists like Jin Nong, that the extreme mutations of an epigraphic aesthetic manifested. By the nineteenth century, the style of every important calligrapher showed significant appropriation of texts from early stone sources, a trend perhaps most evident in the calligraphy of Weng Fanggang 翁方剛 (1733-1818), Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829-1884), and Wu Changshuo (1844-1927).

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122 Benjamin Elman, From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 2001) 29-30, 103-104, 225-234. This is exemplified by the Han dynasty phrase “shi shi qiu shi” 實事求是 [to seek truth from facts] that was reused in 18th century (and later by Deng Xiaoping) as a slogan for impartial scholarship.
124 See Elman, 234, for a discussion of the relationship between epigraphy and calligraphy in the Evidential Research movement.
In 1762, a year before Qian Du’s birth in Hangzhou, the painter Luo Ping made a portrait of the city’s most distinguished epigraphy scholar, Ding Jing (1695-1765) [fig. 17], and at around the same time he painted another companion portrait of his mentor Jin Nong [fig. 18], who was the most famous painter of his generation. The deliberately heavy, dark, and awkwardly accentuated lines that Luo Ping used to define the robes of each man seem to take on an animated quality all their own, as if the figures, whose bare contours are painted in a contrasting thin, dry, light-toned line, were being worn by their clothes rather than the other way around. The quality of line used to describe the folds of Ding Jing’s and Jin Nong’s robes was uncommon, and Luo Ping chose this style of brushwork because it directly referenced the cut rock surfaces that Ding Jing spent his time investigating and cataloging and from which Jin Nong developed his distinctive style of calligraphy.

Ding Jing’s book, Record of Engraved and Cast Texts of Wulin 《武林金石記》 (first prefaced in 1782) was the most comprehensive study of Hangzhou’s stone and metal relics from
earlier dynasties and the result of a lifetime’s study. His scholarship and virtuosity in seal carving inspired an entire lineage of seal carving, the Xiling Seal Carving Society. He pioneered several seal carving techniques, including the chongdao style, in which each stroke of the character inscribed was cut with the blade in a single smooth movement. In the technique, the seal cutting blades were wielded like brushes, with no touching up of the marks permitted. By holding the blade and stone to the same principles as brush and paper, carved words were seen to directly reflect the movements and ideas of the body that cut them, just like calligraphy. The resulting carved lines were intentionally awkward and unrefined.

Jin Nong also developed his own distinctive calligraphy technique, and like Ding Jing he sought out character models from Han dynasty inscribed stele, especially those done in clerical script. One of his most intensely studied sources was the “Stele of Mt. Hua,” an Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) monument the text of which was highly circulated in rubbing form during the Qing dynasty. The “Mt. Hua” text was noted for the flamboyance of its calligraphy, particularly in the squatness of its characters and the broad, heavy strokes that often ended each word, characteristics that Jin Nong put to use in his own work.

It was these same choppy, rough, and awkward qualities of line that Luo Ping called to mind in his paintings of Jin Nong and Ding Jing. For a contemporaneous viewer, following the dark ink rhythms of the creases and folds in each robe would have been like running a hand over an organically deteriorating and roughly hewn stone surface.

125 Although the Xiling Seal Carving Society was not founded until 1904, the founders traced a continuous lineage back to Ding Jing.
127 This style is what would later be referred to as “lacquer script,” though Jin Nong did not call his style by any particular name.
Luo Ping’s painting also makes visual allusions to a set of stele carved with *Sixteen Arhats* paintings by the Six Dynasties monk-painter Guanxiu (832-912), which were housed at that time in the Shengyin temple near West Lake in Hangzhou. Emperor Qianlong had first been taken with the paintings in 1752, and in 1762 he had these paintings copied in sets of stele and distributed to eighteen monasteries throughout China. It was from these reproductions that the images of the Arhats were disseminated to a larger population. Luo Ping, who may have seen the Arhat stele in the original or also in these reproduced forms, drew particularly from the image of the Arhat Bakula for his portrait of Ding Jing. The elongated neck, which Yuan Mei describes in his inscription to the painting as “crane-like,” is one of Bakula’s defining physiognomic features. Luo Ping seems to have blended this with attributes of the Arhat Nagasena, whom Guanxiu depicted with his hands clasped in prayer under his chin, a feature that Luo Ping transformed by placing these clasped hands over a walking cane. The portrait of Jin Nong alludes to the fourth Arhat, Nandamitra [fig. 19], who was shown in the Guanxiu images making a pinching gesture while reading a sutra text.\(^{129}\)

But the allusions were not just iconographic; they were also material. The heavy dark outer lines of each painted figure’s robes directly emulated the kinds of stone surfaces into which the Arhat images were carved and which Ding Jing and Jin Nong made their reputations studying. Through these visual allusions, Luo Ping simultaneously imagined Jin Nong and Ding Jing as re-embodiments of the Arhats, as inheritors of a classic tradition of religious painting through Guanxiu, and as figures whose bodily forms physically reflected the stone sources that they analyzed. The specific gestures of each figure further emphasized the tactility of this academic interest in carved and cast surfaces and by extension encouraged a haptic mode of viewing each painting.

Throughout his later life Luo Ping brought these portraits with him wherever he traveled, and the visual allusions to stone surfaces were evident to his audiences. The poet Yuan Mei, whom Luo Ping visited from Nanjing in 1781-1782, and who was also like an uncle to Qian Du, inscribed both of Luo Ping’s portraits. On the Ding Jing portrait Yuan Mei wrote:

This extreme antique portrait of Longhong; depicted as if the shadow is about to fly away.

Peering at the engraved stele, he extends his crane-like neck; leaning on a staff, he sits on a mossy stone.

This reclusive gentleman transcends the world; and is a great commoner in the midst of men.

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He seems to seek the tadpole characters of ancient times; residing in the temple of Cang Jie.\textsuperscript{131}

For Yuan Mei, Luo Ping’s brushwork allusion to the stone surfaces of stele was plain. Yuan Mei described Ding Jing as in the midst of analyzing an engraved stele, although the painting shows no such object overtly. Instead, the thing positioned directly in the line of Ding’s vision was Luo’s six-character inscription in archaic seal script, “Portrait of Gentleman Ding Jing.” These words were designed to slip between ontological registers, figuring both as an image of the stone text that Yuan Mei imagined Ding Jing to be analyzing and as the inscription on the object of the painting itself, further underscoring a parallel between the image and a stele surface.\textsuperscript{132} Yuan Mei echoed this in his poem with an evocative description of the image, “depicted as if the shadow is about to fly away.” A shadow-less image was one without spatial illusion, one that announced its flatness proudly, and to Yuan Mei, one that was also “antique in the extreme.”

Yuan Mei’s inscription of Luo Ping’s painting of Jin Nong, done at the same time as the Ding Jing inscription, similarly hid a series of allusions to stone and the body. Describing Jin Nong, he wrote:

He was a Gan Shi squandering gold, dined on jade like Li Yu.

Who used ore of gold to cast an image of his deeds?

It was disciple Luo of Twin Peaks, Who washed his hands in the Milky Way, and then sketched this portrait.

How mournful is his antique visage; Jin’s strange robes are all a-flutter.


He is firm in his ambitions, and his spirit rushes like the wind. He holds a palm-leaf scripture, seeming both to read and not read. Whiskers curled and scraggly, his open eyes gaze fixedly.\textsuperscript{133}

The accumulation of historical eccentrics referenced by Yuan Mei included Han Shi, a Daoist character who wasted masses of gold in order to find an alchemical means of manufacturing it, and Li Yu, a Northern Wei dynasty official who ate powdered Jade to prolong his life. In the first allusion Yuan portrayed Jin as a typically impractical scholar, one who disregarded wealth in favor of principle. But in the second allusion, the ingestion of stone in order to gain immortality had a parallel activity in Jin’s study of stone inscriptions in order to produce new kinds of calligraphic texts. These lithocentric themes continued in Yuan Mei’s poem through an allusion to the process of casting as a mode of fixing an image of Jin Nong’s deeds, an allusion immediately contrasted with the description of Luo Ping’s brushwork as drawn from the stars. Yuan went on to describe the image of Jin Nong made from these ore-cast and celestial sources as “antique,” “strange,” and “a-flutter,” adjectives that set the scene for Jin Nong’s studious attention with eyes that “gaze fixedly” at the Sanskrit text in his hands that he seemed “both to read and not read.”

Both of Luo Ping’s portraits were identified by Yuan Mei with stone or metal surfaces, and in both cases, the brushwork was read through these analogies. To further compound the epigraphic aesthetic that these readings indulged in, each figure was imagined as contemplating an ancient text, straining through the distance between the present and the past to glean meaning from archaic forms of writing. This theme of legibility and the aestheticization of the difficulty of reading an ancient text united scholarship of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

—Qian Du and Epigraphy—

It was into this environment of epigraphic referencing that Qian Du was born, and later in his life, when recalling this time, Qian Du explicitly linked himself with the generation of Jin Nong and Ding Jing. In the inscription to a painting of plum blossoms, Qian Du claimed that often Jin Nong visited his home and made paintings there, and when he did he frequently held the young Qian Du. The implication made by Qian Du was of a contact transfer of influence from a renowned master of the prior generation to the infant and would-be master of the following generation.

Qian Du’s father, Qian Qi, was a Hangzhou native, and when he retired from his last official posting in 1778 he was especially active in the circles of the Hangzhou literati. Yuan Mei described Qian Qi as a renowned critic of poetry, and twelve volumes of Qian Qi’s collected verse were published in the late eighteenth century under the title Drafts of Poetry from the Limpid Jade-green Studio《澄碧齋詩鈔》. Qian Qi’s daughter, Qian Lin 錢琳, also became a student of Yuan Mei’s. Ding Jing and Jin Nong were also among the elite of Hangzhou’s mid-eighteenth century literati with whom Qian Qi socialized, and until Jin Nong’s late career move to Yangzhou they lived in the same neighborhood, “within the distance of a chicken’s flying.” The Nanping Poetry Association was among the social groups that enabled these connections.

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134《畫梅與聽香》晚年與吾鄉金冬心先生交最密恆至吾家作畫日竟數幅余方髫齡時時挈抱之。SHHZ, 30. As Chiu Shihhwa has argued, since Jin Nong died within a year of Qian Du’s birth this story was likely handed down to Qian Du and not directly remembered by him, Chiu, 63-64.
135 As described in Yuan Mei’s epitaph for Qian Qi: Yuan Mei 袁枚, “Fujian bu zheng shi Qian gong muzhiming” 福建布政使錢公墓志銘, in Xiao cang shan fang xu wen ji 《小倉山房續文集》(Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1988), 1719.
136 See the painting “The Female Disciples of the Suiyuan” 《隨園女弟子圖》 by Cui Mou 崔某, in the Shanghai Museum for a portrait of Qian Lin among Yuan Mei’s female students.
137 Chak Kwong Lau, 33.
The Association was begun in the 1740s by their mutual friend Hang Shijun 杭世駿 (1696-1773), and it became the central hub of Hangzhou’s elite cultural group, including Ding Jing, Jin Nong, Li E 劉鶚 (1692-1752), and Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705-1755), among others.138

While Qian Du may have begun his life in an environment of epigraphic studies, it was not until his mentorship by Gui Fu 桂馥 (1733-1806) from 1803-1806 that he came into consistent contact with a scholar whose central concern was the study of ancient forms of language. It was also in this period that Qian Du first begins to paint seriously. Although he was thirty years Qian Du’s senior, Gui Fu and Qian Du became close friends during Qian Du’s time in Yunnan.139

Gui Fu was an official who served most notably in Yunnan, but he gained greater renown through his scholarship of the Shuo wen jie zi 《說文解字》 an early Chinese text on the origins of the language.140 Gui Fu’s main scholarly work was his edited version of the “Shuo wen” text, but another volume of his work was collected by his friend and fellow Yunnan official Li Kexi 李柯溪 under the title Plain Letters 《札樸》 in 1813.

Gui Fu’s authorship over the Shuo wen heritage in the late eighteenth century extended to visual means as well. In 1779 Gui Fu met Luo Ping at Weng Fanggang’s Su Studio in Beijing and commissioned him to make a fictitious group portrait of the proper lineage of Shuo wen scholars from the Han through the Yuan dynasty.141 The painting was transferred almost

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138 Ibid., 49, 70
139 It is also possible that Qian Du had met Gui Fu when they were both in Beijing in the 1780s and 1790s.
140 Written by Xu Shen 許慎 (c. 30-124).
141 See entry titled “Shuo wen tong xi tu” 說文統系圖 in Gui Fu 桂馥, Zha pu 《札樸》 (Taibei: Shi jie shu ju, 1964) v. 6, 6.
immediately into a carved stone stele version.\textsuperscript{142} He was also a renowned seal carver, and Luo Ping had at least five seals made by Gui Fu during their friendship.\textsuperscript{143}

In the biographical sketches by Cheng Tinglu that preface Qian Du’s writings, we learn a bit more about the relationship he had with Gui Fu:

One day he fled [his married life], and his communication with his wife was severed. They searched for him but he had fled over the ten thousand miles, and so they thought him dead, burning offerings worth many thousand gold pieces for his soul. After this he went around empty handed and could not return. So he lived a monk’s life together with Gui Weigu, each selling the calligraphy and paintings they made. When they got money they would spend it on alcohol and feasting, happily chatting and laughing for several days, and when that was exhausted, they would again be back to only enough for travel rations.\textsuperscript{144}

If Qian Du was driven to Yunnan by a need for escape, to indulge a sort of midlife crisis avant la lettre, then he appears to have satisfied those desires and more. This time spent drinking, painting, and visiting important historical sites at the far edge of the empire coincided with Qian Du’s shift in professional ambitions, from service in the lower ranks of officialdom to a career spent painting and composing poems within the network of elite literati into which he was born.

Qian Du’s text \textit{Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting}, which was in essence a selected biography and self-fashioning of the events and artworks that Qian Du chose to mark his painterly history, began with his time in Yunnan, indicating that this was a gestational period for Qian Du. It was only after his time there that he started to paint in earnest and to style himself

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{142} Matteini, 71-72, 76, n. 25.
\item\textsuperscript{143} Shan, 97-99.
\item\textsuperscript{144} Cheng Tinglu, “Yi shi” \textit{[Various Anecdotes (about Qian Du)]}, in SHHZ, 6-8.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
primarily as an artist. What more we know of the relationship between Gui Fu and Qian Du is
drawn largely from these texts.

In his later writings, Songhu’s Reflections on Painting, Qian Du enumerated the paintings
in Gui’s collection that he admired and listed the paintings he made for or with Gui Fu while
they both lived in Yunnan. We learn of a drunken mural painting session at the Qingyun
Monastery, of whiling away the summer heat together at Yuntao Temple, and of the two
designing a balustrade for two Tang dynasty flowering plum trees at the Black Dragon Pool
outside of Kunming. Gui Fu introduced Qian Du to a larger group of scholars who would
become his friends and patrons in Yunnan, including, Shi Lansheng 史蘭生, Cha Douyi 查斗一,
Li Kexi 李柯冕, Huang Zhencang 黃震蒼, He Wudi 何五弟, and Li Heping 李鶴坪. Qian
Du recalled his days with Gui Fu in Yunnan fondly, filled as they were with bouts of heavy
drinking with friends, visits to temples bearing paintings as gifts, the study of painting, and
meeting new friends. He wrote, “we were like Kumarajiva in the purified realm, repeating the
karma of brush and ink.”

In turn, the scholar-official Gui Fu felt as if he had found his young disciple at the edge
of a vulgar life and cultivated the gentleman in him, as indicated in one of his poems that was
used to preface Qian’s collected writings:

Far away I come across the seventh son of the Qian family scattered and loose; in the

Chu Mountain springtime he writes on a slant with only one spare brush. Guests bring

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145 Including the “Former and Latter Odes to Red Cliff”《前后赤壁》as painted by Zhao Mengfu, “Striking the
Inkstone”《击砚图》by Shen Zhou, and “Eighty Years of Longevity”《八十自寿图》by Shangguan Zhou.
146 Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting includes many paintings inscribed to or painted in the company of these
men. It was Li Kexi eventually published Gui Fu’s “Plain Letters,” and Qian Du also painted a farewell painting for
Li Kexi’s departure for service in the south (probably Yunnan), titled《息廬圖》, a painting with this title and with
inscriptions by Li Kexi’s friends is currently in the Zhejiang Provincial Museum Collection.
147 Kumarajiva was a Kuchean Buddhist famous for translating many Sanskrit texts into Chinese in the early fifth century.
lowly gold to praise the newly white-haired man before them; when will I open my aged eyes to see you rise beyond the wind and dust of life?148

Looking over the topics collected in Gui Fu’s “Plain Letters,” and seeing them in conjunction with the anecdotes relayed by Qian Du, we can imagine the atmosphere of camaraderie that the two likely shared in those years.149 As the older scholar and his young apprentice explored Kunming’s temples and estates, topics of conversation must have ranged from the sites of historical importance in Yunnan to the locations of local steles of note, from archaic forms of certain characters to the best springs for taking up tea water.

Of Qian Du’s mentors, Gui Fu was the most involved in epigraphy studies. They met in a period of transition for Qian Du, and Gui Fu had great influence on the young man. Gui’s friends included Weng Fanggang and Huang Yi,150 and through them Qian was immersed in an environment in which epigraphic sites were mentioned like celebrity names, where rubbings circulated like tabloids, and where strict analysis of these sources was highly respected. Qian Du’s painting career gestated during his years in the far south of Yunnan, and not long after Gui Fu passed away he returned to the southern Yangzi region to establish himself as a painter, a feat he accomplished by painting for the network of scholars and patrons that had constituted his father’s friends.

It was in one such painting, “Pristine and Verdant Garden” 《綠淨園》, done for Governor Wang Zishan as Qian Du was on his way back from Yunnan in the fall of 1808, that

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148 万里逢钱七支离散荡人惟愿一枝笔写遍楚山春客里黄金贱尊前白发新几时开老眼看尔出风尘曲阜桂馥未谷. Gui Fu, in SHHZ, 3.
149 Gui Fu’s writings were organized into six topics: two volumes of research on the Classics 温经; four volumes of notes on visits to historical sites 览古, one volume of corrections to false truths 匡谬, one volume on epigraphic texts 金石文字, one volume of village wisdom 鄉里舊聞, and one volume of travel writing about Yunnan 滇游續筆.
150 See Weng’s mention of Gui Fu in his notes to the “Fan Memorial Stele” 《范式碑二》 in Huang Yi 黄易, Xiao peng lai ge jin shi wen zi 《小蓬萊閣金石文字》 (1800).
Qian Du began to settle into his preferred style of painting and to relate that style conceptually to the epigraphic movement. As described above in Chapter One, “Pristine and Verdant Garden” was done as an elaboration on and reaction to a painting of Wang’s garden by Xi Gang, Qian Du’s friend and fellow Hangzhou native.

Beyond the framing and perspective discussed in Chapter One, Qian Du’s painting was also clearly distinguishable from Xi Gang’s by its modes of texturing and brushwork [fig.20]. The contrast in dynamism of the brush styles of each painter was particularly evident in the rock formations. A consistency of brushwork rooted in study of the masters of Yuan dynasty painting unified Xi Gang’s painting. Under-washes and texturing were done with a free-form daubing of medium and light grey ink, and then the overtexture and outlining were done in a drier, darker tone. The dynamism of each brush stroke was emphasized over exact placement, and it was only with the grouping of like texture strokes that a sense of the rough, vibrating surface of the objects of the world was achieved. By contrast, Qian Du’s texture strokes were abbreviated and miniaturized. Rather than the flicking, wild vibrato of Xi Gang’s brush, Qian Du’s was calm and stippled, and more varied.

[Figure 20] Details of Brushwork in “Mountain Retreat of the Jade Tung Trees” (Left, Fig.6) by Xi Gang and “Pristine and Verdant Garden” (Right, Fig.7) by Qian Du
Both were made within the era of epigraphic aesthetic, but neither seems to directly reference the surfaces of stone monuments or rubbings taken from their surfaces. There were no stone monuments in the painting, and there were no inscriptions on the painting in archaic script. A genealogical reading of the styles of each painting would describe Xi Gang’s painting in terms of an interest in the “Yuan Masters,” especially Ni Zan, and would identify Qian Du’s painting with Wen Zhengming and the “Wu School” of painting. Such an interpretation has always sufficed for the classification of works by both of these painters. Yet looking closer, and particularly at Qian Du’s inscription, the vocabulary of deprecation that Qian Du uses was part and parcel of the values of the epigraphy movement:

All the places Xi Gang’s did not imagine and image, I add each one here, wielding brush and ink in a barren and inferior version (compared to his). Seeing this great magician I am aware that my own forms are abominable by comparison, and viewers of my latter [part] will not be able to tell whether it is workmanlike or awkward.151

If the visual difference between Qian’s brushwork and Xi’s were not immediately evident to the viewer, Qian Du became explicit about it by describing his style of painting as “barren and inferior” to Xi’s. He also positioned himself as a documenter of forms, one who “fills in each” form rather than someone who “imagines and images” them like Xi Gang. To further drive home the difference, Qian referred to his dry, stippled, precise brushwork as on the border between identification as “workmanlike or awkward.”

151鉄生象想之所未到者皆一一補為之持筆墨荒劣如小作之見大巫自覺形穢,後之覽者勿 X 工拙計也. The full inscription on the painting and the full inscription as listed in SHHZ are slightly different. The painting inscription follows here, with areas of difference underlined and their alternate inscriptions in parentheses: 庚申嵗[-]吾友鐵生為紫珊太守子山作碧梧山館圖。是綠淨園最幽朦處也[勝處蒼渾超逸直逼元人] 余於戊辰秋自滇歸游瓦梁笪園中吾聞月詩酒之暇主人出是圖展獻意目見卷後尚有餘紙更為作此 [余游瓦梁子山出以見示,并乞余作綠淨園圖於是卷之後] 盖園之中巖石秀峭水竹深邃與夫池臺亭樹高下拗折[亭樹幽浙几榻位置] 鐵生象想之所未到者皆一一補為之持筆墨荒劣如小作之見大巫自覺形穢,後之覽者勿 X 工拙計也 嘉慶已己二月六日鈍叔美識 [余老矣目毆腕僵固不能追步鐵生或得附。鐵生以傳也遂為作此蓉裳農部制小記弁首山尊學士賦詩六章余更和之]
The primary function of this description was to strike a deferential position in relation to Xi Gang, who was one of Hangzhou’s preeminent painters, a follower of Ding Jing in seal carving, and someone who later scholars would canonize with Qian Du and Jin Nong as the “three legs of the tripod” of Hangzhou.\textsuperscript{152} But the terms by which he established this deference were not necessarily negatively inflected. They also subtly reflected the values of an epigraphic aesthetic. The difference between a painting like Xi Gang’s, which “imagines and images” 象想, and Qian Du’s, which is “barren” 荒劣, “added in” (or appended) —— 補, and leaning toward “awkward” 拙 from “workmanlike” 工, was parallel to the material difference between the study of calligraphy from handwritten documents on paper or silk, called 体學, and the study of calligraphy from stone monuments, usually in the form of rubbings or prints, called 碑學.

——Stone Surfaces in Calligraphy——

To study a hand written document was to study the direct impression in paper and ink of the past movement of a body directed by a mind. The language of viewing and critiquing calligraphy was a bodily language, filled with the discussion of the body 體, bone 骨, pulse 氣, and flesh 肉 of a given character. This anthropomorphizing of the character was part and parcel of the characterology of calligraphy as a whole. Marks of the brush reflected impulses and refinements of the mind, and reading calligraphy was the art of following the order of events of a hand and body in time.

\textsuperscript{152}As written by Shen Jingxiu 沈景修(1835～1899), who prefaced a printing of Qian Du’s works in 1886, SHHZ, 2-3.
In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the authenticity of the earliest handwritten examples of calligraphy came under direct scrutiny. Their silk and paper support deteriorated over time, and copies and forgeries were abundant. Scholars were skeptical that early examples were actually genuine transmissions of their purported authors. But stone sources had fewer of these complications. Turning to the study of anonymous ancient stone monuments was a means to find sources of calligraphy that were purportedly unadulterated. One of the most impassioned debates was put forward by the scholar Ruan Yuan, who wrote in “A Theory of Southern and Northern Calligraphy” 《南北書派論》:

In the vicissitudes of calligraphy, the schools are all mixed without traceable origins, and so how to return to the ancients? Clerical script was transformed into standard and running script between the late Han and Wei and Jin dynasties, and the separation between standard script and running and cursive was the basis for the two schools of Northern and Southern calligraphy.

During the early Tang, although the Wang School was manifest, [actual examples in] silk and mulberry paper were scarce, and so the practice of the Northern style was preferred. In the Tang, there were still traces of characters for the Southern School but they depended on silk and mulberry paper, while the characters of the Northern style depended on stele and carved boards, which were available for public viewing while silk and mulberry paper were seldom available for study.153

Ruan Yuan, like many of his contemporaries, advocated the study of calligraphy from stele and not from the few questionably authentic and rarely seen scraps of ancient calligraphy.

153書法遷變流派混淆非溯其源曷返于古蓋由隸字變為正書行書其轉移皆在漢微魏晉之間而正書行草之分南北兩派者然此時[唐初]王派雖顯緣楮無多世間所習尤為北派唐時南派字迹但寄缣楮北派字迹多寄碑版碑版人人共見缣楮罕能逼習. Ruan Yuan 阮元, Nan bei shu pai lun 《南北書派論》, in Li dai shu fa lun wen xuan 《歷代书法论文選》, 629-637 (Shanghai: Shanghai shu hua chu ban she, 1979).
on paper or silk. The study of calligraphy from these stone monuments was enabled by the production of rubbings, supposedly direct transferences of the original stone’s topography onto paper through the tapping of an inked pad on to a paper placed across the surface of the stone.

In contrast to the study of calligraphy on silk and paper, the study of stele calligraphy in the form of rubbings emphasized different formal elements. Rather than speaking of the calligraphy in terms of the movement of the body behind the brush, the terms of aesthetic interaction revolved around the materiality of the stone and its signs of age and degradation. Like his contemporaries, Qian Du celebrated the fractured materiality of epigraphy studies, as in the last two lines a poem inspired by viewing a painting by Huang Gongwang:

In the dead of a moonless night the sound of my clogs echoes off the mountain, and at the base of a fractured stele I make a rubbing of an old text.\(^{154}\)

In Qian Du’s poem, the trace of a scholarly presence was found both in the sounds of clogs echoing in the darkness and in the fragmented texts of the stele, itself not entirely visible due to the ravages of time. The audible traces of the echoing sounds of the clogs also prefigured the traces of sound that would accompany the act of a rubbing being taken from the stone. This reproductive process of taking a rubbing from a stone formed the base of epigraphy studies, and the traces of the stone surfaces found in those rubbings were valued aspects that then became reproduced in calligraphy and painting under the epigraphic aesthetic.

As one contemporaneous example, the rediscovery of the “Fan Memorial Stele” 范氏碑 [fig. 21a] in the late eighteenth century led to its immediate reproduction in rubbings [fig. 21b] and in woodblock prints of rubbings [fig. 21c]. The stone was originally carved in 235, and was meant to mark and monumentalize the “Fan Family Memorial Tomb,” located in present-day

\(^{154}\)夜闌月黑山屐響碑底自剔殘善文. SHHZ, 17-18.
southern Shandong Province. At some point after the thirteenth century the stele was broken and buried. The top half was rediscovered in 1776 and the bottom half in 1787, by Li Dongqi 李東琪, who then invited Huang Yi 黃易 (1744-1803) to add an additional inscription to the original object. Huang Yi was a Hangzhou native, one of Ding Jing’s most successful disciples, and one of the most important epigraphy scholars of his day.

For several reasons, the inscription on the Fan Memorial Stele was difficult to read in its original state. Even just after it was originally carved, its legibility was only enabled by good light source that set off the characters in contrast to the plane of the stone’s surface. In addition, weathering, age, and inherent flaws in the stone material led to a deterioration of the stone over the centuries, to the point that the boundaries between carved character and stone surface blurred.

155 Part of inscription reads: 范巨卿碑额既出后正碑久寻不得有古搨本方思补刻今李铁桥寻得石复见碑阴字数虽缺少而体势森严神味完足实为快事乾隆己酉三月.
156 Huang Yi was introduced to Ding Jing through his father Huang Shugu 黃樹穀 (1701-1755), a close friend of Ding Jing.
By the late eighteenth-century rediscovery of the Fan Memorial Stele, large sections were missing and many of the surviving characters were complete illegible.

In a rubbing the characters became more visible, reproducing the surface in black and the characters in white, creating a sharp material contrast of ink and paper where once the contrast was only in depth of stone. The relative visibility of the characters in this format was determined by the quality of technique used by the artisans. The distribution of ink as well as the pressure of tapping determined the quality of impression and the sense of the original stone surface. Minor sites of damage were recorded in the subtle grading of ink tones across the surface of the stone, with its natural texture, its accumulated pock-marks, and chipped edges. To a great degree the sense of the character’s form was also determined by the quality of the artisan’s rubbing technique. A word’s body, direction, fleshiness or slimness, beginnings and endings, all could be drastically changed by the sensitivity of the rubbing.

The differences between these rubbings became an entire subset of study for epigraphic scholars, and earlier rubbings of stele were prized by scholars, often to a greater degree than the monument itself, particularly when those rubbings presented moments of legibility that the current monument could not.\textsuperscript{157} In a case like the “Fan Memorial Stele,” where the actual monument was rediscovered in the late eighteenth century but rubbings from an earlier pre-burial period also existed, the earlier rubbings showed approximately one hundred and fifty more characters than the stele did. In preserving an earlier and irretrievable state of the object, the early rubbing became more valuable to later scholars than the monument itself.

—Boundaries of the “Antique and Awkward” —

The Fan Memorial Stele was further disseminated in Huang Yi’s Engraved Texts of the Lesser Penglai Pavilion 《小蓬萊閣金石文字》\(^{158}\) of 1800 [fig. 21c], a text that reproduced in woodblock form the outline drawings of eleven early rubbings of recently excavated monuments along with transcriptions and commentary.\(^{159}\) What distinguished Huang Yi’s images was their technique of drawing the boundary lines of a character rather than reproducing a simulacrum of the rubbing technique, as was more common in the reproduction of epigraphic sources.

In the Lesser Penglai Pavilion reproductions of the Fan Memorial Stele these boundary lines only sometimes gave legibility to the forms of the characters. The woodblock-printed images of the rubbings were interpretations rather than artifacts that made direct contact with the surface of the ancient object, as a rubbing would have. It was in this format that Qian Du likely saw one of the other famous epigraphic sources of his lifetime, the Wuliang Shrine images, and the influence of their style as well as their concern with legibility is apparent in his work.

The method of reproduction that defined Huang Yi’s Lesser Penglai Pavilion images was called “Shuang gou fa” 雙鉤法, literally “double hooked method,” though most often it is translated as “double outline.” “Shuang gou” was an old form of copying a text in outline method. In 1208, Jiang Kui 姜夔 (1155-1221) wrote about the proper imperatives of executing “shuang gou” method by hand:

In writing each word extension of the style of the form is most important, and in carving calligraphy in metal and stone it is easy to neglect this. In making a tracing

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\(^{158}\) 1800 is the date on Qian Daxin’s preface, Princeton’s Gest Library edition is dated 1834. Both seem to be printed from the same blocks (Tseng illustrates an 1800 edition in “Retrieving the Past, Inventing the Memorable”; The University of Chicago Library 1800 version is the same as Gest version except for the Chen Yun introduction that exists in the Gest edition).

\(^{159}\) In the commentary on the Fan Memorial Stele, we learn that the existence of the old rubbing version was brought to the attention of Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 by Qian Du’s mentor in Yunnan, Gui Fu.
copy one must capture the ink halo [of the original] without going outside the [form of the] word. When filling within the character or using vermilion to back the word one must maintain the true fat and lean of the original body of the word. However, thinner is better, [because] when it comes to the stage when the workers carve it, when they smooth out and arrange the tracing copy [for mounting], the thin places will become a little thicker.\footnote{字書全以風神超邁為主刻之金石其可苟哉雙鉤之法須得墨暈不出字外或廓填其內或朱其背正得肥瘦之本體雖然有貴于瘦使工人刻之又從而刮治之則瘦者亦雙為肥矣。}

Jiang Kui’s instructions emphasized that in the transition from original to tracing copy it was the boundary of the form that was the most important aspect to attend. Negotiating the particulars of each material transfer involved awareness of the properties of ink as it as absorbed into the paper, the expansive nature of paper when it is drawn taut, and the difference between these materials and the obdurate stone.

Huang Yi’s \textit{Lesser Penglai Pavilion} text appears to be among the first instances of a “double hooked method” illustrated in woodblock form. When his friends Weng Fanggang and Qian Daxin prefaced the work, they each mentioned this explicitly.\footnote{錢塘黃秋盫小蓬萊閣所藏金石就其早傳者雙鉤鋟木; Qian Daxin wrote: 其家藏宋搨石經殘字及成陽靈臺魏元丕朱龜譙敏王稚子范式諸刻雙鉤而鐫諸木.} The lines of Huang Yi’s prints were not the lines laid by a brush making a character. Instead, they were forensic descriptions of the deteriorated stele surface, descriptions of the area where the outer edge of a word met with the expanse of stone into which it was carved. This wending, broken, scattered quality of line sometimes brought full clarity to a word and at other times gave an exact description of the illegibility of a word, leaving a viewer entirely bewildered by the precisely demarcated but linguistically unintelligible boundary of a form. This emphasis on boundaries
was a drastic shift away from the emphasis on the absorbent and anthropomorphic vocabulary of handwritten documents in ink on paper or silk.

The “shuang gou” outline method of Huang Yi’s woodblock reproductions in the “Lesser Penglai Pavilion” was an extreme manifestation of the priorities already present in any rubbing. Both outline method and rubbings showed an intentional shift to focus on the outermost boundaries of form rather than the dynamics of brushwork per se. But due to the stone’s material degradation, the boundaries of form in outline method blended with the stone’s material topography, collapsing the difference between ground (or object) and text. The form of words incorporated the qualities of a stone surface, and calligraphers that used these rubbings and prints emulated that epigraphic aesthetic.

The material qualities of aged and archaic characters carved in stone were removed from the direct touch of the brush to paper and therefore from the traces of the author’s mind as replicated in ink. The boundaries were what mattered, not the flow of lines emphasized in the study of handwritten calligraphy. Combined with the fact that many of these stone sources were anonymously inscribed and archaic in origin, rubbings allowed scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth century an escape from the pressures of citing specific past masters.

The aesthetic that formed around these manifestations of stele study was frequently described in terms of its “antique and awkward” 古拙 nature. These were the words used to authenticate ancient monuments by scholars like Huang Yi, who wrote on album leaf of 1797, “Finding a Stele near Liangcheng Mountain,” “Judging from the archaic and awkward clerical script calligraphy there is no doubt that the inscription must be from Han times.”

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This was an ideal that was at the core of Qian Du’s painting as well, and for him this appreciation of the “antique and awkward” in painting was directly linked to the appreciation of epigraphic calligraphy sources. Describing a large painting of plum blossoms by Huang Gongwang, Qian Du wrote:

The trees reveal their roots, wound up and unyielding, and written out as if in seal script method; the branches and trunks are all finely textured; the blossoms are as large as a fist, with an ancient hoary essence.\(^{163}\)

Here Qian Du made a direct analogy between an image of the roots of a plum blossom tree and the ancient sources of early calligraphy styles found on the stone and metal surfaces prized by scholars of epigraphy. Similarly, when painting after the style of the Ming dynasty painter Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1598-1652), Qian Du wrote:

Laochi [Chen Hongshou] used seal script method to paint, and it was ancient and awkward like the brushwork from the hand of the Wei and Jin masters, like coming across an ancient immortal seeking to turn his bones into cinnabar.\(^{164}\)

Embodiment here was importantly co-figured in the forms of anonymous masters of the Wei and Jin dynasties and an immortal, who through acts of alchemy and secret knowledge attempted to turn his own bones into the precious mineral cinnabar, a material which was associated with burial practice and the afterlife. Bodily metaphor could still be found in Wei and Jin calligraphy even though specific authors were unidentifiable.

In his most explicit mention of an epigraphic source, found in his notes on figure painting in Songhu’s Reflections on Painting, Qian Du prized the combined qualities of the “awkward and antique” found in a set of stone-carved figures from the Han dynasty:

\(^{163}\)樹露根輪囷倔強以篆籀法寫之枝幹皆細皴花大如拳古氣蒼奔. SHHY, 114.

\(^{164}\)老遲以篆籀法作畫古拙似魏晋人手筆如過古仙人欲乞換骨丹也. SSHZ, 60.
In making large figures, one must grasp the antique and awkward concepts of the stone carvings of the Wuliang Shrine.\textsuperscript{165}

The Wuliang Shrine was a family memorial constructed in the mid-second century in the area that is now southern Shandong Province. The carved stones of the Wuliang Shrine were known to scholars since the eleventh century through rubbings and textual accounts, but at some point after the Song Dynasty the location and identification of the stones were lost.\textsuperscript{166} It was only after 1786, when the engraved stone fragments of the shrine were rediscovered, that they rose to dominate the curiosity of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century scholars. The excavation of these stones was one of the most important discoveries for epigraphy scholarship in the late 1780s and early 1790s, and their discovery and promotion was done chiefly by Huang Yi.

The fame of the Wuliang Shrines in this period was due to a combination of the thirst for new epigraphic sources and to Huang Yi’s persistence in promoting the Shrines in various forms of scholarly reproduction, including in his \textit{Engraved Texts of the Lesser Penglai Pavilion}. It was through one of these forms of reproduction that Qian Du would have seen the Wuliang Shrines, as he never mentions a journey to visit the stones in situ. While reproductions of the image program from the Wuliang Shrines proliferated in academic circles from Beijing to Yunnan, each form of reproduction replicated different aspects of the original surfaces. Depending on which sources Qian Du used, his understanding of the “antique and awkward” qualities that he identified with the Shrines would have had different visual qualities.

\textsuperscript{165} 作大人物须于武梁祠石刻领取古拙之意. SHHY, 76.

\textsuperscript{166} Several of the stones are first mentioned disparately in the eleventh century by Ouyang Xiu 欧陽修 in \textit{Ji gu lu 《記古錄》} [Record of Collected Antiquities], some the stones were first grouped in the twelfth century by Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 in \textit{Jin shi lu 《金石錄》} [Records of Metal and Stone], and the full shrine grouping was done later that century by Hong Gua 洪适 in his \textit{Li shi 《隷釋》} and \textit{Li xu 《隷續》} [Explications on Clerical Script and Supplement on Clerical Script], see Cary Y. Liu, “Perspectives on the ‘Wu Family Shrines,’” in \textit{Recarving China’s Past: Art, Archaeology, and Architecture of the ‘Wu Family Shrines’}, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 23-25.
From the late 1770s on tracing copies of a purportedly “Tang” dynasty album of Wuliang Shrine rubbings were circulating among scholars like Weng Fanggang and Huang Yi. The rubbings came from an album owned by Wang Xuejiang, a wealthy Yangzhou collector. The album was purportedly rubbed from the real stones during the Tang dynasty, but the earliest collector seals on the album are from the early Ming dynasty, and the album mostly likely dates to then. Huang was given a tracing copy of the “Tang” album from his friend Lu Guanfu in 1783, three years before he discovered the stones in Shandong that he declared to be the remnants of the original Wuliang Shrine. Weng Fanggang borrowed this copy of the “Tang” album from Huang and had it carved in either stone or wood by Song Baozhun. By 1791, five years after his discovery, Huang Yi owned the original “Tang” album, and it was from this album that he had woodblocks cut for his *Engraved Texts of the Lesser Penglai Pavilion* in “shuang gou” style.
Comparing some of Qian Du’s figures [fig. 22] with those of the Wuliang Shrine as reproduced in *Engraved Texts of the Lesser Penglai Pavilion* [fig. 23], there are immediate visible correspondences. The forms of the figures have the same rounded shoulders and rounded chins. Heads turn at the same three-quarters angle and share facial features such as the willow leaf mouth and rounded nose. Their robes and sleeves hang with the same weight, with a sort of doughiness that is intentionally awkward and which gives the material a sense of heft.

Beyond the basic shapes of Qian Du’s figures, his epigraphic interest is even more pronounced in his method of outlining each body, just as with Luo Ping’s portraits of Jin Nong and Ding Jing. Similarly to Luo Ping’s paintings, Qian Du’s delineated each figure in dark, fractured lines. But in contrast, the lines that define Qian Du’s figures are thin and raspy, like desiccated straw, and seem to draw their inspiration directly from the broken outlines that defined the reproductions of the rubbings of stone surfaces in Huang Yi’s publication.

Qian Du had direct involvement with the outline method as well. Writing about a certain painting of plum blossoms by Liu Bowen in the collection of the Yu family in Tieling, Qian Du wrote, “they wanted it cut into stone and have asked me to make a tracing copy of it, but I am afraid I only was able to achieve its form and appearance.”

With his typical modesty, Qian Du felt that his own outline work could only capture the form and appearance, implying that something more fundamental, the spirit of the work, was absent in his version that was transferred to stone. When Qian Du wrote about his painting as “barren” 荒劣, “added in” (or appended) ——補, and leaning toward “awkward” 拙 from “workmanlike” 工, he echoed aspects of this epigraphic aesthetic and its contingent qualities of only transmitting form and appearance. In his use of the word “barren,” Qian Du was evacuating

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168 铁岭于氏藏刘伯温写梅一帧似工细而不为绳尺所拘其妙处非专门名家而一花一蕊并秀色可餐殊可珍赏于氏欲勾勒上石乞余临抚恐仅得形似耳. SHHY, 102.
his brushwork of the responsibility to a kind of embodiment that defined viewing calligraphy from handwritten documents on paper or silk. Likewise, the “filled in” or “workmanlike” qualities alluded to the intervention of an artisan, a further distancing of his work from the embodied aesthetic. Because of the intervention of the artisan and the fundamentally un-absorbent quality of the stone materials, the body of the original calligrapher or painter was only distantly present in the carved stone. Instead, the aesthetics of viewing calligraphy inscribed in stone revolved around the state of the body of the stone, which had often deteriorated over time, leading to the prized quality of “awkwardness” in calligraphy and in painting.

For Qian Du, “awkwardness” was also related to concepts of skill and the lack thereof. In at least five paintings done between 1809 and 1836, he finished his inscription with a phrase that read, “the viewer cannot judge this work in terms of skill or awkwardness,” a sentiment phrased later in his life as, “I no longer am able to judge this in terms of skill or awkwardness.”\textsuperscript{169} The prevalence of this phrase in Qian Du’s inscriptions indicates the importance in his work of taking an ambivalent position between the skilled and the awkward in his painting, an ambivalence mirrored in the wandering outlines and fractured forms of rubbings and their outline reproductions.

That ambivalence, when seen in tandem with the escape into the senses that qualified much of Qian Du’s work, indicates a skepticism toward established forms of literati identity. Scholar-painters like Qian Du and Huang Yi used the concept of “awkward and antique” brushwork, drawn from printed and rubbed sources, to liberate themselves from the genealogies of past painters and schools.

\textsuperscript{169} Phrased as “観者勿以工拙計之” on the paintings 《碧梧山館圖》(1809) and 《秋林月話》(1814), and “不復能計工拙矣” on 《入闗圖》(1823) and 《太華聞鐘圖》(1833), and “不可以工拙計也” on 《冷泉秋話》(1836).
This epigraphic quality of line, definitive of the painting of Qian Du’s generation, also encouraged the re-inscription of paintings into other media, such as the cutting of Qian Du’s paintings and calligraphy into stone, wood, and clay. Two Yixing-ware teapots have already been described in Chapter Two in relation to Qian Du’s involvement with tea aficionados. But what do they have to tell us about Qian Du’s brushwork and the epigraphic aesthetic? There are only two known examples of teapots associated with Qian Du. But these can be grouped among a series of objects that re-introduced the epigraphically-derived brushwork of Qian Du back into carved forms. These objects included: a placard inscribed in Qian Du’s calligraphy with the “Admonition on Speech” by the Song dynasty philosopher Cheng Yi [fig. 26]; two carved wooden wrist rests bearing images of plum blossoms and Qian Du’s signature [fig. 16 & fig. 27]; an inkstone carved with a small scene titled “Image of Qian Du Writing,” by Fei Danxu 費丹旭 (1801-1850) [fig. 24]; and a woodblock print with a poem signed by Qian Du that accompanied the image of a maiden in a printed version the *Dream of the Red Chamber* illustrated by Gai Qi [fig. 25].

No record of Qian Du’s actual participation in the carving process of these objects exists. Instead, and due to the diversity of materials in which we find Qian Du’s calligraphy or images, it appears that the epigraphic qualities of Qian Du’s style of painting predisposed it to being carved in other media. This created a tight circle of material relationships, in which the calligraphy and images carved in ancient and deteriorating stone surfaces inspired a style of painting in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that then encouraged the engraving of those newer images onto objects of stone, wood and clay.
Qian Du’s creative role in each medium can only be hypothesized. Did he know how to use a chisel and wood or how to manipulate a stylus on wet, pre-fired clay? His friend Chen Hongshou was deeply involved in these processes. Not only was he designing Yixing teapots, but he was also a renowned seal carver. Qian Du may or may not have had these same abilities but what is remarkable about his painting in the context of these activities is their part in a larger trend of a decreasing emphasis on the actual traces of the artist’s hand in the final art object. This was supported and even instigated by the shift in calligraphic practice from a reliance on tie 帖 models brushed on paper to bei 碑 stele models carved in stone.

The writings and images of nineteenth-century literati like Qian Du and Chen Hongshou intended for engraving do not appear to have been transferred into more durable surfaces with the intention of preserving them, as was done with older canonical models of calligraphy and painting. Instead, such images were intended from the start to be reproduced as images of paintings and calligraphy, bypassing the stage of brushwork to become a simulacrum of brushwork. In such images it was only the ideas of brushwork, not brushwork itself, that were transferred into a new material. The natural material properties of brush and ink on paper or silk had to be simulated in a group of materials that did not have the same material properties. The absorbent qualities of fibrous paper could be intimated only through manipulating the depths of carving in an otherwise hydro-resistant stone surface. Yet the soft pliability of a brushtip made of hair was somehow shown in the incisions of a sharp metal chisel, and vice versa.

These transferences and material simulations were easier to achieve with some paintings than with others. Because Qian Du’s style of painting depended on an epigraphic aesthetic and

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170 Chen carved seals for many of the friends he shared in common with Qian Du, including one for Yuan Tong carved at the Suiyuan, see Chen Hongshou yin pu 《陳洪綬印譜》 (Hong Kong: Bo ya zhai, 1978), 41-43. The seals are carved with dedicatory inscriptions along the sides and in many of those inscription Chen refers to his preferred method of seal carving as a “seal method of Han dynasty bronzes” 漢銅印法, further emphasizing the epigraphic and antiquarian origins of style among this group of literati.
drew some of its primary visual qualities from a simulation of chiseled stone surfaces, it was by nature easier to transfer images of his paintings back into obdurate surfaces with chisels.

In the case of the inkstone with a painting of Qian Du by Fei Danxu [fig. 24] and the calligraphy done for Gai Qi’s book [fig. 25], images of Qian Du and his calligraphy were made in collaboration with other scholars, further emphasizing manner in which various literati material cultures were put to the purposes of networking. Scholarly projects were supported by a network of friends, and bore the traces of that collaborative nature, whether through their inscriptions, prefaces, or images.

[Figure 24] Inkstone carved with image of a painting by Fei Danxu titled “Image of Qian Du Writing,” undated, sold at China Guardian Auctions, June, 2011
In a carved wooden board [fig. 26], the purposes of which are unclear, Qian Du places the two title words “Pure and Clear” before the text of “Admonition on Speech” by the Song dynasty philosopher Cheng Yi. Cheng’s admonitions to himself were reminders on how to subdue the self in response to the external world by use of ritual. The “Admonition on Speech” reads:

The actions of a man’s heart are declared through speech. One remains focused and calm by avoiding the absurd and impetuous when expressing one’s ideas. Speech is at the core of things; it is the beginning of both conflict and kindness. Fortune or ill fate, honor or disgrace, each stems from the summoning of speech. One becomes a braggart if too easy with speech; one becomes inconsequential if too superfluous with speech. Wanton speech begets disobedience in the world; erroneous speech brings about violations. Do not make this your path. Instead, venerate speech!171

This placard was obviously a display object, showing both large character words that would distinguish it from across a room, and the small characters of Cheng Yi’s text, written in the precise hand associated with Qian Du. Two eye-bolts are currently secured into the top of the

board indicating it was meant to be hung. The message of choosing one’s words carefully reinforced the values of purification through calmness and simplicity found in Qian Du’s appreciation of tea.

Qian Du’s calligraphy, which was put on display in this object, was almost never appreciated like this in stand-alone works of calligraphy. The two characters at the front of this placard, if they were indeed done by him, would be the only two large-sized characters by him to have survived. In general, his calligraphy was small, precise, and done in standard script. Occasionally his calligraphy was praised, as with Cheng Tinglu’s assessment:

In his later years it was as if he was compelled to read books, and he added his own commentaries in fine calligraphy to many pages, passing his eyes over the text and understanding it clearly. He was even able to write characters as small as a fly’s head. His calligraphy derived from Tingyun (Ni Zan), tracing its source to the Song and Yuan. In recent years his use of the brush has been particularly fine, [as fine as] rattan tips and tangerine tree thorns, [and there is] nothing [he] cannot do in double hook outline. 172

According to Cheng, Qian Du’s reputation as a calligrapher was defined by the refinement and almost microscopic detail of his brushmarks, which were as thin as “rattan tips” and “tangerine thorns” even in his old age. To the point of this chapter, Cheng also notes that the refinement of Qian Du’s brushwork in his old age was such that he was even able to accomplish the relatively difficult work of outline copying in “double-hook” method, the same method used by Huang Yi to replicate the stele carvings of the Wuliang Shrines.

172 萬年燈下猶必觀書數頁以自課夾注細書寓目了了並能作蠅頭小字書由停雲上溯宋近歲用筆尤細藤梢橘刺無不雙鉤. Cheng Tinglu in SHHZ, 6-8.
Lastly, the most intimate of the objects carved with Qian Du’s image were two wrist rests, each cut with an image of plum blossoms [fig. 16 & fig. 27]. The lines were direct and calligraphic, in the manner associated with the genre of plum blossoms, as will be shown in the following chapter. The closeness of these objects to the body reinforced the tactile and calligraphic emphasis that ran through Qian Du’s painting and early nineteenth century painting in general.

The owner of either object would have made direct contact with the inscribed surfaces of the object in using it. As he wrote out words of his own, in his own hand, the soft under-skin of the wrist passing over and into the incised grooves of Qian Du’s plum blossom branches and blossoms. The first line of the poem inscribed on the 1836 wrist rest [Fig. 27] further reinforces this connection to the body of the scholar, emphasizing the sturdiness of the plum blossom and therefore of the scholar that it analogized: “The clattering of an immortal’s bones as he faces into the wind alone.”

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173 瑚珊仙骨獨臨風.
Within Qian Du’s oeuvre, the dry and stippled lines that characterized his texturing, his outline technique, and his figures were also an extension of his interest in stone sources of the archaic past. An emulation of “antique and awkward” sources of calligraphy from Han and Wei dynasty sources and the use of similar “antique and awkward” brushwork qualities in painting were rhetorical moves that allowed their practitioners to escape the confining network of literati references to specific historical styles that had accumulated in literati painting circles after the promotion of Dong Qichang’s theories of painting in the early Qing dynasty. The anonymity of the deep past allowed a transcendence of the hierarchical stylistic orthodoxies of the present. This was the same tone that Qian Du struck in the last line of his opening preface to Songhu’s Reflections on Painting, in which he curtly dismissed the idea that Dong Qichang’s Northern and Southern Schools were even a topic for discussion: “As for the origins of the Northern and Southern Schools, and the methods of texturing and washing landscapes, this has already been detailed in the words of my predecessors.” 174

This avoidance of the factionalist politics inherent in the theory of the Northern and Southern Schools, combined with the fascination for anonymous epigraphic sources among Qian Du and his peers indicated a shift in the dynamics of literati painting. In light of the stirring of social change among the literati classes that marked the early nineteenth century, and from the perspective of knowing what would come in the twentieth century for the proponents of pre-modern literati culture, Qian Du’s painting can be seen to foreshadow a lack of confidence in the tried and true canonical forms of literati visuality. That lack of confidence would come to consume and drastically change literati painting by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

174至南北兩宗之源山水皴染之法則前人已詳言之矣. SHHY, 74.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPARSE SCENT OF PLUMS

By Qian Du’s era, the description of plum blossoms was a well-established mode of aesthetic exchange between literati. As with the literati enjoyment of tea or epigraphy, it was primarily through the records left by painting and poetry that the actual moments of the sensuous appreciation of plum blossoms were documented. And as with tea and epigraphy, paintings of plums established their importance under the greater literati ideals, such as “sparseness” 疏, “seclusion” 幽, and “concealment” 隱.

A variety of sounds, touches, and fragrances were engaged in the following poem by Qian Du, inscribed on a painting of a branch of plum blossoms [fig. 28]. As revealed by Qian Du in the dedication, it was a sensory experience, that of the faint scent of fragrances signaling the cusp of spring, that inspired the poem and the painting:

A grass hut covered in fine snow and a wind knocks at the door, the snow is about to clear but has not as blossoms come one after another,

Men follow the mountain birds up to the precipice; monks are familiar with the snoring of wild monkeys as they sleep in the clouds,

The cold fragrance of ice on Yan Mountain casts its cold shade, the empty blue vault of heaven is covered in dense clouds,

In the dead of a moonless night the sound of my clogs echoes off the mountain, and at the base of a fractured stele I make a rubbing of an old text.

In the first month, after the snows, a friend came up to the cold mountains, and fragrances still clung to his wintry clothes and sleeves. I composed a poem, and in the third month, among the rains, I suddenly recall these former travels and write out a
branch of mountain plums that very much have the appearance of gracefully curling among the mists and lush foliage.\textsuperscript{175}

[Figure 28] Qian Du, “Ink Plums,” undated, Liaoning Provincial Museum

In the cold of winter, high up in the hills, Qian Du was visited by a friend who had come up from the milder valley below, where the plum blossoms were already in bloom. Without seeing the blossoms for himself, Qian Du sensed this sign of the coming spring by the wafting fragrance still clinging to the sleeves of his friend. The friend, the fragrance, and the spring they imply, inspired a poem and also an image, each of which paid homage to the unseen.

Qian Du punctuated his poem with a variety of aural and olfactory sensations that revealed otherwise concealed images. A wind knocking at the door presaged the arrival of a friend. The snoring of monkeys betrayed their existence behind a veil of clouds. The sound of

\textsuperscript{175}草庵雪晴風打門欲霽不霽花紛紛人隨山鳥上絕壁僧狎野猿眠呤雲冰崦寒香暗騷屑天壺空翠相氤氳夜闌月黑山屐響碑底自剔殘善文正月雪後友人招遊山寒香撲人衣袂冬賦一詩三月雨中憶昔游寫山梅一枝絕似煙翠間夭矯拳屈之態. The inscription comes from a painting currently in the collection Liaoning Provincial Museum, and was earlier reproduced in \textit{Bai mei ji}《百梅集》(1926). The original poem was also inscribed in SHHZ, 17-18, with some slight differences in word choice.
Plum blossoms could mean many things among the literati of imperial China. They could evoke ideas as disparate as the upright and remote character of a scholarly gentleman or the tempting scents of a young woman or man. Images of plum blossoms emerged within the flower and bird painting of Tang dynasty painting, but it was not until the late Northern Song period (11th-12th centuries), and through the influence of Chan monk painters that the motif became popular in literati circles. By the Southern Song and Yuan periods (13th-14th centuries) it had become a fully popularized, with the ink plum in particular becoming its own genre among the literati. Its connotations included isolation, singularity, transient beauty, and endurance.176

Returning for a moment to the poem and painting by Qian Du, and the themes of concealment, revelation, and transience that the scent of plums inspired, what then is the relationship between sight and smell in such paintings? When a fragrance is smelled, an image might easily be recalled, but when an image is associated with fragrant things, can memories of smell be reactivated?

While the painting could not itself smell of blossoms, it plainly brought the ideas of smell to mind. This was true at the inception of the genre of plum blossom painting, as shown in a Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105) inscription on a painting of plum blossoms by Zhongren 仲任 (d.1125): “it is like strolling among the ledges of (Lin Bu’s) Gushan. It lacks only the

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fragrance.”¹⁷⁷ This correlation between sight and smell continued through to Qian Du’s era. The collector Shen Kuilin would late write of Qian Du’s paintings: “the trunks are bent and the branches coiled; they are strong like iron and stone, flourishing and fine, thriving, and filling the paper with fragrance.”¹⁷⁸

To see could be to smell when it came to the painting of plum blossoms, and among the elite pastimes of the literati during the tumultuous early nineteenth century, paintings of plum blossoms remained a popular way for scholars to exchange ideas of their exceptionalism and of their concealed talents shared only with one another. Qian Du was considered a master of the genre, as Chen Wenshu’s encomium for Qian Du reveals in the direct likening of Qian Du to a plum blossom:

My dear Master of the Songhu Studio is a talent who hides himself away in Xiling, [like] a single crane calling through the mist and clouds or ten thousand branches of plum trees within the sea of blossoms. His middle years were spent in high emotion at the borderlands and his late years spent in lament among the rivers and lakes. Perched in valley temples hidden away, return to us soon before your head goes white.¹⁷⁹

The image and poetic couplet around which Chen Wenshu built this appeal for the return of his oldest comrade were structured around the ideas of hearing something that could not be seen and of seeing something that was obscured. Longing for Qian Du’s return from his travels afar, Chen described the sound of cranes calling through the intervening veil of mists and clouds, likening his own call to that of the noble animal, heard clearly, even if not seen. This metaphor was paired with one of plum blossoms so full in bloom that they obscured the trunks of the trees.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 125.
¹⁷⁸ Chen Kuilin 陳夔麟, Bao yu ge shu hua lu 《寶迂閣書畫錄》(1915), vol.4, 439.
¹⁷⁹ 我愛松壺子西泠此逸才煙霄一聲鶴花海萬株梅 關塞中年感江湖晚歲哀壑庵栖隱处頭白早歸來. Chen Wenshu in SHHZ, 1.
that bear them. Again, Chen called on a scenario in which something fundamental, something of the essence of what it meant to be a literatus, was barely discernable through a cloud of what was more obviously visible.

Plum blossom paintings by Qian Du triggered the sensuous imagination by giving form to the unseen fragrances, calling to mind their memories just as those original fragrances could give sensation to objects not yet seen but highly anticipated, objects like the blossoms that signaled spring or the maidens and gentlemen metaphorically connected to those blossoms. Qian Du’s paintings concretized ephemeral sensations, working materially to reinforce that ephemerality with scents that were “sparse” 疏 and branches “gracefully curling among the mists and lush foliage” 似煙翠間夭矯拳屈之態.

Qian Du’s poem at the head of this chapter was repeated in Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting, with the additional prefacing remarks:

From the grass hut lodged deep among the plum blossoms, in the Sage Huizhong’s meditation room, in appearances I would call the mountains and waters of this rural place secluded and steep, much like the appearances of Huang Heweng’s paintings, which drove me to emulate his concepts in this handscroll.180

These qualities of seclusion were reinforced by reference to the names, if not the actual compositions, of past painters. In this case Qian Du claimed to emulate the Yuan dynasty painter Huang Gongwang and the ideas of seclusion within his paintings. Qian Du further layered this painting with an allusion to a visit to the Ch’an monk Huizong’s home while it was surrounded by plum blossoms, reinforcing historical genealogies of plum blossoms, reclusion, and Ch’an Buddhism.

180自草庵深梅宿慧中上人禪室容若謂是鄉山水幽峭類似黃鶴翁畫本促余仿其意遂成此卷. SHHZ, 17-18.
—The Scholar and the Plum Blossom—

The association of plums as an object of exchange and communication among learned scholars was older than the genre of ink paintings itself. For instance, a story associated with the fifth century scholar Lu Kai tells of his sending a branch of plum blossoms along with a letter to his friend Fan Hua, who was serving in the northwest provinces. Writing to his friend, Lu expressed that that best thing he could send to his friend so far away in the cold north was sign of spring itself.181

Paintings served as proxies for actual plum blossom branches in this tradition of scholarly exchange. In Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting, Qian Du records several of his own inscriptions on plum blossom paintings that were given to friends and patrons:

Painting Plums as a gift to Guo Xiangsheng.

In spring at the old copper mine ten thousand trees lean, the old man writes leisurely as a knocking sounds [at the door of] his mountain home,

As the day strikes noon he is surrounded by a beard of many blossoms, [he is] one honeybee released and clear of his service.182

The poem celebrated a man who had just retired from office. Painting a plum blossom and pairing it with the poetic image of “a beard of many blossoms,” Qian Du created the composite image of a bouquet of plum blossoms and the unkempt beard of an old man. On a similar note, Qian Du painted “Autumn Snow on the Fishing Village,” one of the eight scenes of


182 蒲展贈郭香生春老銅坑萬樹斜老夫閒著叩山家花鬚數徧日卓午一鬢蜜蜂晴放衙. SHHZ, 51.
the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, for Chen Wenshu, which featured a heavy presence of plum blossoms in its inscription, despite being a landscape:

The sound of the oar in the wind rolls over our conversation. Last night the blossoms opened and so we went across the lake.

To the east of the lake and to the west the mist was deep over the water, and the location of the “Blossom Source Grass Hut” was indiscernible.

The master of this Grass Hut is beyond worldly affairs, resting on high he listens to the calls of the birds alone.

Long days he spends as he wishes gathered with his tea service, sometimes blowing his jade pipes at the moon.

Every month the jade pipes blow and dissipate across the water. Clear snows block the gate and no visitors come up.

The balustrades are quiet as spring fills the mountains, a fishing skiff sits alone at the head of the river.183

The master of the “Blossom Source Grass Hut” in this poem had retired from the worries of the world. He spent his days in the pursuit of literati pleasures: sitting alone, listening for the call of birds, savoring tea, and playing his jade pipes at the moon, listening to his tune as its sound disappeared across the lake. While this poem is full of aural contrasts of quietude and harmonious melodies, it begins with the call to view plum blossoms on their first bloom.

Crossing the lake to the “Blossom Source Hut” of this retired gentleman, the two boaters disappeared into the indiscernible void of the fog that hung over the lake. Traveling into this void in pursuit of the fragrant airs of plums, these men were met instead with a variety of sounds.

183雲伯屬畫秋雪漁莊風裏櫓聲伊軋語。昨夜花開過湖去湖東湖西煙水深花源草堂無覓處草堂主人不世情高臥惟聽山禽鳴日長隨意擁茶具月上有時吹玉笙玉笙吹月月墮水晴雪塞門人未起闌干寂寂春滿山孤負溪頭漁艇子。SHHZ, 55.
Painters could also reveal their gentlemanly character through the manner in which they painted plums. In his inscription to an 1812 album leaf [fig. 29], Qian Du wrote:

The difficulty of writing out plum blossoms is in the sequence of making the branches, trunk, dots and moss. Once the branches and trunk are established the blossoms and the stamens each follow after in keeping with the concept. Only Chen Meigong first wrote the flowers and then added the branches and trunk without the each obstructing the other. His arrangement was the best among Ming dynasty life sketching artists, and it was very obviously a quality that was part of his person. The spring rain does not stop and so I wrote this in order to push it away, relaxing at this long table clarifying my energies of the dust of this world.  

![Figure 29] Qian Du, “Plum Blossoms after Chen Jiru,” 1812 Leaf 2 of a 10 leaf album, ink on silk, Taibei Palace Museum Collection

Praising Chen Jiru 陳繼儒(1558-1639) for the cleverness of his composition, Qian Du situates that intelligence as an innate quality, not something learned or studied. For Qian, copying after the processes of Chen was a way of thinking like him, of clarifying his mind “of the dust of the world” by learning from the loftiness of an exemplary predecessor.

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184 寫梅難於作枝幹點次之枝幹既立花蕊皆隨其意意所之矣惟陳眉公則先寫花後補枝幹一無窒礙為明代寫生手第一所設而明之存乎其人春雨不止寫此遺意几案間顧無塵修氣也.
As with Chen Jiru, the plum paintings Ma Hezhi 馬和之 (ca.1130-ca.1170) had a scholarly air, one that was identified with the larger literati ideals of being “lively and refined” 靈秀, as well as “sparse and leisurely” 踈逸, qualities attributed both to the man and to the plum blossoms:

Although Ma Hezhi had some of the studiousness of the Painting Academy, he used his brush in lofty simple ways, which his contemporaries Ma Yuan and Xia Gui were not able to do. His writing of a plum blossom painting is lively and refined, sparse and leisurely, making pure use of his scholarly energies.185

In painting plum blossoms, Qian Du looked to the compositions of past masters like Chen Jiru and Ma Hezhi for inspiration in his own work and for a more general sense of scholarly communion and transcendence of the day to day cares of the world, as in his description of Zhu Yunming’s work, inscribed on painting of plum blossoms titled “In the Spring Shadows at Xixi” [fig.30]:

Making a multitude of rough branches is easy but to make the brushwork simple is difficult. To make brush and ink simple is to not conceal its awkwardness. I look often at horizontal handscroll written out by Zhu Jingzhao; it has only a bare few brush marks and its spirit resonance is exceptional. In the breast of this old man are volumes of books, and to receive his brushwork is to leave the dust and dirt of the world.186

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185 馬和之雖微有院習然用筆高簡處非馬遠夏桂輩所能擬譚近見寫梅一幀靈秀踈逸純具士氣. Inscription to an unpublished 1830 painting in the Xubaizhai collection of The Hong Kong Museum of Art.
186 西溪春影作棤繁枝易簡筆難蓋筆墨簡則無藏拙地矣常見祝京 X 寫橫卷僅數筆而神韻絕世此翁胸具書卷收落筆便離塵垢耳.
Sparseness, like the quality of plum fragrance itself, was one measure of proper spirit resonance, allowing a viewer to see directly into the heart of a man. In this case, Zhu Yunming’s heart was erudite to the point of being like a library, filled with volumes of books. Viewing this work was a transcendent experience for Qian Du, who felt that the worries and attachments of the world are cleared away when he spent time examining the brushwork of this piece.

—Ink Plums and Calligraphy—

The scholarliness of the plum blossom genre in painting, and its associations with the character of the painter were amplified by the extremely direct relationship that the genre afforded between calligraphy and painting. One manner in which this manifested was in the inscriptions on plum blossom paintings, in which the verb “to write” 写 was used more frequently than the verb “to paint” 画 in order to describe the act of depicting the plum blossom. Furthermore, throughout Qian Du’s writings about ink plums there were references to paintings being done in manners similar to seal script or large character script in calligraphy. In one such entry, dated the thirteenth day of the first month of 1804, Qian Du began with a description of a
visit to Huang Zhencang’s “Thirty-three Plum Blossoms Studio” along with Gui Fu and Cha Douyi. An excerpt from the poem that followed reads:

To the east of the city stand thirty plum blossom trees, casting their shade just over this gentleman’s abode. The patron is fond of guests and is doubly fond of blossoms. Inviting guests to see the blossoms on the tenth day, as dawn broke, and with the sun not yet out we already started off to the pavilion, our clogs sounding one after the other, as a spring breeze comes across the green stream. Yesterday, entering the family courtyard, we left traces of wine floating on the glass cups, falling long into the intoxication of the wine, enjoying the happy occasion and spilling ink until we dripped with it, making ink blossoms in large script style.187

In this passage Qian Du recounted an early spring visit to a grove of plum blossoms in the predawn hours. By setting the poem at the break of dawn, Qian Du reinforced the seasonal connotations that blossoming plums had with the cusp of spring. He went on to describe the event of returning to Huang’s home to drink and paint ink blossoms, as inspired by the trip. Guests were likened to plum blossoms and the freely spilt wine was described in parallel with the loosely applied ink used to paint the plum blossoms in large script style. These compounded images created a tight circle of metaphors that emphasized the relationship between scholar and plum blossom and that also made a strong connection between plum blossoms and calligraphy.

Image and script, already conjoined in theories of literati painting, were doubly connected in ink plum blossom paintings. When an author such as Qian Du spoke of painting the image of plum blossoms in a calligraphic style he returned to the idea that grounded literati theories of painting, that a man’s character was visible in the qualities of the marks he made. The

187 城東梅花三十樹正是先生樓陰處主人愛客兼愛花留客看花十日往曉日未出軒已開屐聲一一綠溪來春風昨日入庭戶酒痕縷泛玻璃杯老落酒酣還好事潑墨淋漓大字墨花落紙, SHHZ, 26.
characterological aspect of calligraphy, applied to plum blossom paintings, reinforced the metaphors of scholarliness associated with the genre.

This calligraphic foundation for plum blossom painting was evident in Qian Du’s description of a painting of plum blossoms by Huang Gongwang:

The trees reveal their roots, wound up and unyielding, and written out in seal script method; the branches and trunks all finely textured; the blossoms large as a fist, with an ancient hoary essence.188

Here the association between plums and calligraphy was taken one step further. Qian Du made a direct analogy between the brushwork of the image and the awkwardness of seal script style, an analogy further personified by its description as “unyielding” 倔强 and with blossoms the size of “fists” 大如拳. Here though, rather than “large character” scripts, the stylistic association shifted to “seal script” 篆籀法, an archaic style with “an ancient hoary essence” 古气苍奔.

An association with antique scripts was further emphasized in Qian Du’s description of the paintings of Chen Hongshou on one of Qian’s own paintings of plums from 1812 [fig. 31]:

Laochi sketched from nature often using seal script method in an antique and awkward manner like the brushwork of Jin and Wei masters. Facing it is like encountering an ancient immortal seeking to transform his bones to cinnabar in the deep cliffs and exhausted ravines.189

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188 黄鹤翁…尤奇者《梅花巨幛》树露根轮囷倔强以篆籀法写之枝干皆细皴花大如拳古气苍奔. SHHY, 114.
189 老遲寫生往往用籀篆法古拙似晉魏人手筆對之如在深巖窮壑中遇古仙人乞換骨丹也. The inscription is nearly the same as one listed in SHHZ, 60: 老遲以篆籀法作畫古拙似魏晉人手筆如過古仙人欲乞換骨丹也.
In Qian Du’s painting, he incorporated an “antique and awkward” stylization into the painting by reducing the visibility of individual brush strokes and emphasizing the composition instead. The emphasis on awkwardness was translated into forms that did not make for pretty lines. Branches and trunk alike seemed to have grown slowly and in a labored fashion. Their growth patterns reacted to the harshness of time and the elements with abrupt shifts in direction and by turning back onto themselves until becoming the knotted forms that defined an aged body. Qian Du painted this aged body as the trunk of a plum blossom tree and reinforced the embodied connection by way of poetic analogy to the ancient form of an immortal among the inhospitable mountains and ravines.

—The Erotic Scent of Plum Blossoms—

But lest we associate the plum entirely with the austerity and removal of hermits and retired officials, it is important to note that the allure of barely discernable scents associated with plum blossoms was just as strong of an erotic metaphor in Qian Du’s circle of friends as was the metaphor of an enduring and refined gentlemen bearing up under the cold. Among the first plum
blossom paintings that Qian Du painted was an image created in honor of a courtesan. Sometime between 1796 and 1801, while at residence in the home of Yuan Tong, the son of the poet Yuan Mei, Qian Du’s host decided to rename his courtesan and chose the name “Sparse Fragrances” 疏香, a name with an air of refinement and allure.

Furthermore, a surprisingly erotic message occurs in an 1809 painting by Qian Du of Wang Zishan’s “Pristine and Verdant Garden.” In Songhu’s Reflections on Painting Qian described each section of Wang’s garden by reproducing a set of poems by Wu Shanzun (1755-1821). The composition of Qian’s painting, a delicately colored landscape, was defined by a group of delicate pavilions punctuated by hoary trees, clusters of bamboo, and large fanciful growths of rockery. Likewise, Xi Gang’s 1800 painting, “Mountain Retreat of the Jade Tung Trees,” to which Qian’s painting was appended, showed a secluded study hemmed in by monochromatic forest of roughly textured trunks and stony outcroppings. Wu’s poems were odes to each of the six major locations within the garden, and surprisingly, in contrast to the refined landscapes shown in the paintings by Qian and Xi, the first poem, “Library of Discussing Fragrances” was starkly erotic, telling the story of a scholar tempted from his austerity by beautiful faces and the allure of lingering scents:

Library of Discussing Fragrances.

A marvelous scattered fragrance hangs in the empty room, the master has not yet risen to its special allure;

A bird speaks into the bright mirror, and as spring comes the circular fans descend [over faces];
It is doubtful if he will be able enter to the red city, as he travels instead by each face in the purple glass.\textsuperscript{190}

Fragrances, of plum blossoms and of women, if surrendered to, could compromise a man’s efforts at achieving higher goals. Here, the “red city” was an allusion to a land of immortals, entry to which was endangered by the temptations of spring, in fragrant form and in the form of the flickering reflections and sounds of beautiful birds, or women.\textsuperscript{191}

The threat of these fragrances and the erotic bodies that carried them to the refined atmosphere of the scholar took on an even more direct tone in the following poem by Qian Du:

A jade pot smashed to pieces scattered like rain, its fragments cut the raw silk that covers the pure maiden,

A sparse fragrance brushed on the pillow half drunk on wine, (kingfisher) jade birds chirp and twitter the language of muslin veils,

The bright pearls hang long at four corners, cold clouds scattered about on the coral bed,

The empty studio is uninhabited, and wrapped and seated in a quilt I raise my eyes and only seeing the boundless spring,

The gentleman is tempted to commit his body to a life in the sea of fragrances, deep in the night dreaming of floating among the trees,

Spring has already soured for one who has taken to the cinnabar, a pair of butterflies invites the guest to go.\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{190}語香書屋虛室妙香散主人殊未起鳥語明鏡中春生團扇底疑入赤城游面面玻璃紫. SHHZ, 50.

\textsuperscript{191}赤城 is an immortal land in the Eastern Jin period “Tales of Spirits and Immortals” 《神仙傳》. But it could also be an allusion to an imperial palace or to one of the southern mountains of the Tiantai mountains in Zhejiang province.

\textsuperscript{192}玉壺擊碎散如雨碎蕙鮫絹羅素女疏香拂枕酒半醒翠鳥啁啾隔紗語明珠四角流蘇長冷雲亂撲珊瑚牀空齋無人擁衾坐舉眼但覺春茫茫請君身入香海住夜深夢見羅浮樹丹砂井上春已戲蝴蝶一雙迎客去. SHHZ, 37-38.
As with Wu Shanzun’s poem, Qian created a dreamlike world of luxury materials in which the scholar was tempted by a life spent indulging in a sea of fragrances. These erotic analogies stood in stark contrast to the sparse fragrances referenced among gentlemen. The line between appreciation of fragrances and overindulgences had its ultimate metaphor in the scent of plums, and Qian Du’s paintings of plums engaged both aspects. Removed, sparse, calligraphic, and yet alluring, they called to mind scents and the desire for the bodies attached to those scents.

—The Exemplars of Plum Blossom Painting—

Qian Du seems to have first taken the genre of plum blossoms seriously when he returned to the Lower Yangzi Delta in the 1810s, and to Nanjing in particular. Qian Du chose to build his home “The Blue-green Peak Grass Hut” in the Taogu district of Nanjing in part because it was there that he discovered a property with plum blossom tree that was purported to be well over a millennia old:

At Taogu in front of the Blue-green Peak Grass Hut there is an old plum tree that is said to be from the time of the Six Dynasties. A chill comes through the clear window as I
write this out in the methods of the Tingyunguan\textsuperscript{193} and sent it to Yunbo. It’s the second month in the Southern Yangzi area and the snow has not yet cleared. The fragrance of the plum blossoms in the valley is meager, coiling at the eaves as the cold slips and drips its clear sounds. Sparse mists pour over the gate at noon, and white clouds seem to hasten as a bell tolls in the gully. Blue-green feathers startle me from my nap, and I make a poem to send off to the offices of distant Wusong, anxious for the prevailing eastern winds to carry the vessel along.\textsuperscript{194}

Qian Du wrote this to Chen Wenshu, then serving in Wusong, because Chen had helped him find the property in Nanjing. Qian Du described the lingering chill of winter, the snows that still remained and the plum blossoms that had not fully bloomed. The weak scent of plum blossoms lingered among the slow sounds of melt-off chiming through the air. This particular plum blossom tree became a kind of calling card for Qian Du, and its story became attached to Qian Du’s story.

Chen Wenshu was the first recipient of the news of Qian Du’s discovery of this ancient tree, and Chen later went on to reference this tree in relation to his friend. Qian Du’s disciple, Cheng Tinglu, propagated the story as well. A leaf from an album of plum blossoms by Cheng Tinglu [fig. 33] paid homage to both the tree and to Qian Du:

At Taogu in Jinling, which gets its name from the recluse Tao, there is an ancient plum from the Six Dynasties, luxuriantly coiled and ancient in strength, and Old Songhu once built his Blue-green Peak Grass Hut there. Twenty years ago I stayed in those

\textsuperscript{193}“Ting yun guan fa”《停雲館法》 was a compendia of calligraphy rubbings compiled by Wen Zhengming and his disciples in the sixteenth century.

\textsuperscript{194}陶谷青峰草堂前古梅一樹或云六朝時物也晴窗呵凍以停雲館法寫之寄雲伯江南二月雪未霽谷中梅花香可憐繪畫寒霜滴清響傍午籬落沈荒煙白雲似催鐘出鶯翠羽欲驚人小眠作詩遠寄吳淞宰急趁東風下去船. SHHZ, 55. See also Qian Du’s preface to Chen Wenshu, Mo ling ji, dated 1819.
mountains, copying the plum into stone so that it might endure in greatness. The collected works of Songhu speak of this and so I write out a version of it here.\textsuperscript{195}

[Figure 33] Cheng Tinglu, “Plum Blossom after Qian Du,” undated, ink on paper, Collection Unknown

In Cheng painting the coiled and ancient plum bends upward from the foreground, twisting in front of the viewer in a foreshortened manner. Its contorted branches are outlined in scorched ink of two tones: one a parched medium-dark grey; the other a jet-black tone that delineates the rigid and firm branches that seem to spring forth energetically from the dried trunk, blossoming into full-petaled buds, with stamen as long as eyelashes. The hearty characteristics of endurance that Cheng Tinglu used to describe Qian’s plum blossom tree, of its “coiled and ancient strength” 蟠欝古勁, would have easily been conferred by a reader on to the character of Qian Du as well.

In an 1812 album [fig. 32] Qian Du began to wrestle with ideas of who he should take as examples and what were the best ways to paint plum blossoms. Each of the ten leaves in the album referenced a different painter from the Song though Qing periods, including: Yang

\textsuperscript{195}金陵陶谷以陶隱君得名中有六朝古梅極蟠欝古勁松壺老人曾簗青峰草堂於 X 下廿年前曾一宿山中摩挲石忍宏松壺集内有話因寫焉概 Incription transcribed from the painting, as reproduced in “Bai mei ji” 《百梅集》 (1926). Current collection unknown.
Wencong, Chen Jiru, Fang Congyi, Wang Mian, Xiang Yuanbian, Chen Hongshou, Yao Shun, Tang Yin, Xu Wei, Shitao and Zhu Yunming.

There was particular emphasis on Ming and Qing painters, and in his inscriptions to these works Qian Du frequently discussed compositional techniques and methods of plum blossom painting. In the first leaf, after Yang Wencong [fig. 34], Qian Du wrote, “Yang Longyou [Yang Wencong] used brush and ink in a highly saturated and unrestrained way but still kept to rules; this was the reason his work was precious.”

Qian Du has organized this painting as a chaotic spray of branches springing up from what seems to be a common trunk, but the blossoms are depicted in two contrasting tones. Dark blossoms and light blossoms mix and mingle making foreground and background unclear. The trunks of the larger tree are executed in a wet medium grey tone, in the “highly saturated and unrestrained” manner that Qian Du described. Yet this apparent lack of restraint was also principled. Qian insisted that there were rules to the chaos.

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196 楊龍友用筆用墨極淋漓酣暢而仍具法律所以為貴也.
His interest in the rules of plum blossoms was reiterated in the second and ninth leaves of this same album. On leaf two [fig. 29], done in the style of Chen Jiru, he wrote “the difficulty of writing out plum blossoms is in the sequence of making the branches, trunk, dots and moss; once the branches and trunk are established the blossoms and the stamens each follow after an in keeping with their concept.” He went on to claim that Chen was the only painter who was clever enough to invert this rule by painting the blossoms first. Or, in leaf nine [fig. 30], in a nod to Shitao, he wrote, “When putting brush to paper one should be gentle whereas when pulling the brush back one should be heavy. Rough branches should be subtle and thin branches should be strong, this was the method for writing out plum blossoms used by the Bitter Melon Monk (Shitao).” Rules here exist only to be contradicted or to present seeming contradictions.

In his inscriptions to these leaves Qian Du paid homage to the lineage of painters from which he had chosen to draw inspiration, frequently citing the way in which their ideas allowed him to “sweep away the dust of the world,” by nature of their erudition. That intellectualism, linked to the character of each of these exemplars, was brought up in leaf two [fig. 29], where Qian described Chen Jiru’s powers of composition as a “quality that was part of his person,” and again in leaf nine [fig. 30], where Qian described the “volumes of books” that exist in the breast of Zhu Yunming.

Although the overall tenor of the album was one of technical and historical exploration in the idioms of past masters, there were hints of sensuousness paired with the intellectualism that would find greater expression in Qian Du’s later plum blossom paintings. In his inscription to leaf four [fig. 35], a painting after Wang Mian, he wrote in part, “one night the eastern wind blew and cleared the snow and frost, and [a view of] the nearby mountains opened up they were

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197 写梅难於作枝幹点苔次之枝幹既立花蕊皆随其意意所之矣。
198 落筆宜輕收筆宜重蠻枝欲柔瘦枝欲劲苦瓜和尚写梅法也.
already a barely discernable [shade of] blue-green.”199 Reinforcing the connection to spring, Qian wrote of the winds coming in to clear off the snow and frost and of the resulting surprise once they were cleared: spring greenery had already come to the mountains.

Plums were linked to the cusp of spring, and by extension to the perception of something unseen or not-yet-arrived, something that could be hinted at through the sensation of the refined and sparse fragrances of plums and the sounds of dripping snow or the sight of clearing frost.

Qian Du emphasized the vernal quality of plum blossoms in the last lines of several of the leaves in this album, writing: “the spring rain does not stop and so I wrote this in order to sweep it away” (leaf 2); “the spring rain is incessant and so I playfully copy this painting by the window” (leaf 4); “the rains have newly cleared and the window is now bright and clean” (leaf 5); and “a full month of bitter rain has finally cleared” (leaf 7). The album was done while the spring rains poured down, and the plum blossoms provided an escape for Qian Du during the foul weather, until the rain cleared off, leaving his window and mind cleared of “the dust of the world.”

Wang Mian was one of the exemplars that Qian Du worked from most among the canon of plum blossom painters. In particular he often cited a painting by Wang Mian titled “Ten Thousand Fragrances After a Spring Rain.” Wang Mian was an early Yuan dynasty scholar from Shaoxing, who had failed in official service and who used plums blossoms as a metaphor for the under-appreciated scholar. Qian Du referenced him at least a half dozen times and emulated him in several works. In Songhu’s Reflections on Painting Qian Du recorded his impressions of an original Wang Mian painting:

Wang Yuanzhang’s “Ten Thousand Fragrances After a Spring Rain,” is a large hanging scroll, with three layers of branches and trunk, all using scorched ink in their writing, the flower stamens are extremely round and animated, and the negative spaces defined

199 一夜東風吹雪霽前山空翠已模糊.
with light ink staining. The silk, although old, is brilliant and makes an impression. It is a truly precious thing.200

Technically, Qian associated Wang’s plums with the compositional choices of layering branches and trunks, which, with indelible ink on absorbent surfaces like silk and paper, involved complicated spatial planning. First the branches and trunks were laid down, but breaks in the branches had to be left for overlapping moments of blossoms or other branches. Analysis of a plum blossom painting thus involved the analysis of the order of events for the strokes, and the organizational decisions of the mind and hand behind them, as in calligraphy.

Later commentators also saw the resemblance between Wang’s painting of plums and Qian’s. The collector Chen Kuilin wrote of his plum blossom painting by Qian Du, “This hanging scroll takes as its model the Rock Soup Mountain Peasant (Wang Mian), its trunks are

200王元章《萬香春霽》巨幀枝幹作三層皆用焦墨寫之花蕊並圓活空處以淡墨漬出絹素雖舊精彩逼人殊可寶也. SHHY, 102.
bent and its branches coiled. They are strong like iron and stone, flourishing and fine, thriving, and filling the paper with fragrance.”\(^{201}\)

For Chen, viewing the image of Qian Du’s plums instigated the sensation of smelling their fragrance, demonstrating that painting could cross the boundary between the senses.

—Xixi and the Plum Blossoms of Hangzhou—

Plums were not just about people, as metaphors for scholarly removal or erotic sensation, or about examples of painting style, they were also related to place. Xixi 西溪, the “Western Stream” marshes on the outskirts of Hangzhou, was the premier location for viewing plum blossoms in Qian Du’s native Hangzhou, and it was associated with the painter Jin Nong as well. Xixi, and the plums associated with it, formed a powerful site by which Qian Du could link himself to both Hangzhou and Jin Nong as extensions of his own self-definition.

Qian Du associated his turn toward the plum blossom genre with Jin Nong’s own mid-life interest in such paintings, writing:

When gentleman Jin Dongxin (Jin Nong) of my native town turned forty he put his intentions to studying Song and Yuan nature studies; when he was fifty he studied figures and beasts; only after sixty did he shift his attention to painting plum blossoms. He began by taking Zhao Zigu and Wang Yuanzhang as his instructors, and later he traveled to Shanyou to see Wu Daozi and the brush concepts of his mural paintings, and shifted in that lofty direction, with its deep scholasticism.

In his later years the esteemed gentleman was closest with my family, making many paintings daily. When I was only just replacing my milk teeth I would frequently be

\(^{201}\)Chen Kuilin 陳夔麟, *Bao yu ge shu hua lu《寶迂閣書畫録》*(1915), 439.
held by him. The gentleman’s tomb plaque has already been raised, and I am also old and senile, letting myself go to the recollection of past events like dreams. Discussing the gentleman’s painting with Tingxiang, we add an inscription of our past and present feelings:

One branch, two branches in the shadow of the jade dragon, one thousand dots and then ten thousand dots in the traces of the spring mists. Suddenly remembering Xixi deep in the evening snows, filling the stove with pine fire and closing the humble gate.\(^{202}\)

Qian Du inserted himself into Jin Nong’s history as the inheritor of Jin Nong’s mantle, both through the physical contact he had as a child with the preeminent painting master of Hangzhou in the previous dynasty and as a painter who emulated Jin Nong’s own history of coming to the choice of plum blossom painting only in mid-life.

Xixi could be associated with other scholars as well, as with the title “In the Xixi Spring Shadows,” added to the plum blossom painting inspired by Zhu Yunming described above [fig. 30]. In his inscription to the painting, Qian Du described Zhu’s brushwork as exceptional in “spirit resonance” that was found in his restrained painting of only “a bare few brush marks.” The same principles of sparseness and spirit resonance associated with the painting of plum blossom are transferred to the site of Xixi in the title.

The fame of Xixi, and its association with Hangzhou, was recorded in the *Edited Gazetteer of West Lake* 《西湖志纂》, compiled and illustrated for the *Complete Library of the Four Divisions* 《四庫全書》from 1753 to 1754. The images of the first volume of this twelve-

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\(^{202}\)吾鄉金冬心先生年四十始亦已意學宋元寫生五十學人物蕃馬六十學人物寫生五十學人物蕃馬六十後專意畫梅初師趙子固王元章後遊山右觀吳道子畫壁筆意一變趋向之高學力之邃可想也晚年與先公交最密恆至余家作畫日竟數幅余方齋鈍時時挈抱之今先生墓木已拱余亦頹老自放追憶往事都如夢幻與聽香論先生畫坿書誌今昔之感。一枝兩枝翠蛟影千點萬點春煙痕忽憶西溪深雪夜滿爐松火掩柴門. SHHZ, 30. The poem at the end is also inscribed on a teapot inscribed to Qian Du’s sister, Qian Lin.
volume book illustrated a view of “Searching for Plum Blossoms in Xixi” [fig. 37], and the accompanying text described the geography of the area:

The area in the shade of the northern mountains around West Lake, past Stone Man Peak, is called Xixi. The stream waters twist and turn around the foot of the mountains to a deep and quiet place until they straighten out and thin near the border of Yuhang, receiving the runoff from South Lake. The group of mountains for some thirty-six li here collect to the west and have been called the “Western Streams” (Xixi). The residents there make a living from the plum blossom trees, and when they bloom they fill the air like snow, and therefore people have long gone “Searching for Plum Blossoms in Xixi.”

Following the descriptions of the marshes of Xixi, there are appended poems about Xixi by both the Kangxi and the Qianlong emperors, attesting to the fame of the area. The woodblock print commissioned for the *Edited Gazetteer of West Lake* and designed by Sun Daru 孫大儒 illustrated a landscape labeled with topographic designators and punctuated by famous buildings to be found at Xixi. But Qian Du evoked a sense of the place through the metonymic use of the branches alone.

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203 西溪探梅西湖北山之陰過石人嶺為西溪溪水灣澴山徑幽邃直薄餘杭縣界受南湖之浸群山繞之凡三十六里自古蕩以西並稱西溪居民以樹梅為業花時瀰漫如雪故舊有西溪探梅之. Shen Deqian 沈德潛, et al., eds., *Xi hu zhi zuan* 《西湖志纂》, (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 1993) v.1, 91.
Qian Du’s association with the place could be traced back to his youth, and when he returned to Hangzhou in the 1830s to take up residence in the “Wild Gull Manor” he recalled visiting Xixi in particular, writing a poem in 1835 that paid homage to an earlier visit there with his friend Rongruo in 1787:

One night the eastern wind blew and cleared off the snow. The nearby mountains opened up and were already a hazy blue-green. A small boat travels to the banks of Xixi, as countless gulls [stand] along the sand along with this middle-aged man. In the spring of 1787 the gentleman Rongruo and I traveled to Xixi. The plum blossoms melted away the cold and we made twelve poems. In the spring of 1791 in Wuchang I added several more, sending them to Rongruo. I returned to the lake after forty years to live in the Wild Gull Manor, [but as] I travel to Xixi Rongruo’s grave already has grass
growing on it. Looking back through the mist and clouds I often think of him. Touching on this I therefore wrote out this image.\(^{204}\)

Returning home to live in Hangzhou after forty years, Qian Du reminisced about Rongruo and a trip they once took to Xixi. The place and experience formed a bond between the two main that they maintained over the decades. After Rongruo’s death, Qian Du returned to Xixi and paid homage to his friend’s memory by painting an image of a plum blossom and writing a poem that captured both a sense of the spring associated with plum blossoms and the melancholy air of a man over the mid-point of his life, reaching out to friends that had already left him.

—An Enduring Reputation for Plum Blossoms—

Lastly, plum blossom images in Qian Du’s work carried with them a greater association with inscription and engraving than any other genre in his painting repertoire, linking them sensuously with the modes of haptic viewing derived from his epigraphic interests, as described in Chapter Three. There is only one recorded instance of Qian Du’s involvement with the engraving of an image into stone, but it was for the purposes of preserving and propagating an image of plum blossoms:

The Yu Family of Tieling has collected a painting of plum blossoms by Liu Bowen. In appearances it is well crafted and fine and unrestrained. Its excellence lies in the fact that it is not from a professional or a famous name, and each blossom each stamen is a

\(^{204}\) 一夜東風吹雪齋前山空翠已模糊扁舟記過西溪渚無數沙鷗伴老大人 此丁未春與余君容若遊西溪楥梅作銷首雲煙老懷 X 識愛寫斯圖時. This inscription comes from a 1835 painting in the Xubaizhai collection at the Hong Kong Museum of Art. Part of the poem is repeated from an 1812 album leaf in the Taipei Palace Museum Collection.
marvelous feast of beauty. It is truly a treasured thing to appreciate. The Yu Family wanted it cut into stone and has asked me to make a tracing copy of it, but I am afraid I only was able to achieve its form and appearance.205

Plum blossoms, which could be executed in a style similar to the seal scripts that early nineteenth century scholars derived from sources cut into stone and cast into metal, could then be re-inscribed back into stone, perpetuating the cycle of production.

Years later, Qian Du’s disciple Cheng Tinglu would perform a similar task of making a cut stone version of a plum blossom painting of Qian’s painting of the plum blossoms in his yard at Nanjing:

At Taogu in Jinling, which gets its name from the recluse Tao, there is an ancient plum from the Six Dynasties, luxuriantly coiled and ancient in strength, and Old Songhu once built his Blue-green Grass Hut there. Twenty years ago I stayed in those mountains, copying the plum into stone so that it might endure in greatness.

Qian Du’s plums were also cut into Yixing teapots and bamboo wrist rests, their lines executed in the same hard lines as the “antique and awkward” texts from which he drew inspiration. In these engraved forms, as well as in his paintings and collected writings, Qian Du’s plums endured, just as Cheng Tinglu hoped they would. The momentary pleasures of fragrances shared among scholars were lost each season with the passing of early spring. But, the memory of their fleeting fragrances lived on and were reactivated by the viewing of paintings of plum blossoms.

Although Qian Du came to the painting of plum blossoms late in his life his future reputation would be associated with the genre. In the encomiums appended to Qian Du’s

205鐵嶺於氏藏劉伯溫寫梅一幀似工細而不為繩尺所拘其妙處非專門名家而一花一蕊並秀色可餐殊可珍賞於氏欲勾勒上石乞余臨撫恐僅得形似耳. SHHY, 113.
collected writings, each of his friends Sun Yuanxiang, Jiang Baoling, and Chen Wenshu wrote poems that included plum blossom imagery. Jiang’s poem captured the sense of the cool airs of impending spring, as well as the association with language and writing and the senses of touch and seclusion that were all associated with Qian Du and his paintings:

In the clear reclusion and the concealed void of the eaves, standing tall at the foot of a splay-footed tree,
Sparse blossoms scatter fragrance in the air, soaking my robes like a cool mist;
I open a book and take a seat under the tree, carefully reciting a line of verse about ice and snow;
The moon in the stream gives rise to a special emotion, as its orb is split between the leaves.206

Likewise, the collector and connoisseur Qin Zuyong 秦祖永 wrote in “Discussions on Painting from the Shade of the Tung Tree” 《桐陰論畫》: “Qian Du entered painting via the hand of Wen Wufeng, and his ink plum blossoms were refined and elegant with calm removal, uncontaminated with the dust of the world.”207

Even later, in the early twentieth century, well after Qian Du’s reputation had gone into decline, the association of his name with plum blossoms was still alive. In a 1930 painting of plum blossoms, Ding Fuzhi commented that when copying after the paintings of Qian Du and Gai Qi he felt the need to put down the brush and ask, “how could I dare to be as clear and flourishing as this?”208 Similarly, in 1915, Chen Kuilin remarked in the notes to his catalog of

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207 畫從文五峰入手墨梅秀雅靜逸不染塵氛. Qin Zuyong, 19.
208 Ding Fuzhi’s painting, dated to 1930, was sold at Sotheby’s New York 2015 March auctions. The inscription reads: 松壺玉壺冷淡秀色,亭亭疑可臨幾面,擱筆費評章,如此清華吾豈敢.
paintings: “When Songhu painted plums, they were extremely quiet and strong, refined and leisurely. Only after turning forty did he begin to make images of flowers, recalling with emotion old friends at the door, stirring up old attachments that spring winds brush away from the tips of his ten fingers. How is it that his works can be so refined?”

As the new Republic of China began to coalesce from the chaos of early twentieth-century civil war, scholars such as Chen Kuilin and Ding Fuzhi indulged in the literati pleasures of their immediate predecessors. They desired a connection to the refinement and leisureliness of an earlier era and of a class of literati whose ranks were quickly atrophying. Qian Du’s plum blossom paintings allowed access to those moments of past refinement and to the relationships imbedded in their invitations to touch, smell, hear, and remember the moments of the past.

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209 森壺畫梅頗以清勁秀逸…四十年後始為花寫照感懷舊雨櫻前塵春風拂拂從十指出其精美為何如也。Chen Kuilin, 439. The painting Chen was describing in his collection is currently in the Xubaizhai Collection at the Hong Kong Art Museum.
CONCLUSION: A SENSUOUS HISTORY OF LITERATI PAINTING

If we ask early nineteenth-century painters like Qian Du to be great innovators of style or politically-engaged visual revolutionaries we will only be disappointed. Painters like Qian Du were absorbed in the activities of literati leisure at a time when perhaps, in hindsight, and from the perspective of a modern mentality, they ought to have been more politically engaged with their visual art. But they were not, and there is no use asking them to be. If we instead attempt to recapture an understanding of what made these paintings captivating to their contemporaries, then a different set of questions arise and a different mode of seeing is slowly revealed.

By clearing away our preconceived notions of what a literati painter was and could be, we discover through Qian Du’s work that in times of growing disunity paintings could act as keystone objects for social networks, connecting the individual literatus to his peers. It was not necessary for the means of that connectivity to be a bold statement of stylistic change or a reinterpretation of a historical citation. The sensuous aspects of literati culture could form connections that were just as powerful as historical and stylistic citations.

A set of sensuous cues was at the foundation of any painting’s appeal to its viewers. The appeal to vision was self-evident. But inscriptions and colophons reveal the slightly less obvious idea that sounds were also constantly called to mind in the viewing of paintings, whether it be the sounds of footsteps, of tea boiling, of ghosts whistling, of birds calling, or of winds blowing. Touch was cued in the brushwork itself, which was fundamentally based in theories of embodiment and which in the early nineteenth century relied as well on visual analogies to the stone surfaces of epigraphic sources. Smell could also be made evident upon viewing paintings, particularly in the context of plum blossom paintings, in which the image of twisting of branches heavy with rounded blossoms could trigger memories of the faint scents of early spring.
Each of these senses found its way into Qian Du’s painting in poetic inscriptions as well as in stylistic choices. Through a sensuous mode of viewing audiences were able to connect more fully to the themes of the painting and even to the moment of the painting’s creation. As such, literati paintings secured experiences that were otherwise ephemeral. Literati painting in general can thus be seen as a mode of documentation that anchored present experiences within references to past tropes of literati culture and which therefore made that past part of the present. The recollection of the sensuous activities of literati material culture was crucial to fixing that relationship to the past, whether it was through the sounds and smells of tea appreciation, the tactile surfaces of epigraphic studies, or the scant fragrances of enjoying plum blossoms.

Beyond this reminder of the present-ness and embodied nature of viewing and making literati paintings, it is important to notice that the values that were at the core of literati culture were transitory across different material manifestations of that culture, and those values found a home in a general vocabulary of literati ideals that could be applied to tea just as easily as they could be applied to painting, calligraphy, or plum blossom appreciation. The “sparseness” of fragrance, the “antique and awkward” brush and chisel-work of engraved objects, and the “remote” and “uncontaminated” appreciation of tea, each of these ideals could be applied to the nature of the man who partook in any of these individual activities. What was important to literati culture was maintaining and demonstrating proper character.

But during the early nineteenth century that character was increasingly threatened by the destabilization of the empire, which in turn destabilized the cultural systems in which paintings like Qian Du’s operated. In part as a reaction to this threat, those literati values were re-emphasized by means of a renewed commitment to the various material practices of literati culture, as seen in the art of Qian Du and his peers.
The question asked of early nineteenth-century Chinese literati painting has often been, how is it any different than literati painting from earlier periods? The theory of a sensuous mode of viewing as presented here does not answer that question. It does not explain what is particularly “nineteenth century” about these artworks because these works did not operate within a cultural system that understood the world in terms of zeitgeists. A theory of sensuous viewing does, however, explain why when we see these paintings from the perspective of the discipline of art history, which at the academic level is a fundamentally Western discipline, we have difficulty understanding why these paintings could be popular and engaging to their nineteenth century elite Chinese audiences. It also reveals an aspect of seeing literati painting that is true throughout its history but which has been undervalued in modern scholarship.

As far as nineteenth-century studies of literati culture are concerned, this research on the painting of Qian Du demonstrates the validity of several things we already know. For one, during the early nineteenth century men like Qian Du, who came from privileged backgrounds but who did not secure positions in the government bureaucracy, relied on their social networks to get by. Many of Qian Du’s closest confidants and patrons were also born in the wealthy neighborhoods of Hangzhou such as Qiantang 錢塘 (birthplace of Yuan Mei, Chen Wenshu, and Chen Hongshou) and Renhe 仁和 (birthplace of Qian Du, Yan Lang, and Huang Yi). These social networks of support were structured like pyramids. Ruan Yuan favored both Chen Wenshu and Chen Hongshou, who gained position in part due to Ruan’s influence, and likewise Qian Du gained access to men of greater power through his relationship to the Chens. These relationships were established in part through family connections. Had it not been for Qian Du’s father, Qian Qi, Qian Du would not have been in the social circle of the Chens or of Yuan Mei either.

210 See James Elkins, *Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 1-12.
The importance of relationships for literati is not a new idea, but what this study does offer is an understanding of the visual dimensions of these relationships, and an emphasis on the present-ness of literati interactions. While paintings such as Qian Du’s documented the specific instances of literati interactions, which were marked by the frequent citation of historical and literary allusion, it was the appeal to the senses made in such paintings that anchored them to specific moments and also allowed them to be relived by later audiences.

The social dynamics documented by Qian Du’s painting set the stage for the events of the late nineteenth century, when the estates of many elite families had been ravaged by the Taiping Rebellion, when wealth and power was shifting to merchant classes rather than staying with the bureaucrats, and when the newly established treaty ports such as Shanghai and Hong Kong began to supplant earlier centers of artistic production in the Lower Yangzi Delta region. Some of these events were presaged in Qian Du’s work, as in Qishan’s colophon to Qian Du’s painting for Ruan Yuan, which was one of the last colophons written by the powerful Manchu official before his death at Yangzhou during the Taiping Rebellion.

Furthermore, the chain of emulation and canonization favored among literati painters, which likely would have carried Qian Du’s name into the twentieth century as a major painter of his era, was broken by the reformulation of new Westernized art histories in early twentieth-century China.

But before all of this change, there was Qian Du. By re-examining early nineteenth-century literati culture as it was documented in his painting it becomes apparent that even in a period where stylistic and historical citation appear to change very little, literati painting maintained its appeal and present-ness. The celebration of literati material culture in this period was not dry and academic. It was multi-sensory. As such, literati painting may be among our best
tools for securing the moments of day-to-day interaction among the elite of pre-Modern China. Literati paintings were more than just images; they were the keystone documents for the network of literati sensibility in all of its forms. A close look at what was apparently a stagnant period allows us to understand how and why paintings could still be engaging even if they did not present immediate visual contrasts with the forms of painting that came before or a knowledge of what would come after.

If the understanding of literati painting as a sensuous art that has been formed in this dissertation on an early nineteenth-century painter can be applied to the greater history of literati painting, more questions arise: what would a sensuous history of literati painting look like and what were the role of senses in literati culture at large?

—The Senses and Literati Culture—

To imagine how sensuousness figures into literati painting requires an exploration into the role of the senses in Chinese epistemology. In early Chinese philosophical texts such as Xunzi and Mencius, the senses were described as the “five officials”五官, or sometimes as “heavenly officials”天官. The identities of these five officials varied slightly but generally included eyes, ears, mouth, nose, and body, though body was sometimes described as “form” or “limbs,” and often nose was omitted from the list. In a metaphorical relationship that mirrored that of an emperor to his officials, the heart-mind心 governed these senses.\footnote{Jane Geaney, \textit{On the Epistemology of the Senses in Early Chinese Thought} (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 16-17, 19.}

Each sense had its own capacity for desire and its own ability to know. For instance, in Xunzi the “eyes have a love of color, the ears a love of sound, the mouth a love of flavors, the
heart-mind a love of betterment, the bones, flesh and skin a love of pleasure and ease."Similar to these sensory desires “originated in the disposition and nature of a person.” Likewise, each sense had the capacity for knowledge. As Mozi wrote of pleasant dwellings, good food, ornament, and music: “the body knows their comfort, the mouth knows their sweetness, the eyes know their beauty, and the ears know their music.”

The role of each sense was the differentiation of the phenomena of the world. Epistemologically, these desiring and knowing senses collaborated to differentiate and group the phenomena of existence in order to verify knowledge at large. Again, in Xunzi:

Forms, bodies, colors, and patterns are differentiated by the eye. Sounds and tones, clear and muddy, nodes and harmony, and strange sounds are differentiated by the ear. Sweet, bitter, salty, bland, pungent, sour, and strange tastes are differentiated by the mouth. Fragrances and stenches, perfumes and rotten odors, putrid and rancid smells, dank and sour smells, as well as strange smells are differentiated by the nose. Illness and wellness, cold and hot, smooth and sharp, light and heavy are differentiated by the form and body. Speech and causes, happiness and anger, sadness and joy, loves, hates and desires are differentiated by the heart-mind.

While it may seem that the acts of differentiation that these desiring and knowing senses set about performing on the phenomena of the world correlate to our understanding of sensation and perception, as Jane Geaney has argued, sensation and perception as they are understood in Western philosophy are not the best words to describe the knowledge associated with the senses.

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212 目好色耳好聲口好味心好利骨體膚好愉佚．
213 是皆生於人之情性者也．
214 身知其安口知其甜目知其美耳知其樂也．In Geaney, 19, 37.
215 形體色理以目異聲音清濁調竽奇聲以耳異甘苦鹹辛酸奇味以口異臭芬鬱腥臊奇臭以鼻異疾養滄熱滑鍍輕重以形體異說故喜怒哀樂愛惡欲以心異．Ibid., 35, 44-45.
in early Chinese philosophical texts. Geaney has promoted the usefulness of another term from Western philosophy, Wittgenstein’s “aspect perception,” the direct understanding of a thing as something, an alternative model to the process of taking in raw data (sensation) and interpreting it (perception).

Underpinning Geaney’s argument is the assertion that in the epistemology of early Chinese philosophy the phenomena of the world were not divided into objects with separate traits that belong to them, and therefore a model of sensation and perception is inappropriate. Phenomena like sounds and colors exist in their own right, not as the properties of objects. Furthermore, the closest word to a Western notion of reality is “realization,” 實, something more akin to “the coming into existence of things,” with an emphasis on change and process. In short, the world of Chinese literati painters was not understood to be composed of concrete objects to be sensed, and likewise, the mind sensed in a continuity of process in which sensation was never divorced from an intellectual form of knowledge. 216

In this arrangement the desires and knowledge of each sense stemmed from the innate nature of a person and were governed by the heart-mind, which was itself filled with a capacity for desire.217 In Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, the sensuousness of the world was affirmed, and attention to the senses was part and parcel of adapting to the change inherent in the world. The role of the arts was to socialize the sensuous, making social norms a matter of individual experience.218

Evidence for the intertwined relationship of the sensuous and the intellectual existed at the inception of literati culture in the Six Dynasties period. The anecdotes in A New Account of Tales of the World 世說新語, compiled around 430 and described as a “treatise on human nature”

216 Ibid., 13-14, 31-34.
217 Ibid., 84.
by Nanxiu Qian, record a decisive shift in the tradition of character appraisal from pragmatic abilities related to the duties of government office to aesthetic, philosophical, and psychological traits. Men began to judge one another not by Confucian morality but by how genuinely they revealed themselves to others through their interpersonal choices and actions. The self was established through communication and confrontation with others.\textsuperscript{219}

Many of the tropes of literati sociability that were repeated through the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties began with the anecdotes from \textit{A New Account of Tales of the World}. Of particular significance to the history of the arts and of the senses was the use of natural metaphors and images to describe man’s nature. Aspects of the landscape became stand-ins for the character of men, and these metaphorical images allowed for a greater subtlety of description, liberating literati from the narrower constraints of Confucian character discourse. While earlier accounts might describe a man who “[stood out highly] among couriers and did not mingle with the crowd,” by the fifth century, the same man was described as, “in dense profusion, like a pine tree at a height of [ten thousand feet]. Though gnarled and full of knots, if used for a large building, it may serve as a beam or pillar.”\textsuperscript{220}

These natural metaphors relied on an appeal to the sensuous. As Qian Nanxiu writes, “once human nature inhabits the shells of natural objects, it appropriates the perceptible qualities of nature.” Men could be “soughing like the wind beneath the pine trees, high and gently blowing,” or “vast and deep, like a reservoir of ten thousand \textit{qing}; clarify him and he grows no purer, stir him and he grows no muddier.” Touch, smell, sound, and vision are all marshaled in


these and similar metaphors of a man’s character, and their qualities transferred from the natural object to the person in question.\textsuperscript{221}

These metaphors endured and developed throughout the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods, finding form in texts, images, and the decorative arts. The continuing direct appeal of such metaphors to the senses and the ability of the audience to recall physical sensation through the close reading of an artwork was elegantly demonstrated by Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) when he wrote:

I have always loved these lines from a Tang Poem:

“Cock crows by a grass hut in moonlight
footprints left in frost on a wooden bridge,”

[When I read these,] it is as though I myself were suffering the travelers’ grief, in the cold of the close of the year, in a chill wind under bare trees. And when it says:

“At the wild pond spring waters overflow
The setting sun lingers over the sunken flower beds,”

one can feel the sweet wind and the sun’s rays, all things coming to life, and a oneness with nature that brings a sense of joy and inspiration.\textsuperscript{222}

In Ouyang Xiu’s experience of reading the poem, the appeal to sight (moonlight), sound (cock’s crow) and touch (footprints) directed him to a sense of commiseration with the poem’s traveller and a more direct memory-sensation of cold and chill in his own body. In the latter lines, Ouyang’s sense of joy and inspiration at reading the poem was directly connected to a physical sensation of sun and wind that he had on his own skin while reading about a scene in which neither warmth nor wind is directly mentioned. Which is to say, in order to cue a direct response

\textsuperscript{221} Nanxiu Qian, 41, 62, 182.
\textsuperscript{222} As quoted in Li Zehou, 100.
to the senses of touch, smell, or sight in a reader, a poetic line was not required to commit its predicate to the action of those sensations. The image of the setting sun in early summer over flowerbeds by a flowing spring was enough to inspire the warmth of the sun’s rays, the feeling of the breeze across the water, and the sweet fragrance of the flowers in their sunken bed.

If Ouyang Xiu’s commentary attests to the empathetic sensory reaction a reader might have of a poem, what then might be the status of the senses in relation to viewing literati painting? As images, their appeal was directly visual. Inscribed with poetry, as they often were, such paintings appeal to the aural as well. The bodily, and particularly the haptic, are referenced in the evidence of mark-making that defines literati paintings and also in their terms of appreciation that include bodily “traces” 跡.

Susan Nelson has written about the correlation between sound and vision in Chinese painting. As Nelson has described it, seeing aural phenomena within Chinese painting could be signaled through the purposefully posed figure in the landscape that gestured with its whole body toward the perception of some sound within the painting. Often such figures turned with their backs away from the viewer to emphasize aspects of hearing over looking. Sometimes it was through averted expressions that listeners in a painting showed they were absorbed in the act of listening. But Nelson went on to argue that in landscape paintings without gesturing figures, the composition itself could collaborate with inscribed poems in developing the idea in viewers that they should be listening with their eyes. In paintings like Zhang Feng’s (d.1662) “Listening to a Waterfall by a Rocky Cliff” [fig. 38] the principal activity of the figure was identified in the painter’s inscription as listening, but it was the overwhelmingly stony surfaces of the landscape that amplified that activity for the figure within the scene. It was the patterns of the landscape that created a sonic effect for the viewer. Above the waterfall a blank space of paper was figured
as a rising mist, a pause in the otherwise rough cut surfaces of the landscape, and was capped by a spray of mossy dots that sat at the boundary between represented foliage and a patterning of sound itself.223

[Figure 38] Zheng Feng, “Listening to a Waterfall by a Rocky Cliff” (detail), ca. 1658-1660, ink on paper, Princeton University Art Museum

Such paintings recalled the sensations of patterns in nature, both visual and aural. Nelson understands this synesthetic response as based in a philosophical foundation that began with Zhuangzi’s admonition, “don’t listen with your ears, listen with your mind. No, don’t listen with your mind, listen with your spirit,” to which she has added, “listen with your eyes.” But, she reminds us the ultimate goal was the reinforcement of fundamental principles of the world, the li 理, as shown in the visual patterns of qi 氣, the fundamental vitality of all things.224 Each

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224 Ibid., 50.
separate sense worked together to achieve this, and paintings, by cuing multiple senses, gave form to the processes of concept formation.

Among the literati, paintings served as nodes that connected networks of educated elites across the physical distances of space and through the temporal distances that separated generations. The references to the senses operating within these paintings helped to socialize the sensuous, reinforcing social norms through the documentation and engagement of primary physical experience. As such, literati paintings were at the heart of literati knowledge-making and knowledge-transmission.

To separate the senses from painting, or any of the other literati arts, would be impossible. And yet, throughout the modern history of literati painting studies painting has largely been treated as an intellectual engagement, which amounts to a violation of the fundamental understanding of painting’s role in the social worlds of the literati. Viewing literati painting involved a re-embodiment of the combined sensing and thinking processes of the painter. These paintings directed their messages to the heart-mind by appealing to embodied knowledge through the senses.

As this analysis of Qian Du’s paintings has shown, ignoring these sensuous aspects of literati painting has allowed scholars to pass over entire spans of painting history under the assumption that the only way that the arts could engage in broader histories was through political or stylistic revolution. But these senses had their own history in the arts of China. If a sensuous history of literati painting were written, what sort of cannon would emerge? Who would the important painters be?
APPENDIX 1—A Basic Index of Paintings by Qian Du

This index provides only titles, years, and locations of the paintings by Qian Du that have been considered in the writing of this disseration. I have chosen not to make an illustrated catalogue raisonné at this point because it would be incomplete in too many ways. I saw over 150 paintings by Qian Du or purported to be by him, in both private and public collections in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, America, and Europe. In many cases these paintings have never been published, meaning there are no reproductions to consult, no information available concerning dimensions or materials, and no agreed upon title for the painting. In museums in China and Taiwan I was not able to take pictures and my viewing time was rushed. It would be irresponsible to publish my notes on the inscriptions, colophons, and other details of those paintings until the content of those notes can be confirmed. For the arguments presented in this dissertation I have relied on paintings for which my information was more concrete. Titles are given in Chinese as translations of those titles often differ from publication to publication.

This Appendix is therefore a work in progress.

An asterisk * denotes a work I have not seen in person

Parentheses ( ) denote a work the authenticity of which may be debated
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
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APPENDIX 2—A Publishing History of Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting 《松壺畫贅》 and Songhu’s Reflections on Painting 《松壺畫憶》

1812 – First publication of Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting. Printed at the Suiyuan, Yuan Tong’s home in Nanjing, Anhui Province.
   [No copies of this edition are extant]

(1812-1830) – According to Cheng Tinglu during this time Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting was printed twice more: once in Nanyang, Henan Province, and once in Wulin [Hangzhou], Zhejiang Province.
   [No copies of these editions are extant]

1830 – Date of the fourth printing of Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting. This printing was overseen by Cheng Tinglu and done in Hangzhou. Cheng uses the original Suiyuan edition and expands his new edition by fifty lines.
   [No copies of this edition are extant]

1835-1836 – Qian Du works with Cheng Tinglu to re-edit and publish Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting along with a new text, Songhu’s Reflections on Painting.
   [No copies of this edition are extant]

1850 – Date of Cheng Tinglu’s colophon as reprinted in later editions of both texts. Presumably the colophon originally accompanied a new re-printing in 1850, though that is not ever described in Cheng’s text.²²⁵

1880 – Date of Pan Zuyin’s 潘祖蔭 printing of “The Collected Works of Songhu” 《松壺集》, a combined publication of Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting and Songhu’s Reflections on Painting under the imprint of the “Baxi Studio” 八囍齋. In his colophon Pan Zuyin writes that Qian Du’s writings are all but lost by the 1880s, and that he was only able to find one edition of Qian Du’s collected works, which he had hand-copied in order to print his edition.²²⁶
   [This is the earliest extant copy of both texts; a facsimile copy of the original 1880 printing was done by the Suzhou Wenxue Shan Fang 蘇州文學山房 and has been scanned and put online at Google Books]

1888– Date of the combined publication of Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting and Songhu’s Reflections on Painting as re-published in the “Yu Garden Collection of Block-Printed Editions” 《榆園叢刻》, which was published by Xu Zeng 許增 (1824-1903).²²⁷
   [An original 1888 edition from the collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library has been scanned and put online at Google Books]

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²²⁵ All of the information about early editions of Qian Du's writing was provided by Cheng Tinglu in this 1850 colophon.
²²⁶ See Pan Zuyin’s 1880 colophon to his edition.
²²⁷ See Shen Jingxiu’s 1886 preface to his edition.
1896 – Date of publication for “Collected Writings of the Qian Family of Hushu”《湖墅錢氏家集》, a compilation of writing by the Qian family from Qian Du’s father Qian Di through to the publication date. Published by Qian Du’s grand-nephews, Qian Xibin 錢錫賓 and Qian Xiji 錢錫銈. Volume 11 includes Qian Du’s Songhu’s Superfluous Words on Painting and Songhu’s Reflections on Painting.

[An original 1896 edition from the collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library has been scanned and put online at Google Books]
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