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**Tung Čchi-čchangovy texty o malířství a jejich
vztah k Mi Fuovým *Dějinám malířství***

**Dong Qichang's Texts on Painting and their
Relationship to Mi Fu's *History of Painting***

Disertační práce

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„Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci napsala samostatně s využitím pouze uvedených a řádně citovaných pramenů a literatury a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.“

To the one who made life make sense, and the two who filled it with joy and happiness.

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I. Introduction

I.1 Dong Qichang

The subject of the present study are the texts on painting left behind by the late Ming dynasty painter, calligrapher, writer, connoisseur and collector Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636) and their relationship to the *History of Painting* (*Huashi* 畫史) written by Mi Fu 米芾 (1051–1107). Dong Qichang was one of the central figures of the scholarly world of his time and in his critical texts formulated opinions that became the corner-stone of all subsequent thinking and writing about the history of Chinese painting. Even a late 20th-century introduction to the history and practice of Chinese painting finds it useful to refer to Dong's texts when explaining the basic concepts that dominate the field.¹ It hits the point when telling the readers that Dong's views on the development of Chinese painting might not be universally accepted anymore, but they represent the core of Chinese thinking about painting ever after Dong Qichang at least until the late 20th century.

Substantial amount of Western research has been dedicated to the role of Dong Qichang in the art and scholarly circles of his time, to his own creative activities as well as the impact of his theories upon both theory and practice of painting and calligraphy throughout the later generations.² A pioneering study of his life, published in the time when the works of late Ming dynasty painting were still underestimated as of inferior value compared to the oeuvre of the masters of the middle Ming period, was Nelson Wu's (1954) dissertation *Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, the Man, his Time and his Landscape Painting*. Nelson Wu (1962) further expanded the information on Dong's life in his article entitled "Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555–

¹ Wang Yaoting (1998: 183–184).

² The summary of literature on the topic provided below is by no means exhaustive and mentions only the works relevant to the subject of the present thesis.

1636): Apathy in Government and Fervor in Art”, which is included in the anthology of *Confucian Personalities*. A more apposite picture of Dong Qichang and his artistic activities is, however, available since the publication of Celia Carrington Riely’s (1992) groundbreaking study “Tung Ch’i-ch’ang’s life” included in *The Century of Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636)* edited by Wai-kam Ho. Celia Riely has compiled the data on Dong Qichang’s life from primary sources, namely the *Official History of the Ming Dynasty (Mingshi 明史)*, Dong’s collected writings *Rongtai ji 容臺集*, the writings of his contemporaries and various local histories and gazetteers. She traced the genealogy of his family, his career, his collecting and creative efforts as well as his position within the web of both official and private acquaintances in a year-to-year manner and has created a complex image of this late Ming dynasty scholar.³

As for the research of Dong Qichang’s painting and calligraphy, James Cahill (1978), (1982a) and (1982b) has devoted much space to him in his studies of late Ming dynasty painting, bringing forth fresh views upon the so far neglected period in the history of Chinese art. The painting of relatively unknown masters of the late Ming period was subject of an exhibition in the University Art Museum, Berkeley, and several explanatory essays by Prof. Cahill’s students appeared under his editorship as *The Restless Landscape* in 1971. Later, Wai-kam Ho (1992) as the head of the unprecedented exhibition project entitled *The Century of Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636)*, which was organized in 1992 in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, edited its catalogue that brings together a large body of up-to-date information on Dong’s painting and calligraphy by both Western and Asian scholars. James Cahill (1992) is the author of the essay on Dong’s painting style and Xu Bangda (1992) described in detail the evolution of Dong’s calligraphy.

³ See also Way (1994).

In the secondary literature, Dong Qichang's theory of painting and his writings on artistic issues in general are usually limited to his Theory of Northern and Southern Schools. This famous concept refers to the division of the history of painting into two opposite lineages, which Liscomb (1991: 97) aptly characterizes as follows:

“Employing an analogy with two lines of transmission in Chan Buddhism, he [i.e. Dong Qichang – note M. P.] defined an orthodox Southern School of literati painting, which he traced back to Wang Wei 王維 (ca. 699–760) ..., and a heterodox Northern School composed of courtiers and professionals, which he traced back to Li Sixun 李思訓 (653–718).”

Wai-kam Ho (1976) elaborates on the topic of the Theory of Northern and Southern Schools in his essay devoted to the development of the orthodox lineage in painting of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, while Cahill (1982b) touches upon the same subject in the introduction to the publication on the history of late Ming painting. Mae Anna Quan Pang (1971) goes into greater detail describing the late Ming dynasty painting theory in general and summarizes the problems historians and theoreticians dealt with in their writings. Although interesting and at times novel points are mentioned throughout her essay, as a whole, unfortunately, it provides only an enumeration of the basic theoretical problems and the names of some of the writers concerned with them. Dong Qichang is referred to as one of the many here and several aspects of his theory are shortly introduced. Katharine Burnett (2000) has written an interesting article dealing with the question of originality in the late Ming dynasty painting theory. She uses numerous passages from Dong Qichang's writings to argue that specialized vocabulary was utilized in relation to the issue of originality. Most notably,

she elaborates on the usage of the term *qi* 奇, which was often mistranslated and misinterpreted by Western scholarship as “strange”, “heterodox” or “eccentric”.

Closely related to the emergence of the Theory of Northern and Southern Schools is the question of the authorship of the treatise known as *Discussions on Painting* (*Huashuo* 畫說), which was usually attributed to Dong’s teacher and patron-friend Mo Shilong 莫是龍 (1537–1587). As early as 1930s, this problem became the topic of Victoria Contag’s (1933) article in the *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, while in the second half of the 20th century Prof. Fu Shen (1970) and (1998) made a thorough analysis of the content and style of this text with the result of changing its attribution to Dong Qichang.

With the exception of a somewhat simplified and misleading interpretation of some of the writings on painting by the late Ming literati included in the otherwise very informative monograph by Susan Bush (1971), which have been already subject to a critical review,⁴ and several notoriously quoted lines concerned mainly with the Theory of Northern and Southern Schools usually connected with Dong’s name in the histories of Chinese painting, there hasn’t been, to my knowledge, published a comprehensive analysis of Dong Qichang’s theory of painting, not to speak of its integral translation into a Western language. Not even the gigantic catalogue *The Century of Tung Ch’i-ch’ang (1555–1636)* offers a separate interpretation of Dong’s painting theory in its own right, though descriptions of its different aspects are scattered throughout the essays on other topics by Celia Carrington Riely, Wai-kam Ho, James Cahill, Katharine Burnett and others.

In the Chinese scholarship, the attention accorded Dong Qichang and his theories has been similarly limited for a number of reasons. Dong was traditionally viewed as the father and forerunner of the Orthodox school of painting that flourished in the early Qing dynasty. It was, however, later criticized and overthrown by the Qing dynasty individualist painters, and

⁴ Munakata (1976).

by reformers of Chinese art in the first half of 20th century, so that those interested in it would be labeled too conventional and conservative.⁵ In the People's Republic of China, Dong represented a prototype of a feudal landlord interested only in enhancing the welfare and status of his large family, spending his life in idleness and luxury. His art was therefore seldom studied and exhibited and, only in the last approximately two decades, it has become the topic of serious scholarly research.⁶ Since then, however, an extensive body of material has been brought together in the compendium *Dong Qichang yanjiu wenji* (1998). Furthermore, modern editions of Dong's texts on painting appeared both separately⁷ or as part of larger compendia of the texts on painting of the past.⁸ Generally, Chinese historians of painting view Dong Qichang as the follower of the literati current in painting established during the Song and Yuan dynasties and, again, the father of the later Orthodox school of painting. Of works, mostly by Chinese art historians living in Taiwan or the USA and by Japanese scholars, that go beyond these limits, Wai-kam Ho's (1976), Fu Shen's (2003) or Kohara Hironobu's (1992) and (1998) studies should be mentioned for their insightfulness.

I.2 Mi Fu

Mi Fu was one of Dong Qichang's famous predecessors in the fields of painting, calligraphy, connoisseurship and art collecting. He lived at the close of the Northern Song dynasty and also formulated his views on the evolution of painting and calligraphy in theoretical treatises. His *History of Painting* became one of the most celebrated expositions on different aspects of history and aesthetics of Chinese painting and its collecting of all times,

⁵ On the misunderstanding, criticism and neglecting of Dong Qichang's style by later authors see also Kohara (1991).

⁶ For more information, see Tu Wei-ming (1991: 1–2, esp. note 6).

⁷ See e.g. *Huachanshi suibi* (2007) or *Huazhi* (2008).

⁸ Pan Yungao (2002: 172–212).

and many later authors, including Dong Qichang, admired it and emulated it in their own works. Mi Fu together with other Northern Song dynasty literati with their works of art stand at the brink of a new paradigm, usually called “literati culture” (*wenren wenhua* 文人文化) in the histories of Chinese culture, of which Dong Qichang with his artworks and texts on art represents the late phase. In this sense, Mi Fu and Dong Qichang can be seen as counterparts standing on the opposite ends of an important current in Chinese art. As they both left behind treatises dealing with history and aesthetics of Chinese painting, these two figures and their texts seem to offer themselves for comparison as far as their views on the aesthetics and history of Chinese painting are concerned.⁹

In contrast to Dong Qichang’s oeuvre, Mi Fu’s original paintings are largely lost today. The secondary literature in Western languages therefore focuses mainly on his calligraphy, the works of which survived in somewhat greater numbers and can also be studied from engravings and rubbings of the original inscriptions, as well as on Mi Fu’s texts and his achievements as a Song dynasty scholar. As early as 1960s, Nicol Vandier-Nicolas (1963) and (1964) published a study on Mi Fu’s life and work, and also translated Mi’s *History of Painting* into French. Her *Le Houa-che de Mi Fou*, furnished with a substantial amount of explanatory and illustrative notes, remains the only translation of this treatise into a Western language up to the present day. Susan Bush (1971: 67–74) summarizes some of the key terms of Mi Fu’s theory and Bush and Shih (1985: 191–240) enumerate several of Mi Fu’s ideas as part of their discussion of the basic concepts of Song dynasty literati painting theory.

Lothar Ledderose (1979) studied the development of Mi Fu’s calligraphy and documents it on the surviving body of his inscriptions as well as rubbings and copies in a large range of world collections. In his book, he has also demonstrated Mi Fu’s relationship to the past as one “who cherishes the legacy of the Jin masters” (*Bao Jin* 寶晉), and it is in this

⁹ For the refinement of this argument, I am indebted to Christian Unverzagt.

respect that his research was highly inspiring for the present dissertation. Peter Sturman (1997) has also published a monograph on Mi Fu's art of calligraphy, where the complex nature of Mi Fu's involvement with the art of Jin dynasty masters as well as its effect on his own creative output are brilliantly documented. Another of the main contributions of Sturman's monograph is a detailed discussion of the aesthetic categories related to and articulated in Mi Fu's works. Terms such as *pingdan* 平淡 and *tianzhen* 天真 that are closely linked to Mi Fu's world view and have deep philosophical connotations were part of Mi's vocabulary utilized to describe and evaluate the works of art he writes about. The explanation of these proposed in Sturman's study is highly illuminating also with regard to Mi Fu's painting collection and will be referred to in due course. Most interesting, though quite unrelated to the topic of the present thesis, is also Robert van Gulik's translation of Mi Fu's treatise *On Ink-Stones* into English.¹⁰ As for Mi Fu's collecting and connoisseurship, the Taiwanese scholar Yang Chunxiao (2004) has in her dissertation recently brought together the essential facts, working mainly with primary sources such as Mi Fu's treatises on the history of painting and calligraphy and his collected writings. In her articles, she has elaborated in greater detail on the topic of Mi Fu's connoisseurship of old paintings as reflected by his judgments expressed in his treatises¹¹ and some of her arguments have proved to be appealing in relation to the problems dealt with in the present thesis.

I.3 Dong Qichang and Mi Fu

Dong Qichang's position in Chinese historiography of art is often perceived as equivalent to that of Mi Fu during the Song and Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322) during

¹⁰ Mi Fu (1938).

¹¹ See Yang Chunxiao (2002) and (2006).

the Yuan dynasties. Of these two, Mi Fu left more substantial expositions on the development of painting and calligraphy up to his time, as known to him on the basis of his study of the textual and pictorial material extant in his day. The aim of this study is to analyze Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's theories of painting as a whole, define specific ideas and topics that appear in their writings and look for possible influences and differences between the texts of the two writers. It will be interesting to place the two analyses side by side and see how the theory of the preeminent Ming dynasty and Song dynasty "historians of painting" correspond with each other and in which aspects they differ.

Not only did Dong Qichang often refer to Mi Fu and his connoisseurship of painting, he once even exclaimed that it was of vital importance not to let Mi be the only one who wrote a *History of Painting*.¹² He also emulated Mi Fu's painting style and modeled his attitude towards art in general on that of Mi Fu. Both Dong and Mi were prominent connoisseurs and collectors of old painting and both found joy and satisfaction in delving into the past in order to arrive at consonance with the old masters. Manifestations of this attitude can be found for instance in the fact that Dong Qichang worked hard to trace his relationship to the Five Dynasties painter Dong Yuan 董源 (?-962), with whom he incidentally shared a surname, while Mi Fu styled himself as the one "who cherishes the legacy of the Jin masters."

Besides comparing Dong's and Mi's theories with respect to their literary styles, content and impact during their own as well as later periods, I would also like to formulate more clearly the character of their "histories of painting", and compare the picture of the "histories" these two artists constructed in their writings. This will enable us to understand more thoroughly the content and characteristics of the "history of painting" written towards the end of the Ming dynasty and its relationship to a similar "history of painting" constructed five hundred years earlier during the final phase of the Northern Song dynasty.

¹² *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 45).

The thesis will be divided into three parts that could work as separate studies in their own right. As substantial expositions on the real content of Dong's theoretical writings as well as Mi Fu's *Huashi* are missing in the contemporary scholarship, two separate chapters will be devoted to the discussion of the texts on painting by each of these two artists. I will describe in detail the form in which their texts survive at the present time, their contents including problems of terminology, topics dealt with and individual masters of the past the authors speak about. In the course of the discussion, I will refer to the problems the contents of the texts pose when viewed in the context of the surviving pictorial evidence as well as the arguments presented in other old Chinese treatises on painting. In this way, a comprehensive picture of the texts on painting by each of the two artists will be built up. Based on them, I will try to reconstruct a comprehensive picture of the "history of painting" as perceived by their authors.

Because the principle of studying history lies in looking at past events from the perspective of today, and this was also the case of both Dong and Mi when they wrote about paintings of the past from their contemporary point of view, I decided to retain this perspective throughout the whole thesis. The inquiry will be therefore made from more recent texts, i.e. Dong Qichang's, towards their predecessor, i.e. Mi Fu's text. In this way, it will be easier to demonstrate Dong Qichang's attitude towards the past and illuminate the aspects of his theory that were inspired by or differ from those of Mi Fu.

The comparison of the texts by Dong Qichang and Mi Fu will be the subject of the final chapter, where the topics and arguments presented by the two writers will be discussed side by side. I will try to define areas, in which Dong's and Mi's painting theories correspond to each other and those, in which they differ. Most notably, Dong's and Mi's perception of the past as demonstrated by their comments on paintings and styles of the masters of the past will be examined. I will try to find out what are the main currents in the history of painting they

elaborate on, which individual masters they write about and what is their opinion on the work of these masters as revealed through their comments. Like that, two separate “visions of the history of painting” and also the forces at work throughout the process of their authors’ reflecting over the past are hoped to be revealed and defined for a mutual comparison. Finally, the confrontation of Dong Qichang’s and Mi Fu’s vision of the history of painting is hoped to disclose deeper relationships between the opinions voiced in their treatises and the context of their periods of activity, social status or individual character. The analysis of the painting theory of the two prominent literati artists is thus expected to reveal and document facts important for our study of the history of Chinese painting of the periods in question in general. It is also hoped to illuminate the way in which the literati current of Chinese painting and writing about painting was shaped in the late 11th century and the form into which it has transformed by the late 16th century.

The discussion throughout the present thesis will be illustrated with my own translations of substantial parts of the treatises on painting written by Dong Qichang and Mi Fu. Most translations from Dong’s and Mi’s texts appear in English for the first time and are thus made available for further research by Anglophone readers.

II. Dong Qichang's theory of painting

II.1 Sources

Dong Qichang started to work on his collected writings toward the end of his life and their publication was accomplished by his grandson Dong Ting 董庭 (?–1645?).¹³ *Rongtai ji*, or *The Collected Writings of the Minister of Rites*,¹⁴ was published in 1630 with the preface written by Dong's close friend Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639). In 1635, when Dong reached the venerable age of 80, his collected writings were republished in three volumes, i.e. *Rongtai wen ji* 容臺文集, *Rongtai shi ji* 容臺詩集 and *Rongtai bie ji* 容臺別集.¹⁵ At the beginning of the Qing dynasty his writings were subject to censorship and some of their parts were banned. They were published again with the omission of a number of passages, mainly those dealing with Dong's ideas on painting, grading of calligraphy and notes on different topics, which Qing dynasty censors found “subversive and perverse” (*kuang bei* 狂悖).¹⁶

Dong's reputation as a great theoretician and historian of painting, however, already was widespread during the early Qing dynasty and the demand for his critical texts was great. Scholars therefore tried to dig into miscellaneous sources to locate his scattered statements and opinions, thereby circumventing the Qing censors. Various new treatises nominally

¹³ Riely (1992: 429), Lowell (1973: 28).

¹⁴ *Rongtai* is an unofficial reference to the Ministry of Rites according to Charles O. Hucker (1985: 274). The Minister of Rites (*Libu shangshu* 禮部尚書) was the highest position Dong held in his official career and he therefore styled himself *Rongtai*.

¹⁵ Huang Peng (2001: 56). For a modern edition of the three volumes published under a collective title, see *Rongtai ji* (1968).

¹⁶ This information is recorded in Huang Peng (2001: 55), who, unfortunately, doesn't provide more details on the exact conditions and context of the ban on Dong's texts. For additional information, the interested reader is referred to the *Index of Banned and Censored Qing-Dynasty Books* (*Qingdai jinhui shumu* 清代禁毀書目) published in the 8th year of the *Guangxu* 光緒 era (1883) by Yao Guanyuan 姚觀元 (active in 19th cent.).

ascribed to Dong Qichang appeared, being compiled from different sources by anonymous authors. These include the *Huazhi* 畫旨, *Huayan* 畫眼, *Huajue* 畫訣, *Rongtai suibi* 容臺隨筆 etc. They all comprised diverse material including Dong's statements on the nature and qualities of artistic creation, Dong's colophons and opinions on the works of different painters and calligraphers, ideas related to the creation of Dong's own works, anecdotal jottings from the history of painting and calligraphy and the like. They usually have the form of separate entries (*tiao* 條) that are all but incidentally put together, without any obvious order or organizing principle. As a result, these compilations overlap significantly and identical passages can be found in more than one of these texts, often in more or less the same wording.

The most extensive and richest as for the diversity of material are the *Jottings from the Studio of Painting Chan* (*Huachanshi suibi* 畫禪室隨筆). This book was compiled by Yang Bu 楊補 (1598–1658),¹⁷ and the earliest version extant today is a woodblock printed edition dated 1678 with the preface of Wang Rulu 汪汝錄.¹⁸ It consists of four volumes (*juan* 卷), of which the first is dedicated to calligraphy, but its opening section entitled “On using the brush” (*Lun yong bi* 論用筆) comprises also information relevant to the technical aspects of painting. The remaining sections of the first volume are entitled “Evaluation of calligraphy” (*Ping fa shu* 評法書), “Inscriptions on Dong's own calligraphies” (*Ba zi shu* 跋自書) and “Evaluation of old autographs” (*Ping gu tie* 評古帖). The second volume dedicated to painting is most often annotated and quoted in modern editions of the work. It comprises sections entitled “The secrets of painting” (*Hua jue* 畫訣), “The origin of painting” (*Hua yuan* 畫源), “Inscriptions on Dong's own paintings” (*Ti zi hua* 題自畫) and “Evaluation of old paintings” (*Ping jiu hua* 評舊畫). Volume three begins with a section called “Records of

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ For other early versions and their comparison see Huang Peng (2001: 54–55).

events” (*Ji shi* 記事), followed by “Records of travels” (*Ji you* 記游), “Evaluation of poems” (*Ping shi* 評詩) and “Evaluation of essays” (*Ping wen* 評文). Volume four comprises two sections of “Miscellaneous records, vol. 1 and vol. 2” (*Za yan shang, xia* 雜言上, 下), one section entitled “Jottings from Chu” (*Chu zhong suibi* 楚中隨筆) and closes with “The joy of Chan” (*Chan yue* 禪悅). In the third and fourth volume, references to paintings of old masters that Dong saw or acquired for his collection can also be found as part of the records of events and travels. Some of the comments on literary works, miscellaneous records or jottings from Chu also occasionally contain a reference to painting.

Huazhi is a rather short text that survives in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書¹⁹ and also, in a slightly different version, as a chapter of the *Rongtai ji*. It consists of diverse material ranging from fragments of descriptions of Dong’s travels to highly technical notes on the painting of different subjects. A considerable part is devoted to Dong’s judgments and comments on the works of ancient masters that he owned or saw during his travels. The entries are, however, completely unorganized as for subject and content, and are knotted together in a completely haphazard way. Parts of the text duplicate the entries in *Huachanshi suibi* and parts are repeated again in *Huayan* and *Huashuo*, the latter commonly ascribed to Mo Shilong.²⁰

¹⁹ The *Siku quanshu*, or “The Complete Library in Four Depositories [i.e. branches of literature]” was commissioned by the Qing Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1735–1795). It was compiled in 1773–1785 and gathered “all available books with the exception of those considered to be seditious to the regime or to be intellectually or morally offensive.” Lovell (1973: 110).

²⁰ For an illuminating discussion and its reattribution to Dong Qichang see Fu Shen (1972) and (1998). Following the publishing of Fu Shen’s articles that bring together a whole series of sound arguments against Mo Shilong’s authorship, many Western as well as Asian scholars are inclined to attribute the authorship of *Huashuo* to Dong Qichang, and so am I. Several scholars, however, have disputed some of Fu Shen’s findings and still keep a provision for the possible authorship of Mo Shilong. For details concerning the controversy, see the record of the discussion following Fu Shen’s (1972) paper that was originally delivered at the International Symposium on Chinese Painting in Taipei, and also some of the papers published in Chinese in *Dong Qichang yanjiu wenji* (1998).

Throughout the 20th century, these texts were edited and collated by modern scholars, and different versions and assortments therein were published in the large-scale compendia of theoretical texts on painting. We can thus find a version of *Huazhi* in Yu Anlan's 于安瀾 *Hualun congkan* 畫論叢刊,²¹ *Huayan* in Deng Shi's 鄧實 and Huang Binhong's 黃賓虹 *Meishu congshu* 美術叢書²² and several parts of *Huazhi*, *Huayan* and *Huachanshi suibi* in Yu Jianhua's 俞劍華 *Zhongguo hualun leibian* 中國畫論類編.²³

The discussion of Dong Qichang's painting theory in the present thesis is based on the following texts:

1. The unpunctuated version of *Huazhi* published in Yu Anlan (1937), where 166 entries are listed without any attempt to organize them by the compiler. As stated in the table of contents, the text is based on the version included in the *Shigutang shuhua huikao* 式古堂書畫匯考 section of *Siku quanshu*.²⁴
2. The punctuated version of *Huazhi* published in the third edition of Yu Anlan's compendium (1984), where new material has been added and the entries reorganized in a more orderly and concise fashion by the compiler. In his preface dated the last week of the 6th month of 1957, Yu Anlan explains:

²¹ Yu Anlan (1937 and later editions).

²² Deng Shi and Huang Binhong (1912–36 and later editions).

²³ Yu Jianhua (1957).

²⁴ 四庫全書, 子部, 藝術類, 書畫之屬.

“Dong’s *Huazhi*, *Huayan* and *Huachanshi suibi* overlap and differ from each other, as was already explained in detail in the *Shuhua shulu* 書畫書錄.²⁵ From the comparison of the three texts, it is obvious that *Huazhi* is the longest of the three treatises [in terms of the number of entries pertaining to theory and history of painting – note M. P.], *Huachanshi suibi* is the second longest and *Huayan* is the shortest. *Huazhi* contains roughly 160 entries; *Huachanshi suibi* contains 130 entries; while *Huayan* amounts to less than 100 entries. Therefore, to avoid repetition and supplement the passages to form a complete text, I took *Huazhi* as the basis and added to it the entries it lacked in comparison with the other two texts. I organized the material roughly to form sequences of entries pertaining to the methods of painting (*huafa* 畫法), painting schools (*huapai* 畫派), evaluations of famous paintings (*ping mingji* 評名蹟) and inscriptions on [Dong’s] own paintings (*ti zi hua* 題自畫) respectively. The mistakes made by other editors as well as entries unrelated to the study of painting, such as poems inscribed on paintings and the like, I dared to omit *en bloc*. As a result, I got 210 entries, which is about one third more than in the original version of the text [of *Huazhi*]. Entries extracted from the vol. 12 of *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* 佩文齋書畫譜²⁶ originally entitled *Huazhi*, its vol. 16 originally entitled *Huazhi* and its vol. 18 originally entitled *Huaping* 畫評 are all expositions on methods of painting and painting schools, so I grouped them into Volume 1 (*juan shang* 卷上) of my text. At the end of every entry, I added the notes appended to it in case it appears also in the *Rongtai ji* or *Huachanshi suibi*. As for the remaining entries, I grouped them into Volume 2

²⁵ Yu Shaosong (1932). This book is one of the most informative and helpful annotated bibliographies of Chinese texts on painting and calligraphy written in Chinese. Cf. also Lovell (1973: i).

²⁶ *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu* is an anthology of texts and other information on painting and calligraphy commissioned by the Qing Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662–1722) that was completed in 1708 and comprised 100 volumes (*juan*). For more information, see Lovell (1973: 41–42).

(*juan xia* 卷下) of my text. I used the title of *Huazhi* and hope to make the compilation available [for the use of future readers].”

In the table of contents, it is stated again that the text is based on the version in the *Shigutang shuhua huikao* section of *Siku quanshu*. The same version of the text, as we can see, was thus expanded and regrouped according to the organizing principles of the version found in *Peiwenzhai shuhua pu*. As a result, the randomly sequenced entries of the original *Siku quanshu* edition were organized on the basis of their content into thematically meaningful groups representing the methods of painting, painting schools etc.

3. The unpunctuated version of *Huazhi* published as a chapter of the *Rongtai bie ji*.²⁷

4. Modern punctuated and annotated edition of *Huazhi* published in *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 117–177). This version is also based on the text of *Huazhi* included in the *Shigutang shuhua huikao* section of *Siku quanshu*, but it comprises only 93 entries that do not appear in *Huachanshi suibi*. In other words, the editor Zhou Yuanbin 周元斌 took as the basis the text of *Huachanshi suibi*, and the entries that it lacked in comparison with *Huazhi* he grouped separately under the title of *Huazhi*.

5. The unpunctuated edition of *Huachanshi suibi* from the *Siku quanshu*²⁸ dated 1778 with the editorial note by Ji Yun 紀昀, Lu Xixiong 陸錫熊 and Sun Shiyi 孫士毅.²⁹

²⁷ *Rongtai ji* (1968, IV: 2089–2200).

²⁸ 四庫全書, 子部, 雜家, 雜說之屬.

²⁹ See also Huang Peng (2001: 55).

6. Modern punctuated and annotated edition of *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 3–113 and 181–192) based on the version included in *Siku quanshu* with several supplementary entries compiled from other sources, published under the editorship of Zhou Yuanbin.
7. The unpunctuated version of *Huayan* published in Deng Shi and Huang Binhong (1912–36), which overlaps with the entries in *Huazhi* listed under No. 1 and 2.
8. The reprint of the original unpunctuated version of *Rongtai ji* that comprises *Rongtai wen ji*, *Rongtai shi ji* and *Rongtai bie ji* published in 1968 by the National Library in Taipei, Taiwan.
9. The unpunctuated version of *Huashuo* 畫說 published in Deng Shi and Huang Binhong (1912–36), which repeats with minor variations entries included in *Huazhi* listed under No. 1 and 2. and *Huachanshi suibi* listed under No. 4 and 5. This treatise was originally attributed to Mo Shilong, but as Wai-kam Ho (1976: 111–112) and Fu Shen (1972) and (1998) have shown, its real author is most probably Dong Qichang. On the duplicate entries, see also the notes appended to the entries of *Huazhi* in the third edition of Yu Anlan’s compendium listed here under No. 2.

From the diversity of the enumerated material and mainly from the editorial explanation translated under No. 2, it is obvious that Dong Qichang’s painting theory as it can be reconstructed today is recorded in a heterogeneous body of texts published in different times by different editors. For the purpose of my analysis, I tried to put together all texts or parts of the texts that contain Dong’s statements associated with painting. As a result, I arrived at a corpus of texts quite close to the selection published by Yu Anlan in his 1984 edition, and also by Zhou Yuanbin in his modern edition of *Huachanshi suibi* (2007). The core of the

corpus is formed by the text of *Huazhi* in the edition published in Yu Anlan (1937), supplemented with the parts of *Huachanshi suibi* that do not overlap with *Huazhi*, and with a few additional entries derived from other sources. Unlike other authors (e.g. Yu Anlan according to the explanation translated under No.2), I do not exclude the colophons and poems originally inscribed on paintings that are part of these texts, as they often record interesting information that fits into the connotative framework established by other entries. On the contrary, I intentionally include Dong's colophons found elsewhere, if they are useful for illustrating the points implied by the entries of the core texts, or bring forward new meanings. For the purpose of the present thesis, I treat the corpus described above as authentic in the sense that it represents Dong Qichang's views and ideas related to the art of painting and painting history, although we have very limited means to ascertain the authenticity of each individual entry. The aesthetical and historical concepts will be thus reconstructed under Dong Qichang's name and for the time being referred to as Dong Qichang's. Should new facts concerning the authenticity of some parts of the corpus appear (as was for instance the case of *Huashuo* originally ascribed to Mo Shilong, which was later proved to have been most probably written by Dong Qichang), the findings of this thesis will have to be adjusted accordingly. References to different sources and versions of the texts will be made throughout the present thesis, where alterations significant for the meaning or the context of the argumentation appear.

II.2 Dong Qichang's painting theory

II.2.1 The value and significance of painting (and artistic creation in general)

Both *Siku quanshu* and *Rongtai ji* version of the text of *Huazhi* begin with a quotation of two poems that advocate the value of painting as a vehicle for expressing one's noble ambitions (*gaozhi* 高志) as well as a means for transmitting moral meanings across the centuries. One was written by Du Qiong 杜瓊 (1396–1474), an early Ming dynasty painter, teacher of Shen Zhou 沈周 (1427–1509) and the predecessor of the Wu School of painting, and the other by the Song dynasty poet Chen Shidao 陳師道 (1053–1102). Disorganized as the whole text might be, this seems to be a very suitable opening and moreover a quite common one in expositions on the art of painting from the olden times down to Dong's era.

Du Qiong's poem speaks about the fact that there were people during the Jin and Tang dynasties who regarded painting as mere amusement, unworthy of scholars' endeavors. He, however, finds the creative process that makes things appear out of obscurity equivalent to other literati disciplines, for the reason that it is suitable to convey the lofty ideals of its author. The main argument, in utter conformity with the traditional perception of the merit of artistic creation, is that painting is able to record the real appearance of things (*xiang qi wu yi* 象其物宜) and thus provide guidance for the future generations. Chen Shidao's verse adds to the whole argument the emphasis on finality and elusiveness of all human action when he exclaims "Only in my old age have I recognized the value of poetry and painting. // Now I just regret that the coming months and years will not be many."³⁰

³⁰ 晚知詩畫真自得，却悔歲月來無多。

It is interesting to note that this is the only mention of Du Qiong's ideas throughout the whole text of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, while verse by other poets and painters are often quoted repeatedly. One can thus wonder why the original editor of Dong's writings (or, ideally, Dong himself) chose Du Qiong's verse to argue in favor of the prestige of painting against the conservative criticism implied in the quotation of the old poem. On account of the complete absence of any explanation or commentary on the way *Huazhi* was compiled and individual entries selected, any attempt to make this issue clear is doomed to failure. It is, however, noteworthy that Du was not only the predecessor of the scholarly-oriented Wu School of painting at the beginning of the Ming dynasty, but also a forerunner of the Theory of Northern and Southern Schools of Painting.

Wai-kam Ho (1976: 115) writes: "In the early Ming, almost two centuries before the time of Dong Qichang,³¹ the poet-painter Du Qiong, a teacher of Shen Zhou, classified landscape painting in two opposite traditions, the ink monochrome school of Wang Wei and the 'gold-and-blue' school of Li Sixun, a scheme so remarkably reminiscent of Dong Qichang's that one cannot help wondering whether the resemblance is more than coincidental."³² As we can find a direct quotation from Du Qiong's poem cited as an evidence of the innate qualities of painting in *Huazhi*, I don't believe that the resemblance could be entirely coincidental. From the way Dong quotes Du's words to support his statement on the importance of painting, it is obvious that Dong read and knew Du's opinions on painting and he could well have been inspired by more than this one documented example. Dong wrote

³¹ The transcription is adapted from Wade-Giles to *pinyin* in order to conform to the system utilized throughout the thesis.

³² Cahill (1982b: 10) formulates a similar idea. As part of the introduction to his discussion of the development of late Ming dynasty painting, he also summarizes the history of the concept of two opposite lineages in writing about Chinese painting and shows that its roots go back as far as the Yuan dynasty. For a complex reexamination of Du Qiong's contribution to the establishment of the Two Schools Theory see the article by Kathlyn Liscomb (1991).

quite extensively on the art of Shen Zhou and it is evident that he studied the beginnings of the scholarly tradition at the dawn of the Ming dynasty with great care. We can therefore only regret that no other reference to the ideas of Du Qiong survives in the corpus of Dong's writings on painting, which would further illuminate the degree of originality of the concept of the Northern and Southern Schools in Dong's writings.

In addition to this theoretical statement advocating the value of painting as a noble discipline, practical importance of this activity is occasionally mentioned in Dong's texts, though such remarks are quite rare. An elegant statement on the nurturing power of painting is made in another paragraph of *Huazhi*. According to this playful sentence, it was thanks to the nourishment of mists and clouds in their paintings that Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354) died at the mature age of ninety with the appearance of a young boy and Mi Youren 米友仁 (1086–1165) was still bright at more than eighty and finally died peacefully without a sign of a physical illness.³³ This is a display of the age-old belief of correspondence and inner resonance between the artist and the subjects of his paintings that is often manifested in older theories of painting. The Song dynasty painter and theoretician Guo Xi 郭熙 (ca. 1000–1090), for example, found correspondence between the opulence of mountains in Li Cheng's 李成 (919–967) paintings and his progeny.³⁴

In another entry of *Huazhi*, Dong comes even closer to Guo Xi's idea by stating that

“The way of the painter is to have the whole universe within his hand and the things before his eyes all animated by the natural vital force (*shengji* 生機). Such people are often long-lived. But those who depict the things with elaborate punctuality and meticulously reveal all details, harm their longevity and are without the vital force

³³ Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 4).

³⁴ See e.g. Pejšochová (2003: 20–21).

(*wu shengji* 無生機). Huang Gongwang, Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470–1559) all reached longevity, while Qiu Ying 仇英 (ca. 1509–1551) died at the age of fifty and Zhao Mengfu only lived up to sixty years of age or so.”³⁵

From this paragraph, it can be seen that Dong shares with his predecessors the notion that the painter’s attitude towards painting correlates with the qualities of his life in general. From the Song dynasty onwards, the cultivation of one’s noble ambitions (*zhi* 志) has been an important part of the literati attitude towards life. It encompassed poetry, calligraphy and painting as means for expressing the qualities of the author’s personality. From the point of view of the recipient of the work of art (i.e. reader in case of poetry and viewer in case of calligraphy and painting), it represented a means suitable for the recognition of the qualities imposed onto the artwork by the author. Paintings left behind by the old masters have therefore been viewed as an important testimony of their author’s personal qualities, lifestyle and values.

Here, we can see that one’s longevity was also perceived as a part of this concept and was referred to in relation to one’s painting style. While the artists who painted in consonance with the natural forces that animate the Universe were believed to be themselves nourished by the natural forces and therefore long-lived, those who executed their works with elaborate punctuality (which is obviously what the reference to Qiu Ying points to and can be corroborated by other passages of Dong’s texts) harmed their longevity and died young. Dong nonetheless only hints at this issue several times in his texts, while the Song and earlier theories are much more permeated with this conviction. Dong devotes more space to factual description of the paintings by old masters without such transcendental extensions. In the

³⁵ 畫之道, 所謂宇宙在乎手者, 眼前無非生機. 故其人往往多壽. 至如刻畫細謹為造物役者, 乃能損壽, 蓋無生機也. 黃子久, 沈石田, 文徵仲皆大耋. 仇英知命, 趙吳興止六十餘. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3).

course of his reasoning in favor of some works over others we can sometimes find mentions of technical aspects crucial for the understanding of Dong's approach to painting and its qualities. These will be the subject of the following section.

II.2.2 Key terms and phrases

As the use of language and employment of specific vocabulary is a significant aspect of every kind of theoretical exposition, it is important to identify the key concepts that are referred to repeatedly throughout the text and are prominent in the course of the author's argumentation. In this section, I will summarize the key philosophical, aesthetic as well as technical concepts that stand out throughout Dong Qichang's texts.

In general, it can be observed that Dong Qichang is fond of referring to diverse age-old concepts and philosophical as well as aesthetic terms, more or less loaded with connotations acquired throughout the process of their employment by authors in different periods. More than with the original meaning and connotations of the terms Dong employs, he is, however, often concerned with their ability to suit his arguments on the nature and quality of the creative output of different masters. The general looseness and ambiguity of the terminology employed by Dong is, needless to say, a common feature of the informal jottings and poetic essays composed on specific topics by the literati in their free time.³⁶ In Dong's usage, it is sometimes interesting to see what connotations and meanings the terms excerpted from earlier texts or commonly used by authors of treatises on history and aesthetics of painting can acquire.

³⁶ For more on the genre of informal jottings as used by literati artists, see Fu Daiwie (2007) and also below note 337.

II.2.2.1 The rhythm of the vital energy

Both *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* contain a single reference to the “six principles of painting” formulated by the Six Dynasties’ painter Xie He 謝赫 (active ca. 479–502). This canonical statement is cited in the second paragraph of *Huazhi* directly following Du Qiong’s advocating of the virtues of painting. Dong elaborates only on the first, but, as we know, principal of the six rules that reads “the rhythm of the vital energy [to be expressed] by life and movement” (*qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動).³⁷ Dong writes:

“The first of painters’ rules is called *qiyun shengdong*. *Qiyun* cannot be learned. You can only acquire it in the moment of birth, naturally receive it from Heaven. But there are also aspects that you can learn. Having read ten thousand books and having traveled ten thousand miles, when you cleanse your breast from all dirt and dust, the hills and valleys will be naturally formed within and their outlines appear, directly following your hand. That’s how the spirit of landscape can be conveyed.”³⁸

Xie He’s perception of “the rhythm of the vital energy” as incommunicable, untransferable, and acquired in form of natural artistic talent in the moment of birth suites Dong Qichang’s opinion expressed elsewhere with regard to the so called Theory of Northern

³⁷ For different opinions concerning the explanation of Xie He’s “six rules” and the interpretation of the meaning of the “first rule”, see Soper (1949b), Cahill (1961) and Fong Wen (1963a) and (1967).

³⁸ 氣韻不可學。此生而知之，自然天授。然亦有學得處。讀萬卷書，行萬里路。胸中脫去塵濁，自然丘壑內營。成立郭郭，隨手寫出。皆為山水傳神。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 1).

and Southern Schools.³⁹ The analogy with Chan teaching drawn in one of the paragraphs that form the core of this theory also implies that the artistic excellence of the painters of the Southern School cannot be achieved through painstaking training or gradual accumulation of skills. But at the same time, Dong as a hard-core advocate of the study of old masters hastens to add that there are actually things one can learn through diligent practice, provided he has purified his mind. That's a requirement as old as the theories of Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 345–406),⁴⁰ but in Dong's thinking it is undoubtedly linked also to the ideas of the Neo-Confucian "school of the mind" (*xinxue* 心學) on the pure nature of the "childlike mind" (*tongxin* 童心).⁴¹ This statement is a clear demonstration of the "middle course" Dong liked to take on different issues so as not to give up the opportunity to profit from both opposite alternatives.⁴² It should be borne in mind when discussing Dong's classification of artists, as it can be (and often is) enticing to present his arguments in a too simplified and one-sided way.

In another paragraph of *Huazhi*, Dong Qichang's understanding of the phrase "qiyun cannot be learned"⁴³ and its contribution to the importance of artistic practice in general is further elucidated. On the overall significance of painting, Dong writes:

"The old masters weren't able to exhaust its potential and the noble gentlemen of the Yuan dynasty all found refuge in their engagement with painting. ... In our

³⁹ For the discussion of the position of different painters in the two lineages see also below section II.2.3. For the entries that contain Dong's statements that are usually related to the Northern and Southern Schools Theory, see section II.2.3.1 dealing with Dong's comments on Mi Fu.

⁴⁰ E.g. Guo Xi (1982: 72) records that Gu Kaizhi was known to put a great emphasis on the purification of mind before starting to work on his paintings.

⁴¹ On Dong's adherence to the Chan movement of the day, as well as on his sympathies for the teaching of master Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), see Riely (1992: 391), Wai-kam Ho (1976: 121) and especially Chou Ju-hsi (1989: 248–263).

⁴² Wai-kam Ho (1976: 124), for instance, illustrates the way Dong succeeded to "steer a middle course out of the conflict between the revivalists and the anti-revivalists" in the late Ming intellectual movement.

⁴³ 氣韻不可學.

dynasty, Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming both belong to the most illustrious scholars of the world and even if they weren't good at painting, they would count among the eminent personages. That's what is called 'qiyun cannot be learned'.⁴⁴

Here, the nature of the rhythm of vital energy as primarily a quality of the person and only secondarily of his art is revealed by the statement that even hadn't the masters excelled in painting, they would have become the most prominent personalities of their era. Moreover, the engagement with painting (*hua shi* 畫史)⁴⁵ is perceived as a refuge for the people of noble character in the time of foreign rule.

II.2.2.2 The motivating force

Different technical aspects and proper ways of painting individual subjects are discussed in several entries of *Huazhi* as well as some parts of *Huachanshi suibi*. These topics are most notably examined in the first section of the second volume entitled *The secrets of painting (Huajue)*.

As for landscape painting, Dong describes the way mountains and trees should be composed in a scene:

“The distant mountains must rise and drop again; only in this way the motivating force [will manifest itself in the painting]. Sparse woods are at times on the top and

⁴⁴ 古人自不可盡其伎倆，元季高人皆隱於畫史。... 國朝沈啓南，文徵仲皆天下士，而使不善畫，亦是人物錚錚者。此‘氣韻不可學’之說也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 2).

⁴⁵ *Huashi* usually means “a painter”, “a master painter”. In different contexts it can, however, denote any kind of involvement with painting and painting history, such as in the title of the entire treatise – the record of a sequence of paintings or painters, for the sake of convenience usually translated as *History of Painting*. (For a discussion of the genre *Huashi* belongs to and problems related to the translation of its title into English, see note 337.) In the paragraph quoted above, it is obvious from the context that it refers to the activity of painting itself.

at times beneath them, only like that there will be emotions (*qing*) [manifested in the painting]. This is the secret of painting.”⁴⁶

This is a commonplace statement on maintaining the equilibrium of different compositional elements in the painting, again very close to Song dynasty theories represented for example by Guo Xi’s treatise.⁴⁷ Moreover, it mentions the concept of “motivating force” or “momentum” (*shi* 勢) that permeates and animates the natural world and should be also manifested in painting. This active and physical element is mentioned in contrast with the passive, spiritual principle of “emotion” (*qing* 情).

The term *shi* is central in the concept of landscape (or, equally, any work of art) as a living organism and in this way it is also repeatedly mentioned in Dong’s writings. In the section of *Huachanshi suibi* entitled “On using the brush”, it is sometimes referred to as *bishi* 筆勢, or the motivating force of the brush that was present in the calligraphy of the old masters (e.g. Wang Xizhi 王羲之, 303–379), and the presence or absence of which is responsible for the overall quality of the work. As Wai-kam Ho (1976: 127–128) noted, *shi* is closely related to the concept of the vital energy (*qi* 氣) and the rhythm of vital energy (*qiyun* 氣韻) in a work of art. It is thus linked by Dong to the idea expressed by the first of Xie He’s “six laws,” and represents the criterion for judging the quality of an artwork:

⁴⁶ 遠山一起一伏，則有勢。疎林或高或下，則有情。此畫訣也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 4).

⁴⁷ “Mountains are high and low. High mountains have their veins underneath, ..., the low ones have their veins on their surface. 山有高有下，高者血脈在下，... 下者血脈在上。” (Guo Xi. *Lin quan gao zhi: Instructions on [painting] landscape*.)

“The spiritual energy (*shenqi*) of the old masters was expressed without inhibition by the joint action of brush and ink, its subtleties lay in following the state of mind [of the artist] and naturally becoming the motivating force (*shi*) of his style.”⁴⁸

and

“[Fan] Mu’s 范牧 (dates unknown) version of *The Preface from the Orchid Pavilion* (*Lanting xu* 蘭亭序) is characterized by vigorous and beautiful movements of brush (*bishi*) ...”⁴⁹

In painting, Dong urges that *shi* be used in the same way for characterizing the lively and animated quality of its subject:

“The weeping willow is not difficult to paint, you only have to separate the branches and the inner force (*shi*) will be revealed.”⁵⁰

and for describing the qualities of painting of a certain master:

“Ni Zan’s 倪瓚 (1301–1374) mountains usually have the characteristic feature (*shi*) of inclining to one side; they are not composed of two sides. That’s what most people don’t know.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ 古人神氣，淋漓翰墨間，妙處在隨意所如，自成體勢。 *Huachanshi suibi*. (Vol. 1: “On using the brush”).

⁴⁹ 牧之書蘭亭序，筆勢適媚... *Huachanshi suibi*. (Vol. 1: “Connoisseurship of old autographs”).

⁵⁰ 垂柳不難畫，只要分枝頭得勢耳。 *Huachanshi suibi*. (Vol. 2: “The secrets of painting”).

⁵¹ 云林山皆依側邊起勢，不用兩邊合成，此人所不曉。 *Huachanshi suibi*. (Vol. 2: “The origin of painting”).

In the cases cited, the term *shi* is characteristically preceded by an active verb such as “to achieve/to reveal” (*de* 得) or “to rise” (*qi* 起). In the same way, it is linked to the active aspects of landscape (“its rising and dropping”, *qi* 起 and *fu* 伏) in the above quotation from *Huazhi*. It can also be a quality of the overall design or a composition:

“The people of today construct big mountains by joining together many scattered parts, which is the greatest shortcoming. The old masters ..., on the contrary, even if their scattered parts were also numerous, regarded the motivating force (*shi*) [that tied them together] as the most important”.⁵²

Qing, on the other hand, is a static principle of an atmosphere or emotional charge that can be characteristic of a landscape painting as well as a poem.⁵³ In *Huachanshi suibi* it appears in phrases such as *qingtai* 情態 (atmosphere, state of mind) or *youqing* 有情 (to be permeated with [such-and-such] an atmosphere). It is interesting that trees (or, more precisely, the woods) are mentioned as a medium for expressing or embodying this kind of atmosphere in the quotation from *Huazhi*. The explanation can be found in Dong Qichang’s unusual interest in the subject of trees that is obvious from other paragraphs of his writings on the art of painting, and in the need to form a conventional opposition with the element of mountains in a statement. In Song dynasty theory, mountains are usually opposed with water, but trees can also be a functional opposite as a small element in contrast to the grandeur of mountains, or a lively aspect of the otherwise static scenery. It is also worth mentioning that the statement

⁵² 今人從碎處積爲大山。此最是病。古人 ... 雖其中細碎處甚多，要之取勢爲主。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 4).

⁵³ For discussions of the meaning and implications of the term *qing* in the seventeenth-century Chinese literature and drama, see studies by Judith Zeitlin (2007) and Sophie Volpp (2011).

was most probably originally linked to a particular painting such as other similar sentences in *Huazhi* or *Huachanshi suibi*.

In another paragraph of *Huazhi*, Dong explicitly cites Guo Xi's concept of the four types of mountains⁵⁴ and singles out those one can permanently settle in as the most significant:

“Those you can settle in are the most illustrious for the fact that they inspire in people the lofty sentiments of seclusion.”⁵⁵

Dong cites examples of such mountains in his neighborhood and expresses his desire to find refuge in one of them in his old age. For this reason, we are told, Dong has made one of the sceneries in his neighborhood the subject of his own painting. This passage is thus another of the many examples of Dong's introduction of general theoretical statements on the art of painting recorded as a comment to a description of a specific existing painting, very often his own. Here, we should note that this custom is a prominent feature of Dong's writings on painting. Although not entirely unique, it distinguishes his texts from many others including those by Mi Fu that will be discussed later. It adds to Dong Qichang's theory a touch of subjectivity and direct involvement, missing in the largely depersonalized descriptions of paintings or styles in the entries of Mi Fu's *Huashi*. It represents, on the other hand, one of the common approaches within the genre of “leisurely writings on art” (*biji* 筆記). It requires the reader to abstract the theoretical elements from the concrete and subjective descriptions of the

⁵⁴ “Substantial theories exist, which say that there are landscapes which you can move through, ones you can gaze upon, ones you can roam within and ones you can settle in.” 世之篤論，謂山水有可行者，有可望者，有可遊者，有可居者。(Guo Xi. *Lin quan gao zhi: Instructions on [painting] landscape*.)

⁵⁵ 可居則更勝矣，以其能令人起高隱之思也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 8).

objects in question, and, based on them, to form a sum of the author's theoretical approach from the scattered quotations and remarks.

II.2.2.3 Brushwork and ink

Dong also often speaks of the practical use of brush and ink. Many examples can be found in the exposition on the principles of brushwork in calligraphy in the first section of the first volume of *Huachanshi suibi*, but there are also theoretical statements recorded in *Huazhi* on the importance of brushwork and ink in the field of painting. In a paragraph dealing with Jing Hao's 荆浩 (active in the Five Dynasties period) art of painting, Dong writes that Jing compiled a volume of comments on other people's works called *The Secret of Landscape [Painting]* (*Shanshui jue* 山水訣) where he introduced the categories of brushwork (*bi* 筆) and ink (*mo* 墨). In his own rephrasing of Jing's ideas, Dong expresses his conviction that

“Those, who have brushstrokes and lack in ink often reveal exceedingly the traces of the brush [in their painting] and lack naturalness. Those, who have ink and lack brushstrokes make away with the traits of the brush movements and achieve great variability.”⁵⁶

It seems like an unbiased declaration of the necessity of combining both principles – brushwork and ink – in a particular work of art, which, as Dong states elsewhere, is the basis of the technical mastery of the great painters of the past. Dong's conclusion to this paragraph, however, suggests a slightly different meaning. While emphasizing brushwork and underestimating the usage of ink leads to the “lack of naturalness,” those who dismiss

⁵⁶ 蓋有筆無墨者見落筆蹊徑而少自然. 有墨無筆者去斧鑿痕而多變態. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3).

elaborate brushwork and emphasize the application of ink “achieve great variability.”

Throughout Dong Qichang’s writings we can trace many similar examples of his sympathy for the painters who accentuate the use of ink or ink-wash. In one entry of *Huazhi*, it is even closely related to the author’s ability of expressing the motivating force (*shi*) that permeates the landscape and thus, as we have seen above, to the overall quality of the painting in question:

„Dong Yuan and the monk painter Juran 巨然 (active ca. 960–985) both used ink-wash to paint clouds and mists. They encompassed the motivating force (*shi*) of their emergence, change and disappearing.”⁵⁷

Moreover, the use of ink-wash is the primary feature of the art of Wang Wei in Dong Qichang’s perception:

“The Southern School originates with Wang Wei, who used washes of light ink and transformed the way of painting the outlines and structural strokes.”⁵⁸

From this and similar expositions on the contrasting qualities of brushwork and ink-wash, we learn that it was Wang Wei, who was credited by Dong with the transformation of the painting style that relied on painting outlines and filling them in with color, and, in Dong’s classification belonged to the technical repertoire of the painters belonging to the Northern School of Painting. Wang Wei, according to Dong, painted mainly in washes of ink and thus became the originator of an opposite tradition.

⁵⁷ 董北苑, 僧巨然都以墨染雲氣, 有吐吞變滅之勢. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 16).

⁵⁸ 南宗則王摩詰始, 用渲淡, 一變鉤斫之法. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3).

Another paragraph found both in *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* further illustrates Dong's understanding of the meaning of the term “brushwork and ink” (*bimo* 筆墨):

“The ancients said: ‘There is brush [i.e. brushstrokes] and ink.’ Brush and ink, these two words people often don’t understand. Can there possibly be a painting without brush and ink? There are just paintings done exclusively with the contour lines, without structural brushstrokes (*cunfa* 皴法). These are called ‘without brush’ (*wu bi* 無筆). Paintings that have structural brushstrokes and don’t alternate the light and the heavy, the front and the back, the bright and the dark, are called ‘without ink’ (*wu mo* 無墨). People of old also said, that ‘stones have three faces’ (*shi fen san mian* 石分三面). This idea embodies the usage of both brushstrokes and ink.”⁵⁹

Both quotations just provided of the canonical statements of “the ancients” are Dong’s rephrasings of parts of the above-cited treatise by Jing Hao, which today survives under the title *A Note on the Art of Brush*.⁶⁰ They are only identified by the expression “The ancients say” (*Guren yun* 古人云), without directly referring to the original author of the sentences, as usual in old Chinese treatises. Jing Hao devoted in his treatise considerable space to the discussion of the usage of brushwork and ink in landscape painting. Jing Hao also presented his own reinterpretation of Xie He’s “six laws” (*liu fa*) renamed as “six essentials” (*liu yao* 六要), of which the fifth and the sixth are “brush” (*bi*) and “ink” (*mo*). It is interesting to note that in the course of his discussion of the “six essentials”, Jing Hao also raises the issue of a

⁵⁹ 古人云：有筆有墨。筆墨二字，人多不曉。畫豈有無筆墨者？但有輪廓而無皴法，即謂之無筆。有皴法而不分輕重，向背，明暉，即謂之無墨。古人云：石分三面。此語是筆亦是墨可參之。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 4).

⁶⁰ For an annotated translation of this treatise into English, furnished with a thorough introduction, see Munakata (1974).

painting being “lacking in brushwork” and “lacking in ink”.⁶¹ In Jing’s exposition on the qualities of different masters of the past, Li Sixun is described as lacking in the application of ink-wash; Xiang Rong 項容 (Tang dynasty), the alleged teacher of the master of broken-ink technique Wang Qia 王洽 (Tang dynasty), as lacking in brushwork; and Wu Daozi 吳道子 (active in the first half of the 8th cent.) as excelling in brushwork but lacking in ink. We can thus find a parallel between Jing Hao’s assessment of Li Sixun’s painting and Dong Qichang’s elevation of this painter as the head of the Northern School of painting, which differed from the Southern School mainly in its absence of the use of ink-wash. Dong’s arguments pertaining to the Theory of the Northern and Southern Schools will be discussed in the next section. Here, it is nevertheless interesting to note that Dong’s quotation of Jing Hao’s exposition on the use of brush and ink can be also remotely related to this topic.

II.2.3 Dong Qichang’s discussions of the past

The most extensive part of Dong Qichang’s writings on painting is devoted to discussions of the work of different masters of the past. About one hundred and fifty painters and calligraphers, both ancient and contemporary, are mentioned throughout his texts. Most of them are mentioned only once or twice in different contexts. The names of a few masters, however, keep appearing time and again and the elaborations on their works, painting and writing styles and techniques, painting subjects, predecessors and followers etc. constitute the core of *Huazhi*, *Huachanshi suibi* and other treatises on the art of painting ascribed to Dong Qichang.

In this section, I therefore summarize the information on the masters most often referred to throughout Dong’s writings and discuss the aspects of their art most extensively

⁶¹ Ibidem p. 15.

elaborated on by Dong. Later on, in chapter IV of the present thesis, I will come back to the characteristics of Dong's relationship to these masters that can be retrieved from his texts. Based on them, I will try to formulate Dong Qichang's notion of the history of painting and compare it with the analogous information retrieved from Mi Fu's account preserved in his *Huashi*. In this way, the similarities and differences between the late Ming dynasty and the Song dynasty constructions of a "history of painting" will be revealed on a general level. Moreover, it will be possible to compare the pictures Dong and Mi drew of different painters of the past and use their details to adjust our notion of these masters as part of the history of Chinese painting.

Chapters devoted to the work of different masters in this section will include discussion of Dong's construction of their lineages leading to the formulation of the famous Theory of Northern and Southern Schools of Painting, an outline of his attitude towards the copying of the works of old masters and, finally, a short account of his relationship to his own contemporaries.

II.2.3.1 Dong Qichang and Mi Fu

As Mi Fu is Dong Qichang's counterpart in the overall concept of this thesis and, mainly, one of the artists most frequently referred to in the corpus of Dong's writings, the survey of Dong's relationship to the masters of the past will start with him. In the texts pertaining to calligraphy, particularly the first volume of *Huachanshi suibi*, Mi Fu is virtually the most important personage whose opinions and works are cited in a significant part of the treatise. In Dong's texts on painting Mi Fu belongs to the most prominent figures, too, and is cited several dozens of times. The comments on his paintings and aesthetical concepts fall

into several categories: Mi's renderings of the scenes from the Xiao-Xiang region⁶² often described as "paintings of cloudy mountains", his painting style employed in the so called "ink plays" (*moxi* 墨戲), Mi's position in the lineages of artists constructed by Dong Qichang as a part of his perception of the past, and, finally, Mi Fu's affection for strange stones. As Dong's assessment of Mi Fu's calligraphy is not the subject of the present thesis, it will not be accorded a separate section in this chapter.⁶³

Paintings of cloudy mountains

Several entries of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* record Mi Fu's painting *White Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (*Xiao Xiang bai yun tu* 瀟湘白雲圖 or *Xiao Xiang bai yun juan* 瀟湘白雲卷). In these passages, Dong notes that the landscape depicted in this painting is very similar to the scenery over Lake Dongting, which he was traveling through during one of his journeys to the south, and that it has inspired him to make similar monochrome pictures of cloud-covered river sceneries. In *Huazhi*, for example, we read:

"The painting of cloudy mountains doesn't begin with Mi Fu. It can be traced to the 'splashed ink paintings' of the Tang dynasty painter Wang Qia. Dong Yuan was also fond of painting cloudy scenes and when there are clouds and mists changing and hiding, it is a picture in the style of Mi Fu. From Mi Fu's *White Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, the *samadhi* of his ink plays was revealed to me and thus, I used this style to paint the mountains of Chu."⁶⁴

⁶² Scenes from the Xiao and Xiang region are one of the classical subjects of the Song dynasty landscape painting. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Murck (1995).

⁶³ For more on the evaluation of Mi Fu's calligraphy by later critics, see Ledderose (1979) and Sturman (1997).

⁶⁴ 雲山不始於米元章，蓋自唐時王洽潑墨，便已有其意。董北苑好作烟景，烟雲變沒，即米畫也。余於米芾瀟湘白雲圖，悟墨戲三昧，故以寫楚山。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 6).

and

“The scholar painters should exhaust the skill and encompass beauty, study and befriend the Creation (*zaohua* 造化). They [must] know [how to] paint Wang Wei and afterwards, they will master Wang Qia with his splashed ink. They [must] know [how to] paint Li Cheng and afterwards, they will master the cloudy mountains of the two Mis. That is enough to seal the mouths of professional painters and to linger in the ears of connoisseurs.”⁶⁵

Dong obviously believed that an artist’s skill in the use of ink-wash in his painting was important for him to be classified as the scholar-painter (*shidafu hua* 士大夫畫) in line with the Tang dynasty masters Wang Wei and Wang Qia. Mi Fu counted among the most important followers of this lineage, for he proved to be capable of rendering different aspects of the cloudy mountains so difficult to depict in any other technique. While the master Wang Qia was famous mainly for his paintings in the “splashed ink technique” (*pomo* 潑墨), Mi Fu and Mi Youren are introduced by Dong Qichang as excelling in the paintings of southern landscape (i.e. the landscape of the area called “South of the River”, *Jiangnan* 江南) covered in clouds and mists. In modern histories of Chinese painting, Wang Qia is usually believed to have been a Tang dynasty figural painter. Mi Fu’s and Mi Youren’s works, on the other hand, are described as landscape paintings composed mainly from the “Mi family dots” (*Mi dian* 米點) and many layers of ink-wash in a wide range of tone variations.⁶⁶ Dong notes that these

⁶⁵ 士大夫當窮工極妍，師友造化。能為摩詰而後為王洽之潑墨，能為營丘而後為二米之雲山。乃足關畫師之口，而供賞音之耳。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 15).

⁶⁶ For a short introduction of Mi Fu and Mi Youren and extant paintings attributed to them, see e.g. Wang Yaoting (1995: 51 and 143). For a slightly different assessment of the original painting style and subjects depicted by Mi Fu, see section III.4.2.4 of the present thesis entitled “Mi Fu and Li Cheng”.

were at once following in the tradition of Wang Wei and Dong Yuan and at the same time fresh and original in comparison with the painting styles of other masters. Side by side with Dong's statements counting Mi Fu among the followers of Wang Wei, we can find entries mentioning the superiority of Mi's style of painting clouds and mists that document Dong's sympathy for this painter, such as:

“As it had been raining several weeks in a row, the sky was entirely blocked by fog. Li Cheng's painting style wouldn't be suitable [for depicting such scenery, and therefore] I had to use [the style of] the two Mis to transmit its spirit appropriately.”⁶⁷

Dong records two other paintings of the Xiao and Xiang sceneries by Mi Fu from his own collection that became his companions on the journeys through the southern landscape. In several other entries, Dong professes that he used to take his beloved paintings aboard when traveling long distance, often viewing them against the surrounding landscape and transmitting his feelings into paintings in similar style. In the same vein, he describes traveling with Mi Fu's paintings:

“Mi Fu originated from Xianyang. According to his own words, he painted the landscape of the Xiao and Xiang region after he settled in seclusion in Jingkou 京口 in Nanxu 南徐 [present-day Zhenjiang 鎮江]. All the mountains surrounding the rivers there were similar to the strange sceneries of the three Xiang Rivers. His painting of *Ink Plays* (*Mo xi* 墨戲) on a long hand scroll is now in my collection. I saw the evening clouds over lake Dongting in autumn and, indeed, it was like this

⁶⁷ 惟是積雨連旬，煙霧不開，與李營丘畫法無當，須米家父子可為傳神也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 5).

[i.e. Mi Fu's painting]. In that moment, Mi Fu's way of painting mountains was revealed to me."⁶⁸

This quotation further documents the fact that although Dong based his study mainly on the paintings of the old masters, the contact with real landscape was not entirely unimportant to him, as the critics of the cult of copying sometimes suggest.⁶⁹ When compared with Song dynasty treatises such as Guo Xi's *Linquan gao zhi* 林泉高致 or Jing Hao's *Bifa ji*, Dong's writings are indeed occupied mainly with the descriptions of styles and works of the old masters and don't record much of his experience with real landscape. Some passages including this one, however, reveal the fact that only after confronting a painting with the landscape it allegedly depicts, certain aspects of the use of brush and ink as employed by the ancient author of the painting were clarified. This demonstrates the way in which Dong Qichang at times worked with the paintings by old masters in his collection and reveals a fact not often operated with in the histories of Chinese painting, i.e. that Dong was aware of the necessity to study the paintings of the old masters side by side with real landscape. The entry mentioning the last painting of the Xiao and Xiang scenery by Mi Fu referred to by Dong reads as follows:

“Mi Fu also painted the *Haiyue Hut* (*Haiyue an tu* 海岳菴圖). He said he was inspired by the scenery of the Xiao Xiang region. And then [he painted] the mountains in Jingkou which resemble those in Xiaoshan. Now the *Haiyue Hut* is also in my traveling case. Mi Fu didn't find the mountains and rivers of Beigu by

⁶⁸ 米南宮襄陽人。自言從瀟湘得畫境，已隱京口南徐。江上諸山絕類三湘奇境。墨戲長卷今在余家。余洞庭觀秋湖暮雲，良然，因大悟米家山法。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 11).

⁶⁹ Chou Ju-hsi (1989: 270–276) points out that this shortcoming was nevertheless common in the art of Dong's followers in the Orthodox School of Painting, i.e. the so-called “Six masters of the early Qing dynasty”.

Dongting the best [subject of his painting], thinking that their clouds were the best [subject of painting] instead.”⁷⁰

This paragraph again mentions Dong’s custom to travel with his favorite paintings as companions and hints at the fact that the clouds were the most remarkable feature of the scenery surrounding the southern lakes and rivers. For this reason, according to Dong Qichang, Mi Fu found them to be the best subject to be depicted in his paintings rather than choosing the mountains or the rivers as the main topic. And, as we have seen above, Dong felt a similarly strong affection for the mists and clouds that permeate the southern landscape, believing even in their ability to nourish the vital force of the one who enjoys them and conveys their beauties to painting.

Ink plays

The manner in which Mi Fu used wet ink of different intensity Dong calls “ink play” (*moxi*). From several entries in Dong’s texts, it is obvious that Dong considered “ink play” to be one of the most original and inspiring features of the painting style of the “two Mis” (i.e. Mi Fu and his son Mi Youren).⁷¹ Moreover, as we saw above, Dong declares the painting of clouds and mists one of the essential skills of the scholar-painter. This opinion is documented

⁷⁰ 米元暉又作海岳菴圖，謂於瀟湘得畫景。其次則京口諸山，與湘山差類。今海岳圖亦在余行笈中。元暉未嘗以洞庭北固之江山爲勝，而以其雲物爲勝。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 11).

⁷¹ Mi Fu and his son Mi Youren are often referred to collectively as the “two Mis” (*er Mi* 二米). From the old times onwards, historians and critics didn’t usually find necessary to distinguish between the style of the father and the son. One of the motives is surely the obscure nature of their legacy, which didn’t allow for making exact distinctions between the individual contributions of each of them. Besides, a tendency to group painters with similar background and stylistic orientation under such collective names, regardless of the individuality of those included in such groups, is strong in Chinese historiography and art theory and can be demonstrated on many other examples such as “the two Wangs” (Wang Xizhi and his son Wang Xianzhi 王獻之, 344–386), “the four great masters of such and such period”, etc.

by three entries of *Huazhi*, all of which also shed interesting light on Mi Fu's and Mi Youren's shared attitude towards the painting of the Tang dynasty poet and painter Wang Wei.⁷² These three entries read:

“Paintings in the mode that Mi Youren called ‘ink plays’ can correct the mistakes of generations of painting adepts. He even criticized Wang Wei, but possessed a discerning eye for painting (*juyan* 巨眼).⁷³ I painted [this painting] following [Youren's] manner of expression (*yi* 意). It is roughly comparable to paintings by Gao Kegong 高克恭 (1248–1310), but I was unable to achieve the richness of transformations characteristic of the art of the two Mis.”⁷⁴

“The skill of a painter is best revealed in his art of painting clouds and mists in their transformations. Mi Youren said that of all the paintings he saw, Wang Wei's were the most numerous. They were all exceedingly elaborate, unworthy of being studied, with the exception of those depicting cloudy mountains in the form of ‘ink plays’. This sentence seems to be one-sided, but [when painting] a landscape, the clouds should indeed be accorded due attention and cannot be painted in colors. It should start with applying brushstrokes that will give the clouds the form of steaming vapors, exuberant and plump in their fullness. Like this, they will be vital and full of vibrant rhythm.”⁷⁵

⁷² Another paragraph from *Huazhi* cited in note 65 further corroborates Dong's conviction.

⁷³ The somewhat confusing term *juyan* is often used in relation to connoisseurship of paintings and calligraphy and means “a good eye” experienced in judging the quality of artworks.

⁷⁴ 米元暉自謂墨戲，足正千古畫史謬習。雖右丞亦在詆訶，致有巨眼。余以意爲之，聊與高彥敬上下，非能盡米家父子之變也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 6).

⁷⁵ 畫家之妙，全在煙雲變滅中。米虎兒謂王維畫見之最多，皆如刻畫，不足學也，惟以雲山爲墨戲。此語雖似偏，然山水中，當著意煙雲，不可用粉染。當以墨漬出，令如氣蒸，冉冉欲墮。乃可稱生動之韻。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 2).

“The way in which Mi Fu painted his works can at once correct the devious manners of other painters. In his proud self-conscious statements he proclaimed not to have adopted anything of the meticulous craftsmanship of Wu Daozi. He also said that Wang Wei’s painting suffered from extreme elaborateness, which is really ridiculous. Actually, the Tang dynasty painting style further developed after it was transmitted to the Song, and once it reached Mi Fu’s time, it changed again.

Although I [usually] don’t imitate Mi Fu’s style for fear that my painting would become too simplified and perfunctory, I made this ink play in his manner. I didn’t dare to make it completely devoid of the elements of Dong Yuan’s and Juran’s style. It is a good compromise, but I wasn’t quite able to make justice to it.”⁷⁶

In these three quotations, several important points related to Dong’s attitude to Mi Fu’s art are raised that merit our attention. Firstly, as we have already seen, Dong finds Mi Fu’s painting style described as “ink plays” superior to the styles of many other painters. He claims therefore repeatedly that by using it, it is possible to “correct the erroneous manners of the adepts of painting”. The “ink plays” are, as we have seen above, especially suitable for painting clouds and mists and it is in this subject that the abilities of a painter can be best revealed, because, according to Dong, it is the most difficult to do. Secondly, Dong records

⁷⁶ 米元章作畫，一正畫家謬習。觀其高自標置，謂無一點吳生習氣。又云王維之跡，殆如刻畫，真可一笑。蓋唐人畫法，至宋乃暢，至米家又變耳。余雖不學米畫，恐流入率易，茲一戲仿之，猶不敢失董巨意。善學下惠，頗不能當也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 6). The phrase *xue Xia Hui* 學下惠 refers to the famous politician Liuxia Hui 柳下惠 (originally called Zhan Huo 展獲, 720–621 B.C., the governor of the district Liuxia of the ancient state of Lu), who was praised by Confucius for his ability to make a compromise in a difficult life situation so as not to harm his reputation. In later times, the phrase “to emulate Xia Hui” therefore points to making a compromise in order to live up to one’s reputation as a virtuous man. Here, it apparently points to Dong’s decision to correct in a way Mi Fu’s style with the elements of the style of Dong Yuan and Juran. The exact meaning of the conclusion of the paragraph, however, is quite difficult to understand in relation to this formula. To me, it seems most plausible that Dong sighs his inability to combine the two kinds of styles successfully in this case.

his own attempts to imitate such works of the two Mis, but, interestingly, states repeatedly that he failed to match their most important quality, the richness of transformations of the clouds and mists. And since he maintains that this is the very essence of the ink plays of the two Mis, these complaints, as a matter of fact, demonstrate Dong's sense of his own inferiority to the two great Song dynasty painters. Dong judged his own skill rather as comparable to the Yuan dynasty master Gao Kegong, another of his favorite painters who liked to depict mountains covered in clouds and mists and is often listed as a follower of Wang Wei and Mi Fu in Dong's texts.⁷⁷

No less noteworthy is the way in which Dong comments on Mi Fu's and Mi Youren's notes on Wang Wei's art of painting. In the second entry cited above, Dong quotes Mi Youren saying that he had seen a great many paintings by Wang Wei, but most of them were characterized by minute elaborateness (*ke hua* 刻畫) and thus unworthy of being studied. Only Wang Wei's depictions of cloudy mountains in the form of ink plays are, in Mi Youren's opinion, the exception to this rule. They have, indeed, become the source of inspiration for the two Mis, at least in Dong Qichang's understanding demonstrated by his lineages of painters. In the first entry, Dong hints at the same problem saying that "Mi Youren even criticized Wang Wei". This is a very interesting comment, for Wang Wei's status as the leader of the "Southern – literati – monochrome" lineage of painting has been a well established and undisputed fact in the theories of Dong Qichang's followers down to the present day. Here we can see, however, that Dong was aware of a different perception of the work of his principal model at least in some of the Song dynasty texts on painting.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ For an extant painting by Gao Kegong in this manner see *Gugong shuhua jinghua teji* (1996: 172–3).

⁷⁸ As Kohara (1992: 83) has noted in his article, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the references to Wang Wei quoted by Dong Qichang actually cannot be found in Mi Fu's texts extant today. Dong, however, speaks about Mi Youren's opinion on Wang Wei, so obviously not only the text of *Huashi* by Mi Fu that we have today was the source of Mi Fu's and Mi Youren's theory that Dong Qichang drew on when writing his comments. The textual sources he read and referred to in his own writings are unfortunately usually not

In reality, the “well established fact” that Wang Wei was the progenitor of the monochrome style in landscape painting dates mainly from the day of Dong Qichang and even more so from the enlarged and more sophisticated versions promoted by the successors to his theories. The opinions introduced by his followers are, however, usually characterized by a rather simplified and rigid attitude towards the principal arguments of the theory.⁷⁹ Once Wang Wei was codified as the founder of the “Southern – literati – monochrome” lineage (and, as we have seen, in Dong’s original system he had a possible companion among Tang dynasty painters in the now totally obscure painter Wang Qia, the initiator of the “splashed ink” technique), nobody ever asked what Wang Wei’s genuine work actually looked like. Or, to be more precise, nobody asked this question at least until the second half of the 20th century.

To arrive at a better understanding of the whole problem, we have to bear in mind an important, though often underestimated dimension of the circumstances surrounding artistic creation and collecting of artworks in Chinese history. In relation to the study and transmission of the styles of old masters, it is crucial to understand the level of knowledge of genuine old paintings the practitioners and art critics in the past actually had. As numerous modern studies have shown,⁸⁰ it was extremely difficult to gain access to genuine artworks of

identified and only a few terse remarks on them can be found in the corpus of Dong’s theories. It is therefore not possible to make any conclusions on the nature of Dong’s treatment of his original sources. It would be, however, in either case misleading to directly accuse him of wrenching facts and misinterpreting sources, for it is highly probable that he often quoted texts that are irretrievably lost today. To find out what Mi Fu actually does say about Wang Wei in the currently available versions of his texts, the reader is referred to section III.4.2.3 of the present thesis, where Mi Fu’s references to Wang Wei are discussed in detail.

⁷⁹ Mae Anna Quan Pang (1971: 25–26) elaborates on the ways later artists and theoreticians modified Dong’s theory of the two opposite lineages in the history of Chinese painting.

⁸⁰ For essays and studies related to this problem see mainly Zürcher (1955), Fong (1962), Loehr (1964), Stanley-Baker (1986), Cahill (1994: 113–148), various essays included in Smith and Fong (1999) and most recently Unverzagt (2007: 45–61) and Jacoby (2009: 89–107). Ledderose (1979: 46) also shows that at the end of the 11th century, all major works of calligraphy were in the possession of a few private collectors, mostly belonging to the high officials and aristocratic families of the day and there is every reason to expect that the situation of the

the past in virtually every period of Chinese history and a great confusion surrounded the issues of authenticity and reliability of the extant works. The painters of the late Ming dynasty usually worked in the style of “such-and-such a master”, but the works they took as a basis for their training were copies or imitations often miles distant from the work of the master in question. The problem of locating relevant paintings by the masters of the past, of course, rose with their age, so that, for example, while Yuan paintings could still be found in a certain amount during the Ming dynasty, Song dynasty paintings, not to speak of Tang dynasty or earlier ones, were very difficult to see. The extant masterpieces of old painting were concentrated in several private collections that were made accessible by the owner to those privileged enough to count among family friends or able enough to find a way of being introduced to the owner through the system of personal connections.⁸¹ Besides, it was possible to see works of painters of the past in temples in the form of murals, and temples also housed collections of scrolls that were available for viewing by interested lay students.⁸² In both Song and Ming periods, however, the most extensive and refined as to the quality of the artworks was the imperial collection that was accessible only to a limited number of court artists and students of the imperial academy. In times when the emperor had a strong affection towards art and tried to concentrate most of the ancient masterpieces in the imperial collections, it was

painting collections will not differ significantly. The conditions underlying and shaping the discipline of art collecting towards the end of the Northern Song dynasty are brilliantly documented and analyzed by Ebrey (2008).

⁸¹ Riely (1992) shows throughout the whole essay that recounts Dong Qichang’s life and career the way Dong was able to profit from the connections and acquaintances he made in different stages of his life in order to get access to the artworks housed in prominent collections of his day. The instances she cites often document an extremely pragmatic stance Dong took in these cases that is not commonly emphasized by those who elaborate on his theories. In section II.2.3.4 of the present thesis, Dong’s attitude towards authenticity and copying of the works of old masters is discussed in detail.

⁸² I am indebted to Prof. Katharine Burnett for pointing out this aspect of collecting and study of the old Chinese paintings in the past.

close to impossible for private collectors to get hold of other than inferior paintings or poor copies of the famous masterpieces of the past.⁸³

Under such conditions, it was very difficult for anyone to get to know the corpus of the works by the masters he wanted to study in greater detail. The adepts of painting usually based their study simply on the works attributed to the old masters they happened to come across. Their notion of the technique, composition and other elements of their purported style was therefore formed by paintings of different quality and relevance to the genuine style of the master in question, as well as by the histories and critical texts where the style of these masters was described, and finally by the instructions of the teachers transmitted to the adepts in oral form. This led to the fact that the styles of the old masters as perceived by later students and followers were not based purely on the observation and thorough understanding of the paintings by these masters. On the contrary, they were more or less deformed by the way the “icons” of these masters had been molded by centuries of admirers and imitators.

Both Dong Qichang and Mi Fu, as we know, belonged to the most privileged few, who, largely due to their personal passion for art, saw and even owned a great amount of the masterpieces of old art still extant in their time. They both had the social standing and material means to actively search for the paintings they wanted to collect and throughout their lives cultivated a level of connoisseurship unmatched among their contemporaries. They could therefore dare to express at times shockingly self-conscious opinions on the quality of the works they came across. They were, however, not exempt to the above described state of affairs. As some of their statements such as Dong’s actual ignorance of Wang Wei’s painting style suggest, they, too, were constructing icons of old masters. The attributes of each of the “icon” constructed in this way (such as Wang Wei’s introduction of the ink-wash painting style) were derived from their knowledge of the paintings allegedly painted by the old master

⁸³ For a summary of the history of imperial collecting in China and a detailed elaboration on its situation under the Northern Song dynasty, see Ebrey (2008: 3–8).

they had the opportunity to see and the theoretical information on his style they were able to get. In Wang Wei's case, it is moreover highly probable that the knowledge of his poetry shaped Dong's notion of the "icon" of Wang Wei, the poet-painter and the reputed "Buddha of poetry" (*shi fo* 詩佛).⁸⁴ It would be interesting to describe more closely the way, in which the "construction of Wang Wei", which took place in the field of poetry by including different kinds of poems into collected works and anthologies published in different periods influenced Dong Qichang's notion of Wang Wei's alleged painting style. Such inquiry is, however, beyond the scope of the present thesis and can become the topic of further research.

The icon of Wang Wei as the predecessor of the Southern School of painting was thus formed in the historical and critical texts on painting (and we will see in the next section to what extent it was actually formed in the texts ascribed to Dong Qichang) and it remained unchallenged for several subsequent centuries. Only in the works of modern scholars, whose understanding of old Chinese painting is based on the knowledge of most of the extant paintings by the old masters housed in and made accessible by present-day museums and private collections, a different perception of Wang Wei's painting style was introduced and substantiated by sound arguments. In their opinion, Wang Wei as a painter of the high Tang dynasty was still working largely in the style of "blue and green landscape" (*qinglü shanshui* 青綠山水, also called "gold and green style", *jinbi shanshui* 金碧山水) which prevailed in the work of most landscape painters of his time.⁸⁵

As a mainstream style of the Tang dynasty landscape painting, it can be demonstrated e.g. on the anonymous painting *Emperor Minghuang's Flight to Shu* (*Minghuang xing Shu tu* 明皇幸屬圖) from the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, which is probably

⁸⁴ I am indebted to Prof. Olga Lomová for pointing out this issue.

⁸⁵ This is especially the case of scholars and curators associated with the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Mr. Hsu Kuo-huang, former curator of the collection of painting in the NPM, for example, expressed such opinion in his lecture delivered at Charles University in Prague on 8. September 2004.

a Song dynasty copy that retains the most important characteristics of the blue and green landscape style.⁸⁶ Specifically for Wang Wei's painting, this argument is supported i.a. by the accounts of his principal work *The Wangchuan Villa* (*Wangchuan tu* 網川圖) and its later copies, which was probably also painted in the blue and green style rather than in monochrome ink.⁸⁷ In reality, the surviving paintings attributed to Wang Wei that are painted in ink-wash are scarce and their qualities as well as authenticity are doubted by modern scholars.⁸⁸ In the Tang dynasty sources, remarks vaguely pointing to Wang Wei's possible monochrome painting style can be found that were probably taken as basis by the later writers.⁸⁹ At the same time, however, most of the contemporary or slightly later sources describe Wang Wei's paintings as full of intricate details rendered in color, which are said to have been even applied to the semi-finished works by apprentices and craftsmen.⁹⁰ From the accounts found in the textual sources, we get an impression that the works described there are exactly the colored narrative paintings typical of Wang Wei's time rather than innovative paintings rendered in many layers and tones of ink, the main purpose of which would be the portraying of the transformations of mists and clouds or the like.

⁸⁶ For a reproduction see *Gugong shuhua jinghua teji* (1996: 50).

⁸⁷ A Song dynasty copy of a blue and green version of the *Wangchuan Villa* survives e.g. in the National Palace Museum in Taipei (<http://tech2.npm.gov.tw/literature/graphy/graphy/graphyc.asp?Page=1&CKey=41>. Accessed 17. May, 2010.) or in the Japanese temple Shofukuji 聖福寺 (http://tupian.hudong.com/a1_76_31_0100000000000119093116720076_jpg.html. Accessed 17. May, 2010.).

⁸⁸ See e.g. an image of a painting, which is lost today, that was believed to be the one recorded in Dong's writings, but today is found highly suspicious by Kohara (1992: 87, fig. 37).

⁸⁹ E.g. Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (ca. 815– after 875) in his *Record of Famous Painters of the Past* (*Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記), which he accomplished about 100 years after Wang Wei's death, writes that he “has seen Wang Wei's landscapes in ‘broken ink’, which were characterized by vigorous and fresh brushwork.” (“余曾見破墨山水，筆跡勁爽.” See *Lidai minghua ji*, *Tang chao xia* 唐朝下.)

⁹⁰ Bush and Shih (1985: 343) write: “It is suggested that artisans working under his [i.e. Wang Wei's – note M.P.] direction produced much of his oeuvre, adding colors and details.” For an example of a record of his paintings in the new ink-wash technique in the critical texts of the period, see e.g. the above-cited section of *Lidai minghua ji*.

Getting back to Mi Fu and his observations on Wang Wei's painting as referred to by Dong Qichang, we can see that Mi's comments strikingly correspond to the opinions expressed in the Tang dynasty painting histories as well as with the conclusions of modern experts on ancient Chinese painting. Dong Qichang maintained that Mi Fu and Mi Youren, too, expressed a conviction that "Wang Wei's pictures were largely executed with an extreme elaborateness and therefore unworthy of being studied." The only exception to this fact supposedly were Wang Wei's renderings of cloudy mountains in the style called "ink plays", which might have possibly referred to the same part of Wang Wei's oeuvre described by Zhang Yanyuan as paintings in "broken ink".⁹¹ Dong Qichang, as we have seen, challenges the opinion of the two Mis and charges them with being ridiculous or one-sided.

Most interestingly, Dong adds that he "usually doesn't imitate Mi Fu's style for fear that his painting would become too simplified and perfunctory" to invigorate his disagreement with the two Mi's in this case. Yet from many other statements scattered throughout Dong's writings we know that Dong admired Mi Fu and Mi Youren and modeled a number of his own paintings on their works. Here, it is instructive to note that as a device against "becoming too simplified and perfunctory", Dong utilizes elements of Dong Yuan's and Juran's style and mixes them up with the Mi family ink plays. From the first of the three above quoted paragraphs we can sense that Dong Qichang hopes to mend the "already changed" style of the two Mis with the elements of earlier codified models, which were closer to the purported Tang dynasty origins of the style. In this place, we can leave the issue of Dong – Mi – Wang dispute for the moment, and will return to it below in the section dealing with Dong Qichang's relationship to Wang Wei.

⁹¹ See above, note 89.

Mi Fu as a member of the lineages of painters

Mi Fu is often listed as one in a group of painters, which represents a school or stylistic orientation and illustrates Dong Qichang's own conception and ordering of the history of painting. In this section, I will document the way Mi Fu is grouped with other painters and discuss its relevance to our understanding of Dong's approach to the past.

In several paragraphs, Mi Fu is grouped together with some of the masters belonging to the Southern – literati – monochrome tradition such as Dong Yuan and Gao Kegong, who are mentioned as Dong's principal models throughout the whole body of his writings on painting:

“The paintings by Zhao Lingrang 趙令穰 (active ca. 1070–1100), Zhao Boju 趙伯駒 (d. ca. 1162) and Zhao Mengfu, when perceived as a group, were beautiful but not sweet. The paintings by Dong Yuan, Mi Fu and Gao Kegong, when perceived as a group, were unrestrained but had a good technique. The approaches of these two lineages are like two wings of a bird. I have been delving into them for a long time.”⁹²

As we can see, the lineage opposite to the one including Mi Fu is formed by the “three Zhaos”, by the way, another example of Dong's taste for grouping painters under various collective names as usual in traditional Chinese historiography and art history. Interestingly, the “three Zhaos” are not such a homogenous group as their opposite “wing” represented by Dong, Mi and Gao.

⁹² 趙令穰, 伯駒, 承旨三家合并, 雖妍而不甜. 董源, 米芾, 高克恭三家合并, 雖縱而有法. 兩家法門, 如鳥雙翼. 吾將老焉. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3). For other passages listing Mi Fu side by side with the painters of the Southern tradition, see below section II.2.3.2.

Zhao Lingrang was a painter active in the last decades of the Northern Song dynasty and his legacy is quite obscure today. Works attributed to him that survive in modern collections are largely colorful narrative paintings inspired by famous poems.⁹³ That leads some experts to the conviction that they were actually painted by Southern Song academy painters and can be only loosely linked to the original style of Zhao Lingrang. Albeit later attributions, they suggest that Zhao, too, painted at least softly colored landscapes, and explain his grouping together with Zhao Boju, a slightly later painter active under the Southern Song dynasty. Zhao Boju is famous for richly colored narrative paintings and landscapes in the so called “gold and green style” (*jinbi shanshui*). The third artist in this group, Zhao Mengfu is a Yuan dynasty painter who also often utilized the “blue and green landscape style” to execute paintings in the manner of old masters.

It is obvious that the “two wings of a bird” are actually the two opposite lineages of Chinese painting history elsewhere labeled as the “Northern and Southern Schools”. Here, however, it is noteworthy that Mi Fu, a representative of the monochrome tradition, is mentioned as a link between the Five Dynasties’ painter Dong Yuan – one of the early painters admired by Dong Qichang, whose work he eagerly collected and studied, as we will see below – and the Yuan dynasty artist Gao Kegong, with whom Dong felt a special kind of artistic fellowship. This entry, found both in *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* is therefore one of the extant rephrasings of the most famous passages that refer to the “Two Schools”.⁹⁴ The notion of the two lineages here doesn’t stretch all the way to the obscure origins, which are elsewhere a little bit too forcedly identified with the work of Tang dynasty masters.

Furthermore, towards the end of the paragraph, Dong states that he has been delving into the works of these two groups of painters for a long time. Notably, no mention of his preference

⁹³ For an example of such painting see e. g. the *Yellow Oranges and Green Tangerines* (*Cheng huang ju lü* 橙黃橘綠圖) in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

⁹⁴ See notes 65, 92 and 353.

of one over the other is made in this case. This paragraph compared to the few notorious passages usually quoted as the source of Dong's "Northern and Southern Schools Theory"⁹⁵ therefore represents a more realistic and unbiased version of Dong's perception of the history of painting.

Other topics related to Mi Fu

Besides the above mentioned subjects most extensively elaborated on by Dong, there are a few other mentions of Mi Fu in several contexts. One of them is Mi Fu's affection for strange stones, which became notorious already in his life. In several entries of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, the technique of painting stones by certain masters is touched upon, once even ending with a charming exclamation:

“Sun Kehong 孫克弘 (1533–1611) painted this album with his [Zhao Mengfu's – added by M.P. on the basis of the context of this entry] approach in mind. Had Mr. Mi seen it, he would have definitely kneeled down and bowed to it!”⁹⁶

The last two entries I would like to quote here are found in *Huachanshi suibi* and refer directly to Mi Fu's writings on art. They document the fact that Dong knew Mi Fu's texts well and one even suggests that Dong saw writing on painting as a kind of jesting rivalry with his predecessor Mi Fu:

“During my stay in Beijing, in a letter to Chen Jiru I wrote: ‘The [painters] I want to study are Jing Hao, Guan Tong 關仝 (ca. 907–960), Dong Yuan, Juran and Li Cheng. But genuine paintings by these five masters can rarely be found. In the

⁹⁵ Ibidem.

⁹⁶ 孫漢陽推其意爲此冊。若使米公見，堪僕僕下拜。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 14).

South, the works of Song masters are not even worthy examining. Please, look for them on my behalf and [should you find any] remember them well in the way the people of Song used to do. Once my own book is ready, we can include them in it. Even if we can't own them, we can amuse ourselves with them, so that Mi Fu is not the only one who composed a *History of Painting*.”⁹⁷

From the other, we learn that Dong was lucky enough to see two old inscriptions that are recorded also in Mi Fu's *History of Calligraphy (Shushi)*:

“On the 15th day of the 3rd month of the year *dingyou* 丁酉 (1577), I visited together with Chen Jiru the house of Han Shineng 韓世能 (1528–1598) in Suzhou. His son Han Fengxi 韓逢禧 (1576– after 1655) showed us the calligraphy of *Zishengao* 自身告 by Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709–785) and *Zhu Juchuan gao* 朱巨川告 by Xu Hao 徐浩 (703–782). They are both recorded in the *History of Calligraphy* by Mi Fu and are a double jade.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ 余長安時，寄仲醇書云：所欲學者，荆關，董巨，李成。此五家畫尤少真跡。南方宋畫，不堪賞鑒。兄等為訪之，作一銘心記，如宋人者。俟弟書成，與合一本。即不能收藏，聊以適意，不令海岳獨行畫史也。 *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 46). The phrase “the people of Song” in this paragraph almost certainly refers exactly to Mi Fu, who, as we know, described some of the paintings included in the *Huashi* from his memory. It was, moreover, a common feature of the traditional way of learning painting to commit the entire painting that served as a model to the artist's memory. Below, in the section devoted to Dong's treatment of Wang Wei's painting, I will discuss in detail this aspect of collecting and studying ancient paintings in China in the past. It can be noted here that this paragraph points to the very practice of remembering the paintings the artist has seen throughout the process of his search for ancient masterpieces and describing them, often years later, either in written form or as part of his own creative endeavors.

⁹⁸ 丁酉三月十五日，余與仲醇在吳門韓宗伯家。其子逢禧攜示余顏書自身告，徐季海書朱巨川告，即海岳書史所載，皆是雙璧。 *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 41).

II.2.3.2 Dong Qichang and Wang Wei

Wang Wei, too, belongs to the most often cited artists throughout Dong's writings. Dong's pupils and followers have even elevated him to the position of the most important painter whatsoever. In several paragraphs of Dong's writings, Wang Wei is mentioned as the progenitor of the Southern – literati – monochrome lineage of the “Northern and Southern Schools Theory” and this became the crucial point of Dong's theory for his successors in the ages to come. As Wang Wei reputedly achieved equal recognition in both poetry and painting, his work played an important role in the process of fusing these two disciplines in Chinese theories of art. In this section, I will discuss the paragraphs of Dong's writings where Wang Wei is mentioned in order to document the way Dong actually speaks about him as the progenitor of the “Southern School” or “literati lineage” of painting. Further, I will try to find out the works by Wang Wei, which Dong really saw and could therefore possibly have based his knowledge of Wang's art on. Finally, I will quote Dong's comments on Wang Wei's poetic ideas and poetic subjects in his own painting to document Dong's notion of Wang's role in the process of the fusion of these two disciplines.

Wang Wei as the father of the Southern School of painting

The concept of the history of Chinese painting as evolving in two parallel lineages, or “schools” (*zong* 宗), that originate in the work of Tang dynasty masters and spread all the way to Ming dynasty painting, is referred to in one of the seventeen paragraphs of *Huashuo* (1936: 2). As the text preserved under this title was in the past customarily attributed to Dong's patron and teacher Mo Shilong, the concept as a whole was believed to have been introduced by Mo and later elaborated on and expanded by Dong Qichang. On the basis of the analysis performed by Fu Shen (1970) and (1998) and mainly with regard to the fact that the *Huashuo*

paragraph in question actually verbatim repeats the following quotation from *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, we can assume that its author really is Dong Qichang rather than his older contemporary Mo Shilong. For the purpose of the present study, it can be therefore regarded as belonging to the following body of material extracted from Dong's *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*.

In *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, two standard characteristics of the two lineages appear that again list the painters belonging to each lineage and record Dong's critical reflections upon them. The more complex of these reads as follows:

“The literati painting (*wenren zhi hua*) begins with Wang Wei. Afterwards, Dong Yuan, Juran, Li Cheng and Fan Kuan 范寬 (ca. 950–1027) were his direct followers. Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049–1106), Wang Shen 王誥 (1036–1093), Mi Fu and Mi Youren all emulated Dong Yuan and Juran. And the Four great masters of the Yuan dynasty, Huang Gongwang, Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308–1385), Ni Zan and Wu Zhen 吳鎮 (1280–1354) are their true followers. Wen Zhengming and Shen Zhou of our dynasty are also connected with them. As for Ma Yuan 馬遠 (1190–1279), Xia Gui 夏圭 (active ca. 1180–1230), Li Tang 李唐 (ca. 1066–1150) and Liu Songnian 劉松年 (ca. 1150– after 1225), they are all followers of General Li Sixun. It's nothing good for us to study.”⁹⁹

The continuation of this entry in *Huachanshi suibi*, which is recorded as a separate entry in *Huazhi*, duplicates a formulation from *Huashuo* on the origins of this theory under the Tang dynasty and its analogy with the two schools of Chinese Buddhism. Further on, the masters

⁹⁹ 文人之畫，自王右丞始。其后董源，巨然，李成，范寬，爲嫡子。李龍眠，王晉卿，米南宮及虎兒，皆從董巨得來。直至元四大家，黃子久，王叔明，倪元鎮，吳仲圭，皆其正傳。吾朝文沈，則又遠接衣鉢。若馬夏，及李唐，劉松年，又是大李將軍之派，非吾曹當學也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 2).

belonging to these two lineages are again enumerated. It closes with an open praise of Wang Wei, whose

“depictions of cloudy mountain peaks and cliffs are painted in accordance with the natural order, whose brushwork is well-balanced and the whole work complies with the process of Creation.”¹⁰⁰

Wang Wei’s use of ink-wash instead of colors and his innovations in the technique of painting outlines and structural brushstrokes are also mentioned here.¹⁰¹

In these formulations, Wang Wei is regarded as a Tang dynasty forefather of the literati painting and is followed by the great landscapists of Five Dynasties and Northern Song, by the four masters of the Yuan dynasty and Wen Zhengming and Shen Zhou of the Ming. The opposite school derives from Li Sixun and is continued by the masters of the Southern Song dynasty. In these examples, it is not brought to close with Ming painters, though elsewhere we can see that it closes e.g. with Qiu Ying.¹⁰² These are the basic statements, from

¹⁰⁰ 要之摩詰所謂云峰石跡, 迥出天機, 筆意縱橫, 參乎造化者. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3). A very similar passage appears also in Mi Fu’s *Huashi* as a description of Wang Wei’s painting *Lesser Wangchuan villa* (*Xiao Wangchuan* 小輞川) and it is possible that Dong quoted it from there. Mi Fu further states that the praise of Wang Wei’s cloudy mountains as being painted in accordance with the natural order etc. is based on the description of Wang Wei’s painting of the Wangchuan villa in Zhang Yanyuan’s *Lidai minghua ji*. The versions of Zhang’s text extant today, however, don’t contain this passage. In any case, even in the extant versions Zhang often speaks about the relationship of painting to the process of Creation (*zaohua* 造化) and the general diction of Mi Fu’s quotation is also fully in accordance with his style and terminology. A portion of the phrase used by Dong Qichang seems to come from Wang Wei’s biography in the *Old official history of Tang dynasty* (*Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書). It is highly probable that the compilers of the *Official history* used older sources such as *Lidai minghua ji*, the time of completion of which precedes the compilation of the *Old official history of Tang dynasty* roughly by 100 years, when gathering the data for the biographies of Tang painters.

¹⁰¹ See above note 58.

¹⁰² This aspect of Dong’s theories is the most studied one and is amply elaborated on in the many papers and articles summarized in *Dong Qichang yanjiu wenji* (1998: 985–1004). For the passage where Qiu Ying is mentioned as a Ming painter closing the lineage derived from Li Sixun, see e.g. *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 67).

which all subsequent elaborations on the Southern and Northern lineages in Chinese painting history derive. Concerning the position of Wang Wei as the head of the literati lineage of painting under the Tang dynasty, several points are crucial in Dong Qichang's argumentation.

First of all, it is the recurring topic of painting cloudy mountains (here extended into the expression “cloudy mountain peaks and cliffs”), which we have encountered already in the passages related to Mi Fu's painting. As we have seen, this is one of the subjects where, according to Dong Qichang, the painters' creative abilities can be best manifested. Here, it is therefore not surprising that Wang Wei, once established as the first representative of the Southern School, is praised as being capable of rendering this theme in a superior way. Finally, it is the emphasis on Wang Wei's works' being in harmony with the natural order and directly participating in the process of Creation, which is one of the most important qualities of the painters-sages and thus qualifies Wang Wei as the progenitor of the literati lineage of painting. This is how Dong characterizes Wang Wei in theory as the father of literati painting.

What does he, then, directly tell us about Wang Wei's painting style and which paintings by him or in his style has Dong actually seen? There are several entries where Dong's encounters with Wang Wei's painting or someone else's painting in Wang Wei's style are recorded. One paragraph of *Huachanshi suibi* describes a painting Dong saw in a collection of his teacher in Beijing:

“My teacher Yang Taihe 楊太和 owns a collection of many famous paintings as old as Jin and Tang dynasties. When I had the opportunity to see some of them, there was one painting by Wang Wei with an inscription by the Song dynasty Emperor Huizong 宋徽宗 (r. 1101–1125) on the left side. Its brushwork was smooth and elegant (*piaoju* 飄舉), really a marvelous piece of art. When I consulted the *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜, I found out that its name was *A Mountain*

Retreat (Shan ju tu 山居圖). The technique, in which pine needles and rock formations in the painting were executed, cannot be seen after the Song dynasty. There was absolutely no doubt that it was a painting by Wang Wei. Before [I saw it], it had been labeled as a work of General Li, the identification as a painting of Wangchuan only starts with me.”¹⁰³

This is a very curious record of Dong’s experience with one of the few “Wang Wei” attributions that were in circulation in his day. It describes a real event when Dong was invited to see paintings in the collection of his Beijing teacher Yang Taihe (elsewhere referred to as Yang Gaoyou 楊高郵) and mentions two interesting facts. Firstly, it is remarkable that the collector of “many famous paintings dating from Jin and Tang dynasties onwards” had seriously misattributed one of the prominent pieces in his collection and had to wait for his pupil’s judgment to learn that it actually was a genuine painting by Wang Wei. So be it, we have but the terse information Dong supplies in this entry. It is also possible that there might have been a cue as to the purported author in the accompanying inscription by Emperor Huizong, which the owner might not have dared to question, or another sound reason for the misattribution. Nevertheless, the other important fact and, indeed, a fundamental one for the discussion of Wang Wei’s painting style as perceived by Dong Qichang, is that the painting had originally been labeled as a work of a painter who, according to the “Northern and

¹⁰³ 京師楊太和家，所藏唐晉以來名跡甚佳。余借觀，有右丞畫一幀，宋徽廟御題左方，筆勢飄舉，真奇物也。檢宣和畫譜，此為山居圖。察其圖中松針石脈，無宋以后人法，定為摩詰無疑。向相傳為大李將軍，而拈出為輞川者，自余始。 *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 46). Another paragraph from *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 39) further corroborates this passage, including the information that the painting was called *A Mountain Retreat (Shan ju tu 山居圖)*, that it was inscribed by Emperor Huizong (quoting the whole seven-syllable couplet of the inscription) and that the style possessed the exquisite flavor of Wang Wei’s work. It adds two remarks that “the brushwork was similar to Zhao Lingrang’s” (*bifa lei Danian 筆法類大年*) and that it didn’t at all resemble the painting attributed to Wang Wei called *Clearing after Snow among Rivers and Mountains (Jiangshan xueji tu 江山雪霽圖)* in the collection of Feng Mengzhen 馮夢禎 (1548–1605).

Southern Schools Theory”, was working in the very opposite style than Wang Wei. That the painting was “traditionally attributed to General Li Sixun” suggests with a high degree of probability that it was painted in the blue and green style commonly associated with the name of this artist. Changing its authorship to Wang Wei would then mean that in Dong’s understanding, there was nothing problematic about a painting in this style being executed by Wang Wei, otherwise Dong’s champion of the ink-wash tradition. We cannot, of course, be absolutely sure about the real style of the painting, but it is noteworthy at least that it was possible to change an attribution from a Li Sixun to a Wang Wei so easily and even with a self confident remark that Dong was the first to discover the true identity of the author.

In both *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, there are several other mentions of landscape paintings executed in the blue and green style that are characterized as “being in the style of Wang Wei”. One of them reads:

“Wen Peng 文彭 (1498–1573) sold Li Cheng’s *Solitary Temple amid Radiant Peaks* (*Qing luan xiao si* 晴巒蕭寺) to Xiang Yuanbian 項元汴 (1525–1590). It is painted in the ‘greater blue and green style’ (*da qinglü* 大清綠) entirely in the manner of Wang Wei. Now it is in my collection. When I scrutinized it closely, [I realized that] its author is Dong Yu 董羽 (active in the late 10th cent.).”¹⁰⁴

Another entry, found only in *Huazhi*, is a description of Wang Meng’s painting in the manner of Wang Wei. It is even more illuminating once we realize that it pertains to one of the most celebrated paintings by this Yuan dynasty master still extant today:

¹⁰⁴ 李成晴巒蕭寺, 文三橋售之項子京. 大青綠全法王維. 今歸余處. 細視之, 其名董羽也. *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 43–44). See also Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 10), where, however, the note on the painting being executed in the “greater blue and green style” is omitted.

“Wang Meng was a nephew of Zhao Mengfu and lived in Wuxing. Recently, I repeatedly traveled around lake Taihu and saw his [i.e. Wang Meng’s] painting *Enjoying the Moon from a Bridge over a Stream* (*Xiqiao wanyue tu* 谿橋玩月圖) which is also called *Forest Grottoes at Juqu* (*Juqu linwu tu* 具區林屋圖). It is entirely in the style of Wang Wei. The stones and grottoes fill the space, trees and branches are rendered in a detailed way (*kehua* 刻畫). It is the genuine style of the Tang dynasty before it was changed (*wei bian Tang fa* 未變唐法).¹⁰⁵ At first sight, the structures are precisely rendered and the ideas naturally flow from the brush. After I cleaned it, the powerful style of Wang Meng became visible, boundless and fresh. It is a true descendant of the nobly masters like Ku Kaizhi.”¹⁰⁶

This is a moving description of a painting by Wang Meng that is now housed in the National palace museum in Taipei and still bears the title *Forest Grottoes at Juqu* (*Juqu linwu tu*).¹⁰⁷

When we compare Dong’s description of the painting as crowded with grottoes and trees, all furnished with minute details, with its real appearance, we realize that Dong was very precise in expressing the overall atmosphere of the picture. Modern scholars speak about the painting in similar terms, usually underlining the fact that among surviving Yuan dynasty paintings, this is one of the least corresponding to its prevailing style. As we know, the style marked by large areas of empty space standing for water surfaces and sky, which are

¹⁰⁵ The word *bian* 變 is often used with regard to the changes that took place in the course of the historical development of art or literature. In ancient philosophical texts, it had moral connotations such as the change of the original, unadulterated and natural state of affairs into an artificial, forced or man-made condition. In this way, it developed into “false” or “artificial” in art theory, and its opposite (*wei bian* 未變) thus stands for “original” or “genuine”.

¹⁰⁶ 王叔明爲松雪甥，居吳興。最近太湖屢遊東西洞庭兩山，嘗見其谿橋玩月圖，又名具區林屋圖。皆摹王右丞。石穴嵌空，樹枝刻畫，爲未變唐法也。原之，精於繪理，自出筆意。一洗，黃鶴老人氣習，蒼莽秀潤，君家顧長康真有種耶。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 15).

¹⁰⁷ For a reproduction of the painting and its description see e.g. Wang Yaoting (1995: 167).

customarily enveloped in clouds and mists and painted mainly in ink-wash, is characteristic of most of the surviving Yuan dynasty literati paintings. The painting *Forest Grottoes at Juqu*, on the other hand, represents a type of landscape full of minute details that is almost entirely “full”, not leaving much space for the element of “emptiness” otherwise so commonplace in Yuan dynasty painting. This was the result of Wang Meng’s close following in the footsteps of the old masters rather than conforming to the predominant stylistic orientation of his own day.¹⁰⁸ Dong’s description of the painting again does perfect justice to these features of Wang Meng’s style, pointing out its relationship to the respected styles of the masters of high antiquity. Their works were painted in ink outlines filled in with colors in order to achieve the greatest possible degree of verisimilitude. It is therefore stunning that this painting, too, is further described as being “entirely in the style of Wang Wei”, who is elsewhere regarded as the prominent representative of the very opposite stylistic orientation. This case, luckily supported with authentic pictorial evidence, in my opinion documents even more clearly the prevailing painting style of Wang Wei’s works Dong actually saw and had in mind when recording his observations and coining his theories.

Speaking of the references to Wang Wei’s works in Dong Qichang’s texts, I have to conclude that I wasn’t actually able to locate any mention of a painting by Wang Wei or in his style demonstrably executed in the monochrome ink technique. Only generalized and often vague references to his “use of the ink-wash technique” or “reforming the way of applying the outlines and structural brushstrokes” cited above can be found in several entries of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*. These statements, however, are not supported with records of existing works in a corresponding style in the way Dong spoke for example about Mi Fu’s works classified as ink plays.

¹⁰⁸ For such interpretation of Wang Meng’s painting style, see *ibidem* and also *Gugong shuhua jinghua teji* (1996: 189).

This corroborates the opinions of Mi Fu and Mi Youren, which Dong quoted elsewhere. As we saw in the previous section, the two Mis, according to Dong, maintained that “Wang Wei’s paintings were exceedingly elaborate, unworthy of being studied.”¹⁰⁹ All these facts together make me believe that Dong didn’t base his opinion on Wang Wei’s being the first prominent master of the monochrome ink-wash style on the knowledge of Wang’s paintings. The existing evidence indicates that Wang Wei’s landscape paintings were probably mostly executed in the blue and green style that was notorious in his own time. His monochrome paintings, although mentioned in texts, weren’t generally known even as early as the close of the Northern Song dynasty, not to speak about the late Ming dynasty.

Another interesting point related to the elevation of Wang Wei to the position of the leader of the Southern School is the analogy of painting history and the history of Chan Buddhism. Dong’s involvement with the past and contemporary intellectual movements is discussed by many scholars as part of their extensive writings on Dong Qichang’s life and art.¹¹⁰ They have put together ample material to document the fact that Dong adhered to the prevailing intellectual currents of the day characterized by merging of Chan Buddhism and Confucian ideology to form a new doctrine labeled as “The School of the Mind” (*xinxue*).¹¹¹ As Chou Ju-hsi (1989: 249) puts it, the leading figure of this movement, Wang Shouren 王守

¹⁰⁹ See above the part of section II.2.3.1 entitled “Ink palys”.

¹¹⁰ For a complex analysis of Dong Qichang’s attitude towards the intellectual trends of his day, see Chou Ju-hsi (1989: 248–263). For substantive discussions of Dong’s involvement with Buddhism and other doctrines, see also Wu (1954) and (1962) and Riely (1992). For the influence of the main doctrines such as Confucianism and Buddhism on Dong’s art, see Cahill (1960), (1982b) and (1992).

¹¹¹ On Dong’s inclination towards the concepts of the School of the Mind and its significance for his approach towards art, see mainly Chou Ju-hsi (1989: 248–263). In this article, Prof. Chou argues that it was the very bias towards the idealism of Wang Yangming’s thinking that underlies Dong Qichang’s explanations of the superiority of the literati lineage of painting: “...the aesthetic value of the work is dependent upon the purity of such ideation [i.e. the manifestation of the *liangzhi*, the clear intelligence, elsewhere translated also as the innate knowledge], its inner harmony, or negatively, by the absence of ulterior, and therefore, conflicting motives.” For other observations concerning Dong’s adherence to the ideas of Wang Yangming and his followers, see Zhu Liangzhi (1999).

仁 (1472–1528, commonly known as Wang Yangming 王陽明) himself often resorted to Chan analogy in his instructions. Dong apparently also made use of the central arguments of this movement to support his notion of the history of painting. The analogy between history of painting and the evolution of the two sects of Chan Buddhism utilized in Dong's texts is well known and needs no further explanation. I have argued above that Dong probably didn't make the knowledge of Wang Wei's genuine painting style the basis for appointing him the progenitor of the literati lineage of painting. The question thus remains, if another reason for his choice of Wang Wei as the initiator of literati painting can be found and supported by sound arguments (for, as we have seen, Wang Wei's fellow painter Wang Qia or, even more possibly, the Five Dynasties painter Dong Yuan, might well have been appointed the head of literati painting tradition instead of Wang Wei).

I believe that one of the true reasons was Dong's very inclination to resolving the queries of the past with the Chan analogy, documented by Chou Ju-hsi and others. The split of Chan sects advocating the sudden versus gradual enlightenment occurred under the Tang dynasty, where also the histories of painting locate the split of the "blue and green" and "monochrome" traditions.¹¹² The prevalence of the "blue and green" tradition under Tang dynasty and its connection with the name of Li Sixun and his followers was well established, so it was only natural for Dong to look for Li's counterpart in the "monochrome" lineage of the same period. With the help of textual sources such as Zhang Yanyuan's treatise quoted above and with his typical "nonchalance ... when it comes to factual accuracy,"¹¹³ Dong

¹¹² For a quotation from Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai minghua ji*, see above note 89. For a more detailed account of Tang dynasty theories of landscape painting and relevant statements on innovative techniques of painting, see Bush and Shih (1985: 45–88) and also Acker (1954) and (1974).

¹¹³ Chou Ju-hsi (1989: 255, note 27). Riely (1992) also documents several inconsistencies in Dong's arguments when compared with elsewhere documented reality. It could have been, in the end, also this tendency towards the idealization of history that drove him close to Wang Wei, the painter celebrated for his disengagement with reality in an anticipation of later literati painting. For a mention of Wang Wei's paintings that contradicted the

made Wang Wei the central figure of the rival school. In his account of the history of painting, he connected the obscure notes on Wang Wei's monochrome painting style with the facts on its actual development known from the works of later masters. The paintings by Dong Yuan or Mi Fu were better documented by the surviving textual and pictorial evidence and thus represented a firm base for the description of the qualities of the Southern – literati – monochrome branch of the theory. By appointing the Tang dynasty master Wang Wei to its front, however, the lineage gained the necessary authority and became firmly established in the “golden age” of Chinese landscape painting. Moreover, Wang Wei's persona already had a well established position in the history of poetry that was well known among the literati of later generations and appealed to the ideal of a literati artist living in seclusion and devoting his energies to artistic disciplines such as poetry and painting. Enhanced with the evidence of scattered remarks in old critical texts on painting about his purported original ink-wash painting style and alleged indifference towards the realistic appearance of things (exemplified by his painting of a banana tree covered with snow), such figure seems to have been suitable for representing the very opposite of the masters concerned with elaborate depiction of reality, such as Li Sixun and his followers.

Poetry and painting in the art of Wang Wei

Hand in hand with Wang Wei's elevation to the position of the forefather of literati painting in regular histories of Chinese painting goes also his recognition as a figure crucial in the process of merging painting with poetry. As Wang Wei allegedly announced in one of his poems, he felt that being known mainly as a poet doesn't make justice to his true artistic

essential characteristics of the four seasons and especially of his depiction of a banana tree covered with snow, see the translation of a passage from Shen Gua's 沈括 (1031–1095) *Mengqi pitan* 夢溪筆談 in Bush and Shih (1985: 100).

nature, for he himself felt to be a painter.¹¹⁴ In one of the entries of *Huazhi*, Dong cites this famous verse as a prelude to the praise of Wang Wei's mastery in painting and thus brings to mind the fusion of painting and poetry as being one of the qualities that mark the work of an excellent painter of the literati orientation:

“One of Wang Wei's poems goes: ‘In this life, I became a poet only by mistake; for in the previous life, I must have been a painter.’ In my opinion, Wang Wei's depictions of cloudy mountains and stone paths transcend the natural order, his brushwork is unrestrained and his works comply with the process of Creation. How could there have been a painter like this before the Tang times?”¹¹⁵

In other paragraphs of both *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* Dong further elucidates his understanding of Wang Wei's painting on poetic subjects by quoting examples of his own as well as others' paintings inspired by Wang's poems. They are, however, far less numerous than the passages concerned with Wang Wei's position in the history of painting, which can perhaps mean that this problem was less important for Dong than the questions of historical classification of painters past and present and his comments on their stylistic orientation.

Another famous motto that represents Wang Wei's art, namely Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037–1101) words that

¹¹⁴ For a short summary of related problems see e.g. Wang Yaoting (1995: 86–91 and 183–184). The poem referred to here is believed to be of spurious authenticity by some modern scholars. For Chinese literati of all ages, however, it represented the essence of the merging of painting and poetry in a work of an ancient master and its attribution to Wang Wei was not doubted.

¹¹⁵ 王右丞詩云：宿世謬詞客，前身應畫師。余謂右丞雲峰石跡，迥出天機，筆思縱橫，參乎造化。唐以前安得有此畫師也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 9–10.)

“[In Wang Wei’s] poems, there are paintings; and in his paintings, there are poems.”¹¹⁶

is also part of one of Dong’s expositions on poetic subjects in painting. The entry reads:

“‘Under the mountains, in desolate mist, a far-away village // on the edge of heaven, a solitary tree, on an elevated plateau,’ this is a line by Wang Wei. It is nothing that Beiyuan of our family [i.e. Dong Yuan] and Gao Kegong wouldn’t be able to imitate. In recent times, however, those who could follow them are but very few. That’s why I employed the concept of ‘[In Wang Wei’s] poems, there are paintings; and in his paintings, there are poems’ in my painting. This then is a painting that nobody except for Wang Wei would be able to make.”¹¹⁷

Interestingly, the description of a painting Dong executed under the inspiration of Wang Wei’s verse has its variation also in *Huachanshi suibi*, where we learn that it was a painting entitled *Far-Away Village Lost in Desolate Mist* (*Gu yan yuan cun tu* 孤煙遠村圖). It is further described as:

“‘Under the mountains, in desolate mist, a far-away village // on the edge of heaven, a solitary tree, on an elevated plateau’. Had Wang Wei not been skilled in the art of painting, he wouldn’t have formulated this verse. Mi Youren, however, maintained

¹¹⁶ 詩中有畫, 畫中有詩. For the quotation of the original poem by Su Shi see Bush and Shih (1985: 203).

¹¹⁷ 山下孤煙遠村, 天邊獨樹高原. 此王右丞句也. 非吾家北苑與高房山不能摹寫. 近時以來得其緒餘者, 廖廖不聞. 余所以寫‘詩中有畫, 畫中有詩’意. 此圖然非右丞不能為. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 9).

that Wang Wei's paintings were exceedingly elaborate, so I used the style of Mi family mountains to paint this poem."¹¹⁸

The verse chosen as the topic of a painting here is really an ideal example of a poem that demands a great deal of painterly imagination. It suggests that its author meant the two times three poetic images ('a base of the mountains', 'desolate mist', 'a far-away village', 'the edge of heaven', 'a solitary tree' and 'an elevated plateau') as more or less loosely joined pictures that in the imagination of an educated reader melt into one picture-like scene. The atmosphere they evoke is very similar to that brought about by viewing a painting on a similar topic as we know it from the later history of Chinese painting.¹¹⁹

There are, again, several intriguing aspects that these two descriptions account for. First, the very way in which they document Dong's interest in the fusion of painting and poetry in Wang's oeuvre is instructive. Actually, many examples of standard Tang dynasty poems (especially by Wang Wei and Du Fu 杜甫, 712–770) can be found that almost call for being transposed into paintings and, indeed, became the subject of paintings by Song and Yuan dynasty masters.¹²⁰ What is important here are the above described qualities of imagery present in the poem that make it a suitable topic for painting. In this aspect, the poem that evokes the atmosphere of a far-away village lost in solitary mist fits perfectly into the range of poetic topics employed by Song and Yuan dynasty painters. Dong Qichang, apart from

¹¹⁸ “山下孤煙遠村，天邊獨樹高原。”非右丞工于畫道，不能得此語。米元暉猶謂右丞畫如刻畫，故余以米家山寫其詩。 *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 88).

¹¹⁹ In my M.A. thesis (Pejčochová, 2003: 41–46) I analyzed the poetic subjects suitable for painting that are mentioned in Guo Xi's *Linquan gao zhi* and traced examples of their usage in Song and Yuan dynasty painting. Mr. Hsu Guo-huang cited others (including a work attributed to Dong's favorite painter Zhao Lingrang preserved in the National Palace Museum, Taipei) in his lecture on the development of Song dynasty painting delivered at the Charles University in Prague on 29. September, 2004. This issue is further illustrated with examples of surviving paintings in Edwards (1991).

¹²⁰ For examples of such paintings, see Pejčochová (op. cit.).

making this verse an inspiration for his own painting in the same way as generations of painters before him, in his theoretical statement reflects on the way Wang Wei's poem actually gained the qualities necessary to become a suitable topic of painting. He writes: "Had Wang Wei not been skilled in the art of painting, he wouldn't have formulated this verse." This means that Dong found the painter's imagination and even a practical experience with materializing it in painting essential for the ability to formulate such poetry. This seems commonplace in the case when the poet was also famous for his painting and, moreover, traditionally designated the head of the literati tradition, characterized by fusing poetry and painting in a single work of art.

But how, then, are we to account for the currency of poetic subjects taken by later painters from the verse of Du Fu or Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), who, at least according to the present knowledge of their work, haven't ever painted at all?¹²¹ The point might again lie in Dong's envisioning these qualities in Wang Wei's art rather than a real experience-based description of the state of affairs, very similar to Dong's designation of Wang Wei as the forefather of the literati painting. Dong projected the notorious fact that Wang Wei was a poet-painter who initiated the merging of these two disciplines in literati painting, further supported by the famous quotations from Wang's purported reflection on his occupation and Su Shi's judgment of his art, into his own understanding of the painterly qualities of Wang Wei's verse. What he praised was, in fact, a certain visual quality found in some poems by masters of the High Tang period irrespective of their practical experience with painting.¹²² In other words, from what we know today on the use of Tang poems as subjects of painting, it seems that Dong confused the cause and the consequence. For the knowledge and

¹²¹ The results of the analysis of poetic subjects recorded in Guo Xi's *Linquan gao zhi* show that Du Fu's poems were among the most popular with Song dynasty painters, followed by the verse of Wang Wei and Liu Zongyuan. (Pejšochová, 2003: 41–46)

¹²² For the refinement of this argument, I am indebted to Prof. Olga Lomová. For more details, see Lomová (1999).

understanding of Tang poetry lead the masters of later periods to the creation of paintings on poetic subjects and with poetic atmosphere, while the Tang dynasty poets didn't necessarily have to be great painters to produce such verse. This again shows the degree of Dong's idealization of the past in order to support his own notion of the historical development.¹²³ It is, however, important to note the fact that Chinese texts on painting of the kind Dong Qichang and his colleagues wrote are by no means scholarly treatises in the Western sense of the word. As I have shown elsewhere in the present thesis, the informal and intermittent nature of the *biji* genre allowed the authors to record diverse and often even conflicting opinions throughout a single text that was being created during a long period of time. In the philosophical background and mental attitude of Chinese literati, it was moreover common that different aspects of a particular problem were perceived as interrelated to such a degree that the cause and the consequence were sometimes impossible to be clearly separated. It is therefore quite common that particular ideas and arguments seem to contradict each other from the point of view of the modern reader and we should bear this fact in mind before charging Dong Qichang with a nonchalant attitude towards the historical development of Chinese painting.

In light of our knowledge of Dong's sympathy towards the painting style of some masters of the past, it is not surprising that he maintains that "It is nothing that Beiyuan of our family [i.e. Dong Yuan] and Gao Kegong wouldn't be able to imitate, but in recent times those who could follow them are but very few." The notion of himself being one of the few, who are able to compensate for the inadequacies of the masters of his time is also exactly in line with Dong's argumentation recorded elsewhere. What is, however, really striking, is the final part of the *Huachanshi suibi* version of the description where Dong writes "As Mi Youren maintained that Wang Wei's paintings were exceedingly elaborate, I used the style of

¹²³ On this aspect of Dong's argumentation cf. also Riely (1992: 401–2 and 405), who arrived at a similar understanding of Dong's comments, though in a different context.

Mi family mountains to paint this poem.” As I have tried to demonstrate in the previous section, Dong probably didn’t have a direct experience with Wang Wei’s purported monochrome painting style. The schematized version of the history of painting, which puts him at the head of this tradition, was perhaps based mainly on written accounts of Wang Wei’s innovations in painting and probably also on Dong’s knowledge of Wang Wei’s poetry. This entry then further documents the degree of skepticism as to the significance of Wang Wei’s genuine works for the history of literati painting. It suggests that even in the case of their significance as the fountainhead of the merging of poetry and painting, which, too, I see as more theoretical than based on material evidence, Dong is surprisingly pragmatic when it comes to the practical solution. Even though he regarded Wang Wei as “a poet, in whose poems there are paintings, and a painter, in whose paintings there are poems”, he chose rather the “Mi family painting style” to execute these poetic paintings in, so as not to be accused of emulating a style too detailed and elaborate to merit the efforts of a literati painter. This instance is perfectly illustrative of the importance the Song dynasty literati such as Mi Fu and Mi Youren actually had with regard to the practical aspects of merging poetry and painting.

II.2.3.3 Dong Qichang and Dong Yuan

In her detailed account of Dong Qichang’s life and career, Celia Carrington Riely repeatedly points out that Dong Yuan was one of Dong’s most favorite painters, one with whom he even perceived a kinship of a kind. Not only did the two painters share a surname, which allowed for Dong Qichang’s partly joking and partly proud expressions such as

“Beiyuan of our family” (*wu jia Beiyuan* 吾家北苑)¹²⁴ cited in the previous section. Dong Yuan originated from southern China, an area full of lakes and water courses, which Dong Qichang wandered aboard a boat many times in his life¹²⁵ and whose natural sceneries he liked to contemplate and portray in his paintings. This might have been, according to Riely, a reason for his special relation to Dong Yuan. Aside from that, it is important to note that Dong Yuan’s art was crucial for the development of the painting styles of Yuan dynasty masters whom Dong admired. At a certain stage of his life, he decided to “trace the source of the stream” and started to study the art of Dong Yuan in order to find the source of the Yuan dynasty styles. In the colophon appended to the painting called *Privileged Residents of the Capital* (*Longsu jiaomin tu* 龍宿驕民圖) attributed to Dong Yuan, which is now housed in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, Dong Qichang states:

“In the year *xinmao* 辛卯 (1591) I requested leave [from the Hanlin] and returned home. There I searched everywhere for paintings (lit. splashed-ink works) by the four painters of my district. Eventually I decided that I should trace the source [of their style] and [realized] that I should take only Beiyuan [Dong Yuan] as my master.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Beiyuan 北苑 was the abbreviation of the position Dong Yuan held at the court of the Southern Tang emperor Li Jing 李璟 (r. 943–961). His full title was (Vice-) Commissioner of the Northern garden (*Beiyuan shi* 北苑使 or *Beiyuan fushi* 北苑副使).

¹²⁵ For a moving discussion of Dong’s passion for the southern landscape, see Riely (1992: 400 and passim). For a revealing account of the treatment of Dong Yuan’s legacy by different later writers, see Unverzagt (2007).

¹²⁶ 辛卯請告還里。乃大搜吾鄉四家潑墨之作。久之，謂當溯其原委，一以北苑爲師。Quoted after Riely (1992: 401) in her translation. The “four painters of my district” are sometimes identified with the Four masters of the Yuan dynasty, while elsewhere names of other painters active in the area of Huating during the Yuan dynasty are mentioned. See *ibidem*, note 150.

In his writings, Dong Qichang indeed mentions Dong Yuan often, approximately as often as Mi Fu or some of the Four masters of the Yuan dynasty. Dong Yuan is largely referred to as one of the prominent masters of the literati (or “Southern”) lineage of painting in the accounts of the history of painting, sometimes side by side with Wang Wei, but often without mentioning Wang and recording Dong Yuan as the head of this tradition. Furthermore, he is mentioned several times in the passages concerned with copying and transmitting the style of one’s master. Finally and at times also in connection with the problem of copying and transmitting, Dong Yuan’s paintings are referred to as the source of the styles of Yuan dynasty painters. In these instances, he is often placed side by side with the monk painter Juran, with whom he was classified as a stylistic pair called Dong-Ju 董巨 by later historians.

Dong Yuan in the lineages of painters

The most familiar account of the two opposite lineages in the history of painting quoted above¹²⁷ lists Dong Yuan as the second master in the lineage of “literati painters” (*wenren zhi hua*), directly following Wang Wei. This is the standard formula, repeated with minor variations several times, which brings together Wang Wei, Dong Yuan, Juran, Mi Fu, Mi Youren, and sometimes also other landscape painters of the Five dynasties and Northern Song, and, finally, the Four masters of the Yuan dynasty. There are, however, variant statements, which place Dong Yuan in the same position but depart slightly from the notorious scheme. One of them describes the subjects and styles typical for the work of different masters in quite an impartial way:

“Song dynasty painting after Dong Yuan and Juran got rid of excessive fanciness and overelaborated details and was faithful to the resemblance of the Jiangnan

¹²⁷ See note 99.

nature. For the depictions of the seaside areas, however, it is necessary to use [the style of] General Li Sixun, while for depicting the groups of travelers crossing the northern mountains, it is necessary to use [the style of] Li Tang. Guo Xi, Zhu Rui 朱銳 (active in the first half of the 12th cent.) and Huang Gongwang specialized in paintings of Mount Haiyu. Wang Meng painted the sceneries in Tiaozha, while Song Di 宋迪 (ca. 1015–1080) of the Song dynasty specialized in depicting the Xiao and Xiang rivers. Each painter followed what he saw, none of them mixed up [the types of sceneries in their painting].”¹²⁸

Here, Dong Yuan and Juran are credited with bringing about the turn in the history of painting when it made away with excessive fanciness and elaborateness (*kehua* 刻畫), which was, as is obvious from the context, the characteristic feature of the Tang dynasty painting. Curiously, Wang Wei isn’t mentioned here at all and the change is situated in the “Song dynasty painting after Dong Yuan and Juran”. An appealing alternative to the accounts of Wang Wei’s reform of painting styles found elsewhere, for it is definitely closer to our knowledge of the development of the painting styles of these masters based on the results of modern scholarship. Moreover, other painters are listed here, each with a subject that, according to Dong, is a strong point of their painting. In this way, Li Sixun and Li Tang are treated as equally important with their abilities in depicting the seaside areas and groups of travelers in the mountains. Guo Xi, Zhu Rui and Huang Gongwang are mentioned together in an unusual way as masters specializing in the paintings of Mount Haiyu. This attests to the fact that not the stylistic orientation (which, actually, even in the other references to the

¹²⁸ 宋畫至董源巨然脫盡廉纖刻畫之習，然惟寫江南山則相似。若海岸圖，必用大李將軍，北方盤車騾網，必用李晞古。郭河陽，朱銳，黃子久專畫海虞山，王叔明專畫苔雪景。宋時宋迪專畫瀟湘。各隨所見，不得相混也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3).

lineages of painters is but a weak uniting element) but the subject matter they excelled in is actually the reason for listing their names side by side in this entry.

In another paragraph, we read that

“Li Zhaodao 李昭道 (7th–8th cent.) and his followers Zhao Boju and Zhao Bosu 趙伯駒 (1124–1182) carried the technical refinement to the extreme, while their painting also possessed scholarly spirit. Those, who emulated it later were able to imitate its skill, but were unable to imitate its elegance.”¹²⁹

Dong Yuan, Juran and Mi Fu, on the other hand, are credited with

“having been enlightened straight away and able to enter the land of Maitreia-Buddha”¹³⁰

and thus represent the opposite direction than Li and his followers. It is, however, also a strikingly fair statement that doesn't *a priori* reject the school of Li Zhaodao. It acknowledges its qualities and maintains that only the later followers such as Qiu Ying damaged its credit with their inability to emulate the scholarly spirit of its founders. Dong Yuan is mentioned here side by side with Juran and Mi Fu as those representing the opposite

¹²⁹ 李昭道一派, 爲趙伯駒, 伯驩, 精工之極, 又有士氣. 后人仿之者, 得其工, 不能得其雅. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 15). The primary meaning of the term *ya* 雅, which closes this paragraph, is “elegant”, “refined”. In the old Chinese texts on art it however denotes a special kind of “elegance” that is related to the refined quality of the personality of the artist. It has basically confucian connotations of moral rightness and conformity with the established standards and regulations. In this aspect, it is close to the meaning of the expression “scholarly spirit” (*shi qi* 士氣) used in the previous sentence. The overall meaning of this paragraph is therefore highly laudatory in relation to the art of Zhao Boju and Zhao Bosu and does not show any sign of contradiction between stylistic elaboration and scholarly spirit in their paintings.

¹³⁰ 可一超直入如來地也. Ibidem.

lineage of painters enlightened right away. Surprisingly, no mention of Wang Wei is to be found here, either.

Dong Yuan, painters of the Yuan dynasty and the emulation of the style of one's teacher

The fact that Dong Qichang studied the works of Dong Yuan and tried hard to emulate his style in his own painting is well documented in the accounts of Dong's life and career.

Riely, for example, summarizes it as follows:

“How he reached the conclusion that ‘[he] should take only Beiyuan as [his] master’ is something of a mystery. In 1592 Dong had never, to his knowledge, seen even a single work by Dong Yuan. Jiangnan had lamentably few such paintings: Dong later wrote of his months in Huating, ‘I sought [everywhere] in Jiangnan for Dong Beiyuan’s paintings but I couldn’t obtain one.’ Dong, however, was not averse to basing a conclusion on theoretical grounds, rather than on the pragmatic grounds of visual evidence (!). Relying, one might say, on intuition tempered by tradition, he projected Dong Yuan as the stylistic progenitor of the great Yuan masters.”¹³¹

It is known that Dong Qichang finally collected several paintings attributed to Dong Yuan and, fortunately, some of them survive to this day even with his autographs. These tell us a great deal of interesting information on Dong's attitude towards the works in question and on the style of Dong Yuan as Dong Qichang himself perceived it.¹³² We can, therefore, base our

¹³¹ Riely (1992: 402), exclamation mark mine.

¹³² Some of the colophons have been translated into English and elaborated upon in the secondary literature. See mainly Riely (1992) and Kohara (1992: 94–101).

understanding of Dong's perception of Dong Yuan's works on a much more sound foundation than in the case of Wang Wei.

In Dong's theoretical writing, Dong Yuan's art is frequently mentioned as the fountainhead of the painting styles of the Four masters of the Yuan dynasty, though his "style" as a whole is usually not described in greater detail. It is, however, several times cited in relation to the problem of copying and transmitting the style of one's master, which also sheds interesting light on the question of Dong's understanding of Dong Yuan's art. Moreover, the entries in question, in my view, further document the suggested position of Dong Yuan as a real forerunner of later literati painting, for by mentioning their efforts to copy and emulate Dong Yuan's works, they repeatedly document his importance for later painters in the literati lineage. At the same time, they reveal Dong's attitude towards the practice of copying, which is at times fresh and differs strikingly from the notorious picture of a hard-core, orthodox conservative.¹³³

Amused in its tone is a paragraph mentioning the difference between the styles of the Four masters of the Yuan period and their teacher Dong Yuan:

“Juran studied Dong Yuan, Huang Gongwang studied Dong Yuan, Ni Zan studied Dong Yuan, Mi Fu studied Dong Yuan. There was only one Dong Yuan, so why do the expressions of these masters differ? If common people do it in the way that [the copy] is identical with its model, how can [their work] be transmitted to later generations?”^{134,135}

¹³³ For the discussion of Dong Qichang's perception of *fang* 仿, or “creative copying”, see Chou Ju-hsi's (1989) article “The Cycle of *fang*: Tung Ch'i Ch'ang's Mimetic Cult and Its Legacy”.

¹³⁴ 巨然學北苑, 黃子久學北苑, 倪迂學北苑, 元章學北苑。一北苑耳, 而各各不相似。使俗人爲之, 與臨本同, 若之何能傳世也? Deng Shi and Huang Binhong (1936: *Huayan*, p. 40). It is well known that the verb *xue* 學, “to study”, as part of the vocabulary pertaining to the history and aesthetics of Chinese painting, does not point to the direct contact of two painters of the teacher – student kind. It denotes rather a choice of an artistic model

This passage reveals that, according to Dong, it is not the external resemblance (or, more precisely, “uniformity”) that is to be achieved when emulating the style of one’s master. The great painters of the past of whom Dong cites Juran, Mi Fu, Ni Zan and Huang Gongwang all emulated one Dong Yuan and yet, their own expressions differ dramatically. What has to be achieved is the similarity through dissimilarity (*bu he er he* 不合而合) and, mainly, the transmission of the inner energy (*chuan shenqi* 傳神氣) intrinsic to the work of art in question, rather than its form.¹³⁶ This is a basic concept of the literati painting firmly established already in the Song dynasty theory, yet it is important to note its presence in the thinking of Dong Qichang who is sometimes accused of promoting slavish copying of the works of one’s master.¹³⁷ Another entry found both in *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* speaks about imitating

from among the painters of the past, the works of which the painting adept sought for and tried to copy and emulate as a basis for the later formation of his own distinctive style. On the broad issue of authenticity of the works available to students of painting throughout the Chinese history, see above the passage discussing Dong Qichang’s references to Mi Fu’s “ink plays”. As for the exact wording in this paragraph, and also for the reason of its repeated and therefore highly accentuated use, I find it suitable to stick to the primary meaning of the verb “to study”, though it could be as well translated as “to emulate” or “to follow (in the stylistic footsteps of a master)”.

¹³⁵ Chou Ju-hsi (1989: 265) also quotes this entry in a slightly different translation and notes that its version recorded in *Huayan* contains more information than that of *Huazhi* (cf. Yu Anlan, 1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3). This passage is therefore a rare document of *Huayan*’s importance as a supplement to *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*.

¹³⁶ The passage preceding the above cited sentence from *Huazhi* expresses the same conviction in relation to the calligraphy of the Two Wangs. “Under the Qi and Liang dynasties, [the transmission of] its spirit was interrupted. Only after Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638) and Chu Suilinag 褚遂良 (597–658) of the early Tang dynasty transformed its features, the similarity based on dissimilarity was achieved, almost as if Wang Xizhi and his son were revived. These words most people don’t understand. For although copying itself seems easy, it is difficult to transmit the inner energy [of the model work of art].” 余嘗謂右軍父子之書, 至齊梁而風流頓盡. 自唐初虞褚輩變其法, 乃不合而合, 右軍父子殆似復生. 此言大不意會. 蓋臨摹最易, 神氣難傳故也. Deng Shi and Huang Binhong (1936: *Huayan*, p. 40).

¹³⁷ Chou Ju-hsi (op. cit.) suggests, that the “creative copying” (*fang*) meets exactly these requirements and links it, quite convincingly but a little bit too forcedly in my opinion, to Dong’s adherence to the neo-confucian

the styles of old masters in a very similar vein. Again, it emphasizes the necessity to transform the original style, paradoxically, in order to achieve closer resemblance:

“This is an imitation of Ni Zan’s brushwork. Ni Zan mainly modeled his trees after Li Cheng’s ‘wintry forests’, his mountains and stones after Guan Tong and his brushstrokes after Dong Yuan, but he transformed all those styles. If you study the old masters and can’t transform [their styles], they become more of an obstruction and hindering to your work. The more you depart from them, the more you achieve perfect resemblance.”¹³⁸

The four masters of the Yuan dynasty, namely Ni Zan, Huang Gongwang, Wang Meng and Wu Zhen are mentioned many times as continuing in the style of Dong Yuan under the Yuan dynasty and thus representing a mediator between the formative epoch of the literati lineage of painting and its final phase in the late Ming. It has been suggested that it was Ni Zan and Huang Gongwang whom Dong admired most,¹³⁹ and indeed, the records of their qualities and works Dong saw or collected are the most numerous. Wang Meng is sometimes criticized as being inferior to Ni Zan but, interestingly, also praised as getting close to the legendary style of Wang Wei, however obscure as we have seen above.¹⁴⁰ Wu Zhen is the least often referred to, usually being just the fourth member of the group.

Ni Zan is celebrated as the most outstanding of the four artists, the one who started his career with studying the work of Dong Yuan and later succeeded in forming his own style.

School of mind (*xinxue*). He shows that it is in this way that Dong was able to overcome the conflict between tradition and innovation, conservatism and creativity.

¹³⁸ 此仿倪高士筆也。云林畫法，大都樹木似營丘寒林，山石宗關仝，皴似北苑，而各有變局。學古人不能變，便是籬堵間物。去之轉遠，乃由絕似耳。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 7).

¹³⁹ Riely (1992: 394). Dong’s opinion on the art of the Four masters of the Yuan period can be derived mainly from the entries recorded in *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 54, 68 and 86).

¹⁴⁰ See above section II.2.3.2.

Dong Qichang even cites Ni Zan's own inscription, in which he proudly declares that he succeeded in getting close to the essence of the style of Jing Hao and Guan Tong, something his contemporaries such as Wang Meng wouldn't be able even to dream of.¹⁴¹

In a colophon on his own work in the style of Wang Meng, Dong comments Wang's mastery as follows:

“The painting of Wang Meng was based on the style of Zhao Mengfu's works, that's why it extremely resembles [the expression] of his uncle. He also emulated quite a few Tang and Song dynasty masters and made Dong Yuan and Wang Wei his model. That's why his own painting was unrestrained and has many faces, while often reaching out of the framework set by Zhao Mengfu. And had Wang Meng studied only Zhao Mengfu, he wouldn't necessarily have stayed within the constraints of his style either. That's why I emulated Wang Meng's idea in this painting.”¹⁴²

In this inscription, Dong praises Wang Meng for being able to achieve a multifaceted and varied artistic expression, in which he even surpassed his uncle Zhao Mengfu. The fact that Dong Yuan and Wang Wei are mentioned as though in one breath also deserves attention. It makes the impression that Dong Yuan and Wang Wei are somehow equivalent and stand together at the birth of literati painting represented later by Wang Meng, Ni Zan and others. It would have been impossible from the practical point of view – Wang Wei was a Tang dynasty poet/painter, while Dong Yuan was a two hundred years younger landscapist, their purported painting styles differed dramatically etc. This is, however, exactly the way Dong builds up his

¹⁴¹ See *Huachanshi suibi* (2007: 86).

¹⁴² 王叔明畫，從趙文敏風韻中來，故酷似其舅。又汎濫唐宋諸名家，而以董源，王維爲宗，故其縱逸多姿，又往往出文敏規格之外。若使叔明專門師文敏，未必不爲文敏所掩也。因畫叔明筆意及之。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 7).

half evidence based, half legendary history of painting by quoting names of the painters' predecessors, peers or antipodes together with his own name throughout his texts and associating painters often without any further explanation of the details of their stylistic closeness. Here the phrase "Dong Yuan and Wang Wei" functions almost as an invocation of the essence of literati painting and a guarantee of artistic quality. In Dong's perception, and actually in the traditional approach to artistic creation in China in general, it was customary to see the qualities of an artist's work as closely related to the qualities of his personality and even his life-style, philosophical orientation and similar issues. It is therefore likely that such approach was also one of the reasons that underlie Dong's grouping of different painters in some of his paragraphs.

II.2.3.4 Dong Qichang on the problem of copying paintings of the old masters

We have already touched upon the problem of Dong Qichang's attitude towards emulating the works of art of ancient masters and transmitting the style of one's master in the previous section devoted to Dong's relationship to Dong Yuan. In the secondary literature, Dong is often presented as an advocate of strict and rigid adherence to the legacy of the old masters, and sometimes even made responsible for the later stagnation of the development in the field of Chinese painting.¹⁴³ The understanding of his attitude towards copying of the works of old masters and the broader problem of authenticity of the surviving works is therefore crucial for making a better picture of his relationship towards the past and reviewing the notorious idea of his being a staunch conservative. In *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, we

¹⁴³ This was especially the case of the radical advocates of the need to modernize Chinese painting active in the first half of the 20th century such as Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895–1953). See e.g. Lang Shaojun (1997: 317–320) or Pejšochová (2008: 11). For an expression of a similar doubt as to the plausibility of such conviction, see also Unverzagt (2007: 110–111).

can find several interesting passages where Dong elaborates on the problems of authenticity and copying in painting. An entry from *Huazhi* reads:

“The works of calligraphy can be handed down in the form of rubbings (*fatie* 法帖). The art of painting has to be entrusted to silk and paper; it cannot be transmitted through carvings in stone or wood. The works of Song and Yuan masters are now all worth hundreds in gold. And if you make a small mistake, you can easily buy a fake. The painters of shallow skills get hold of the brush in the morning and mount the painting themselves in the evening. Some of them declare to paint in the style of Fan Kuan, some Guan Tong, some of them Dong Yuan, some Juran. Only very few are ashamed of this practice.”¹⁴⁴

This is a frank and straightforward formulation that reveals Dong’s familiarity with the situation surrounding the Song and Yuan dynasty works of art preserved in his own time. Reluctant to the real style of his revered master Wang Wei as he might be,¹⁴⁵ this quotation accounts for his sober attitude when the practical questions of connoisseurship are concerned.

Similar in tone and even more detailed and illustrative is the following paragraph found in both *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*:

“The masters of olden times are far away, indeed. Today there is nobody who has ever seen a painting by Cao Buxing 曹不興 (active in the 3rd cent.) or Wu Daozi. Even the works of the followers of Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 345–406) and Lu Tanwei 陸探微 (active ca. 460s – early 6th cent.), are there any to be found? That’s

¹⁴⁴ 書有法帖尚可意求。至於畫道，必托縑素，非木石雕鐫所能傳者。今宋元名筆，一幀百金。鑒定少譌，輒收膺本。而淺學之流，朝事執筆，夕以自標。或曰此學范關，此學董巨，殊可慚惶。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 16).

¹⁴⁵ See above section II.2.3.2.

why, when discussing painting, you must rely on what you can see with your own eyes. If someone says of [a painting by] a master of the distant past: ‘This is Gu Kaizhi’ or ‘This is Lu Tanwei’, he is not only cheating other people but, in fact, he is mainly cheating himself! That’s why I say: ‘The masters of landscape painting were Li Cheng and Fan Kuan, of trees and fruit Zhao Chang 趙昌 (ca. 960– after 1060) and Wang You 王友 (Song dynasty), of flowers, bamboo and the feathered creatures Xu Xi 徐熙 (d. before 975), Huang Quan 黃筌 (903–965) and Cui Shunzhi 崔順之 (Song dynasty), of horses Han Gan 韓幹 (ca. 706–783) and Li Gonglin, of buffalos the Daoist monks Li Guizhen 厲歸真 (Five dynasties) and Fan ? 范 ? (unidentified), of Buddhist images Sun Zhiwei 孫知微 (d. ca. 1020), of deities and demons Shike 石恪 (Five dynasties), of cats He Zunshi 何尊師 (Song dynasty) and of dogs Zhou Zhao 周照 (Song dynasty). All these painters have already achieved skill and excellence [in their respective genres]. Those literati who have their masterpieces in their collections have paid thousands in gold for them. Why then look for the works of the high antiquity, which cannot be found anymore?’¹⁴⁶

From this compelling account we learn that Dong Qichang, not unlike the connoisseurs of our days, felt uneasy with the proliferation of forged works attributed to the masters of high antiquity and with the inability of collectors and connoisseurs of shallow experience to distinguish among them. The emphasis on judging the works of art according to one’s real experience shows again Dong’s pragmatism and familiarity with the problems of

¹⁴⁶ 古人遠矣。曹弗興，吳道子，近世人耳，猶不復見一筆。況顧，陸之徒，其可得見之哉。是故論畫，當以目見者為準。若遠指古人曰：此顧也，此陸也。不獨欺人，實自欺耳。故言山水，則當以李成，范寬；花果，則趙昌，王友；花竹翎毛，則徐熙，黃筌，崔順之；馬，則韓幹，伯時；牛，則厲范二道士；仙佛，則孫太古；神怪，則石恪；貓犬，則何尊師周照。得此數家，已稱奇妙。士大夫家，或有收其妙跡者，便已千金矣。何必遠求太古之上，耳目之所不及者哉。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 1).

insufficient expertise on the part of many collectors. It is interesting to note that for Dong, the “high antiquity” (*taigu zhi shang* 太古之上) was the time before the Five dynasties and Song dynasty. These were probably the periods from which dated the oldest works of tolerable authenticity that were still extant in Dong’s days. Surprisingly, with the sole exception of Wu Daozi, no masters of the Tang dynasty are recorded here, which perhaps represented an intermediary period between “the high antiquity” of the Period of Division and Sui dynasty and the regular “past” starting with the Five dynasties and Song dynasty. To our disappointment, neither Wang Wei and his specialization nor the situation concerning the authenticity of his extant works are mentioned in this passage.

Another fact that merits attention in connection with this quotation is the way in which Dong creates an index of masters and their most common subjects as a part of his discussion of the reliability of extant old masterpieces. This method of constructing the history of painting is common in Chinese treatises from the earliest times and we will see below that Mi Fu also likes to utilize it in his *Huashi*. With regard to Dong’s theory we can note that this enumeration is very different from his accounts concerned with the division of the old masters into two opposite lineages (no mentions not only of Wang Wei, but also of Dong Yuan or Mi Fu are to be found here) and we can thus read it as one of the alternative “histories of painting” found in his texts. It is however striking that Dong links it with the problem of authenticity and reliability of extant old paintings, as though trying to provide an authoritative catalogue of the acceptable works by different masters. That would be an archaic practice, indeed, and one professing against the realistic and practical overtone otherwise characteristic of the passages concerned with the problem of authenticity and copying in Dong’s texts.

The last quotation in this section will document Dong’s interest in the extant masterpieces of old painting yet from another point of view. In *Huazhi* we read:

“In Guangling 廣陵 [present-day Yangzhou] I saw a landscape by Sima Huai 司馬槐 (active at the turn of the Five dynasties and Northern Song dynasty). It was depicted with extreme skill and detail and closely resembled Li Cheng. The painting was accompanied by a number of Song and Yuan dynasty inscriptions and is not recorded in any painting catalogue. From this you can see how an old master escaped being famous. Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590) had originally inscribed it as being a work by Zhang Duanheng 張端衡 (1082–1132) but after I read the *Collected Writings of Lu You (Lu Fangweng ji 陸放翁集, Lu You 陸游, 1125–1210)*, the error came to light. Inscribing a painting really is the most difficult task.”¹⁴⁷

From this passage, it is obvious that Dong wasn't interested only in the paintings of the old masters who had already achieved fame and played a significant role in the history of painting. The account of Dong's encounter with Sima Huai's painting reveals that as a true connoisseur, he was able to see quality in works of lesser known artists and wasn't afraid to announce that he discovered a so far neglected master whose abilities other connoisseurs failed to recognize. This example of Dong's correcting a misattribution of a painting is not the only instance recorded in Dong's writings, as we have seen above in the story of changing a painting's attribution from “a Li Sixun” to “a Wang Wei”. The final exclamation in this paragraph again represents a vivid document of Dong's perception of the problems surrounding authenticity of the old masterpieces. It reveals that even an experienced connoisseur of Dong's caliber admitted that inscribing a painting and exposing thus to the judgment of others one's ability to attribute a work of art solely on the grounds of its style really is a complicated and, in fact, a dangerous task. Anyone who has ever tried his hand at

¹⁴⁷ 余在廣陵見司馬端衡畫山水，細巧之極。絕似李成，多宋元題跋。畫譜俱不載。以此知古人之逃名。王弇州嘗跋作張端衡。後見陸放翁集，始知其誤。跋畫最非易事。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 10).

an old Chinese painting completely devoid of autographs and inscriptions will recognize the ultimate accuracy of these words.

II.2.3.5 Dong Qichang and the painters of his day

In the last section of chapter II concerned with Dong Qichang's theory of painting I will quote several paragraphs that record Dong's remarks on painters of his own era, i.e. earlier decades of the Ming dynasty as well as the very decades of Dong's life. These accounts of the styles and works of the artists close in time to Dong Qichang himself not only reveal interesting details concerning Dong's taste and preference for some painters over others. They also document Dong's relationship to his own past by illustrating the application of his historical concepts on the painting practice of his day. They can thus illuminate some aspects of Dong's notion of the history of painting from unique points of view and complement the established picture of his artistic taste.

The paragraphs concerned with contemporary or slightly older painters can be roughly classified into three groups. The first includes passages where the art of the so called Four Masters of the Ming dynasty, i.e. Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1523) and Qiu Ying is discussed. These represent the continuation of the grouping of old masters into two opposite lineages and are often quoted as an illustration of the final phase of the so called Two Schools Theory. In Dong's texts, Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming are indeed mentioned as followers of the Southern tradition in line with Dong Yuan, Juran, Mi Fu and the Four Masters of the Yuan period.¹⁴⁸ In one entry, Tang Yin is criticized in line with the Ming calligrapher Zhu Yunming 祝允明 (1460–1527) as producing frivolous works unworthy

¹⁴⁸ For examples of such records see e.g. notes 44 and 99.

of the efforts of a serious scholar.¹⁴⁹ It is, however, Qiu Ying whose mentions in Dong's writings I will cite most extensively, for he is referred to from different points of view that illustrate the variability and heterogeneous nature of Dong's thinking. The second group encompasses Dong's remarks on the work of other significant painters of his era including such artists as Ding Yunpeng 丁云鹏 (1547–1621), Wu Bin 吳彬 (active ca. 1573–1620) and Yang Wencong 楊文驄 (1597–1645). Finally, entries that illustrate Dong's recognition of women painters of the past as well as of his day will be quoted to close the exposition on the crucial issues of Dong's theoretical oeuvre.

Four masters of the Ming dynasty – the case of Qiu Ying

In section II.2.1, I have quoted a passage that can be found both in *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* and discusses the correspondence between an artist's style and achieving longevity. In this entry Dong maintains that “those who depict the things with elaborate punctuality and meticulously reveal all details, harm their longevity and are without the vital force”.¹⁵⁰ Huang Gongwang, Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming all reached longevity, which, according to this theory, means that their painting was free of excessive fanciness and elaborate details and encompassed the vital force of the Universe. Qiu Ying and Zhao Mengfu, as the argument goes, died prematurely, for they were overly concerned with chasing all the details of their subjects and consequently lacked the vital force.

In this interesting passage that documents Dongs holistic approach to painting, three of the four painters later labeled as the “Four Masters of the Ming dynasty” are mentioned. Shen Zhou and Wen Zhengming are grouped together with Dong's favorite Yuan dynasty painter Huang Gongwang and are praised as those who “have the whole universe within their hands

¹⁴⁹ For the original see Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 12).

¹⁵⁰ For the original see note 35.

and the things before their eyes all animated by the natural vital force”. Obviously, in the work of Shen and Wen a continuation of the tradition of Yuan dynasty masters such as Huang Gongwang, who in turn emulated the art of Dong Yuan, is perceived and emphasized. On the other hand, the Ming master Qiu Ying is grouped together with Zhao Mengfu and is labeled as the one who harmed his longevity. Relating longevity to one’s painting style seems to be an extreme example of not judging artists according to their actual works of art but rather classifying them on the basis of other, often not artistic aspects of their personality. Qiu Ying is often made an icon of the sort of painters who didn’t possess the qualities of literati painting elsewhere defined as “elegance”, “refinement” (*ya*) or “scholarly spirit” (*shi qu*) and is thus unable to express the qualities of the author’s personality. His work was moreover judged as exceedingly detailed and elaborated, which was seen as a major shortcoming.¹⁵¹ Here, it is all the more explicit, as the factor of age would in a more realistic approach definitely represent but a casual parameter of one’s life.

Another record of Qiu Ying’s painting in the style of “the Northern School” represented by Guo Zhongshu 郭忠恕 (?–977) and Zhao Boju, with the note that this is not the lineage that Dong himself follows, is found in *Huazhi*:

“There was a Song dynasty painting called *Sima Guang’s Garden of Solitary Pleasures* (*Wengong Duleyuan tu* 溫公獨樂園圖), which Qiu Ying copied. It is a ‘ruled painting’ (*jiehua* 界畫) in the Song academic style, there are few buildings and terraces and it has the flavor of Guo Zhongshu’s and Zhao Boju’s style. It is not what I train myself.”¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ For an example of such evaluation of his work see note 102.

¹⁵² 宋人有溫公獨樂園圖。仇實甫有摹本。蓋宋畫院界畫，樓臺少，有郭恕先，趙伯駒之韻。非余所習。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 8).

Dong concludes with the remark that he, on the contrary, painted a picture of the Yueyang Tower (*Yueyang lou tu* 岳陽樓圖, a topic that is also often executed as a ‘ruled painting’ in the Song academic manner) using the style of Dong Yuan and Huang Gongwang.

In *Huazhi* there are, however, at least two records of Qiu Ying’s paintings in positive context, one even declaring him to be superior to Wen Zhengming. It reads as follows:

“In 1590 in the capital, I saw the hand scroll *The Peach Blossom Spring* (*Taoyuan tu juan* 桃源圖卷) executed in color by Zhao Boju. Later, it was bought by the Academician Wu (*Wu taixue* 吳太學) from Xindu. I don’t have the wealth to afford it myself; I only have the desire in my heart. This copy by Qiu Ying is obviously very fine, really the descendant of Zhao Boju. Even if Wen Zhengming tried to make such [painting] with all his skill, it wouldn’t surpass this one [i.e. Qiu Ying’s]. The saying ‘the skillful ones do not surpass the ones who are trained well’ works here, indeed.”¹⁵³

A part of another entry found in *Huazhi* goes:

“Qiu Ying’s copy of Zhao Boju’s *Emperor Guangwu Crossing the River* (*Guangwu duhe tu* 光武渡河圖) can be placed between Li Gonglin’s *Single Rider* (*Dan qi* 單騎) and Chen Juzhong’s 陳居中 (active ca. 1201–1204) *Wenji’s Return to China* (*Wenji gui Han* 文姬歸漢). Its composition is antique and elegant, the

¹⁵³ 宋趙千里設色桃源圖卷，昔在庚寅見之都下。後爲新都吳太學所購。余無十五城之償，惟有心艷。觀此仇英臨本，精工之極，真千里後身。雖文太史悉力爲之，未必能勝。語曰：‘巧者不過習者之門’信矣。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 11).

colors are beautifully applied. Among the masters of recent times, he is the foremost one.”¹⁵⁴

The last two quotations record Qiu Ying’s paintings that Dong Qichang liked and approved of their technique, use of colors etc. After having read his criticism of the exaggerated elaborateness, excessive coloring and richness of detail, it is quite surprising to find such paintings in the manner of Zhao Boju that Dong praises as possessing antique and refined (*ya*) composition and beautifully applied colors. This looks like an impartial judgment pronounced over paintings that, although in the style of Zhao Boju, are executed in a fine and elegant fashion and represent superior examples of its kind. It attests to the fact that Dong was at times able to appreciate the qualities of very different paintings, sometimes even executed in a style or technique he criticized elsewhere. Here, he even accentuated his admiration for one of them with an exclamation that “the skillful ones do not surpass the ones who are trained well” (*Qiao zhe bu guo xi zhe zhi men*. 巧者不過習者之門), although at another times he declares that “this is not what I train myself.” (*Fei yu suo xi*. 非余所習).

Dong’s contemporaries

Dong Qichang is primarily known as the founder of the so called Orthodox School (*Zhengtong pai* 正統派) of painting and an ardent advocate of the orthodox style derived from the painting styles of the masters of the Southern lineage such as Wang Wei, Dong Yuan, Mi Fu or Huang Gongwang. One would therefore expect that the references to his contemporaries will concern mainly painters working in similar manner and of similar intellectual orientation. Of these masters we can cite e.g. Chen Jiru, who was Dong’s close friend and artistic

¹⁵⁴ 仇實甫臨趙伯駒光武渡河圖, 衷於李伯時單騎, 見 ? 與陳居中文姬歸漢二圖之間. 位置古雅, 設色妍麗. 爲近代高手第一. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13).

companion,¹⁵⁵ or Mo Shilong, the son of Dong's mentor and patron Mo Ruzhong 莫如忠 (1509–1589).¹⁵⁶ Both of these artists are mentioned in Dong's writings several times but the frequency is surprisingly not very impressive. On the contrary, there are other masters of the late Ming dynasty, whose works and painting styles are noted in several paragraphs of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* and who were obviously object of Dong's genuine interest.

One of the painters mentioned several times is Ding Yunpeng, who is even addressed as Dong's friend. An individualist figure painter of the late Ming, Ding specialized in religious figures and painted soft, meticulously executed images of Guanyin and other mostly Buddhist deities. His images displayed individualized features and were highly innovative in comparison with the classical style of masters such as e.g. Wu Daozi. There are even speculations as to possible Western influences on his art.¹⁵⁷ A record of his painting in *Huazhi* reads:

“The painting called *Luohan Dressed in a Robe Made from Aquatic Plants* (*Luohan lou shuisheng* 羅漢蓼水生) is in the collection of Wang Shizhen. My friend Ding Yunpeng painted it when he traveled to Yunjian 雲間, it must have been the year *bingzi* (1576) or *dingchou* (1577). It is lively like a strong colt or a crane flying with the wind; it's not one of the dry, inanimate images of withered trees painted in one's old age. The poems, texts, paintings and calligraphy are

¹⁵⁵ Chen outlived Dong by three years and it was him who wrote Dong's epitaph, a considerable sign of closeness and distinction of their relationship.

¹⁵⁶ For details of Dong's relationship to Mo Shilong, see Riely (1992: 389–390).

¹⁵⁷ For a short introduction of Ding Yunpeng as well as two of his surviving works, see Yang Xin (1997: 236–7). A summary of existing literature on Ding's art and life is provided in Kent (2004: 86, note 1).

skillful when you are young and subtle when you are old. Subtlety is better than skill, but when there is no skill at all, how can there be subtlety?”¹⁵⁸

Dong’s experience with Ding Yunpeng’s work is, as we can see, similar to the opinion expressed in Yang Xin’s introduction¹⁵⁹ – the image is lively and conveys an impression of a strong personality, miles off the dry and withered figures painted by a conventional artist in his old age. It is quite remarkable that Dong is so excited with an extraordinary Buddhist image given his own aversion to the painting of figures in his landscapes. Although he didn’t usually place figures into his landscapes at all, he was, again, able to appreciate a painting in a manner that he would probably never use himself. Even more intriguing, however, is his praise of the work of a young painter, who hasn’t yet achieved the subtlety (*dan* 淡) of a mature artist, and the accentuation of the value of skillfulness (*gong* 工), which is here advocated as the prerequisite for one’s progress towards the higher level of subtlety. While from other passages it is obvious that excessive elaboration (which can be seen as a consequence of mere skillfulness in painting) at the expense of refinement and subtlety is considered a gross error in Dong’s approach, here we can see that he also considered skill important in order to achieve subtlety in painting.

Wu Bin, a painter of a specialization very similar to Ding Yunpeng, whose works are regarded as even more bizarre by the historians of Chinese painting,¹⁶⁰ is also mentioned once in *Huazhi*. Dong speaks about his painting of fantastic rocks that he executed for a collector of

¹⁵⁸ 此羅漢婁水生, 弇山先生所藏. 乃吾友丁南羽游雲間時筆, 當為丙子, 丁丑年. 如生力駒, 順風鴻, 非復晚歲枯木禪也. 詩文書畫少而工, 老而淡. 淡勝工, 不工亦何能淡. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 14).

¹⁵⁹ See note 157.

¹⁶⁰ For a short introduction of his work and two reproductions of surviving paintings, see Yang Xin (1997: 236–8).

these strange stones, Mi Wanzhong 米萬鍾 (1570–1628).¹⁶¹ It is again a subject remote from Dong's own interests but close, as we know, to his great model Mi Fu, which Dong never forgets to emphasize when it comes to this topic.¹⁶²

Yang Wencong, today an almost forgotten painter originating from the same region as Dong Qichang, is also praised as an excellent painter in one paragraph of *Huazhi*. Dong describes his qualities as follows:

“Yang Wencong was born in Guizhu and his painting skills are second to no one. In his painting called *Terrace Pond* (*Taidang* 台蕩) and others, he has mastered the vigorous structure of Song painters but is free of their rigidity. He encompasses the elegance equal to the painters of the Yuan dynasty, but is free of their weakness. I was astonished to realize that he belongs somewhere between Juran and Huichong 惠崇 (?–1017) and I was looking [at his work] to my heart's content. Yang Wencong can make thousand miles in one day and all the transformations of spring and autumn are abundant in his art. I haven't seen where he got to and how his painting changed after we separated. In my Studio of Painting Chan (*Huachanshi* 畫禪室), I intentionally displayed his painting on the *xiteng* paper and worship it alongside with Wang Wei's painting.”¹⁶³

Yang Wencong, who is not even accorded an introduction in Yang Xin's substantial summary of Ming dynasty painting,¹⁶⁴ was Dong's countryman and that surely explains at

¹⁶¹ For the original text, see Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 17).

¹⁶² See e.g. the passage quoted in note 96.

¹⁶³ 楊龍友生於貴竹，獨破天荒。所作台蕩等圖，有宋人之骨力，去其結。有元人之風雅，去其佻。余訝以為出入巨然，惠崇之間，關止矣。龍友一日千里，春秋甚富。未見其止，不知分手之後變化若何。余畫禪室中專待溪藤一幅，與摩詰同供養耳。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 15).

¹⁶⁴ *Op. cit.*

least partly his appraisal of Yang's paintings. It is, however, unique within the whole corpus of Dong's theories to see a contemporary painter placed side by side with Wang Wei, all the more so when Dong proclaims that he worships Yang's painting in the same way as the works of this revered master of the past. It is of course necessary to keep a provision for literary hyperbole that is omnipresent in Chinese writing about art, especially when praising a friend. This paragraph would nevertheless qualify as the most exalted praise expressed by Dong upon a work of a contemporary painter and as such provides a unique evidence of the qualities of his works that are lost today.

Dong on female painters

To close his essay on the development of Ming dynasty painting, Yang Xin (1997: 246) notes that in the final decades of the Ming dynasty, a marked increase in the number of female painters is evident. He writes:

“... there were few female artists in Chinese history. This began to change toward the end of the Ming dynasty, when their number began to increase. According to Tang Shuyu 湯漱玉 in *The Jade Platform History of Painting (Yutai huashi 玉台畫史)*,¹⁶⁵ of the 216 known female artists from ancient times to the reign of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 emperor (r. 1796–1820) of the Qing dynasty, half lived during the Ming dynasty and four-fifths of these lived during the late Ming.”

Yang Xin further records that a considerable number of the female artists were concubines or prostitutes trained especially in the art of writing, painting, singing and playing

¹⁶⁵ The English translation of the title of this book is quoted according to Yang Xin. Elsewhere it is sometimes translated as *The Jade Terrace History of Painting* and the name of its author is sometimes transcribed as Tang Souyu.

musical instruments in order to accompany their husbands or clients in pursuing their noble interests.

Dong Qichang's texts also bear testimony to this trend, as he speaks about women painters several times and also occasionally mentions women taking part in literati activities. In *Huazhi*, three references to women painters in history can be found scattered among other paragraphs discussing paintings or painting styles of the painters of the past, which by itself is quite remarkable. Moreover, in one entry Dong notes exactly the trend described by Yang Xin, i.e. the marked increase in the number of painters among the singing girls in the region surrounding the Western lake in the last decades. One entry also records participation of a Daoist nun in the viewing of paintings together with Dong and his companions.

In the course of construing his history of painting of a sort, Dong speaks about a Tang dynasty female painter of birds and flowers in the same way as about other male painters of the past and records his encounters with her paintings:

“Yao Yuehua 姚月華 (Tang dynasty) in her spare time sometimes painted flowers and birds. Her paintings are of the freshest in the world. She has painted a lotus for Mr. Yang which is sketched in dark and light ink and its appearance is very realistic. Therefore I have retained [her painting] in order to amuse myself with it, for [nowadays] you don't find many of her paintings among people.”¹⁶⁶

Zhao Mengfu's wife, Guan Daosheng 管道升 (1262–1319), who was famous mainly for her paintings of bamboo, is mentioned twice in *Huazhi*:

¹⁶⁶ 魏氏月華筆札之暇, 時及丹青. 花卉翎毛, 世所鮮及. 嘗爲楊生畫芙蓉, 約略濃淡, 生態逼真. 然聊復自娛, 人不獲多見也. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13). Zhou Yuanbin (2007: 159) explains that the painter's surname “Wei 魏” is mistaken for “Yao 姚” and that the artist in question is actually Yao Yuehua 姚月華, a Tang dynasty female painter.

“Many paintings of ink bamboo by lady Guan survive. I saw her painting called *Embroidered Buddha in a Mountain Hut* (*Shan lu xiu Fo tu* 山廬繡佛圖) and she was also an able landscape paintress. Today, I saw the painting of the Buddha again together with an inscription in small regular script and both were very accurate. Even the ensuing lines of calligraphy by Zhao Mengfu couldn’t be far superior. The inscription by Shen Zhou reads: ‘The brushwork is not inferior to Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105)’.”¹⁶⁷

“Once when Zhao Mengfu was painting a horse rolling on the ground, his wife lady Guan eavesdropped at him from behind a wall. Following his example, she also seized a brush. ...”¹⁶⁸

In one instance, when commenting on Chen Jiru’s artistic concepts, Dong records a curious fact that

“... with us, there was Wang Wei 王微, a Daoist nun from Yangzhou, looking [at this painting].”¹⁶⁹

The most extensive passage where women painters are mentioned, however, is one describing Dong’s boat trip across the continent, in the course of which he stopped to view paintings with his companions:

¹⁶⁷ 管夫人墨竹, 世多有之。余見山廬繡佛圖, 亦工山水。今復見此佛像及小楷, 皆有法度。雖文敏續書數十行, 無能遠過也。白石翁跋: 筆法不減涪翁。垂始當作無始, 或偶然筆誤耳。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13).

¹⁶⁸ 趙承旨畫滾馬, 管夫人隔垣窺公作滾馬形, 自此絕筆。... Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 16).

¹⁶⁹ 同觀者, 修微王道人。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 14). *Xiu Wei Wang daoren* 修微王道人 is identified as the Daoist nun Wang Wei 王微 by Zhou Yuanbin (2007: 163).

“In the year *yihai* 己亥 (1599), on my way North when I passed by river Wen, Yu Wending 于文定 (1545–1608) painted an album of landscapes and flowers and showed it to us in Dongping 東平, at the place of Lady Li Daokun 李道坤, the wife of Mr. Li. A visiting officer asked me to furnish it with an inscription. The Northern School of painting originates with Mrs. Li 李夫人, while in calligraphy, there was also Li Wei 李衛, how extraordinary, how extraordinary. I lived in seclusion for almost thirty years and then I heard that the noble ladies skilled in painting appeared on scene again, they all reside by Xihu 西湖 in Wulin 武林. First, there was Lin Tiansu 林天素, than there was Wang Youyun 王友雲. One is like the *ghata* of Master Wolun 臥輪 (dates unknown, probably active in the late Tang dynasty) of the Northern School, the other is like the teaching of Master Huineng 慧能 (ca. 638–713) of the Southern School.”¹⁷⁰

Then, Dong goes on to liken the art of these two woman painters to the teaching of the Northern and Southern schools of Buddhism and to praise the qualities of their particular paintings.

This statement, interestingly not quoted in the customary expositions on Dong’s theory of the Northern and Southern schools of painting, is remarkable for repeating the analogy of painting history and Chan Buddhism in connection with the art of female painters of the Xihu region. It is, however, another example of Dong’s attitude towards women painters – instead of describing and underlining specific feminine qualities of their painting, they are treated in the same way as male painters throughout Dong’s texts. An amused hyperbole is again

¹⁷⁰ 歲在己亥余北歸, 過汶上時, 于文定公以東平李室名道坤者所作山水花卉冊見示. 託路大夫求余跋. 北方畫學自李夫人創發. 亦書家之有李衛, 奇矣, 奇矣. 山居荏苒幾三十年, 乃聞閨秀之能畫史者一再出, 又皆著於武林之西湖. 初爲林天素, 繼爲王友雲. 彼如北宗臥輪偈, 此如南宗慧能偈. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 16).

obvious in the whole paragraph, but the attention accorded these women painters as well as the praise of their art clad in Buddhist terminology are themselves remarkable. A conventional mention of calligraphy in this context, reminiscent of the references to Wang Xizhi's art of writing as a parallel to the development in painting throughout the discussions of the art of male painters elsewhere, gives the whole section an even more serious outlook. Given the fragmentary nature of Dong's writings on painting, it is unfortunately impossible to reconstruct his views on the art of female painters in a more complex fashion. It is, however, interesting to note at least that references to these paintresses are present in his texts and at times even echo the phrasing of passages that are usually interpreted as the core of Dong Qichang's painting theory.

III. Mi Fu's painting theory

Following the comprehensive overview of Dong Qichang's texts on painting, I will turn my attention to Mi Fu's painting theory as recorded in his text *History of Painting (Huashi)*¹⁷¹ and make an analysis of his comments on similar topics as those identified above in Dong's texts. The interpretation of Mi Fu's painting theory outlined in this chapter will subsequently become the basis for the confrontation of Dong's and Mi's texts on painting that will be the subject of the final chapter of the thesis.

Both Mi Fu and Dong Qichang studied and practiced calligraphy and painting throughout their lives and left behind extensive treatises on these arts. It is, however, important to note that they both were primarily calligraphers and perceived their research and collecting of calligraphy as primary and far more important than the practice of painting. This observation is even more fundamental for the understanding of writings by Mi Fu, who, as Lothar Ledderose and Peter Sturman so brilliantly documented in their research, actually built his personal and artistic identity around the issue of emulating Jin dynasty calligraphers. His writings on calligraphy (most notably the *Baozhang daifang lu* 寶章待訪錄 and *Shushi*) and his own calligraphic works contain numerous references to and judgments of the autographs of the old masters that, when systematized, form a fascinating picture of an artist entangled deep into the fabric of his own past.

This part of my thesis aspires to forming a similar picture based on the analysis of Mi Fu's writings on painting. In the following sections, I will try to identify the terms and phrases that are used most frequently in Mi Fu's comments on the quality of the paintings recorded in *Huashi* and can be therefore singled out as the representatives of Mi Fu's theoretical approach.

¹⁷¹ In the same way as when referring to Dong Qichang's writings, I will hereafter refer to Mi Fu's text with its Chinese title, i.e. *Huashi*.

In a similar way as for Dong Qichang's theory of painting in chapter II, I will go through the most important issues that keep appearing time and again in *Huashi* and discuss their significance for our understanding of Mi Fu's vision of the history of painting from antiquity up to his time. These will include Mi Fu's stance on the importance of painting as a refined discipline, his attitude towards copying and authenticity of old paintings as well as materials and technical aspects of painting and mounting paintings. Most notably, I will concentrate on Mi Fu's relationship to individual artists of the past and their works described in *Huashi*, which in their complexity represent his attitude towards the painting of the past.

It must be, however, observed at the very beginning that *Huashi* doesn't seem to provide such ample and varied material as *Shushi* for picturing an eccentric and at times even mad personality with its singular relationship to the art of the past, which brought Mi Fu immortal glory.¹⁷² With the exception of the preface, the contents of which will be discussed in greater detail in the section III.2,¹⁷³ the entries of *Huashi* sound for the most part factual and moderate, not striving to provoke controversy or sensation. As original paintings by Mi

¹⁷² Numerous tales circulate about Mi Fu's alleged extravagancies including such that he used to wear historical clothes and costumes, was obsessed with cleanliness and washed his hands and anything he touched many times a day, or that he spoke in a strange voice and felt no shame in addressing a stone as an older brother. Egan (2006: 211–218) has a whole subchapter that brings together contemporary evidence showing Mi Fu as a madman. As for examples of his odd opinions and judgments of old calligraphy, in the course of the analysis of his writings by Lothar Ledderose (1979: 49–58) for example, we read: "Mi's opinions about Chu [Suiliang]'s style were apparently very strong and differed considerably from those of his contemporaries" or "Mi Fu contradicted the opinion of many of his contemporaries who believed that originals written by Wang Xizhi's forerunners Zhong You 鍾繇 (151–230) and Zhang Zhi 張芝 (active ca. A.D. 190) had been handed down" or "... in opposition to the more common opinion he deemphasized the position of Wang Xizhi." Peter Sturman (1997: 59) in turn cites a record, which states that even in his youth, Mi Fu was already noted as a bright and outspoken man who "applied himself to literature, but never used the phrases of earlier writers." This is rare, indeed, in the tradition-oriented system of Chinese literary composition and again brought Mi Fu a reputation of an eccentric writer.

¹⁷³ Peter Sturman (1997: 5) shows how Mi Fu's enthusiastic and bold advocating of the intrinsic merit of artistic creation against the success and fame gained in the civil service, which he pronounced in the preface to *Huashi*, was regarded as sheer lunacy by later Confucian-minded critics. Egan (op. cit.) records a similar observation.

Fu are largely lost today¹⁷⁴ and his texts, too, provide little information on his own art of painting, it is also not possible to combine the facts we have from reading *Huashi* with his extant works to form a complex picture similar to the one Peter Sturman constructs for Mi Fu's calligraphic oeuvre. As we will see below, painting was in the 11th and early 12th centuries probably still regarded as far inferior to calligraphy and the contents of texts related to its collecting and practice seem to reflect this status. Given the limited scope and complexity of *Huashi* and also the relative scarcity of other reliable information on the painters recorded in it, not to speak of their original works that would allow for a comparison, we cannot hope to create a distinct and clearly defined picture of the kind encountered in the studies on Mi Fu's connoisseurship of calligraphy.

Ledderose's (1979: 53) description that applies to Mi Fu's texts on calligraphy and painting alike, on the other hand, aptly summarizes the reasons for making *Huashi* the subject of detailed research and comparison with other texts of this genre:

“... when one looks at the entire body of Mi Fu's writings, it is remarkable how methodically and rationally he writes about single objects. In reading his passages one is again and again impressed by the precision of his descriptions, the logic of his arguments, the breadth of his knowledge, the frankness of his judgments, and the vividness of his style. It was these very qualities that were admired and emulated by later connoisseurs. Moreover, not only his methods of investigation but also the form in which he presented them became a model for later generations. Mi Fu was the first to cast his scholarship in short separate entries about particular works. Herein he set a standard for the most important genre of art-historical writing in China: a colophon.”

¹⁷⁴ For a penetrating discussion of surviving paintings attributed to Mi Fu see Wai-kam Ho (1959).

This part of the thesis will therefore discuss the contents of Mi Fu's *Huashi*, which, as Dong Qichang's own words quoted above¹⁷⁵ as well as Ledderose's characteristics mentioned here show, might well have been one of the sources of inspiration for the compilation of Dong's *Huazhi* and certain parts of his *Huachanshi suibi*. Special attention will be paid to Mi Fu's opinions on the painting genres and works of different painters that will be summarized in chapter IV to represent Mi Fu's vision of his own past as far as the domain of painting is concerned.

III.1 The form and content of *Huashi*

III.1.1 Sources

Mi Fu's painting theory is now to be found in a single text entitled *Huashi* that survives in his name. Kohara (2002a: 63–64) lists as many as 24 versions of the text he was drawing on when collating the text for his Japanese translation.¹⁷⁶ These include Zhao Mengfu's handwritten copy of the text in the collection of the American collector Weng Wange 翁萬戈, which, if authentic, is the earliest surviving edition of *Huashi*. Further, several Ming printed editions are listed here including one found in *Wangshi huayuan* 王氏畫苑 (Wang Shizhen, 1591) and a Qing dynasty version from *Siku quanshu*. Among the modern editions are those included in Deng Shi's and Huang Binhong's (1936) *Meishu congshu* and Yu An'lan's (1982) *Huapin congshu* 畫品叢書. Throughout his analysis, Kohara presents all the variant readings found in different editions of the text and discusses the meaning as well as context of the individual entries in a complex way. Nicole Vandier-Nicolas states that

¹⁷⁵ See note 97.

¹⁷⁶ The Japanese translation of *Huashi* was recently published as Kohara (2009) and (2010).

according to Chinese bibliographies the text of *Huashi* was not widely circulated during the Song dynasty and only attracted the interest of art historians and theorists in the Yuan period.¹⁷⁷ She assumes that there probably had existed a printed edition of the text in the Song time, which was later reprinted in the Ming period. Besides, the text was included in different compendia of painting theories, of which the oldest known is Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (ca. 1316– ca. 1396) *Shuofu* 說郛.

It is interesting to note that other Mi Fu's texts, most notably the *History of calligraphy* (*Shushi*), were part of older Song dynasty compendia, into which *Huashi* had not been included. That might be explained by the fact that *Huashi* was assigned lesser importance at the time of its composition than *Shushi*, for painting was traditionally regarded as inferior to calligraphy as far as the prestige in the hierarchy of scholarly disciplines is concerned. A similar conviction is expressed by Kohara (1995: 17) who writes:

“...The answer to this question lies, I believe, in the difference in prestige accorded to writings on calligraphy and painting. This interpretation is supported by the fact that in the *Songshi* chapter on art and literature, Mi's *Shushi* is listed among 'lesser studies' related to the Confucian classics, which include *Chuci* 楚辭, *Erya* 爾雅, and *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字. The *Huashi*, on the other hand, is found in the section on miscellaneous arts, devoted to such gentlemanly amusements as archery, chess, and drinking games like pitch-pot. The level of prestige accorded to painting was thus no higher than in previous ages.”

¹⁷⁷ Vandier-Nicolas (1964: XXII–XXIV, esp. XXIII, note 5).

Both Vandier-Nicolas and Kohara therefore take into account “this traditional treatment of writings on painting as anecdotal essays”¹⁷⁸ and explain with it some of the anomalies of the text.

I have based my study on the *Meishu congshu* version of *Huashi*¹⁷⁹ and whenever necessary, I will refer to the variant readings according to Kohara’s detailed collation provided in his article entitled “Collated and Annotated Text of the *History of Painting*” (*Huashi jizhu* 畫史集註).¹⁸⁰ I have consulted also the *Siku quanshu* version of *Huashi*, its translation into modern Chinese and its commentary by Xiao Peicang and Lao Shuifan (2003: 112–222) and the French translation of Nicole Vandier-Nicolas (1964). In the same way as for Dong Qichang’s texts, I treat the versions available today as authentic and representing Mi Fu’s views on the art of painting and its history up to Mi Fu’s day, even though it is very difficult today to prove the authenticity of every single entry of *Huashi*.

III.1.2 Date

The date of the composition of *Huashi* is not known and the text itself offers little by way of explanation. Most of the paragraphs are neither dated nor contain any clue for situating the events they describe in time. Dong Qichang, on the contrary, recorded similar events of his life often with the inclusion of the year and month in which they happened. In Mi Fu’s case we have to rely on his general biography where some of the affairs cited in *Huashi* are mentioned in a different context, and the corroboration of his biographical data from other surviving texts, such as *Shushi* or Mi Fu’s collected writings that survive under the title *Bao Jin Yingguang ji* 寶晉英光集. It is probably from these sources that Kohara derives

¹⁷⁸ Kohara (1995: 18, note 20).

¹⁷⁹ Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 3–58) recorded as Nr. 11 in Kohara’s list.

¹⁸⁰ Kohara (2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b and 2005).

the dates of several of the *Huashi* paragraphs stating e.g. that “article 115 ... was in fact written in the year of his [Mi Fu’s] death [i.e. 1107], while article 195, last in the work, is dated 1088 and details a conversation between the thirty-eight-year-old author and Shen Gua.”¹⁸¹ The dating of the article 115 to the last year of Mi Fu’s life is again not supported by substantial evidence and is probably inferred from the fact that it seems to describe the state of Mi Fu’s collection after donating some of his important artworks to the collection of Emperor Huizong in 1104 and Mi Fu’s subsequent banishment to Huaiyang 淮陽 a year later.¹⁸² Had the paragraph 115 been really written in the year of Mi Fu’s death, 1107 would then be the date of the completion of the whole text and the possibility that the text is unfinished would also be implied.

Nicole Vandier-Nicolas (1964: XXII–XXIII, notes 1 and 5), on the other hand, argues strongly in favor of the fact that *Huashi* is a complete and authentic text, fairly well preserved as far as the original form and content are concerned. In the course of her study, she was comparing the content of *Huashi* with Deng Chun’s 鄧椿 (active ca. mid. 12th century) *Huaji* 畫繼 as well as other later works on painting where extensive passages from *Huashi* are quoted. She came to the conclusion that

¹⁸¹ Kohara (1995: 14). The dating offered for some of the paragraphs of *Huashi* in this article is, however, questionable, and the author doesn’t refer to the sources he used in order to determine it. Maybe they are cited in the Japanese version of his article (Kohara 1994), which wasn’t available to me at the time of writing the present thesis. Kohara himself revised some of his opinions in his later works on the topic. The last paragraph of *Huashi* that records Mi Fu’s conversation with Shen Gua, for example, is in Kohara (2005: 137) commented upon as follows: “Mi Fu frequented Shen Gua when he was forty to forty-two years old and it is very likely that [this event took place] in this early period of his life.”

¹⁸² Kohara (1995: 11).

“*Huashi* seems to have come down to us without obvious alterations. Though the style might be surprising and some of the passages difficult or almost impossible to understand and translate, the fault is not on the side of a negligent copyist.”¹⁸³

If both she and Kohara were right, it would have been quite a coincidence that Mi Fu finished the compilation of his *History of Painting* shortly before his death with the last paragraph dealing with the regretful state of his collection.

One way or another, it is probably close to impossible to establish the date of the completion of *Huashi* with certainty with the material we have today. In this place, we will therefore resort to a simple enumeration of the most important clues the text itself and closely related sources provide concerning the date of its composition and its authorship. The first important fact is that the text is furnished with a preface, the last two sentences of which make an impression that they really were written down as the very last of the whole text:

“Therefore I have compiled everything [concerning painting] I had seen throughout my life to present it to my sons and grandsons and have entitled it *The History of Painting*. Those, who know [more], can expand it with what they [saw and heard] with their own eyes and ears.”¹⁸⁴

These words seem to prove beyond any doubt that the text and its preface are finished and authorized by its compiler. The final sentences of the preface, on the other hand, don't contain the date and signature of the author, which was quite a common feature of texts intended as authorized for dissemination and subsequent use by Mi Fu's posterity.

¹⁸³ Vandier-Nicolas (1964: XXI).

¹⁸⁴ 故敘平生所覩以示子孫, 題曰畫史. 識者爲予增廣耳目也. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 4).

As for the explicit dating of events recorded in *Huashi*, the specification of the time of burning of the Temple of Sweet Dew (*Ganlu si* 甘露寺) in Runzhou 潤州 as “one morning toward the end of the Yuanfu era (1098–1100)”¹⁸⁵ is a sole example. Otherwise, only the names of several historical eras related to the creation of some of the paintings or events that took place in the past are mentioned. Of the references to events in Mi Fu’s life the most important is probably the mention of Mi Fu’s Studio for Treasuring the Jin (*Bao Jin zhai* 寶晉齋) that appears twice in the text of *Huashi*. As Kohara (2004a: 45) explains, Mi Fu started to use the sobriquet “Treasuring the Jin” (*Bao Jin* 寶晉) in 1101 when he acquired Xie An’s 謝安 (320–385) calligraphy entitled *Ba yue wu ri tie* 八月五日帖, which was later followed by two more masterpieces of Jin dynasty calligraphy.¹⁸⁶ The time of the inclusion of the two paragraphs that mention the Studio must therefore postdate this event. Moreover, the acquisition of some of the oldest pieces in Mi Fu’s painting collection, i.e. Gu Kaizhi’s *Vimalakirti and Celestial Maidens* (*Weimo tiannü tu* 維摩天女圖) and Dai Kui’s 戴逵 (ca. 326–396) *Guanyin tu* 觀音圖, which are mentioned at the very beginning of *Huashi*, took place in 1102.¹⁸⁷ Based on the evidence of these paragraphs, the whole text must therefore have been accomplished sometime between 1102 and Mi Fu’s death in 1107.

This corresponds with the opinion of Peter Sturman (1997: 156), unfortunately again not documented by the evidence of primary sources, that:

¹⁸⁵ 元符末一旦... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 21).

¹⁸⁶ These two are Wang Xianzhi’s 王獻之 (344–386) *Shier yue tie* 十二月帖 and Wang Xizhi’s 王羲之 (303–361) *Wang lue tie* 王略帖.

¹⁸⁷ Kohara (1995: 11) cites the primary sources that substantiate this dating.

“Among Mi Fu’s extensive writings on the arts the best known are his two histories of calligraphy and painting, *Shu shi* and *Hua shi*, both probably completed between 1103 and 1005, and the earlier predecessor to *Shu shi*, *Baozhang daifang lu* of 1086.”

Wai-kam Ho (1959: 89) gives the date of the completion of *Huashi* as “shortly after 1103”. Lothar Ledderose (1979: 50) also notes that Mi Fu’s practice of omitting the dating in most of the paragraphs of *Huashi* and *Shushi* is a grave problem. On the basis of his analysis of the content of *Shushi*, however, he arrives at a similar dating of this text, i.e. “sometime between 1103 and Mi Fu’s death in 1107” and a curious suggestion that “Perhaps these notes were originally dictated, which could explain their loose and colloquial style.”¹⁸⁸ Given the parallels and similarities found in *Huashi* and *Shushi*,¹⁸⁹ where identical events and works of art are sometimes referred to in a slightly different wording, this would possibly apply to *Huashi*, too.

III.1.3 Content

Huashi as it is preserved today in most of the editions cited above consists of a preface and three sections arranged in chronological order: “Jin dynasty painting” (*Jin hua* 晉畫), “Six Dynasties’ painting” (*Liuchao hua* 六朝畫) and “Tang dynasty painting supplemented with the painting of Five Dynasties and the present dynasty” (*Tang hua Wudai guochao fu* 唐畫五代國朝附). It is interesting to note the asymmetry in the length of individual chapters, as the first two contain only a few entries each, while the third covers the remaining nearly 180

¹⁸⁸ Ledderose (1979: 49). Here, Ledderose expresses another interesting opinion that “His [Mi Fu’s] own collection of calligraphic works, however, was for the most part not assembled before the last decade of his life.” (Ibidem, p. 46).

¹⁸⁹ This proximity of the two works is strongly accentuated also by Vandier-Nicolas (1964: XXII, note 1).

paragraphs. We can therefore wonder why the Song dynasty artists and their works are grouped together with the painting of Tang dynasty and regarded as mere “supplement”, in spite of the fact that this category is the most numerous and rich in Mi Fu’s commentaries. It is of course possible that the reason for such organization of the text lies mainly in the effort to demonstrate the editor’s respect for the masters of antiquity. The painters of Tang dynasty and his own era are probably regarded as contemporary and in a way ordinary to deserve special recognition. This kind of arrangement, however, offers little help for the reader’s orientation.

In the preface, Mi Fu uses allusions and references to Du Fu’s poems to argue in favor of the importance and inherent qualities of painting.¹⁹⁰ The first chapter records three paintings from Mi Fu’s collection by Jin dynasty masters – two by Ku Kaizhi and one by Dai Kui (also known as Dai Andao 戴安道). In the second chapter, several paintings by masters of the Six dynasties are quoted, both in Mi Fu’s and other collections. The third and most extensive chapter includes diverse material pertaining to the works of Tang, Five Dynasties’ and Song dynasty masters in Mi Fu’s as well as other collections, Mi Fu’s evaluations of these works, comparisons of paintings by a certain master from different collections, advice for collectors, notes on subjects of painting typical for different masters, remarks on authenticity of paintings Mi Fu owned or saw in other collections, on the use of seals and signatures, occasionally even references to other collectibles such as antique bronzes, and different sorts of episodes and stories Mi Fu experienced or heard about in the course of his career as art collector.

A few paragraphs contain also information somewhat remote from the main subject of the text represented by its title and the explanation provided by the last few sentences of the

¹⁹⁰ For the discussion of the contents and significance of the preface see below and cf. Sturman (1997: 4–5), who has also translated a part of the preface into English. A complete translation of the preface to *Huashi* is offered by Egan (2006: 194–197).

preface. In some, materials, types of mounting or historical realia such as garment and hat types are described, while others deal with even less related topics such as music, astrology and ghost stories. Kohara (1995) attempts to explain the inclusion of such paragraphs with Mi Fu's political ambitions. To me, such stance appears quite forced and not supported by sufficient evidence. My impression from repeated readings of *Huashi* is rather that it belongs to the genre of "miscellanea" composed by literati on their favorite subjects and even though it is entitled *History of Painting*, it can contain passages on other subjects only loosely linked with the main topic.¹⁹¹ From the paragraphs where ghost stories or Mi Fu's intuition on the supernatural disappearance of his friend are recorded¹⁹² we can see the relevance these strange topics had to painting in Mi Fu's approach. Similarly, the elaborations on musical tones and astrological concepts are always linked to a discussion of paintings on these subjects and can be, in my opinion, tolerated as curious excursions common in the texts of this genre.

¹⁹¹ For a highly illuminating discussion of the way the inclusion of various topics into the "miscellanea" of different kinds was perceived by the authors of the Song dynasty informal jottings (*biji* 筆記), see Fu (2007). Especially his argument on the fundamental closeness of all topics once their qualities such as subtlety or refinement are concerned is highly relevant here. He e.g. shows that Shen Gua in his jottings on the art of calligraphy "talked a lot in reference to other categories about the level of subtlety and visionary capacity for astronomy and mathematics. Therefore, the capacity to observe is as important in astronomy as it is in painting. Conversely, the gift of grasping subtlety is as important in national finance as it is in divination. We can also appreciate how the practices of intermittently writing and jotting down short notes into various categories of a general miscellany as in *Brush talks*, contributed to shape Shen Gua's general epistemological position on knowledge ... to shaping a 'synchronic' epistemological outlook on these categories." (Fu, 2007: 118) In other words, the Song dynasty authors of informal jottings on special subjects were for the most part not concerned exclusively with the subject in question in the way modern treatises on such topics would be composed. On the contrary, they were used to taking notes of many different matters related to the subject in question in various, often highly individualistic ways throughout a long period of time. Consequently, the specific nature of the relation is sometimes not so obvious to a reader centuries remote from the writer's time, not to mention a very different cultural background. Fu (2007: 119) further expresses his conviction that under the Song dynasty, the "general miscellanies", which contained discussions of many different subjects, became very popular among literati who were not necessarily experts in every field their treatises touched upon. Though this is not the case of Mi Fu's *Huashi*, which belongs to the category of a "single subject miscellany", the practices used in writing both types might of course overlap to a certain degree in case of each text.

¹⁹² Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 48–49).

Moreover, the conviction of Nicole Vandier-Nicolas that the text is well preserved notwithstanding, a possibility still remains that corrupted or later added portions not representing Mi Fu's original ideas can be found in *Huashi* in the same way as in any other ancient treatise.¹⁹³

The entries of the third chapter of *Huashi* cover all the prominent genres of Chinese painting, i.e. figure painting, landscape painting, painting of birds, flowers and different animals such as buffalos, horses and others. Many important collections and collectors of Mi Fu's period are mentioned including several members of the imperial family such as Zhao Lingrang, Mi Fu's fellow scholars and painters such as Su Shi, Li Gonglin or Wang Shen, historians and theorists of painting such as Shen Gua, and many dealers or private collectors of lesser renown.

Except for the basic division of the whole text into three chapters, little effort was apparently devoted to the organization of the material included in the individual chapters. The organization is, however, not "completely chaotic" as Kohara (1995:14) notes in his article. Entries discussing the work of a particular painter (e.g. Wu Daozi) sometimes follow each other, but are interrupted by a discussion of other artists' works even in a different genre before getting back to works of Wu Daozi. Entries discussing works in a given genre (i.e. figural painting, birds and flowers etc.) sometimes seem to be grouped together, but this principle is again violated many times. Most of the odd passages mentioned above are appended at the end of the whole treatise and similar subjects such as mounting and painting

¹⁹³ Kohara (1995: 16) states, for example, that a part of Mi Fu's exposition on astrology is "plagiarized from Shen Gua's *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談 [*Casual Writings from the Garden of the Stream of Dream*]". As we can see from the 'case of *Huashuo*', which was originally attributed to Dong Qichang's teacher Mo Shilong but had in reality most probably been compiled from portions of writings of Dong Qichang himself (for details see Fu Shen 1972) and given the closeness of Mi Fu and Shen Gua, whose meetings and conversations are recorded in *Huashi* and other historical writings of their time, it is quite possible that some passages of their texts intermingled in the course of their transmission.

materials are sometimes discussed in sequential paragraphs. As a whole, the work makes an impression of an unfinished or semi-edited text not polished into a final form. It retains to a significant degree the character of an exemplary collection of “pen-notes” (*biji*) as described above and elaborated upon in the article by Fu (2007).¹⁹⁴ The confusion of the contents, from a modern reader’s point of view, is nevertheless not as serious as in the case of Dong Qichang’s *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, where e.g. a quotation of Ni Zan’s statement on a specific painting is recorded four times in four different wordings. As a similar example from Mi Fu’s *Huashi*, a reference to a painting he hadn’t seen can be quoted, which is followed by the description of the same work several pages below, obviously appended years later after Mi Fu had the opportunity to examine the painting with his own eyes.¹⁹⁵ This is, however, a rare instance of two paragraphs referring to a single painting. *Huashi* as a whole seems to be edited at least to a certain degree as far as the chronological order and names of the artists are concerned.

III.2 The value and significance of painting

Unlike Dong Qichang’s texts dealing with theory and history of Chinese painting, Mi Fu’s treatise is preceded by a preface, which elucidates the general idea that led him to composing a *History of Painting* of this kind and substantiates it with arguments in favor of the intrinsic value of artistic creation. Mi Fu opens the text with a quotation of Du Fu’s poem that laments the transience of merit and fame that can be achieved through one’s career in the civil service and contrasts it with the ability of painting and calligraphy to be transmitted to future generations. As Peter Sturman (1997: 5) points out, Mi’s statement is based on “the

¹⁹⁴ For more details on the genre the text of *Huashi* belongs to, see the introductory passages of section IV.2.

¹⁹⁵ Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 39 and pp. 53–54). Cf. also Kohara (1995: 17).

premise that the traces of one's art can convey the essential qualities of an individual, and occasionally with greater longevity than successful public service.”

We know this stance from ancient historical texts beginning with *Zuo zhuan* (左傳), where the so called “imperishable three” (*san bu xiu* 三不朽), or “establishing virtue” (*li de* 立德), “establishing merit” (*li gong* 立功) and “establishing words” (*li yan* 立言), are recorded as a vehicle for transmitting one's attainments to posterity. The “establishing of words” from this quotation has been frequently referred to in Chinese literary criticism to argue in favor of the significance of literary creation as a means for transmitting the author's ambitions and aspirations to later generations. It has been emulated also in the expositions on the history of calligraphy and painting alike, for it gives these “grossly material and superficially pleasing”¹⁹⁶ disciplines an air of canonical approval and help to defend them against the charge of being unworthy of serious scholarly efforts. The preface to *Huashi* opens exactly in this vein and with a great deal of irony argues that

“While the achievements of the Five Kings were soon laughed at by women and kids, Xue Ji's 薛稷 (649–713) brush was refined and his ink was subtle, and the copies and rubbings [of his works] thus became widespread. When the stone breaks, it can be recut, when the silk splits, it can be repaired. And the number of forgeries [of his works] that are in circulation cannot even be counted. That's why men of talent and discerning scholars value [the works or art and wrap them in] ornamental brocades and richly woven fabrics and treat the dozens of them [that are in their collections] as precious objects of amusement (*zhen wan* 珍玩). If you look back at the splendor of the Five

¹⁹⁶ Sturman (1997: 5).

Kings, it is only chaff and dust, hardly worth of being discussed. Even a little child knows that [their achievements] by far don't match those of Xue Ji.”¹⁹⁷

As we have seen in section II.2.1, Dong Qichang's *Huazhi* opens in a very similar way with citing poems that argue in favor of the significance of artistic disciplines such as painting and poetry. Du Qiong's poem cited by Dong Qichang, too, finds painting a suitable means for conveying the lofty ideals of the author and therefore worth practicing by the scholars-literati. The quotation of Chen Shidao's poem in the final part of *Huazhi*'s first paragraph, which states that “Only too late have I learned what can be gained through poetry and painting. Now I just regret that the coming months and years will not be many”¹⁹⁸ also echoes the final part of Mi Fu's preface that reads:

“At the Nine Springs [it] cannot be done and that's why I shout into the darkness:
‘Second Du [i.e. Du Fu], I offer you a goblet of wine. What a pity that you can't
accompany me on my outings.’”¹⁹⁹

By addressing Du Fu at the Nine Springs in this unabashed way, Mi Fu brings forward the issue of the transience of life and all human endeavors not unlike Dong Qichang with the quotation of the verse of Chen Shidao. Mi Fu, however, does it in a much more relaxed way

¹⁹⁷ 五王之功業尋爲女子笑。而少保之筆精墨妙，摹印亦廣。石泐則重刻，絹破則重補。又假以行者何可數也。然則才子鑿土，寶鈿瑞錦繡襲數十以爲珍玩。回視五王之煒煒，皆糠粃埃壘，奚足道哉。雖孺子知其不逮少保遠甚明白。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 3). For a slightly different translation see Sturman (1997: 4). Egan (2006: 194–197) translates the preface to *Huashi* in its entirety, but with quite a different emphasis than the translations of Sturman and myself. In Egan's study, the translation is nonetheless followed by a lucid and inspiring explanation of its principal points.

¹⁹⁸ See note 30.

¹⁹⁹ 九原不可作。漫呼杜老曰：杜二酌汝一卮酒。愧汝在不能從我遊也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 4).

that corresponds with his reputation of an eccentric and outspoken nonconformist. His bold exclamation thus not only invokes Du Fu and invites him to a fantastic meeting across centuries. It also substantiates the central argument of the preface to *Huashi*, i.e. that the merit and fame (*gong ming* 功名) achieved through the civil service will perish whereas the renown brought about by one's excellence in the fine arts will survive for ages. This is clearly demonstrated by the context of this playful invocation, for it is immediately followed by the sentence where the keynote of the whole preface is brought forward: "Therefore I have compiled everything [concerning painting] I had seen throughout my life to pass it on to my sons and grandsons and have entitled it *The History of Painting*."²⁰⁰ Painting as a noble discipline is thus a means to express one's ambitions and communicate it across centuries to one's posterity. As we have seen, Mi Fu even suggests that the name attained with artistic excellence is more enduring than that achieved by diligent service to the state.

The final phrase of the preface quoted here moreover shows that Mi Fu used the term "history" (*shi* 史) in the same sense, which it carried ever since the grand Han dynasty historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–86 B.C.) compiled his *Historical Records* (*Shiji* 史記). In traditional Chinese approach, the compilation of a "history" didn't imply an objective recount of past events, but rather an expression of values as demonstrated through past events and the deeds of the figures of the past. The history is drawn not only as a chronology, but also as a hierarchy of events and its protagonists. In the same way, Mi Fu uses the title "History of Painting" for a text that gathers his comments on painters of the past and their works in order to record Mi Fu's judgment upon them and present his opinions on their quality. In this way, the title and its explanation in the final passage of the preface is quite accurate to the contents of Mi Fu's text, even though it might not seem so to the modern reader.

²⁰⁰ For the original Chinese text of the quotation, see above note 184.

The choice of Du Fu as the counterpart in this imaginary argument over the importance of art versus civil service in the preface to *Huashi* merits yet a more detailed discussion. As we have seen in the part dealing with Dong Qichang's comments on Wang Wei's fusion of painting and poetry, it was common for later historians of painting to refer to poems of the masters of High Tang period as being an inspiration for landscape paintings and vice versa.²⁰¹ In the Song dynasty painting theory, Du Fu and his poems are mentioned similarly as suitable topics of painting, exploiting thus the multifaceted nature of Du Fu's legacy, in which many different kinds of schools and followers found poems suitable for their argumentation purposes.²⁰²

For the literati artists, as Peter Sturman (1997: 154) has shown, Du Fu's poetry had an even greater appeal as an embodiment of simplicity and frankness (in Mi Fu's theory represented by the concept of *pingdan tianzhen* 平淡天真), the basic qualities they valued in poetry, calligraphy and painting. Huang Tingjian's words, for instance, are cited as an example of this attitude:

“In the poems you have sent to me are many fine lines, but I dislike the fact that your achievements are often the result of ‘fine carving and chiseling’. To understand composition you need only thoroughly familiarize yourself with the poems in the ancient style meter written by Du Zimei [Du Fu] after arriving in Kuizhou. They are simple, yet a great skill emerges from within. They are ‘even and light’ [*pingdan*, note M.P.], yet the mountains are tall and the waters deep. ...”²⁰³

²⁰¹ See section II.2.3.2.

²⁰² E.g. the authoritative exposition dealing with fundamental issues of painting, Guo Xi's *Linquan gaozhi*, mentions two poems by Du Fu as part of its list of the recommended poetic themes for painting.

²⁰³ Sturman (op. cit.).

It demonstrates the way in which Du Fu's poetry was regarded as a paragon of simplicity and unpretentiousness. With this quality, Du Fu's work must have been close to Mi Fu's taste for the "even and light" and "spontaneous and natural" (*pingdan tianzhen*) forms of expression both in calligraphy and painting.

The references to Du Fu in the preface are yet a different case. Mi Fu uses extremely personal words that betray lenient criticism as well as certain amount of respect on his part.²⁰⁴ Moreover, the sense of the preface as a whole is not exactly favorable for Du Fu, as he is shown here as someone who lamented the transience of merit and fame one can achieve in public life but was ignorant of the fact that the true achievements actually lay in the field of artistic creation. From Mi Fu's half daringly joking expressions, we can sense confidence that his own system of values is superior to the one Old Du²⁰⁵ and career-oriented scholars preposterously pursued.

Mi Fu, however, was far from being that lunatic as to try to discredit Du Fu as a great Tang dynasty poet in this way. What he actually mocks here is not the poet Du Fu and his work, a source of poetic inspiration for the paintings of ones and a truthful "poet historian" for others. It is rather the "construction of Du Fu" as a paragon of Confucian values, an artist who was able to portray his time in his poetry so faithfully that it could become, in the traditional view on the merit of historiography, a mirror for later times. This image of Du Fu, as Charles Hartman brilliantly documents, was created by the Song dynasty literati and politicians who eagerly made use of Du Fu's verse in order to support their own political ambitions.

"Events in the century between the 1030s and the 1140s prompted the Song literati to respond sympathetically to different portions of and different voices in Du Fu's corpus.

²⁰⁴ Expressions such as "Du Fu, the old Confucian" (*Fu lao Ru* 甫老儒) or "Second Du" (*Du er* 杜二) can be cited as examples of this way of addressing.

²⁰⁵ *Lao Du* 老杜 being another of the familiar appellations Song dynasty literati used when referring to Du Fu.

They expressed their preferences through textual selection and arrangement, variant readings, and commentary. The first period in the Song reception of Du Fu, framed by Wang Zhu's 王洙 (997–1057) establishment of the poetic corpus in 1039 and the first printing of that corpus in 1059, emphasized the social ballads and gave a corresponding image of Du Fu as social reformer. This emphasis coincided with the *Qingli* 慶曆 (1041–1048) “minor reform” and culminated in the image of Du Fu as the “poetic historian” (*shi shi*), a sobriquet that caps his biography in the *New Tang History* (*Xin Tang shu* 新唐書) of 1060. The second period saw the accumulation of the earliest layer of commentary at the height of the political factionalism that began seriously to divide Song government in the 1070s. Emphasis then shifted to demonstrations of Du Fu's political loyalty to his sovereign, now defined as unwavering adherence to a given set of political principles unto death; Du Fu became linked to Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 339–ca. 278 B.C.), the epitome of Chinese political martyrs. In a third period, another shift in emphasis was prompted by the fall of Northern Song in 1127 and the coming of political and physical catastrophes commensurate to those that Du Fu had witnessed and lived through. Du Fu became a cosmic survivor, a sage whose poetic corpus was a guidebook to personal and moral salvation.²⁰⁶

For many of Mi Fu's contemporaries involved in the factional struggles of the day, Du Fu's poems offered support and consolation and became a popular source of reference. Mi Fu, who for the most part didn't engage in the political struggles,²⁰⁷ throughout the whole corpus of his writings on art maintains a very different position than that of an artist in the service of the political career. His comments on calligraphy and painting portray an artist and a collector

²⁰⁶ Hartman (2008: 45).

²⁰⁷ To form a picture of the engagement in the factional struggles of the prominent literati of the day such as Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), Su Shi and Huang Tingjian see Bol (1992) and Murck (2000). For the differences in Mi Fu's approach, see Xu (1999) and Egan (2006: 162–236).

deeply entangled with the objects of his interest, giving vent to his passion in purely artistic ways such as emulation of or writing about the artworks he has viewed and collected.²⁰⁸ It is, in my opinion, exactly for this reason that Mi Fu invokes Du Fu in the preface to *Huashi* to contrast the construction of the politically engaged and loyal artist with his purely art-oriented and aesthetic concerns. And it is this centrality of artistic interests, as detached from the unrelated issues such as career and politics as they can be in the case of a minor Song officer²⁰⁹ that Mi Fu's jesting formulations in the preface urge us to bear in mind when reading the following paragraphs. This attitude brought Mi Fu fame throughout the subsequent history of Chinese art and its collecting and certainly also fascinated and inspired Dong Qichang when writing his texts about painting.

III.3 Technical aspects of painting

Similarly as in chapter II, the following chapters will discuss various aspects of Mi Fu's theory of painting. First, technical problems of Mi Fu's interest will be elucidated including the vocabulary used to evaluate the paintings of different periods and artists' skills

²⁰⁸ This stance will be documented throughout the whole text of chapter III of the thesis with the testimony of Mi Fu's own arguments recorded in *Huashi*. For a similar view corroborated also by Mi Fu's poetic output cf. for instance Egan (2006: 164): "Unlike Su Shi, Mi Fu is completely unapologetic about his possessiveness toward the outstanding collection of painting and calligraphy that he gathered. His immersion in art, as collector, connoisseur, and producer, seems his very life to him. As a collector, he writes about the joys of owning art works, and the frustrations of having particular masterpieces elude his grasp, with a passion that Su Shi was wholly incapable of. But his way of life raised questions about the acceptability of giving such centrality to aesthetic pursuits."

²⁰⁹ Sturman (1997: 87–120) shows that when necessary, Mi Fu, too, was capable of "adopting a different persona" and switching into a role of a good Confucian who carried out his duties diligently and even reflected this attitude in his poetry and calligraphic style. On the whole, however, Sturman's study maintains an opinion similar to the one described above, i.e. that theory and practice of art were the central points of Mi Fu's interest throughout a large part of his life.

in *Huashi*, the grading of painters, materials and mountings of paintings and other practical details related to the history of painting.

III.3.1 Key terms and phrases

III.3.1.1 Good and bad paintings

In Mi Fu's text, terms and phrases pertaining to the quality and dating of the paintings in question far outnumber the abstract concepts such as motivating force (*shi*) or atmosphere (*qing*) that stand forth in Dong Qichang's terminology. The paintings that Mi Fu speaks about are usually described with simple yet poignant words that reveal experience and pragmatic approach on the side of their author.

The most common positive characteristic of a painting is that it is "nice" or "good" (*jia* 佳) of which the opposite is "not nice" or "not good" (*bu jia* 不佳). Examples of the use of such descriptions are

"Good (*jia*) paintings of horses that I have seen..."²¹⁰

or

"Of the Tang paintings, the one of *Zhang Zhihe, Yan Zhenqing and a Servant (Zhang Zhihe, Yan Lugong, jiaoqing tu* 張志和顏魯公樵青圖) by an anonymous master that is

²¹⁰ 馬佳本所見 ... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 9).

in the collection of Zhu Changwen, whose courtesy name is Boyuan, is very good (*shen jia*).”²¹¹

The negative meaning is at times used in a purely technical context:

“If you acquire an old painting the mounting of which is not peeling off, it’s not necessary to remount it. If it [the mounting] isn’t good (*bu jia*), then change the mounting.”²¹²

or again describes the artistic quality of the painting in question as evaluated by Mi Fu:

“Li Jia 李甲 (dates unknown) was an eccentric of Huating. He used to paint birds in an untrammelled manner (*yibi* 逸筆) that was capable of expressing the qualities [that lie] beyond the form (*you yiwai qu* 有意外趣). His trees, however, were not good (*bu jia*).”²¹³

Another term often used by Mi Fu to praise a painting is “graceful” (*xiu* 秀) or its variants “limpid and graceful” (*qingxiu* 清秀) and “graceful and fresh” (*xiurun* 秀潤). The famous hand scroll *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* (*Nüshi zhen heng juan* 女史箴橫卷) attributed to Gu Kaizhi is described in the chapter on Jin dynasty painting as follows:

²¹¹ 唐畫, 張志和顏魯公樵青圖, 在朱長文字伯原家, 無名人畫, 甚佳. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 10).

²¹² 古畫若得之不脫, 不須背褫. 若不佳, 換褫. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 14).

²¹³ 李甲, 華亭逸人. 作逸筆翎毛, 有意外趣. 木不佳. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 41).

“The hand-scroll called *Admonitions of the Court Instructress* in the collection of Liu Youfang has a lively brushwork. The hair and moustaches are graceful and fresh (*xiurun*).”²¹⁴

One paragraph speaks about paintings falsely attributed to Wang Wei, which their owners judge solely on the basis of graceful brushwork:

“The paintings of snowy landscapes by Jiangnan painters are also often attributed to Wang Wei. It’s enough [for the ordinary collectors of this world (*shi su* 世俗)] that the brushwork [of a painting] is limpid and graceful (*qingxiu*) to label it [as Wang Wei’s].”²¹⁵

A paragraph discussing the only two genuine landscapes by Li Cheng that Mi Fu had seen in his life contains a description of one of them as “extremely graceful and unusual” (*xiu shen bu fan* 秀甚不凡)²¹⁶ which indicates that the term perceived as opposite to “graceful” (*xiu* 秀) might also be “ordinary” or “mediocre” (*fan* 凡). Far more often, however, Mi Fu uses the word “vulgar” or “ordinary” (*su* 俗) to describe a quality of a painting or the character of connoisseurs. We can as well often encounter a two syllable compound “the vulgar of this world” (*shi su* 世俗), as quoted above. Mi Fu, for instance, comments on the false paintings by Li Cheng that they are

²¹⁴ 女史箴橫卷在劉有方家，已上筆彩生動，髭髮秀潤。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 4).

²¹⁵ 雪圖命爲王維，但見筆清秀者即命之。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 7). The meaning of this quotation is partly determined by its context. It is a part of a paragraph that discusses paintings falsely attributed to Wang Wei by ignorant collectors of Mi Fu’s day.

²¹⁶ Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 10).

“all painted by vulgar artisans and are [inscribed with] false signatures.”²¹⁷

Huang Quan’s paintings of lotuses are characterized as

“although plump and attractive, they are all vulgar.”²¹⁸

A painting of figures by a minor master imitating Wu Daozi even made Mi Fu laugh:

“Wu Zongyuan once painted more than twenty Heavenly Kings crossing the sea. Their statures were all alike and also their hands were all similar to each other. When I unrolled the picture, I felt as if looking at a group of ghosts and demons performing the *daling* dance. I couldn’t help to burst out laughing, for the vulgar regarded [this painting] as skillfully painted.”²¹⁹

The two negative expressions are sometimes combined together to mean “mediocre and vulgar” (*fansu* 凡俗) as in the case of the description of large paintings falsely attributed to Li Cheng, which are characterized as

“lacking in naturalness, they all are mediocre and vulgar.”²²⁰

²¹⁷ 皆俗手假名. Ibidem.

²¹⁸ 雖富艷皆俗. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 12).

²¹⁹ 宗元乃爲過海天王二十餘身. 各各高呈, 似其手各作一樣. 一披之猶一羣打令鬼神. 不覺大笑, 俗以爲工也. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 19). As for the word *daling* 打令, Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 59) explains it as a kind of gesture performed by one’s hands. Kohara (2003a: 84–85) points out that the expression *daling guishen* 打令鬼神 refers to a ritual dance in the course of which people wear masks of ghosts and demons.

²²⁰ 無自然, 皆凡俗. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 10).

III.3.1.2 Divine and untrammeled paintings

Terms utilized elsewhere for the grading of artists and their works, the nature of which is more abstract and less technical than those listed above, can be also found in *Huashi*. Mi Fu, however, doesn't use a consistent system of grading to classify the artists and paintings he describes. In most cases, he uses the terms “divine” (*shen* 神) or “to belong to the divine” (*rushen* 入神) and “untrammeled” (*yi* 逸) in a way that shows that they are perceived as descriptions of excellence without wider connotations as to the relative value of the painting in question.

In older theories represented e.g. by Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai minghua ji*, artists were graded in three categories labeled simply “top” (*shang* 上), “middle” (*zhong* 中) and “bottom” (*xia* 下). Another Tang dynasty writer, Zhang Huaiguan 張懷瓘 (active ca. 713–741) introduced in his *Judgments on Calligraphy* (*Shu duan* 書斷) and *Judgments on Paintings* (*Hua duan* 畫斷, lost today) a three-stage classification of painters with the categories labeled “able” (*neng* 能), “wonderful” (*miao* 妙) and “divine” (*shen* 神). Later on, the class of “untrammeled” (*yi* 逸) artists was added in late Tang and early Song dynasty histories of painting²²¹ such as Zhu Jingxuan's 朱景玄 (active in the middle 9th cent.) *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dynasty* (*Tangchao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄) or Huang Xiufu's (active

²²¹ A remark has to be made in this place that different texts were conceived as histories of paintings throughout Chinese history including those quoted in this paragraph. They were by no means all called “a history” (*shi* 史). An enumeration of different painters of the past and the assessment of their works can be found in treatises entitled “a record” (*lu* 錄), “a critique” (*ping* 評) or even “an account of my experiences” (*jianwen zhi* 見聞志). For the names of other ancient texts conceived as “histories of painting”, see note 382. For the discussion of Mi Fu's usage of the term *shi* for the title of his treatise, see note 337.

in the late 10th and early 11th cent.) 黃休復 *Record of Famous Painters of Yizhou* (*Yizhou minghua lu* 益州名畫錄).²²²

As Susan Nelson (1983a: 397–299) has shown, the concept of *yipin* changed since its introduction in the late Tang dynasty through all the subsequent periods up to the theories of Ming and Qing dynasty writers. Whereas in the early stages of its development it denoted an artist released from protocol and obligations of the official life and in his artistic practice unconcerned with rewards and recognition of his work, in the later periods mainly the painters who transcended the hitherto development within the field of painting history were classified as “untrammeled”. As Nelson (*ibidem*, p. 400) puts it:

“All the same, although these painters could be seen within an art-historical framework, they (and they alone) could also be seen without it. The distinctive aspect of their painting – what made it *yi* – was seen not as a “transformation” (*bian* 變) as it was with other great or greater but not as “untrammeled” painters, but as something altogether new.”

It is interesting to note that for the later critics beginning with the Yuan dynasty Zhang Yu 張雨 (1283–1350) and Yuan Hua 袁華 (1316– after 1376) and culminating in the writings of Dong Qichang, Mi Fu and Ni Zan were often regarded as a pair tied together with a kind of spiritual and conceptual relationship, both being described as eccentric or mad. For this reason as well as for reasons of their unprecedented painting styles,²²³ these two artists alone were frequently classified as “untrammeled” in the later histories of painting. It is interesting to

²²² For the discussion of the concept of *yipin* in Western languages, see mainly Shimada Shujiro (1961, 1962 and 1964), Soper (1975–1976) and Nelson (1983a).

²²³ For an illuminating discussion that makes clear how their radically different painting styles came to be judged as equally untrammeled, see Nelson (1983a: 402–406).

note that Mi Fu, himself using the categories “divine” and “untrammeled” in his text, was to become a paragon of an “untrammeled” artist for the later generations of critics.

Coming back to Mi Fu’s own use of the terms *shen* and *yi*, several examples of his descriptions of paintings can be cited from *Huashi*:

“The two paintings of Heavenly Kings in the collection of Wang Fang, whose courtesy name is Yuangui, are both Wu Daozi’s works that belong to the divine.”²²⁴

“Dong Yuan[’s works] were mostly ‘even and light’, ‘natural and spontaneous’. In times of Tang dynasty, such quality didn’t exist. [Dong Yuan] is superior to Bi Hong 畢宏 (Tang dynasty). Of the contemporary paintings [even] those of elegant manners that belong to the divine class (*shenpin* 神品) cannot compare with him.”²²⁵

In one passage, Mi Fu speaks about the seals he used to imprint on different kinds of paintings. On one of the seals mentioned here, characters “divine class” were engraved. This shows that although Mi Fu didn’t use a complete system of classification of painters, he adopted this popular specification of the superior class and used it even in the form of a seal.

Paintings labeled as “untrammeled” are usually described as works of eccentric masters or possessing other qualities that make them completely extraordinary, somehow out of the common system of values. This fully conforms with the standard meaning of the term “untrammeled” in Song dynasty theories, as shown by Susan Nelson (1983a: 397–299). From a lengthy description of a painting by Sun Zhiwei, for instance, we can sense exactly this meaning:

²²⁴ 王防字元規家二天王, 皆是吳之入神畫. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 8).

²²⁵ 董源平淡天真多. 唐無此品. 在畢宏上. 近世神品格高無與比也. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 11).

“Sun Zhiwei painted stars and heavenly bodies in an unusual way. They didn’t resemble any pictures extant among people. He was a really exceptional person. And also his paintings were done in an untrammelled manner. They were executed swiftly, were ‘even and light’ and full of life.”²²⁶

In other entries, the “untrammelled” quality is an attribute of the overall expression (*yi* 意), which can be also understood as “style” of a particular master, referring to different aspects of his works as well as to his personality and the personal message he entrusts his works with, or of the brushwork (*bi* 筆):

“Chen Chang 陳常 (dates unknown) from Jiangnan paints trees and rocks in the ‘flying white’ technique. The overall expression is lucid and untrammelled. He is, [however], not skillful [in painting] figures.”²²⁷

“In my collection, there is a painting of reed by Yi Yuanji 易元吉 (active in the 11th cent.), which is done in an untrammelled brushwork and is very life-like.”²²⁸

²²⁶ 孫知微作星辰，多奇異，不類人間所傳。信異人也。然是逸格，造次而成，平淡而生動。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 22–23). The translation of the expression *zaoci* 造次 as “swift” follows Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 70), who notes that it is a quotation from *Lunyu* 論語. For another example of the use of the term “*yi* 逸” (untrammelled) in *Huashi*, see above the quotation in note 213. The paragraph dealing with the work of Sun Zhiwei is especially instructive in its use of the term “*yiren* 異人” (a strange person) in a place where we would expect the homophone “*yiren* 逸人” (an untrammelled person) that appears in the quotation in note 213.

²²⁷ 江南陳常以飛白筆作樹石。有清逸意。人物不工。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 43).

²²⁸ 余收易元吉逸色筆作蘆，如真。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 45).

From these quotations, it is obvious that Mi Fu used the word “untrammled” mostly for describing a painter who is very extraordinary, even eccentric, and his artwork is absolutely singular and incommensurable in the output of other painters past and present.

III.3.1.3 Paintings described as “even and light” and “natural and spontaneous”

In the section III.2, I have already mentioned Peter Sturman’s (1997) contribution to our understanding of Mi Fu’s use of the terms “even and light” (*pingdan*) and “natural and spontaneous” (*tianzhen*), and his demonstration of their proficiency and possible connotations in the Song dynasty theory of calligraphy. In this section, I will therefore limit myself to quoting the few examples of Mi Fu’s usage of these terms that can be located in *Huashi* in order to delimit their meaning in the field of his theory of painting.

The first thing that strikes one right at the beginning is that there are only four places in the whole *Huashi* where these terms are utilized, and the second is the fact that of the four, three are references to paintings by Dong Yuan and Juran. Given the importance of these terms for Mi Fu’s general approach to art and its practice,²²⁹ this by itself signifies a special recognition of the work of these two masters within Mi Fu’s history of painting. In this place, we will take a closer look at the meaning the terms “even and light” and “natural and spontaneous” carry in *Huashi*.

The descriptions of Dong Yuan’s and Juran’s works read as follows:

“Juran studied [the work of] Dong Yuan. Many of his paintings are still extant. [They are full of] mists and vapors and are limpid and fresh. The composition is often ‘natural and spontaneous’. In his young age, Juran’s paintings were full of the ‘alum-heads’

²²⁹ For an illuminating discussion of this issue, see Sturman (1997: 121–172).

(*fantou* 礬頭) while in his later years they became ‘even and light’ and possessed a lofty allure.”²³⁰

“In Su Bi’s collection, there is a landscape by Juran. It is ‘even and light’ and possesses exceptional qualities.”²³¹

“Dong Yuan[’s works] were mostly ‘even and light’, ‘natural and spontaneous’. In times of Tang dynasty, such quality didn’t exist.”²³²

“Sun Zhiwei painted stars and heavenly bodies in an unusual way. ... They were executed swiftly, were ‘even and light’ and full of life.”²³³

The four quotations show that the meaning of the expressions “even and light” and “natural and spontaneous” in *Huashi* is quite limited and is not deeply elaborated on by Mi Fu. In the first quotation, the quality of “even and light” is quite unusually attributed to the composition (*bujing* 布景) of Juran’s painting. It is elucidated by the contrasting description of Juran’s early paintings as being full of “alum-heads” (*fantou*), i.e. the small rock formations used as a compositional element to cover remote mountain peaks or forested slopes of the hills in the painting since Five dynasties onwards. These are visible also in the most famous painting attributed to Juran entitled *Layered Mountains and Dense Woods* (*Cengyan congshu tu* 層巖叢樹圖) in the collection of the National Palace Museum in

²³⁰ 巨然師董源。今世多有本。嵐氣清潤，布景得天真多。巨然少年時多作礬頭，老年平淡趣高。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 10–11).

²³¹ 蘇泌家有巨然山水，平淡奇絕。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 30).

²³² For the original text, see note 225.

²³³ For the original text, see note 226.

Taipei.²³⁴ They are supposed to make the painting more “full” (*shi* 實) in the traditional approach to composition and therefore more elaborate and visually compelling. It is therefore possible to understand Mi Fu’s verdict on Juran’s early and late works in terms of the opposition of elaborate and attractive vs. simple and unaffected, which corresponds with the basic meaning of the term *pingdan* in Song dynasty painting theory.

The next comment on the Juran painting in the collection of Su Bi states that besides being “even and light”, it is strange and exceptional (*qijue* 奇絕), which is further corroborated by the last quotation pertaining to Sun Zhiwei’s personality and work that has been discussed above in the section dealing with “untrammled” (*yi*) artists. These two examples show the closeness of the *pingdan* concept with the notion of singularity and unconventionality in Mi Fu’s use of these terms.

To close this section, it is interesting to note that an opposite evaluation, formulated for example as “carved and chiseled” (*diao zhuo* 雕琢) by Huang Tingjian in a letter that Sturman (1997: 154)²³⁵ cites as an example of the Song usage of the term “even and light”, is not utilized by Mi Fu at all. Nor are its synonyms such as Dong Qichang’s favorite expression “elaborate paintings” (*kehua* 刻畫). The highly positive and complimentary meaning of “even and light” in *Huashi* is in fact not counterbalanced with any negative formulations and thus stands forth as a one-sided expression of artistic singularity.

²³⁴ For a reproduction see e.g. Wang Yaoting (1998: 142). For a mention of Juran’s use of *fantou*, see *ibidem* p. 143.

²³⁵ For those who would like to search for the original of Huang Tingjian’s text where the term “even and light” is mentioned, it has to be noted that Sturman erroneously gives Huang’s *Shangu ji* 山谷集 as the source of the quotation, whereas it actually comes from the *Yuzhang Huang xiansheng wenji* 豫章黃先生文集, vol. 19.

III.3.1.4 Painting styles of different periods and artists

Lothar Ledderose's (1979: 51) words that "Mi Fu does not use stylistic arguments to date his pieces [of calligraphy]" and "certainly Mi Fu didn't operate with the modern concept of style" are principally valid for his writings on painting as well. There are, however, numerous entries in *Huashi* that document the fact that he was aware of certain stylistic features as being characteristic of the painting of different periods as well as individual attributes of styles of different masters. His notion of these personal and period styles is neither systematically described nor abstract enough to form a complex stylistic history we are used to construct in the western approach to art historical study. It is nonetheless obvious that such a notion must have existed in Mi Fu's mind and that it often worked as the underlying principle for judging and describing paintings in *Huashi*. In this section, I will quote several examples of the ways Mi Fu characterized the painting styles of different masters and periods.

In several cases, he simply states that the style of a certain painting is not appropriate to the period it seems to date from or the school it might belong to:

"In the hand scroll depicting ten old sages in the collection of Mr. Su, the draperies are not painted in the manner used in the Jin dynasty."²³⁶

"The painting of a pear sprig in bloom in the possession of Fan Dagui, which he acquired from duke Fu [i.e. Fu Bi], is painted in ancient brushwork, it isn't [the kind of painting] done in Jiangnan or Shu."²³⁷

²³⁶ 蘇氏古賢像十人一卷, 衣紋自非晉筆. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 5).

We can also find several descriptions of paintings in which elements of landscape are painted without visible traces of the brush. This is a stylistic feature of Tang and earlier painting when ink and pigments were applied within large flat areas delineated by contour lines.

“[In the three landscapes by Xue Ji and Li Sheng 李昇 (Five Dynasties)], the rock formations and riverbanks are naturally formed and devoid of visible brushstrokes.”²³⁸

“Shen Gua owns two smaller paintings and one hanging scroll by Bi Hong. The former are executed in greater blue and green style [i.e. using blue and green pigments] combined with ink, which are both applied by robust brush movements without the use of structural brushstrokes.”²³⁹

The second quotation even speaks about blue and green landscapes, which were indeed the most ancient type of landscape painting in China. Mi Fu describes them completely in accordance with what we know about their style from the few surviving examples and extant textual records, i.e. as paintings that are rendered primarily in blue and green colors with a partial use of ink and devoid of structural brushworks (*cun* 皴).

Paintings of different masters were also judged by Mi Fu as genuine or false on the grounds of their painting style, which is sometimes even described in greater detail:

²³⁷ 范大珪有富公家折枝梨花, 古筆, 非江南蜀畫. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 35). In the areas of Jiangnan with its centre in Nanjing and Shu with its centre in Chengdu, two famous schools of painting in the genre of birds and flowers flourished during the time of Five Dynasties.

²³⁸ 石岸天成, 都無筆蹤. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 15).

²³⁹ 沈括收畢宏畫兩幅一軸. 上以大青和墨, 大筆直抹不皴. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 57).

“The painting called *Planting of Gourds* (*Zhong gua tu* 種瓜圖) in the collection of Mr. Su surely depicts a historical event. Pictures of this kind were often executed by painters of Shu. It is painted with great skill, but it isn’t a work of Yan Liben 閻立本 (ca. 600–673). Liben’s paintings are usually colored and delicate. He used to utilize white lead to portray the moonlight spreading on the ground. Nowadays, when people acquire such painting [like the *Planting of Gourds*], they also sometimes ascribe it to Li Sixun. This, too, is wrong. On the court of Li Yu 李煜 (r. 961–975) in Jiangnan, there were many such paintings that were imprinted with seals reading *Neihetong yin* and *Jixianyuan yin*. It must have been paintings acquired from remote areas or precious tributes.”²⁴⁰

“Fan Kuan studied [the style of] Jing Hao. [Jing] Hao styled himself Hongguzi. Once, Wang Shen brought me two paintings that were inscribed as works of Goulong Shuang 勾龍爽 (active in the 2nd half of the 11th cent.). In the course of remounting, I immersed them in water and [discovered that] on the left side, characters reading ‘Painted by Hongguzi Jing Hao’ were inscribed on a stone, hidden under another stone daubed with green pigment. They couldn’t have been added later. But the painting absolutely didn’t resemble [Fan] Kuan[’s style].

Several years later, in the studio of monk Dantu [I saw] a hanging scroll with a landscape that was exactly like [the one painted by] Jing Hao. The brushstrokes were dry and not round. In the part of the waterfall, it was inscribed [with the characters reading] Fan Kuan of Huayuan. It must have been a painting executed in [Fan Kuan’s] young age. If you compare it with his usual painting style, the dense forests on the top of the hills [visible in this early painting] changed into withered trees and the large

²⁴⁰ 蘇氏種瓜圖絕畫故事。蜀人多作此等畫。工甚，非閻立本筆。立本畫皆著色而細。鎖銀作月色布地。今人收得便謂之李將軍思訓，皆非也。江南李主多有之，以內合同印，集賢院印印之。蓋收遠物或是珍貢。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 6–7).

boulders once haphazardly protruding over the watersides evolved into powerful and stern [depictions]. [On the grounds of this development] I believe that he indeed was a student of Jing's style. Therefore I exchanged the work for another painting to keep it in my collection as a lesson in connoisseurship (*shi jian* 示鑒).”²⁴¹

“Wang Shen studied Li Cheng's method of applying brushstrokes, but he painted them in gold and green pigment. ... He also painted monochrome [landscapes in] flat distance in Li Cheng's style.”²⁴²

Of the above three quotations, especially the one expounding the development of Fan Kuan's style is instructive for understanding the way in which Mi Fu described the style and technique of the painters mentioned in *Huashi*. His “lesson in connoisseurship” shows that on the ground of style that comprises a painters' specific brushwork technique (“the brushstrokes were dry and not round”), conventions in depicting individual subjects (“the dense forests on the top of the hills changed into withered trees”) and compositional features (“the large boulders once haphazardly protruding over the watersides evolved into powerful and stern depictions”), Mi Fu was able to distinguish not only a painting of one master from another but also early and mature works of one painter. Stylistic arguments are often used also in the paragraphs that elaborate on the study of a master's style by a later painter, such as the one mentioning Wang Shen quoted above.

²⁴¹ 范寬師荆浩. 浩自稱洪谷子. 王詵嘗以二畫見送, 題勾龍爽畫. 因重背入水, 於左邊石上有洪谷子荆浩筆字, 在合綠色抹石之下. 非後人作也. 然全不似寬. 後數年丹徒僧房有一軸山水與浩一同, 而筆乾不圓. 於瀑水邊題華原范寬. 乃是少年所作. 却以常法較之, 山頂好作密林, 自此趨枯老. 水際作突兀大石, 自此趨勁硬. 信荆之弟子也. 於是以一畫易之, 收以示鑒者. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 17–18).

²⁴² 王詵學李成皴法, 以金碌爲之. ... 亦墨作平遠, 皆李成法也. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 25).

Among the passages dealing with technical aspects of painting are those that discuss the usage of different kinds of silk or mounting in different periods or by different artists. One paragraph describes in detail various treatments of silk in different historical epochs:

“Ancient paintings up to the beginning of the Tang dynasty all used unsized silk. From the time of Wu Daozi, Zhou Fang 周昉 (ca. 730– ca. 800) and Han Gan onwards, [the silk was] sized, half-sized, covered with powder or hammered like a silver slab. That’s why their figures colorfully and vividly appeared from underneath the brush. Nowadays, when people collect Tang paintings, they often judge them according to the quality of silk. If they see a piece of silk with coarse texture, they say: ‘It is not Tang dynasty silk’. That’s wrong. All the paintings by Zhang Seng[you] 張僧繇 (active in the early 6th century) and Yan Liben that are extant today are executed on unsized silk. The paintings of the Southern Tang used coarse silk while the silk used by Xu Xi sometimes resembled hemp cloth.”²⁴³

From this quotation, as well as from the one above that mentions the use of two specific seals impressed on paintings of a certain genre in the collection of Emperor Li Yu during the Southern Tang dynasty,²⁴⁴ it is obvious that Mi Fu had a fairly precise notion of the technical features of paintings executed in different periods and housed in different collections. In one paragraph, he even discusses the qualities of ink stones used in different epochs and attempts to explain with them the prevailing brushwork of those periods:

²⁴³ 古畫至唐初皆生絹。至吳生，周昉，韓幹後來皆以熟湯，半熟，入粉，搗如銀板。故作人物精彩入筆。今人收唐畫，必以絹辨。見文龕便云不是唐，非也。張僧畫，閻令畫，世所存者皆生絹。南唐畫皆龕絹。徐熙絹或如布。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 36–37).

²⁴⁴ See note 240.

“[The traces of the brush] in ancient paintings were all round. That has to be explained by the use of painting instruments. Under Jin and Tang dynasties, the ink stones were all of the type called ‘phoenix pond’. Its center was hollow like a tile’s. That’s why it was called ‘tile ink stone’. It looked like the kind of tile used as a flower tub resting on three legs. The ink was called ‘snail’, for it was manufactured so as to resemble the powder made of snail shells. This also corresponds with the fact that hollow ink stones were used.²⁴⁵ When you raise the brush [from a hollow ink stone], the tip is round, so the [brushstrokes in the] painting or calligraphy it produces are also inevitably round. Under the present dynasty, the practice of using ink stones with flat centre resembling a grindstone was introduced. When you raise the brush [from a flat ink stone], the tip is flat and so are the characters [written with it]. Tang Xun, whose courtesy name was Yanyou, started to produce ink stones with a protruding centre saying: ‘It’s suitable for observing the quality of ink. When you raise the brush, its tip forms a triangle. How could the characters written with it be round?’ I tried to reconstruct the form of this ink stone.²⁴⁶ Some of the literati use it; they modify it a little bit by slightly leveling the protruding back part but not insomuch as to resemble a tile. Just one or two of my friends who are enlightened [to understand such matters] use it. As for the vulgar people of the world, there is no remedy to be found [for their lack of understanding].”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ The correspondence is not so obvious to me and no modern translation or commentary illuminates the meaning sufficiently. For the purpose of demonstrating Mi Fu’s awareness of different painting styles and techniques used in different periods, let us manage with a verbatim translation of the highly technical formulation of the original.

²⁴⁶ Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 89–90) reveals the identity of Tang Xun 唐詢 as a scholar who graduated during the Tiensheng 天聖 period (1023–1032), which means that he was at least two generations Mi Fu’s senior. That would explain why Mi Fu had to “reconstruct the form of the ink stone”, which had by Mi Fu’s time probably due to its sporadic use fallen into oblivion. For more on the use of ink stones in different historical periods up to Mi Fu’s day, see Van Gulik’s translation of *Mi Fu on Ink-Stones* (1938).

²⁴⁷ 古書畫皆圓，蓋有助於器。晉，唐皆鳳池研，中心如瓦凹。故曰研瓦。如以一花頭瓦安三足爾。墨稱螺，製必如蛤粉。此又明用凹研也。一援筆因凹勢，鋒已圓，書畫安得不圓。本朝研始心平如砥，一援筆則扁，故字亦

III.3.2 Materials and mounting of paintings

Besides the above quoted paragraphs that contain Mi Fu's discussions of the technical aspects of painting of different periods, there are numerous other passages in *Huashi* that deal with the problem of mounting, painting materials, use of silk and paper or questions related to the preservation and storing of paintings in one's library.²⁴⁸ Expositions on these topics are only loosely related to the main subject of the treatise, i.e. the history of painting in the strict sense of the word. They nonetheless document the fact that Mi Fu was well versed in all these areas and combined his knowledge and understanding of the technical aspects of painting with his experience in connoisseurship that encompassed the formal and stylistic features of painting.

The inclusion of these passages in *Huashi* in the form of separate entries is quite unusual among extant histories of painting up to Mi Fu's day²⁴⁹ and accounts partly for the informal and relaxed atmosphere of the whole work. These paragraphs are intermingled with those discussing extant works of art and styles of different painters. Like that, they make an impression of having been recorded in the very moment they came on the author's mind in the process of writing. The fact that they were not edited and grouped in a separate chapter or

編。唐詢字彥猷始作鑿心凸研，云：宜看墨色。每援筆即三角。字安得圓哉。余稍追復其樣。士人間有用者，然稍平革鑿背，未至於瓦。惟至交一兩人頓悟者用之矣。亦世俗不能發藥也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 29).

²⁴⁸ For a general introduction in these specialized topics, see mainly Gulik (1958) and more recently and specifically for mounting Schmitt (2002).

²⁴⁹ Gulik (1958: 148–152) notes that the primary sources pertaining to the technical aspects of Chinese painting prior to the Song dynasty are scarce. The first writer to deal more extensively with these problems is probably Zhang Yanyuan, who devoted one chapter of his book (*Lidai minghua ji*, vol. 3, chapter 3 entitled “On the backing and mounting of scrolls”, *Lun zhuangbei biao Zhou* 論裝背標軸) to the questions of remounting antique paintings.

section of the treatise contributes largely to the unfinished and disorganized impression one gets from the reading of the text.

Most of the paragraphs dealing with painting materials and mounting are quoted in English in Gulik (1958: 183–185). In this place, I will therefore translate only the most instructive examples and those that will be helpful for further discussions of the topics below:

“Silk must not be used for backing paintings. If you use it to repair damaged places, it seems to be good as long as the silk is new. But after unrolling the scroll many times [the silk of the patches] becomes stiff. As the silk of the scroll rubs the patches, the so far undamaged places will be damaged. That’s very regrettable. ...

If the silk bursts in many places, the painting is definitely good [i.e. antique]. The cracks all differ from one another. On long hanging scrolls and hanging horizontal scrolls, the cracks are horizontal. Hand scrolls²⁵⁰ burst vertically. The cracks are vertical and parallel to the direction of the roller. They never run in the direction of the threads. With the increasing age, the cracks start to appear from the two edges of the painting. The damaged parts are not situated opposite to one another and little hairs do not appear on them. When you straighten [the silk], they close again. That cannot be forged. When [the cracks] are forged, [they are made by] a sharp knife and run along the threads. If old, they shed little hairs. When you lift and straighten [the silk], it is stiff and sharp. When the [silk] is artificially dyed, the pigment coagulates along the threads. That exposed to smoke [in order too look older] retains the odor. [The genuine

²⁵⁰ The same expression as in the previous sentence, i.e. *hengjuan* 横卷 is used here, which doesn’t make sense. From the context, it is however obvious that the first *hengjuan* refers to a hanging horizontal scroll, the important feature of which is that it is suspended vertically most of the time. In this sentence, *hengjuan* 横卷 denotes a hand scroll that is usually viewed in a vertical position on a table. Gulik (1958: 184) doesn’t offer any explanation of this apparent inconsistency of the original text, although he translates it in the same way as me.

silk] is darker on the obverse than on the reverse.²⁵¹ Old silk and paper have a specific smell of their own.”²⁵²

“The color of the silk of a genuine [old painting] is pale. Even if it’s damaged on many places, the color [of the silk] is pale and light, while the pigments remain vivid and juicy as if they were new. Forged Buddhist images are often artificially blackened with smoke, which damages the original color [of the silk]. If the silk is darkened with smoke, the remnants of the ash are visible in the texture, which is easy to discover. But [in case of genuine ancient paintings] the old bursts go over the colors and don’t crack vertically. They always involve two or three threads at once. This is impossible to forge.”²⁵³

“Li Xiaoguang, whose courtesy name is Shimei, and who served as the Transport supervisor in Jiangdong had in his collection scrolls attributed to Zhong You and Wang Xizhi. Once, he had them remounted in Jinling and when the paper backing was taken off, he discovered that it was made of Tang dynasty calling cards that had been

²⁵¹ The original doesn’t make clear that this description pertains to the genuine old silk. In my interpretation, I follow Gulik (*ibidem*), while Xiao Peicang and Lao Shuifan (2003: 183) translate the sentence as if pertaining to the artificially aged silk. Gulik’s rendering, which supposes that the genuine silk is darker on the obverse than on the reverse, seems more logical to me.

²⁵² 装背畫不須用絹。補破處用之，絹新時似好。展卷久爲硬。絹抵之却於不破處破。大可惜。... 絹素百片，必好畫。文製各有辨。長幅橫卷裂文橫也。橫卷直裂。裂文直。各隨軸勢裂也。直斷不當一縷。歲久卷自兩頭蘇開。斷不相合。不作毛。摺則蘇也。不可僞作。其僞者，快刀直過，當縷兩頭，依舊生作毛。起摺又堅紉也。濕染色棲縷間。乾薰者烟臭。上深下淺。古紙素有一般古香也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 37–38).

²⁵³ 真絹色淡。雖百破而色明白，精神彩色如新。惟佛像多經香烟薰，損本色。染絹作濕香色，棲塵紋間，最易辨。仍蓋色上作一重古破，不直裂，須連兩三經，不可僞作。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 56).

straightened out and sized.²⁵⁴ His grandson, whose courtesy name is Fengshi, told me so. Recently, when I served in Taichang I saw them [in person].”²⁵⁵

“Among the literati in Suzhou there was one who judged old paintings according to their mounting. He always found a name of an old master in a history of painting [and ascribed the painting to him].”²⁵⁶

I have quoted mostly the paragraphs where the technical aspects of painting are discussed in relation to its authenticity. This topic will be the focus of our attention in one of the subsequent sections. In this place, we can just note that all the passages document the fact that Mi Fu was well aware of the practices used in order to give a forged painting an antique look. The minute details of the nature and appearance of cracks in old paintings as well as descriptions of artificial dying of silk recorded in the first two quotations attest to Mi Fu’s familiarity with these issues. They make one believe that he must really have seen a great number of both, genuine old paintings and forgeries that were in circulation in his day.

The third quotation is a record of an unusual discovery of old works of art that occurs once in a lifetime of a connoisseur and was, in this case, brought about by his attention to the technical aspects of the paintings he is working with. This remark is close in nature, for

²⁵⁴ This interpretation follows the translation of Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 118), who offers a plausible explanation supported by historical sources. She maintains that Fengshi 奉世 was the courtesy name of Li Chengzhi 李承之, a son of Li Xiaoguang’s son named Li Di 李迪, who is referred to as Li Wending 李文定 elsewhere in *Huashi* and that they all were descendants of a prominent Tang dynasty family. Mi Fu hints at this fact, according to Vandier-Nicolas, with the reference to the Tang dynasty calling cards (obviously with inscriptions by important people). Xiao Peicang and Lao Shuifan (2003: 188) offer another explanation of this complicated sentence, which seems far less plausible than that of Vandier-Nicolas.

²⁵⁵ 江東漕李孝廣字世美處有鍾, 王迹。嘗於金陵重背, 拆下背紙, 乃礮熟唐人門刺。其孫奉世語余如此。近官太常遂得見。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 40).

²⁵⁶ 有吳中一士大夫好畫而裝背以舊古爲辨。仍必以名畫記差古人名。... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 49).

instance, to one from Deng Chun's *Huaji* that records the fact that after the accession of Huizong, the once popular paintings by Guo Xi were all dismantled and some of them even served as table wipes in the imperial mounting workshop, only to be presented to Deng Chun's father thereafter.²⁵⁷ It is therefore, more than anything else, a rare record of an anecdotal character that contributes to our understanding of the details of artistic practice in ancient China.

In addition to these entries, others dealing with material used for preservation of paintings as well as the use of different types of knobs and brocade designs are the subject of entries quoted by Gulik (*ibidem*). One paragraph also contains a list of Mi Fu's seals that can be useful when judging the authenticity of paintings attributed to Mi Fu or old paintings that once allegedly were in Mi Fu's collection and are inscribed with his colophons.

III.4 Mi Fu's vision of the past

After discussing in detail various technical aspects of painting dealt with in *Huashi*, it is time to have closer look on Mi Fu's comments on the particular artists of the past and their work. On the following pages, Mi Fu's opinion on the contents of a good collection, his remarks on his own collecting and painting activities, his approach to different genres of Chinese painting as well as discussions of individual works of the artists mentioned most often in *Huashi* will be analyzed. As the notion of the painting history is the central issue of the present thesis, this section will be the most extensive of chapter III and several of its sections will discuss the relevant problems in considerable depth.

²⁵⁷ See Deng Chun (2005: vol. 10, p. 123).

III.4.1 Mi Fu's recommendations for collectors

Several paragraphs of *Huashi* record Mi Fu's comments on the significance of different masters of the past and recommendations as to which painters' works are indispensable for a good collection or which paintings one should start with when wishing to build up an impressive collection. The contents of these entries are of course closely related to Mi Fu's notion of importance or inferiority of individual masters of the past within his construction of painting history. This will be the subject of the following section, where the qualities of paintings by different masters in Mi Fu's view are elaborated on and the importance of these masters for his construction of the history of painting demonstrated. To begin with, we can however note that *Huashi* contains paragraphs that group the names of various artists in order to illustrate their artistic eminence in a given genre or other qualities that make them an object of Mi Fu's special attention. One of them reads as follows:

“Every collector should first acquire Tang Xiya's 唐希雅 (active mid-10th cent.), Xu Xi's and other snowy landscapes and landscapes by Juran and Fan Kuan. [Of the paintings by these masters,] those that correspond with each other in their measures should be hung on the walls. After that, [other] famous masters should be hung above these, pairs of those of similar sizes first and those that can't be matched into pairs next. If the measures of the old paintings are disorderly, [the whole arrangement] should be balanced with adding [other pictures]. Works dating from the Jin dynasty should be hung in the second row, while Tang dynasty paintings can be used to counterbalance them. Paintings by Xu Daoning 許道寧 (ca. 970 – 1051/1052) are not to be used, for they are just imitations of other peoples' works and are too vulgar.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ 凡收畫必先收唐希雅, 徐熙等雪圖, 巨然或范寬山水圖, 齊整相對者裝堂遮壁. 乃於其上旋旋掛名筆, 絹素大小可相當成對者, 又漸漸掛無對者. 蓋古畫大小不齊, 鋪掛不端正. 若晉筆, 須第二重掛, 唐筆爲襯乃可

This paragraph is interesting with its emphasis on the balanced and orderly display of the paintings from one's collection and the way it is combined with the selection of genres and names recommended by Mi Fu. If we try to imagine the appearance of a display organized according to Mi Fu's suggestions, the result will be close to that of pre-modern European picture-galleries, where paintings of different masters almost entirely covered the walls and were usually arranged more according to genre and format than to the quality and provenance.²⁵⁹ In Mi Fu's description, the names of masters whose paintings are suitable for collecting mentioned in this context are quite striking, for they obviously include only a few from the large range of painters recorded as Mi Fu's favorites elsewhere in *Huashi*.

It has to be noted that the description documents the prominence of the genre of snowy landscapes in Mi Fu's theory, which is corroborated by other entries, most notably those dealing with Wang Wei's painting that will be quoted below. It is also worth our attention that Mi Fu places the name of Juran and Fan Kuan side by side, while elsewhere Juran is almost invariably referred to together with Dong Yuan. The genuine styles of Tang Xiya and Xu Xi are quite obscure today, but Mi Fu's final remark on the low quality of Xu Daoning's paintings is startling, for today he is usually classified side by side with the most outstanding Song dynasty landscapists. This entry probably mirrors Mi Fu's personal sympathies and combines them in a highly informal manner with his ideas on the proper display of the paintings by his favorite masters. The seemingly confused structure of his arguments, quoting the names of the approved landscape masters first, than expounding the arrangement of their works in the interior only to get back to the name of a painter Mi Fu disliked, is typical of the

掛也。許道寧不可用，模人畫太俗也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 13–14). The paragraph is also translated by Gulik (1958: 181–182).

²⁵⁹ Gulik (*ibidem*) makes a similar observation.

genre of miscellaneous notes on art. This and other similar entries thus support the classification of *Huashi* as a whole into this category of informal writings.

One paragraph contains an exposition on the significance of different genres popular in Song dynasty painting:

“When contemplating and evaluating paintings, the most valuable are Buddhist images and narrative paintings, because they possess didactic qualities (*quan jie* 勸戒). Next come landscapes with their potential for expressing the infinity, especially the scenes of mist and clouds and hazy sceneries are fine. Next come bamboos, trees and waterside rocks and next still flowers and grass. As for beautiful women, feathered creatures, elegant outings and theatre scenes, these do not belong to the refined objects of amusement.”²⁶⁰

This statement represents Mi Fu’s opinion on the hierarchy of genres in painting. His rendering conforms completely with the age-old system that gives priority to the painting of figures with its ability to record the appearance of virtuous men and exemplary deeds and thus provide guidance for its viewers. Second comes landscape painting, which during the Song dynasty gained eminence for its capacity to become a source of enjoyment for lofty gentlemen who sought escape from the pressures of official life.²⁶¹ From Mi Fu’s description, as well as

²⁶⁰ 鑒閱佛像故事圖有以勸戒爲上。其次山水有無窮之趣，尤其是烟雲霧景爲佳。其次竹木、水石。其次花草。至於士女、翎毛、貴游、戲闌，不入清玩。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 52).

²⁶¹ This function is declared in the first chapter of Guo Xi’s *Linquan gao zhi*, entitled “Instructions on landscape” (*Shanshui xun* 山水訓), which was probably accomplished several years after Mi Fu’s death. It provides a penetrating explanation of the value of landscape painting for those who wish to escape from the tiring duties of everyday life. Guo Xi was a professional painter employed at the court of emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1068–1085), but his views on the merit of landscape painting basically corresponded with the nascent literati theory of painting. To be precise, this aspect can be actually traced all the way back to Zong Bing’s 宗炳 (375–443) legendary essay *Preface to Painting Landscape* (*Hua shanshui xu* 畫山水序), where Zong states that he had

from several extensive comments on wall paintings in Buddhist monasteries found in *Huashi*, we can sense that the primacy of landscape painting over painting of figures in the Song dynasty literati painting was still not declared by painters themselves, their actual painting practice notwithstanding. Next still come the paintings of bamboos, trees, flowers etc., later jointly classified as paintings of flowers and birds (*huaniao hua* 花鳥畫). As we can see from Mi Fu's exposition, in Song times these minor genres were still much more varied and whereas bamboos and flowers were accepted as the lowest class of paintings worthy of literati interests, the birds (i.e. "feathered creatures", *lingmao* 翎毛) were grouped together with paintings of beauties and theatre scenes as those not being subject of the lofty interests of a literati painter. Another paragraph continues in a similar vein, yet the categories discussed above are matched with names of painters working in the individual genres:

"Clearly discernible and easy to authenticate are the figure paintings by Gu Kaizhi, Lu Tanwei, Wu Daozi and Zhou Fang; the flowers, bamboos and birds by Teng Changyou 滕昌祐 (active in late 9th – early 10th cent.), Bian Luan 邊鸞 (active in late 8th – early 9th cent.), Xu Xi, Tang Xiya and Zhu Mengsong 祝夢松 (probably active in the first half of the 10th cent.);²⁶² and the landscapes by Jing Hao, Li Cheng, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Juran and Liu daoshi 劉道士 (active in the second half of the 10th cent.). The buffalos by Dai Song 戴嵩 (active in the 8th cent.), horses by Cao Ba 曹霸 (active in the 8th cent.) and Han Gan and horses by Wei Yan 韋偃 (active in late 7th – early 8th cent.) are difficult to authenticate for they closely resemble each other. The paintings of contemporary masters are unworthy of a lengthy discussion. If you come over [a painting] by Zhao Chang 趙昌 (ca. 960 – after 1016), Wang You 王友 (Song dynasty),

Painted landscapes on the walls of his house in order to find enjoyment when he was unable to take a walk in a real landscape.

²⁶² This painter is identified by Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 57 and 90).

Tan Hong 譚鬻 (dates unknown) or the like, you can use it to cover a wall. If not, it doesn't make a difference anyway. [But paintings by] Cheng Dan 程坦 (dates unknown), Cui Bai 崔白 (active ca. 1050–1080), Hou Feng 侯封 (active ca. 1020–1060), Ma Fen 馬賁 (active in the early 12th cent.), Zhang Zifang 張自芳 (dates unknown) or the like can only spoil your walls. In the tearooms and wine houses, Zhou Yue's 周越 (active ca. 1020–1060) and Zhong Yi's 仲翼 (active ca. 1020–1060) inscriptions in draft script can be hung, but those are beyond the present discussion. If you come across ancient anonymous paintings that are difficult to classify, they can also prove to be good friends.”²⁶³

Although some of the names quoted by Mi Fu in this entry are obscure today and we are thus unable to make an independent opinion, this is obviously one of the passages in which Mi Fu's self-confident, controversial judgments over the quality of works by his fellow painters are pronounced. Although we are too remote in time to make use of his recommendations today, we can remember this paragraph as an extreme example of Mi Fu's pronounced judgments and refer to it later in the course of the discussion of his overall vision of the past.

²⁶³ 坦然明白易辨者，顧，陸，吳，周昉人物，滕，邊，徐，唐，祝花竹翎毛，荆李闕董范巨然劉道士山水也。戴牛，曹，韓馬，韋馬亦復難辨。蓋相似衆也。今人畫亦不足深論。趙昌，王友，譚鬻輩得之，可遮壁，無，不爲少。程坦，崔白，侯封，馬賁，張自芳之流，皆能汗壁。茶坊酒店可與周越，仲翼草書同挂，不入吾曹議論。得無名古筆差排，猶足爲尙友。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 29–30).

III.4.2 Mi Fu and the painters of the past

III.4.2.1 Mi Fu on his own painting collection

Before proceeding to the discussion of Mi Fu's attitude towards different painters of the past, we can have a brief look at the entries where Mi Fu refers to his own collection:

“The majority of works in my collection is constituted by old paintings. Because of my fondness of old calligraphies, I sometimes exchange up to ten paintings for one inscription. In general, I am able to exchange a sum of money or any of my precious objects made of jade, rhinoceros horn etc. or ten paintings [for one inscription] without hesitation. They are all marked with my collectors' seals and inscriptions in the four corners, so they can be authenticated at first glance.”²⁶⁴

Although this paragraph doesn't specify the old paintings in Mi Fu's collection (we shall see from the next quotation, which were the most precious ones and which, on the other hand, were the ones Mi Fu was ready to let go), it makes two points crucial for our understanding of Mi Fu's perception of the relative value of painting and calligraphy. The first is that Mi Fu owned a collection of old paintings that he subjectively described as large and the second that he was willing to exchange up to ten old paintings for one piece of old calligraphy. This

²⁶⁴ 余家收古畫最多。因好古帖，每自一軸加至十幅以易帖。大抵一古帖，不論費用及他犀玉瑠璃寶玩，無慮十軸名畫。其上四角皆有余家印記，見即可辨。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 31). In this paragraph, I translate the word *jia* 家 as “a collection”, which is obvious from the beginnings of many paragraphs that read “*yu jia shou*... 余家收...”, referring to Mi Fu's collection and not to Mi Fu's family. As for the word *ban* 辨, I am inclined to translate it as “authenticate” rather than “distinguish” or the like, which is also supported by the context of its other usages in *Huashi*.

supports the theory that Mi Fu considered calligraphy as more important than painting²⁶⁵ and devoted his energies primarily to collecting calligraphy, while painting was of secondary importance. Given Mi Fu's obsession with art, even his secondary collection – the collection of paintings – once grew to enormous dimensions, which Mi Fu, with the necessary provision for boasting about one's collection in front of one's peers, refers to in this paragraph. In the following one, he goes on to tell us:

“Of the thousands of Jin and Tang dynasty autographs [that were once] in my collection, [the greater part is already] scattered away and only about one hundred [remains].²⁶⁶ Of the most exquisite, I have kept only ten or so. Those with unusual inscriptions also gradually disperse. Jin dynasty paintings must be preserved [in my collection]. In order to eternalize several of the Jin pieces, I have named my dwelling ‘The Studio of Treasuring the Jin’. Whenever I arrive there, I display them on the walls. Nowadays, [such artworks] cannot be found anymore.

The calligraphies and paintings cannot be discussed in terms of their price. The literati find it difficult to trade them and so they often engage in their exchanges, which by itself can be considered a lofty pastime. Whenever the people of today acquire a piece of art, they regard it as precious as their own life. This is ridiculous! In the human life

²⁶⁵ For a discussion of this topic see also section III.1 above.

²⁶⁶ This interpretation contradicts that of Kohara (1995: 12–13), but I find it more appropriate with regard to the overall context. Kohara renders the passage: “I had a thousand [examples of] Jin and Tang calligraphy, of which a hundred are now scattered and lost,...”, which ignores the collective meaning of the numbers “hundred” and “thousand” common in Chinese (the examples were not exactly “one thousand” and there are not exactly “one hundred” scattered and lost). Moreover, the plain logic speaks rather in favor of the opposite ratio of the scattered and kept calligraphies – if there were only one hundred of the original one thousand lost, Mi Fu wouldn't find it that grave, I suppose. The general meaning of the whole paragraph is, however, that only very few from the original autographs have remained in Mi Fu's collection, and that they continue to be dispersed. This is, I dare say, the fate of many exquisite collections and we can note another interesting parallel with the collection of Dong Qichang, which fell victim to fire and became the source of Dong's profound grief, similar to that of Mi Fu recorded here.

[it is often so that] the things that are before one's eyes for a long time become boring. If you now and then exchange them for new ones, both parties get what they were longing for and are satisfied."²⁶⁷

From this entry, we first learn that many of Mi Fu's beloved artworks have dispersed, only to find out that he is still lucky enough to keep some of them and display them in his "Studio of Treasuring the Jin" whenever he is present. Kohara (1995: 12–13), as we have seen above, offers an alternative translation and also an explanation that Mi Fu lost the large part of his collection due to the gift of some of his best artworks to the collection of Emperor Huizong in 1104. Kohara links the gift to Mi Fu's political ambitions and even assumes that some of the Jin treasures that Mi Fu presumably presented to the throne might have been forgeries from his hand. That would ensure him both imperial rewards and the preservation of the beloved pieces of art in his personal collection. I don't find this opinion well grounded in the sources available to me, of which Kohara cites also the above paragraph as part of the evidence. Rather than a kind of Mi Fu's acknowledgement of his own deceit, I would understand it as an expression of his acceptance of the impermanence of the physical objects that have once pleased our eyes but whose loss is inevitable. This reading is partly substantiated by similar examples from the writings of other literati, e.g. Dong Qichang's complaints over the loss of a large part of his collection in a riot against his family quoted above.²⁶⁸ Moreover, the contents of the final part of this paragraph make such reading highly plausible.

After telling us that he lost many works that had originally formed his collection and explaining the importance of those that remain, Mi Fu goes on, in his typically self-assured

²⁶⁷ 余家晉, 唐古帖千軸, 蓋散一百軸矣. 今惟絕精只有十軸在. 有奇書亦續續去矣. 晉畫必可保. 蓋緣數晉物, 命所居爲寶晉齋. 身到則挂之. 當世不復有矣. 書畫不可論價, 士人難以貨取, 所以通書畫博易, 自是雅致. 今人收一物, 與性命俱, 大可笑. 人生適目之事, 看久即厭. 時易新玩, 兩適其欲, 乃是達者. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 31).

²⁶⁸ For details see Riely (1992: 416–419).

manner, to demonstrate his conviction that the true literati actually don't cling to individual artworks. The process of collecting, which involves exchanges of the works in one's collection with like-minded friends is rather a goal in itself and constitutes the very core of the refined pleasure these people take in engaging themselves with art. Together with the emphasis on the unmarketable nature of art and the scorn for the preposterous conduct of the petty collectors, this paragraph as a whole counts as one of the clearest statements of the literati approach to art and its collecting. This passage could become a prologue to all subsequent writing on the collecting practice of Chinese literati and one only wonders how come that it is one of the less known paragraphs of Mi Fu's treatise.

One of the few places where it is quoted is Ronal Egan's (2006: 201) discussion of Mi Fu's role in the circle of Northern Song dynasty literati.²⁶⁹ It is worth our attention that Egan offers a very different, in fact a contradictory translation. It is obviously coined to suit his argument that presents Mi Fu's approach, entirely unapologetic about his own extreme attachment to art objects, as being a direct opposite of Su Shi's declared detachment from the things of this world. In the context of the exposition on the impermanent nature of art objects pronounced in the opening part of the paragraph (which Egan doesn't cite and is therefore not forced to deal with the seemingly unfitting context of his explanation), I would see my translation as more logical and also textually accurate.²⁷⁰ I must, however, admit that in such case, it would undermine Egan's otherwise most plausible contrast of Mi Fu's and Su Shi's general approaches towards art collecting and related activities. From my reading of *Huashi*, I would rather suggest that Mi Fu, obsessed with art objects as he might have been, was not as

²⁶⁹ A translation of this paragraph is also part of the discussion of the "Reservations about Collecting" by Patricia Ebrey (2008: 97), which I only came across after the main body of this thesis was finished. To my great surprise, Prof. Ebrey's translation is almost verbatim same to mine and also serves the purpose of illustrating Mi Fu's sobriety about the collecting of artworks contrary to the usually prevailing opinion on the dissipated nature of his passion for collecting.

²⁷⁰ The translation of Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 95) basically corresponds with mine.

consistent in the shockingly direct and unapologetic approach as Egan suggests. His statements are sometimes virtually extreme, as in the preface where he takes an opposite stance to all those who admired Du Fu as a paragon Confucian artist, while sometimes he shows quite a smooth and relaxed attitude, which in fact most effectively demonstrates the pure joy of his engagement with the artworks.

Further in his study, Egan (2006: 228–234) shows that Su Shi in fact went as far as applying Buddhist rhetoric to his attitude towards art objects in order to demonstrate his detachment:

“Su’s claim in the following lines that he wanted to ‘turn things around,’ by exchanging the rocks for the painting, is informed by a Buddhist teaching: people who are attached to things find themselves ‘turned around by things’ (*wei wu suo zhuan* 爲物所傳), whereas the cultivated mind is able to ‘turn things around’ (*neng zhuan wu* 能傳物) without clinging to them and, thus, resembles the Tathāgata.”

In his argument over the necessity of “exchanging” the works of art so as to gain the utmost pleasure one can get from the process of collecting, Mi Fu uses the word *yi* 易 (“to change”, “to exchange”), which commonly denotes the exchanges of artworks between likeminded friends throughout his treatise. Su Shi, as we saw, enriches his statement with the subtle context of Buddhist rhetoric and utilizes the word *zhuan* 傳 (“to turn”, “to transmit”). In Mi Fu’s use of the word *yi* I can sense a similar meaning that is further emphasized in the context of the initial sentences, in which Mi Fu laments the elusiveness of the possession of works of art, and with the reference to the “things passing before one’s eyes”. In other words, Mi Fu is not taking up Buddhist rhetoric in the way Su Shi does, but his message is basically the same in this instance. Under the weight of reality, in which collections of the greatest treasures

inevitably fall apart, the true connoisseur doesn't stick to individual works of art, but rather takes pleasure in the act of connoisseurship itself, regardless of the identity of the particular object in his possession. That the objects implicated in these "exchanges" were of similar artistic value is a matter of course and in several other paragraphs Mi Fu discloses details pertaining to exchanges he or his fellows actually undertook.

III.4.2.2 Genres of the paintings discussed in *Huashi*

Having become acquainted with two of Mi Fu's theoretical passages on the collecting of painting in general, we will move on to examine individual authors and paintings he records in *Huashi* and their significance for our understanding of Mi Fu's vision of the painting history. On the whole, approximately six dozens of painters are referred to in the treatise, which is about one half of the total amount of artists mentioned by Dong Qichang in his texts on painting.²⁷¹ This may be caused by the simple fact that Mi Fu's treatise was written earlier in time and Dong thus quotes some of the painters mentioned by Mi Fu plus many others active in the periods after Mi Fu's death, and also by the fact that Mi Fu's *Huashi* is much shorter compared to the overall length of Dong Qichang's writings on painting. *Huashi* is, however, very similar in nature to Dong Qichang's texts on painting. Mi Fu, too, quotes the names of a wide range of painters of different genres who are obscure today and appear only once or twice in the whole text, while the names of a few crucial artists famous to this day keep appearing time and again in different parts of the text.

The structure of genres of the paintings recorded in *Huashi* echoes Mi Fu's theoretical statement on the relative merit of individual painting genres in general.²⁷² Roughly one quarter of the entries discussing the works of individual painters belong to the genre of figure

²⁷¹ See section II.2.3.

²⁷² See section III.4.1.

painting, which encompasses Buddhist images and narrative paintings that were referred to as the most important type. Anonymous mural paintings of figures are mentioned three times in *Huashi*. In one entry, we even find an intriguing description of the wall decorations found in the Temple of Sweet Dew close to Mi Fu's home in Runzhou.²⁷³ Besides, the first chapter devoted to Jin dynasty painting records three figure paintings by Gu Kaizhi and Dai Kui. Of these, two are depictions of Buddhist deities, while the third, *The Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* remains to this day one of the most celebrated didactic paintings of all ages. Of other figure paintings by famous masters, accretions to Yan Liben, Wu Daozi and his followers, Gu Hongzhong 顧閔中 (active in the 10th cent.), Zhou Fang and Zhou Wenju 周文矩 (active in the 10th cent.) are mentioned. About one half of the painters of figures are, however, minor masters, whose names have long fallen into oblivion.

Mi Fu's attention to depictions of the literati-sages of the past such as *Ji Kang [playing] the Guangling Melody* (*Ji Kang Guangling san* 嵇康廣陵散)²⁷⁴ or *Portrait of Xie Lingyun in Meditation* (*Xie Lingyun panzu zuo xiang* 謝靈運盤足坐像)²⁷⁵ is also noteworthy and can be explained by Mi Fu's obsession with the past and his identification with some of its figures as discussed by Sturman (1997). These paintings are both described as extraordinary and possessing antique elegance, the first even as being a genuine Tang dynasty narrative painting, to which the text of the whole story was presumably attached.²⁷⁶ Both were, however, not collected by Mi Fu himself but were in the collections of his friends and acquaintances that he saw at one time or another. It would be interesting to know if Mi Fu, too,

²⁷³ See Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 21) and also Sturman (1997: 1–2).

²⁷⁴ See Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 52).

²⁷⁵ See Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 57).

²⁷⁶ This is indicated by the sentence “In the record of the story, the character “*min*” is missing.” (*Suo shu gushi kong min zi*. 所書故事空民字.)

collected any of the portraits of his favorite figures of the past, but *Huashi* unfortunately contains no indication thereof.

About one third of the masters recorded in *Huashi* are landscape painters and, contrary to the figure painters, mostly those famous up to the present day. Of the Tang dynasty painters, mostly accretions to Wang Wei of different quality and reliability are discussed. Li Sixun, Bi Hong and Wei Yan are mentioned twice and other Tang dynasty landscapist are rarely referred to whatsoever. Of masters active during the Five Dynasties and the Song dynasty, Li Cheng, Dong Yuan, Juran, Guan Tong, Jing Hao, Fan Kuan, Xu Daoning, Liu daoshi, Li Gonglin, Li Sheng, Song Di, Wang Shen and Zhao Lingrang are mentioned. The most often quoted landscapist in the whole text is Wang Wei, whose works or accretions are discussed in thirteen paragraphs, closely followed by Li Cheng and Dong Yuan, both with nine entries.

Interestingly, Guo Xi, who is known as a follower of Li Cheng and one of the initiators of the so-called Li-Guo school of painting, is not quoted even once in the whole text of *Huashi*. This fact, curious indeed, suggests that Mi Fu probably didn't know Guo Xi's paintings or didn't find them worthy recording. Guo Xi's works were much-favored and widely displayed by his patron Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085), and different sources seem to indicate that Mi Fu was not very familiar with the imperial collection during Shenzong's reign.²⁷⁷ Although he was probably invited to review the imperial collection by Emperor Huizong in the early 1100s, Guo Xi's work had by that time already experienced a marked decrease in popularity and many of his paintings were dismantled and stored away.²⁷⁸ This might help to explain Mi Fu's ignorance of Guo Xi's work, which is quite striking given the intensity of his interest in the painting of Li Cheng. Another underlying reason might also

²⁷⁷ Ledderose (1979: 48).

²⁷⁸ For more about Guo Xi's painting during the reigns of Shenzong and Huizong, see Pejčochová (2003: 4–10).

be the air of professionalism linked with Guo Xi's work by the Song dynasty literati, although his paintings were principally close to that of many literati painters.

Next to figure and landscape painters, also a considerable number of masters of minor genres such as flowers, birds, bamboo, horses etc. is recorded in *Huashi*. Of these, Xu Xi with his paintings of flowers is cited most frequently, followed by Huang Quan and his paintings of birds and flowers, Xue Ji with his cranes and Tang Xiya, another painter of flowers. Xue Ji and his painting of cranes has a prominent position among painters of similar orientation, for this work is mentioned in the preface to *Huashi* as part of the discussion of the intrinsic value of painting. The two cranes depicted in the painting in Mi Fu's collection are praised as an example of a noble subject capable of expressing the lofty ideals of literati painters. Similarly, Xu Xi's flowers are extolled many times as fresh and life-like, while Huang Quan's paintings of flowers, on the other hand, Mi Fu criticizes as excessively ornamental and vulgar. Of bamboo painters, the famous literati Su Shi and Wen Tong 文同 (1019–1079) are mentioned, and similarly as in Dong Qichang's treatise, a woman painter of bamboo surnamed Wang is referred to in one entry. About twenty less prominent painters of different genres are mentioned once or twice, but, again, their names have by now largely fallen into oblivion.

In the following sections, I will discuss Mi Fu's comments on the works of the painters most frequently mentioned in *Huashi* and the significance of Mi Fu's observations for our understanding of his notion of history of painting. From the above summary of the most often quoted painters of individual genres, it is interesting to see that the crucial artists in Mi Fu's treatise are generally the same as those discussed prominently in the texts of Dong Qichang. This on one hand documents the overall importance of these masters in the history of Chinese painting and, on the other, can demonstrate the closeness of Mi Fu's and Dong Qichang's vision of the history of painting in particular.

III.4.2.3 Mi Fu and Wang Wei

As suggested above, Wang Wei was one of the most often quoted painters in Mi Fu's history of painting and a considerable number of paragraphs is devoted to the discussion of his genuine or alleged works. Actually, the subject of authenticity permeates most of the entries concerned with Wang Wei's works, which points to the fact that the legacy of this Tang dynasty artist was quite obscure already in Mi Fu's time.

Of the paintings attributed to Wang Wei, his "snowy landscapes" (*xuetu* 雪圖) and the depictions of his famous Wangchuan Villa are mentioned most frequently. Some paragraphs reveal that the copies of the Wangchuan Villa in circulation in Mi Fu's time were numerous and their quality of execution differed markedly:

"One of the meticulous copies of Wang Wei's *Small Wangchuan* (*Xiao Wangchuan* 小輞川) is in the collection of Mr. Li in the capital. Its figures are painted well, it must be close to the original. It differs markedly from the paintings ascribed to Wang Wei by the ordinary collectors of this day. Maybe it is copied from the version in the collection of Mr. Yang from Yixing."²⁷⁹

There is one more mention of the painting depicting the Wangchuan Villa in *Huashi* that records a story about its colophons having been cut away by a crafty collector and pasted to another painting in order to enhance its value. Mi Fu unfortunately doesn't elaborate on the technique, composition and other formal elements of the Wangchuan paintings and we are thus unable to get a glimpse of the real appearance of the versions Mi Fu saw and collected.

²⁷⁹ 王維畫小輞川摹本筆細，在長安李氏。人物好，此定是真。若比世俗所謂王維，全不類。或傳宜興楊氏本上摹得。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 7).

He doesn't even record as much as the overall style of these paintings, so we are left to wonder if he saw the blue-and-green versions recorded elsewhere or if he might have happened to see a version painted in ink-wash. The only detail Mi Fu does record is that "the figures [in the Li version] are painted well". It is therefore probable that the painting was not a pure landscape but more likely a landscape populated with figures, which were depicted in sufficient detail to allow for a judgment over the quality of their execution.

The paragraphs dealing with snowy landscapes mostly record the instances when paintings in this genre by other artists were mistakenly ascribed to Wang Wei. One of them even mentions an interesting painting where Wang Wei's alleged self-portrait is appended to a Buddhist image:

"In the collection of the Vice-Minister Zhang Xiu, whose courtesy name is Chengzhi, there is a painting of the *Pratyeka Buddha* (*Bizhifo* 辟支佛). In its lower part, Wang Wei is depicted wearing a hat called the 'peach of immortals' (*xian tao jin* 仙桃巾), dressed in a yellow robe, his hands clapped together in a ritual fashion. It must be his self-portrait. It resembles closely the extant painting entitled *Ten Grand Disciples of Guanzhong* (*Guanzhong shi da dizi* 關中十大弟子), so it must be authentic.

The ignorant collectors often attribute to Wang Wei all the paintings depicting mule caravans or the Jianmen pass, which actually originate in the state of Shu.²⁸⁰ The paintings of snowy landscapes by Jiangnan painters are also often attributed to Wang Wei. It's enough [for the vulgar collectors] that the brushwork [of a painting] is limpid and graceful to label it [as Wang Wei's]. For example the painting *Wei Wudi Reading a Stele* (*Wei Wu du bei tu* 魏武讀碑圖) from the collection of Su Zhichun is also

²⁸⁰ Wang Wei is recorded to have painted famous pictures of a Mule caravan (*Luo wang tu* 騾綱圖) and the Jianmen pass (*Jianmen guan tu* 劍門關圖), but these subjects were also often depicted by the painters of the Shu area during the Five Dynasties period.

attributed to Wang Wei. A small hand scroll in the collection of Li Guanqing is also attributed to Wang Wei. It is similar to the one depicting the reading of stele. The *Snowy Landscape* (*Xue tu* 雪圖) that originates in the collection of Mr. Li from the capital, which is now in my possession, and the *Snowy Landscape* (*Xue tu* 雪圖) in the collection of Mr. Sun Zaidao, whose courtesy name is Jizhong, are a similar case; they are both attributed to Wang Wei. Other [examples of such falsely attributed paintings] in the collections of the wealthy aristocrats are too abundant to be even counted. In reality, [genuine paintings by Wang Wei] cannot be that numerous.²⁸¹

This paragraph reveals the qualities that were connected with Wang Wei's work in the late Northern Song period. It tells us that there were numerous paintings that were attributed to Wang Wei solely on the basis of its limpid and graceful brushwork (*bi qingxiu* 筆清秀). As the quality of the paintings in question is not elaborated upon more extensively, it is difficult to imagine, what the actual meaning of such a description was. We can only assume that skillful handling of the brushstrokes and the absence of excessive elaboration or superfluous details, elsewhere referred to as important qualities of Wang Wei's individual landscape style, can be implied by such vague formulations that are commonly used by historians of painting in ancient China without further explanation.

Moreover, a great number of works depicting the topics customarily linked with Wang Wei's name (i.e. snowy landscapes, mule caravans and the sceneries surrounding the Jianmen pass) were attributed to this master on account of its subject matter, which was, as we know, a commonplace practice throughout the whole history of Chinese painting. These subjects,

²⁸¹ 張修字誠之少卿家有辟支佛。下畫王維，仙桃巾，黃服，合掌頂禮。乃是自寫真。與世所傳關中十大弟子真法相似，是真筆。世俗以蜀中畫驃綱圖，劔門關圖爲王維甚衆。又多以江南人所畫雪圖命爲王維。但見筆清秀者，即命之。如蘇之純家所收魏武讀碑圖，亦命之維。李冠卿家小卷亦命之維。與讀碑圖一同。今在余家長安李氏雪圖與孫載道字積中家雪圖一同，命之爲王維也。其他貴侯家不可勝數。諒非如是之衆也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 7).

however, were also frequently painted by masters of the Shu and Jiangnan areas during the Five Dynasties period and this is whence in fact, in Mi Fu's opinion, the abundance of the paintings signed as Wang Wei's come from. This passage is thus another testimony to Mi Fu's expertise and sober attitude in matters of authenticity of ancient paintings. One is left to wonder where he acquired such a familiarity with the painting of the different areas and styles, but his formulations appear to be based on a personal experience with the different kinds of paintings in question. Mi Fu unfortunately doesn't describe in greater detail the stylistic features of Wang Wei's paintings that he did consider genuine. The mention of Wang Wei's self-portrait attached to a Buddhist painting is nonetheless a rare document of a figural painting, given Wang Wei's later renown as a landscape painter. One of the extant works on figural subjects linked with his name, i.e. *Fu Sheng Expounding the Classic* (*Fu Sheng shou jing tu* 伏生授經圖) in the collection of Osaka Municipal Museum,²⁸² can be pointed out here by means of comparison. The fact, however, remains, that Wang Wei is mostly referred to as a landscape painter working mainly in the ink-wash technique – a notion this thesis hopes to expose to reconsideration, and Mi Fu's record of his self-portrait remains a scarce testimony of his non-landscape works.

Another two or three paragraphs contain a remark that the snowy landscapes in certain collections are falsely attributed to Wang Wei. In one entry, Fan Kuan is also said to have modeled his paintings of snow-covered hills on the works that were commonly attributed to Wang Wei in his day:

“[Fan Kuan] painted snow covered hills entirely in the style of the so called Wang Mojie.”²⁸³

²⁸² For an illuminating discussion of the qualities of this painting, see Wang Yao-t'ing (2010).

²⁸³ 其作雪山全師世所謂王摩詰。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 40).

This is interesting, for Fan Kuan's style as we know it today from the surviving examples of his works is very different from the alleged blue-and-green landscapes of Wang Wei. It is, however, possible that it was exactly the subject of snowy landscapes that represented Wang Wei's purported revolutionary ink-wash painting and hence its popularity among the painters of Five Dynasties and Northern Song dynasty.

The fact remains that the snow-covered landscapes are the only examples of Wang Wei's works painted in ink-wash that survive to the present day at least in the form of copies and attributions.²⁸⁴ From Mi Fu's descriptions, it is obvious that they were popular already during the Northern Song dynasty when they were collected by art lovers and emulated by painting adepts. They were, however, extant almost exclusively in the form of copies and imitations and it was therefore not possible for the emulators of Wang Wei's ink-wash style to base their studies on originals. The only originals that Mi Fu cites are, most curiously, figure paintings, which are not commonly linked with Wang Wei's name in later histories. It seems thus highly plausible that the icon of Wang Wei that was elaborated upon and further codified in Dong Qichang's theories was taking its form already in Song times and that it had a similarly loose relation to reality as later on under the Ming dynasty.

For completeness' sake, it is important to add that Mi Fu's alleged critical comments on Wang Wei's work quoted by Dong Qichang are, indeed, not part of any extant version of *Huashi*, as Kohara (1992: 83) notes in his essay on Dong Qichang's connoisseurship of old painting.²⁸⁵ Mi Fu, on the other hand, refers to Wang Wei mostly positively as a painter of harmonious and neatly ordered pictures that enjoy great popularity, but are accessible only with difficulty and, to be honest, quite remote from Mi Fu's innermost interests.

Of Tang dynasty landscape painters, Mi Fu speaks much more enthusiastically e.g. of Bi Hong and his two landscapes that had once been part of the collection of Mi Fu's friend

²⁸⁴ For reproductions of some of them, see Kohara (1992).

²⁸⁵ See section .3.

Shen Gua. In the very last paragraph of *Huashi*, he describes these two paintings in detail and expresses his desire to see them again long after Shen Gua exchanged them with somebody else. As Egan (2006: 210–211) puts it,

“Mi Fu had an eye for art that is capable of sustained analysis and minute appreciation. More surprising still, he was capable of recording his appreciation in prose passages that are fully concerned with the object before him. We have seen something of this habit of mind already in Mi Fu’s entry on paintings by Bi Hong. ... In Su Shi’s writings on paintings, voluminous as they are, one does not find passages like these. Su Shi seems to be incapable of looking so closely at a painting or of giving such sustained attention to the composition, brushwork, and the overall feeling of a painting. As discussed above, Su moves quickly from the images in the painting to ideas of his own about painting, and often the connection between the two is distant. As a critic of painting, Su Shi is intellectual, sometimes even polemical. Mi Fu is a painterly critic of painting.”

From this pregnant formulation, it is clear that in contrast with his fellow literati painters, when a painting does give rise to Mi Fu’s enthusiasm, he is capable of descriptions and analyses that are close to modern forms of academic descriptions and, moreover, his mind rests almost solely on artistic issues. In comparison with the discussion of Bi Hong’s paintings referred to above, the entries dealing with Wang Wei’s art in *Huashi* are much less detailed and give an air of a compulsory part of Mi Fu’s account rather than a field of his special interest and keen observation.

III.4.2.4 Mi Fu and Li Cheng

Another landscape painter cited about a dozen times in *Huashi* is Li Cheng, who was active in the Five Dynasties period and early Northern Song dynasty in the North-Eastern China. Although he was roughly two hundred years Wang Wei's junior, Mi Fu's account of his works shows that in the late eleventh century Li Cheng's works were almost as scarce as Wang Wei's. Probably due to their popularity with adepts and admirers of landscape painting, a large number of copies and accretions were extant in Mi Fu's day, but, in Mi Fu's opinion, genuine paintings by Li Cheng were extremely rare. A much quoted paragraph from *Huashi* documents this situation:

“As for Li Cheng's landscapes, I have only seen two of them. One was a painting of *Pines and Rocks* (*Song shi* 松石) and the other was a set of four hanging scrolls with motives of landscape. The *Pines and Rocks* were in the collection of Sheng Wensu and now is in my collection. The [set of four] landscapes is in the collection of Master Baoyue in Suzhou. They are extremely graceful and unusual, the pines are strong and protruding, the branches [of other trees] have dense foliage and offer a lot of shade. The brushwork of small *jingchu* trees is devoid of trivial details, it doesn't produce strange shapes of dragons, snakes, spirits and ghosts.

The large paintings in the collections of today's wealthy families all resemble drugstore sign boards executed in the Yan or Liu script. Lacking in naturalness, they are all mediocre and vulgar. The trees in those pictures angrily burst into all four sides, the trunks are dry and withered with many joints, while the small bushes resemble kindling wood and lack vital force.

[Li] Cheng served as assistant in the Court of Imperial Entertainments and achieved the title of *jinshi*. His son You served as the Grand Master of Remonstrance and grandson

You as Edict Attendant.²⁸⁶ [Li] Cheng was working as the Grand Master of the Palace with Golden Seal and Purple Ribbon, but even if he had been an ordinary craftsman who painted just in order to earn his living, his works couldn't have been that numerous. They are all painted by vulgar artisans and are [inscribed with] false signatures. I am ready to introduce a 'non-Li Cheng' theory."²⁸⁷

In another paragraph, the four Li Cheng paintings in the collection of Master Baoyue are further described as follows:

"... The four paintings by Li Cheng that are housed in Baoyue's collection depict a scholar riding a horse followed by a servant boy. They are limpid and graceful like Wang Wei's portrait of Meng Haoran.²⁸⁸ [Extant Li] Cheng's figure paintings are limited to these two. The other depictions of clowns, gamblers or folk actors are all Xu Daoning's works in the manner of the paintings of Li Cheng's period."²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ All the translations of titles and functions follow Hucker (1985).

²⁸⁷ 山水李成只見二本。一松石，一山水四軸。松石皆出盛文肅家。今在余齋。山水在蘇州寶月大師處。秀甚不凡。松勁挺，枝葉鬱然有陰。荆楚小木無冗筆，不作龍蛇鬼神之狀。今世貴侯所收大圖，猶如顏柳書藥牌形貌似爾。無自然，皆凡俗。林木怒張，松榦枯瘦多節，小木如柴無生意。成身為光祿丞，第進士，子祐為諫議大夫，孫宥為待制。贈成金紫光祿大夫，使其是凡工衣食所仰，亦不如是之多。皆俗手假名。余欲為無李論。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 10).

²⁸⁸ Kohara (2004a: 163–165) explains that Wang Wei's depiction of Meng Haoran is recorded in Zhu Jingxuan's *Record of Famous Painters of the Tang Dynasty*, where it is entitled *Chanting a Poem on a Horseback* (*Ma shang yin shi tu* 馬上吟詩圖). A similar painting is recorded also in the *Xuanhe huapu*, while other sources presumably note that Meng Haoran was seated on a donkey in the painting by Wang Wei in question. It is, however, the topic of a scholar-gentleman riding a horse that links the portrait of Meng Haoran with Li Cheng's depiction of the scholar aboard a horse described by Mi Fu.

²⁸⁹ ... 寶月所收李成四幅，路上一才子騎馬，一童隨。清秀如王維畫孟浩然。成作人物不過如是。他圖畫人，醜怪，賭博，村野如伶人者，皆許道寧專作成時畫。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 36).

This passage represents a curious evidence of Li Cheng's figural paintings, otherwise forgotten and omitted from the histories of Chinese painting. It is exciting to see that one of the progenitors of the classical tradition of Chinese landscape painting was so famed for his paintings of figures such as clowns, gamblers and the like in the late eleventh century that these were widely imitated by contemporary or slightly older painters. Xu Daoning, today recognized as an almost equally skilled Northern Song dynasty painter,²⁹⁰ is again quoted as an example of an inferior painter who only draws on the reputation of others, while his paintings are of poor quality.²⁹¹

It is also interesting to note the closeness of Li Cheng's painting to Wang Wei's that Mi Fu finds in the manner of the execution of the works. Today, only a few examples of landscape painting are believed to be fairly close to Li Cheng's original painting style²⁹² and controversy persists as to his possible authorship of other famed landscapes. In Mi Fu's day, on the other hand, Li Cheng was obviously noted also for paintings of figures and figures in landscapes. This genre chronologically preceding landscape painting was popular during the Tang dynasty, and later obviously coexisted with pure landscape painting in the work of some masters. Although innovations in the technique of landscape painting under Tang dynasty and in later periods are usually emphasized in standard histories of Chinese painting, it is apparent that Wang Wei, to quote just the most striking example, also commonly painted figures (such as his own self-portrait and Buddhist figures mentioned above) and figures in landscape (such as the Meng Haoran painting mentioned here and recorded already in Tang dynasty histories of painting quoted by Kohara, 2004a: 163–165). From this entry of *Huashi* it seems that Li Cheng's painting represents a similar case, for one of the two extant works by this master

²⁹⁰ See e.g. the painting entitled *Fisherman on a Snowy River* (*Xue xi yufu tu* 雪溪漁父圖), attributed to Xu Daoning, which is discussed as one of the important extant works of the so called "Li-Guo painting tradition" (*Li-Guo huaxi* 李郭畫系) in Xu Guohuang (1999: 23–26).

²⁹¹ For another reference of this kind recorded in *Huashi*, see section III.4.1.

²⁹² For a reproduction of one of them, see e.g. Wang Yaoting (1998: 51).

acknowledged as genuine by Mi Fu is actually a set of landscape paintings featuring a figure of a scholar riding a horse as a central motive, not unlike the Wang Wei's portrait of Meng Haoran.

There are, however, passages in *Huashi* that mention Li Cheng's paintings also in negative context. One of them even reveals additional intriguing facts that deserve our attention:

“Once, I had a discussion about composition and layout [in painting] with Li Gonglin, after which I painted *Wang Xianzhi Writing on a Silk Gown* (*Zijing shu jianqun tu* 子敬書練裙圖). The painting, once finished, was taken away by an influential official and in the end never got back to me. Another time, I painted a picture of *Zhidun, Xu Xun, Wang Xizhi and Xie An Taking a Walk in a Landscape* (*Zhi, Xu, Wang, Xie yu shanshui jian xing* 支, 許, 王, 謝於山水間行) and hung it in my study.

When I try to seek guidance from the landscapes old and new, there are seldom such that stand out of the mediocre rubbish, and therefore I gave freedom to my brush [to execute mine in accordance with my own vision]. It is full of mists and clouds that obscure the sun and the trees and rocks are not delineated in detail. It does justice to [my] idea and that's enough.

If my friends want [me to paint a picture for them], I provide them just with horizontal hanging scrolls three feet in length or vertical hanging scrolls of the same length. For my own study, however, the pairs of paintings that I hang there never surpass three feet in length. Even when mounted, they are not long enough to be viewed when sitting on a chair. [In this way], the people who pass by don't stir them with their sweating

shoulders. And I don't paint large screens, not even a stroke of the vulgar feeling present in Li Cheng or Guan Tong.”²⁹³

This is an account of Mi Fu's own painting activities that is truly rare in the whole text of *Huashi*. Unlike Dong Qichang, who recorded his views on works and styles of other masters usually in connection with a painting of his own, Mi Fu informs us seldom of his own creative efforts and this paragraph represents an interesting exception. It records two Mi Fu's paintings, one of which he passed on to an anonymous high official, while the other he kept and exhibited in his own study. The first curious detail pertaining to this description is the fact that both paintings by Mi Fu belong to the genre described above in the passage devoted to Li Cheng's set of paintings featuring a scholar riding a horse, i.e. the genre of figures in landscape.

Today, Mi Fu is recognized as a painter of landscapes noted for his skills ever since the late Northern Song period.²⁹⁴ The only two paintings from his own hand he himself records in his treatise, however, are of a slightly older type, i.e. the attention of the author is paid prominently to the figures that represent the subject of the painting and the landscape setting is secondary. This is the case of the above-mentioned Wang Wei's portrait of Meng Haoran chanting a poem on a horseback. It likewise applies to Li Cheng's painting of a scholar accompanied by a servant boy and now also to the two Mi Fu's paintings – one depicting Wang Xianzhi writing on a silk gown and the other showing four famous scholars of the Jin period taking a walk in a landscape. This summary indicates that when calling a painting simply “a landscape”, Mi Fu sometimes actually means the kind of landscape

²⁹³ 余嘗與李伯時言分布次第, 作子敬書練裙圖. 圖成乃歸權要, 竟不復得. 余又嘗作支, 許, 王, 謝於山水間行, 自挂齋室. 又以山水古今相師, 少有出塵格者, 因信筆作之. 多烟雲掩映, 樹石不取細, 意似便已. 知音求者, 只作三尺橫挂, 三尺軸. 惟寶晉齋中挂雙幅成對, 長不過三尺. 標出不及椅所映, 人行過, 肩汗不著. 更不作大圖, 無一筆李成, 闕全俗氣. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 24).

²⁹⁴ For a brilliant summary of his achievements, see Ho Wai-kam (1959).

painting that features figures of famous personages in the landscape setting. This was in fact also the case of Li Cheng's set of four paintings, the description of which starts with the words "As for Li Cheng's landscapes, I have only seen two of them."²⁹⁵ The details of the descriptions of some of these paintings and their alleged proximity to Wang Wei's portraits further point to the fact that they were most probably executed in ink outlines and colors, at least as far as the figural part of the compositions was concerned. That can be quite a revealing observation for someone used to the standard notion of Mi Fu's landscapes. In histories of Chinese painting, these are usually presented as paintings executed primarily in the monochrome ink-wash technique with extremely wet brushstrokes that feature the "Mi family dots" (*Mi dian* 米點) as well as highly simplified architecture and landscape structures notorious from the few extant landscapes attributed to Mi Fu.²⁹⁶ The fact nevertheless remains that no evidence can be found in *Huashi* for Mi Fu's preference of the ink-wash technique over painting in ink and colors. It can be partially deduced from the choice and descriptions of some of Mi Fu's favorite pieces. But even these, as the paragraph in question documents, were often paintings of figures in landscape setting though customarily called "landscapes" by Mi Fu.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ 山水李成只見二本.

²⁹⁶ For the reproduction of the most famous one, see e.g. Wang Yaoting (1998: 51).

²⁹⁷ For another interesting piece of indirect evidence cf. Dong Qichang's quotation of a passage purportedly derived from a today lost statement by Mi Fu on the sources of his own painting style (see above section II.2.3.1). It records that "Mi Fu ... in his proud self-conscious statements proclaimed not to have adopted anything of the meticulous craftsmanship of Wu Daozi." Although popular legends maintain that Wu Daozi painted three hundred miles of the southern landscape sceneries in one day, the surviving copies of his paintings as well as modern art-historical research indicate that he was primarily a figure painter. Figure painting is also commonly recognized as the field where his contribution to the history of Chinese painting is unmatched by other painter of the subsequent ages. Mi Fu's alleged reference to his "meticulous craftsmanship" would also well suit this image. It is therefore highly possible that Mi Fu actually points to the fact that "[when painting figures] he has not adopted anything of the meticulous craftsmanship of Wu Daozi".

One of the most celebrated narrative paintings of the time span in question, i.e. Tang-Five Dynasties-Northern Song period, is Zhao Gan's 趙幹 (ca. 937–978) *Early Snow on the River* (*Jiang xing chuxue tu* 江行初雪圖),²⁹⁸ which has a well documented pedigree and is almost unanimously accepted as an authentic work of the Five Dynasties period. The detailed, yet reserved way of rendering figures that are situated in the landscape in this picture is instructive of the manner in which figures were treated in narrative paintings of the time. Another example of a purported work of the period that features a figural subject set against landscape background is a work attributed to Juran called *Xiao Yi Steals the Lanting Scroll* (*Xiao Yi zuan Lanting tu* 蕭翼賺蘭亭圖).²⁹⁹ This painting shows that the figure, which is its main subject, can be so small that it is difficult to be located at first sight. Such a scene corresponds with the common notion of a 'Song dynasty landscape' better, for the landscape setting is paid primary attention. Mi Fu, however, describes his "landscapes" as being less than three feet in height, while typical "Northern Song dynasty landscapes" of the kind such as the Juran painting are usually painted on large formats. Moreover, other contemporary descriptions of the paintings in question, most notably of the one depicting the Jin dynasty scholars that is elsewhere entitled *Shanyin tu* 山陰圖, suggest that the figures were certainly not an insignificant part of the whole composition, as for instance the figure of Xiao Yi in the painting attributed to Juran. On the contrary, they were rendered in great detail and were perceived as the actual subject of the picture.³⁰⁰ This all is to say that the notion of "a

²⁹⁸ For a reproduction see e.g. *Gugong shuhua jinghua teji* (1996: 54–57).

²⁹⁹ For a reproduction see http://tech2.npm.gov.tw/sung/html/graphic/c_t1_3_b08.htm. Accessed 10. Sept. 2010.

³⁰⁰ Kohara (2003b: 50–57) quotes interesting evidence, which shows that the painting entitled *Shanyin tu*, which portrayed four Jin dynasty scholars, in reality might have been Li Gonglin's work, to which Mi Fu only appended his inscriptions and seals. In that case, the wording of the reference in *Huashi* would probably be a mistake. The description of the painting in *Huashi*, however, seems to be quite accurate as to its appearance described in the sources quoted by Kohara, whoever its true author. Secondly, it is interesting to note that the rendering of this subject had again its antecedent in a work by Wang Wei, which once had been in Mi Fu's

landscape” in Mi Fu’s time might have been much more complex than we are used to assume on account of the extant paintings attributed to Northern Song dynasty painters perpetuated in later histories of painting. The subject of the two paintings in question, on the other hand, fits perfectly in the picture of Mi Fu’s interest in, or even obsession with, Jin dynasty art and its authors as described by Peter Sturman (1997). Both these paintings, similarly as the portraits of Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) or Ji Kang 嵇康 (223–263) mentioned above, further illustrate Mi Fu’s fascination with Jin dynasty culture.

To get back to the paragraph quoted from *Huashi*, the actual subject of the painting notwithstanding, Mi Fu refers in his description also to landscape elements, the rendering of which was for him obviously a criterion of artistic quality. He mentions the presence of mist and clouds, one of the few rare references to this element so important for Dong Qichang as we have seen in chapter II of the thesis. The information that the trees and stones are not painted in a very detailed manner is interesting and is probably related to the notion of the freedom of execution according to the author’s innermost feelings, which is mentioned next. This is clearly an attribute of paintings that “stand out of the mediocre rubbish” and, as Kohara (*ibidem*) argues, the point Mi Fu wishes to make is not hard to identify. Whereas, as he tells us with his typical self-confidence, most landscapes of the old and contemporary masters he had seen before were ordinary and mediocre, his (or his friend’s) painting executed without excessive attention to details and with a complete freedom of the brushwork stands out. These formulations belong to the most conforming to later literati views on painting, represented among others by the theories of Dong Qichang, in the whole text of *Huashi*. They are, however, not so often expressed in Mi Fu’s text as one might expect.

collection and carried his inscription. Zhan Jingfeng 詹景鳳 (active in the second half of the 16th century), the author of the above comment, nevertheless assumed that the true author of the *Shanyin tu* attributed to Wang Wei was Gu Hongzhong, another painter of narrative subjects active ca. in the mid-10th century.

Given this emphasis on the issue of artistic aloofness and stylistic singularity, it is quite strange that the passage continues with purely material concerns that bring our thoughts back to the ground. Mi Fu not only expresses his predilection for smaller formats of painting. He also gives vent to his well known obsession with cleanliness and in an almost grotesque manner explains that the paintings displayed in his study cannot be viewed while sitting on a chair, for they are deliberately mounted short and suspended high so as not to be stirred by the sweating shoulders of the visitors. In the final sentence, Mi Fu gets back to Li Cheng and the problem of lofty and vulgar paintings and, interestingly again, declares that his own (or, possibly, his friend's) paintings are free of the vulgar feeling emanating from Li Cheng's as well as Guan Tong's paintings. It is hard to imagine what exactly was the content of the expression "vulgar feeling" (*su qi* 俗氣) that Mi Fu uses here, except for maybe the format, which indeed is usually much larger than the recommended three feet in length in the case of works attributed to Li Cheng and Guan Tong.

Otherwise, Mi Fu usually refers to Li Cheng's work in a laudatory context such as in the passage on landscapes by Jiang Changyuan 蔣長源 (dates unknown):

"Doctor Jiang Changyuan paints landscapes in colors. His mountain peaks resemble those of Jing Hao, while the pine trunks resemble those of Li Cheng. The needles are formed according to [his observations] of real pine needles. They are like vigorous rat tails and are very lively. ..."³⁰¹

Here, landscapes painted in colors are mentioned as drawing on elements of Li Cheng's style. Moreover, the whole formulation is praising the work of Mi Fu's friend and Li Cheng's

³⁰¹ 大夫蔣長源作著色山水。頂似荆浩，松身似李成。葉取真松爲之。如靈鼠尾，大有生意。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 24–25).

painting, being one of its sources, is thus also presented in a positive light.³⁰² Negatively, Li Cheng is once mentioned in comparison with Fan Kuan:

“... Li Cheng [used] light ink [and his works] look misty and dream-like, his rocks resemble moving clouds. [His works are] very elaborate and lack natural expression. Although Fan Kuan’s expression is vigorous and majestic, his works are dark like a gloomy night; the rocks are not set apart from the ground, while the objects possess a kind of obscure refinement. I would classify [his work] as superior to Li Cheng’s.”³⁰³

In this entry, Li Cheng’s work is charged with lack of naturalness or, more precisely, lack of faithfulness to the real appearance of the objects in question (*shao zhenyi* 少真意). The description of his landscapes as misty and dream-like itself is quite neutral and this quality was, as we know, regarded as positive by later painters. This passage, however, is a singular example of Mi Fu’s finding fault with excessive elaborateness (*duo qiao* 多巧), in the same way as Dong Qichang criticizes some painters as producing “elaborate paintings” (*kehua*). Although the exact expressions used by the two writers are not identical, the contexts of their use and the quality they denote in the two author’s approach can be seen as quite close to each other. Mi Fu’s expression “excessive elaborateness” (*duo qiao*) might therefore represent the germ of the concept of “elaborate paintings” (*kehua*) later developed by other literati critics. It is, however, surprising that it is Li Cheng’s painting, the later paragon of lofty landscapes full of misty peaks and trees with crab-like branches, who is mentioned as a representative of this failure. In an attempt to find an explanation, it can only be said again that the picture we

³⁰² Jiang Changyuan is mentioned by Mi Fu in the preface to *Huashi* as his “friend calligrapher and painter” (*wu shuhua you* 吾書畫友). For the sources that document their relationship, see Kohara (2003b: 63).

³⁰³ ... 李成淡墨如夢霧中，石如雲動。多巧少真意。范寬勢雖雄傑，然深暗如暮夜晦暝，土石不分，物象之幽雅。品固在李成上。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 53).

have about the real appearance of the works of the masters of Five Dynasties and Northern Song dynasty is probably very fragmentary and many aspects and faces of their works are irretrievably lost.

III.4.2.5 Mi Fu and Dong Yuan

Dong Yuan is one of the landscapists mentioned most often throughout the text of *Huashi* and it is obvious that his work was Mi Fu's favorite. The references to his paintings are usually short and concise, yet they are almost unanimously positive. They are also unique in their intense concentration on the issues of style and artistic qualities and don't dwell on inconsequential matters. Mi Fu's comments on Dong Yuan's works thus represent a display of some of his crucial theoretical and art-historical concepts, many of which have already been quoted above:

“Dong Yuan[’s works] were mostly ‘even and light’, ‘natural and spontaneous’. In times of Tang dynasty, such quality didn’t exist. [Dong Yuan] is superior to Bi Hong. Of the contemporary paintings [even] those of elegant manners that belong to the divine class cannot compare with him. The peaks and summits appear and vanish; clouds and mist reveal and cover [the objects]. There are no traces of artificial elaboration, everything is ‘natural and spontaneous’. The vapors are heavy and lush, tree trunks vigorous and towering. The streams and bridges, fishermen and islets here and there, a real piece of southern landscape!”³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴ 董源平淡天真多。唐無此品。在畢宏上。近世神品格高，無與比也。峯巒出沒，雲霧顯晦。不裝巧趣，皆得天真。嵐色鬱蒼，枝幹勁挺，咸有生意。溪橋漁浦，洲渚掩映，一片江南也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 11).

“Juran studied [the work of] Dong Yuan. Many of his paintings are still extant. [They are full of] mists and vapors and are limpid and fresh. The composition is often ‘natural and spontaneous’. In his young age, Juran’s paintings were full of the ‘alum-heads’ (*fantou*) while in his later years they became ‘even and light’ and possessed a lofty allure.”³⁰⁵

“The misty scene by Dong Yuan in my collection has a horizontal format. The structures of the mountains are now hidden and then appear again, the tips of the branches stick out and disappear; the overall feeling is lofty and antique.”³⁰⁶

“The eldest son of Wang Qinchen has six old paintings by Guan Tong that are particularly interesting. [He owns also] four paintings by Dong Yuan that are lovely in their true expression [of the sceneries they depict].”³⁰⁷

These four quotations can be basically broken up into two categories – the first two describe Dong Yuan’s works in general, while the last two comment on particular paintings Mi Fu has seen. All four, however, use similar language and express praise over different aspects of Dong Yuan’s painting.

As we have seen above, Dong Yuan was one of the paragons of the principles called ‘even and light’ (*pingdan*) and ‘natural and spontaneous’ (*tianzhen*). These qualities are mentioned repeatedly in the entries pertaining to Dong Yuan’s work and are further supported by the emphasis on the absence of the opposite qualities, such as “there are no attempts of artificial elaboration” (*bu zhuang qiao qu* 不装巧趣). In the discussion of Mi Fu’s comments

³⁰⁵ For the original Chinese text see note 230.

³⁰⁶ 余家董源霧景，橫披全幅。山骨隱顯，林梢出沒，意趣高古。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 15).

³⁰⁷ 王欽臣長子有六幅關全古本，特奇。董源四幅，真意可愛。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 54).

on Li Cheng's painting, we have seen that the aversion against excessive elaboration was one of the reasons for Mi Fu's negative attitude towards them. Here we encounter a similar formulation again, this time clearly situated in the context of the discourse on simplicity and naturalness. It is obvious that Mi Fu's predilection for Dong Yuan's painting derives largely from his conviction that it possesses these supreme qualities and lacks excessive elaboration. In this aspect, Mi Fu thus evaluates Dong Yuan's painting as a direct opposite to the works of Li Cheng that he criticized above.

Mi Fu further mentions mists and clouds, which, as we know, were an important topic for Dong Qichang, but in *Huashi* are not referred to very often. Comments on Dong Yuan's painting are an important exception and Mi Fu's descriptions such as "the vapors are heavy and lush" (*lan se yu cang* 嵐色鬱蒼) or "[they are full of] mists and vapors and are limpid and fresh" (*lan qi qing run* 嵐氣清潤) are, in my opinion, a testimony of their importance specifically in Dong Yuan's style. That might also be the reason why Dong Qichang, who admired the misty scenes very much, had a special predilection for Dong Yuan not unlike his predecessor Mi Fu. Mi Fu, however, differs in the fact that he emphasizes his appreciation of the misty scenes only in connection with Dong Yuan's painting. This might again be a nucleus of the latter vogue of these paintings.

Mi Fu praises also other elements of Dong Yuan's style such as mountain peaks or pine trees. He points out repeatedly that the artistic quality of Dong Yuan's paintings rests largely with the fact that the objects depicted are at times visible and at times hidden, so as to make an impression of naturalness and diversity. This is a basic quality of Northern Song dynasty landscape painting in general and is also advocated for instance by Guo Xi in his *Linquan gaozhi*. Together with other means of expression, the use of clouds and mists and well-considered placement of compositional elements such as mountains, trees, streams, bridges, figures of fishermen etc., exactly as mentioned in the above passages of *Huashi*,

largely make for the natural and unaffected manner of Northern Song dynasty landscapes. It is therefore interesting to see that Mi Fu, the paragon of literati values, also records these procedures, otherwise discussed rather by professional painters of Guo Xi's sort.

One last quotation of a reference to Dong Yuan's work in *Huashi* is a curious record of a painting of fish, serpents and dragons depicted against landscape background in Dong Yuan's style:

“In the collection of Zhao Shu'ang, there is for many years a painting entitled *Waking from Hibernation* (*Chu zhe tu* 出蟄圖). It originates from Jiangnan, the fish and prawns come one after another, while hills, rocks, woods, trees and figures resemble those of Dong Yuan. The dragon is not vulgar, it is an excellent work. [It can be also called] *Dragon Munching on a Pearl* (*Long tun zhu tu* 龍吞珠圖).”³⁰⁸

A document of another minor painting genre, this passage shows that even such unusual depictions of water creatures that escort the king of the water world – the dragon, who is just waking from the winter hibernation, were commonly set against a landscape background. In this case, the mountains, trees, rocks and even people were painted in a manner reminiscent of Dong Yuan's painting and one is only disappointed that it is impossible to find out e.g. what the figures in Dong Yuan's manner looked like or what was the overall appearance of such painting as a whole.

³⁰⁸ 趙叔盎家舊有出蟄圖。江南畫，魚蝦相隨，山石林木人物如董源。龍不俗，佳作也。是龍吞珠圖。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 23).

III.4.2.6 Mi Fu and Xu Xi

Of other than landscape painters, Mi Fu mentions often also figure painters such as Ku Kaizhi and Wu Daozi and several painters of flowers, bamboo and animals. Of the authors working in these genres, Xu Xi's name appears to be the most prominent. His works are cited more than a dozen times and mostly praised as being elegant and full of life:

“The flowers of Teng Changyou, Bian Luan, Xu Xi and Xu Chongsi 徐崇嗣 (active in the 11th cent.) were all very life-like. Only Huang Quan's lotuses cannot compare with them; although plump and attractive, they are all vulgar.”³⁰⁹

Other passages document the fact that Xu Xi didn't apply himself solely to painting of flowers.

In *Huashi*, his paintings of snowy landscapes, fruits, fowls and cats are mentioned:

“Every collector should first acquire Tang Xiya's, Xu Xi's and other snowy landscapes and the landscapes by Juran and Fan Kuan. ...”³¹⁰

“... Teng Zhong, whose courtesy name is Yuanzhi, owns two pairs of hanging scrolls with Xu Xi's flowers and fruits.”³¹¹

“Wei Tai, whose courtesy name is Daofu, owns Xu Xi's painting of a flying quail on the paper called *chengxintang*,³¹² which is very life-like. ...”³¹³

³⁰⁹ 滕昌祐, 邊鸞, 徐熙, 徐崇嗣花皆如生. 黃筌惟蓮差勝, 雖富艷皆俗. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 12).

³¹⁰ 凡收畫, 必先收唐希雅, 徐熙等雪圖, 巨然或范寬山水圖. ... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 13).

³¹¹ ... 滕中孚元直有徐熙對花果子四軸. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 30). As indicated by Kohara Hironobu (2004a: 114), the character *fu* 孚 is mistaken for *zi* 字.

“The *Peony in the Wind* (*Feng mudan tu* 風牡丹圖) by Xu Xi has several thousands of leaves and only three flowers. One [is depicted] *enface*, one from the right and one is situated behind the many branches and their disheveled leaves. The rock and its perforations are round and glossy, with a kitten seated atop. I hate paintings of cats and I wanted to cut it off many times. In the end, I exchanged the painting for an ink-stone with Tang Linfu. Jiang Changyuan bought a very skillful painting by Huang Quan of a *Persian Cat Shaking a Lotus Bud* (*Limao chan bo he* 狸貓顫荔荷) for twenty thousand cash.”³¹⁴

The last paragraph is one of Mi Fu’s straightforward formulations, which show that he wasn’t ashamed to express his dislike of a subject or a type of painting in a direct and uncompromising language. On the top of that, the passage ends with a derisive remark that exactly the kind of painting that causes Mi Fu’s disgust, moreover painted by Huang Quan, whose works are repeatedly criticized by Mi Fu as vulgar, was bought by one of the well off collectors for twenty thousand in cash. The description of Xu Xi’s work, however, doesn’t contain any negative hint and counts as one of the most detailed in the whole text of *Huashi*. It is tempting to imagine the painting described by Mi Fu as possibly similar to the anonymous Song dynasty depiction of *Cat under Peonies* (*Fugui hua li tu* 富貴花狸圖) praised by Wang Yaoting (1998: 6) as extremely life-like and subtle in its execution. In reality,

³¹² Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 107) explains that *Chengxintang* 澄心堂, or ‘The Hall of the Purified Heart’, was the name of a hall in the imperial residence of the last two rulers of the Southern Tang dynasty, where the famous artist-emperor Li Yu had a special paper of the same name manufactured.

³¹³ 魏泰字道輔有徐熙澄心堂紙畫一飛鷄如生. ... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 35).

³¹⁴ 徐熙風牡丹圖, 葉幾千餘片, 花只三朵. 一在正面, 一在右, 一在衆枝亂葉之背. 石竅圓潤, 上有一貓兒. 余惡畫猫, 數欲剪去. 後易研與唐林夫. 蔣長源以二十千置黃筌畫狸貓顫荔荷甚工. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 45).

no reliable paintings by Xu Xi survive to this day³¹⁵ and it is thus impossible to figure out their possible relationship to this rare picture.

One of Xu Xi's paintings that Mi Fu owned and regarded as unquestionably authentic was a depiction of two peach branches:

“In the Xiangguo monastery, I bought for eight *jin* a painting on paper of two peach sprigs. The rear part of the green leaves is bitten through by worms, two leaves come out above the peaches and two peaches stick out high as if protruding from the paper. It is a genuine painting by Xu Xi.”³¹⁶

Aside from the remarkably high price Mi Fu paid for this painting, he also records the fact that it was executed on paper. It must have been quite scarce for a Tang painter and especially for one working primarily in the genre of birds and flowers. Another paragraph further reveals that Xu Xi usually painted on silk that was so thick that Mi Fu likened it to hemp cloth:

“... All the paintings by Zhang Seng[you] and Yan Liben that are extant today are executed on unsized silk. The paintings of the Southern Tang used coarse silk while the silk used by Xu Xi sometimes resembled hemp cloth.”³¹⁷

Otherwise, in one entry Mi Fu repeats his reservation towards the paintings of birds that he voiced above in the paragraph devoted to the hierarchy of painting genres:

³¹⁵ Cf. also Barnhart (1997: 91).

³¹⁶ 余相國寺中八金得紙桃兩枝。綠葉蟲透背，二葉著桃上，二桃突兀高出紙素。徐熙真筆也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 57).

³¹⁷ 張僧畫，閻令畫，世所存者皆生絹。南唐畫皆麤絹。徐熙絹或如布。... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 36–37).

“Large and small paintings of branches by Xu Xi are also in my collection. The scholars often come to see them. [Paintings of] feathered creatures do not belong to refined objects of amusement, and therefore I don’t record [such works]. A large peach sprig that is called *Spring Feeling Filling the Hall* (*Man tang chun se* 滿堂春色) is in my collection.”³¹⁸

From this passage, it seems that one of the most important parts of Xu Xi’s oeuvre, from a scholar’s point of view, is the depiction of tree branches similar to the painting of plum sprigs in full bloom that were popular slightly later.³¹⁹ The title translated as *Spring Feeling Filling the Hall* could also indicate such paintings of plum sprigs, which were at least from the Yuan dynasty onwards favored by literati painters in the genre of flowers and birds. The mention of the peach branch in bloom in *Huashi* can represent an early reference to such topic as a subject preferred by the literati, especially when it’s contrasted with the vulgar (in Mi Fu’s view) subject of feathered creatures.

The last reference to Xu Xi’s painting in *Huashi* that I will quote here is negative. Mi Fu declares that there is an ancient painting of flowering branches, which is superior to paintings by Xu Xi and Huang Quan:

“The ancient painting of two branches in bloom in the collection of Gao Gonghui is anonymous and greatly damaged. It is superior to Xu Xi and Huang Quan, it comes from my collection.”³²⁰

³¹⁸ 徐熙大小折枝，吾家亦有。士人家往往見之。翎毛之倫非雅玩，故不錄。桃一大枝，謂之滿堂春色，在余家。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 13).

³¹⁹ See e.g. the paintings of plum blossoms by the Yuan dynasty literati painter Wang Mian 王冕 (ca. 1287–1359), http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Wang_Mian. Accessed 12. Sept. 2010.

³²⁰ 高公繪家古花二枝，百破碎，無名。在徐黃上，自余家往。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 57).

One cannot resist the temptation to think that Mi Fu might have praised the work and classified it as superior to the works of the greatest masters of the genre, i.e. Xu Xi and Huang Quan, primarily on the account of its provenance in his collection. It is nevertheless the only negative reference to Xu Xi's work in *Huashi* and as such, it must be taken seriously. It shows again that Xu Xi's name was largely affiliated with the paintings of flowering tree branches and that he probably also drew on an older tradition of paintings in this genre, the anonymous representative of which might have been the painting in the collection of Gao Gonghui that once had its place in Mi Fu's collection.

By way of summary, Xu Xi is a painter almost as often cited by Mi Fu as Li Cheng or Dong Yuan. He is obviously the most prominent non-landscapist featured in Mi Fu's collection and in the collections of his friends and acquaintances. Based on the references to his work in *Huashi*, we can imagine an artist able to cover quite a wide range of genres that include depictions of snowy landscapes, different kinds of birds, flowers and flowering tree branches, all the way to the paintings of cats and other animals, which were not regarded as subjects of refined (*ya*) scholarly interest by Mi Fu. Xu Xi's works were mostly judged as subtle but life-like, while the paintings of his counterpart in Mi Fu's view, the painter Huang Quan, were considered too elaborate and vulgar (*su*).

III.5 Mi Fu's comments on the problem of authenticity

In his own time and ever after, Mi Fu was known as one of the most expert connoisseurs of old painting and calligraphy. We have seen above that his knowledge of the masterpieces and collections of the past was striking. He was also well versed in the technical aspects of painting of different periods of the past and was able to distinguish genuine and

forged materials, mountings and painting practices.³²¹ We do not, however, have much information on the way he himself attained such a high level of connoisseurship, except for a few remarks scattered through his own writings. It is obvious, for example, that he knew pretty well the stylistic features of paintings executed in the period of Five Dynasties at the court of the Southern Tang dynasty under the rule of Emperor Li Yu and in the south-western region of Shu. Numerous passages from *Huashi* document that he was able to identify the paintings originating from these places that were erroneously ascribed to various old masters.³²² It is nevertheless not clear where did Mi Fu get such intimate knowledge comprising the painting style, compositional practices as well as the use of inscriptions and seals that he was able to identify on the paintings coming from the collections in question.

In other passages, he even tells us that in his time, it was almost impossible to get hold of a genuine painting of a certain master.³²³ On the other hand, he is quite unreserved about the shortcomings of paintings falsely attributed to these masters and, again, the reader of his arguments is left to wonder where he learned the details of the masters' style to be able to recognize their absence so brilliantly. Such uncompromising statements as the one on the inexistence of Li Cheng's painting are, in my opinion, sometimes deliberately overstated in order to impress the reader, or formulated in a way to suit Mi Fu's line of argument.

Sometimes they seem to be a record of an instantaneous idea or a particular situation that might be severely subjective or contradictory to statements recorded elsewhere in *Huashi*. It is, however, obvious that Mi Fu had seen a great deal of the ancient paintings extant in his time and on the basis of what he saw, he was able to form a poignant picture of the historical styles and practices. The accuracy of this picture was, of course, disputed and supplemented by later

³²¹ See mainly section III.3.2, where Mi Fu's knowledge of painting materials, mountings and stylistic features of old painters is discussed.

³²² See e.g. the passage quoted in note 240 above.

³²³ For the description of paintings attributed to Li Cheng and Mi Fu's statement that in his whole life, he had only seen two authentic paintings by this master, see the paragraph quoted in note 287 above.

historians of Chinese painting. It is nonetheless impressive to this day as to its complexity, clarity and self-confidence. In my opinion, these attributes of Mi Fu's pondering of his own past are, among other things, a good reason for us to believe that *Huashi* was really accomplished late in Mi Fu's life, at a time when he felt he was experienced enough and confident in his own judgment.³²⁴

It is also noteworthy, and important to be mentioned in order to reinforce Mi Fu's credibility as a connoisseur, that his descriptions and judgments are for the most part very sober and pragmatic. He seldom extols paintings of the high antiquity and, in a strikingly similar manner to Dong Qichang,³²⁵ comments critically on the prevalence of fakes signed in the name of Gu Kaizhi, Wu Daozi and Wang Wei. Similarly to Dong Qichang, Mi Fu devotes extensive parts of his treatise to contemporary and slightly older artists and comments on their works in a down-to-earth and highly technical manner. In case of collectors and self-styled connoisseurs, on the other hand, he is less tolerant and his comments are at times passionate and full of sarcasm. These passages represent the most telling examples of Mi Fu's reputed arrogance and ability to go against the current of the prevailing attitudes and opinions.

Mi Fu's comments on the problems of authenticity of paintings in different collections of his day include the following:

“Among the literati in Suzhou there was one who judged old paintings according to their mounting. He always found a name of an old master in a history of painting [and ascribed the painting to him]. He once obtained a painting of *Seven Heavenly Bodies* (*Qi yuan* 七元) and inscribed it as a painting by Emperor Yuan of the Liang dynasty 梁元帝 (r. 552–554). He also owned a painting of *Fu Xi Drawing the Trigrams* (*Fu Xi*

³²⁴ For a broader reflection of the practical background of Mi Fu's and Dong Qichang's connoisseurship, see above the part on Ink plays in section II.2.3.1.

³²⁵ For more details see section II.2.3.4.

hua gua xiang 伏羲畫卦象) and inscribed it as a work of Shihuang 史皇 (i.e. the legendary historian of the Yellow Emperor and inventor of Chinese characters Cang Jie 倉頡, active ca. 2650 B.C.). I asked him for the reason [of such an attribution] and he replied: ‘I have obtained it from his descendants.’ I didn’t know if he meant the descendants of Xuanyuan (i.e. the Yellow Emperor) or the descendants of Shihuang.³²⁶ If he meant the descendants of Shihuang, he must have obtained it from the garden of Prince Li (i.e. the imperial burial site).³²⁷ [In case of] other paintings it was like with this one. The collector once saw Gu Kaizhi’s painting of Vimalakirti in my collection and, without any reference to its brushwork, said: ‘Such contemporary paintings like this one are really easy to obtain.’ Thereafter he turned his head to his attendant and said: ‘Tomorrow tell Hu Changmai³²⁸ to get two such paintings.’ Several days later, he really got hold of two mediocre and vulgar paintings, which he inscribed ‘*Vimalakirti* by Gu Kaizhi’ and ‘*Vimalakirti* by Lu Tanwei’. ...³²⁹

This paragraph is a blatant example of the piercing sarcasm Mi Fu is capable of when it comes to the critique of vulgar collectors and their manners. But, the ridicule notwithstanding, we should take note of his mention of the fact that the vulgar collector judged the paintings “without reference to their brushwork” (*geng bu lun bifa* 更不論筆法) and tried to determine

³²⁶ Kohara (2004b: 106) presents a reasonable assumption that this sentence is mistaken for *Xuanyuan chen Shihuang sun* 軒轅臣史皇孫, i.e. ‘Shihuang [Cang Jie], the servant of the Yellow Emperor’.

³²⁷ In translating this sentence, I follow Kohara’s explanation, who assumes that Mi Fu is mocking his counterpart with the reference to the ‘garden of Prince Li’, i.e. the ‘Li garden’ (*Li yuan* 梨園), which was the place where the Prince was buried. Vandier-Nicolas (1964: 141–142) gives a similar explanation.

³²⁸ Kohara (*ibidem*) records that Hu Changmai was a dealer in antiquities of non-Chinese origin. The personal name Changmai is explained as a local expression denoting ‘objects of lesser importance’, i.e. antiquities.

³²⁹ 有吳中一士大夫好畫而裝背以舊古爲辨。仍必以名畫記差古人名。嘗得一七元題云梁元帝畫也。又得一伏羲畫卦象題云史皇畫也。問所自，答云：得於其孫了。不知軒轅孫，史皇孫也。若是史皇孫，必於戾園得之。其他畫稱是。嘗見余家顧凱之維摩，更不論筆法，便云：若如此近世畫，甚易得。顧侍史曰：明日教胡常賣尋兩本。後數日果有兩凡俗本，即題曰顧凱之維摩，陸探微維摩。... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 49).

their age solely on the basis of the mounting. These comments show that Mi Fu expected others to evaluate paintings on the basis of their brushwork (as he himself did) and that he was well aware of the problems with forging historical mountings and other technical aspects of antique paintings.³³⁰ Moreover, as this section aptly documents, he was always suspicious when it came to the discussion of the paintings of high antiquity such as the alleged works of the legendary inventor of Chinese script Cang Jie or the paintings of the period of division, ascribed for instance to the artist-emperor Yuan of the Liang dynasty. As a truly devoted collector, Mi Fu had a fairly good notion of the few really ancient masterpieces in the collections of his contemporaries and was able to describe their subject, composition and style from memory. Several paragraphs in *Huashi*, including this one, record his comparisons of the ancient paintings he knew by heart with the works he was presently dealing with.

Another lengthy paragraph describes paintings from the collections of three famous connoisseurs active in the Jiayou 嘉祐 era (1052–1062), which Mi Fu saw and evaluated as falsely attributed to old masters of renown:

“During the Jiayou era, there were three collectors named Yang Bao, Shao Bi and Shi Yangxiu who were enamored [with painting] and collected it by any means.

Afterwards, I got the opportunity to see their paintings. Those of Mr. Shi fell short of excellence; Mr. Yang used to stamp his paintings with the seal reading ‘Five dukes in four generations’, but there was not even one good painting [in his collection]. Shao’s [paintings were stamped with] seals skillfully inscribed with characters in the seal script, their sides rather protruding and high. The paintings roughly resembling those from Jiangnan were all signed in the name of Xu Xi. Paintings originating from the area of Shu that depicted the heavenly constellations and various deities were signed as

³³⁰ For more details on this topic, see above section III.3.2.

works of Yan Liben, Wang Wei or Han Huang 韓滉 (723–787). That’s all so ridiculous! ...”³³¹

We see again that those were mostly paintings executed in the period of Five Dynasties (i.e. in the era directly preceding the Song dynasty) in the areas of Jiangnan or Shu, which were according to Mi Fu abundant in the Northern Song dynasty collections. On the basis of their subject matter or a few formal features, they were often ascribed to famous masters of Tang and earlier periods. In cases of disclosures very much like these, Mi Fu usually points to the blatant simplifications in the process of attributing the paintings to the masters in question and ends with a derisive exclamation that such a behavior is highly ridiculous.

As for the few old paintings Mi Fu found truly authentic and to his liking, he was able to review their stylistic and compositional details from memory even many years after he had viewed them, as we saw in the case of Bi Hong’s landscape described in the very last paragraph of *Huashi*.³³² Some of them, and even more so some pieces of calligraphy in Mi Fu’s possession, as we know, were so admired by him that he named his studio in their honor. This, again, is a feature perfectly befitting a connoisseur of his kind, later emulated by many of his followers including Dong Qichang.

³³¹ 嘉祐中三人收畫，楊褒，邵必，石揚休皆酷好，竭力收。後余閱三家畫。石氏差優，楊以四世五公字印號之，無一軸佳者。邵印多巧篆字，其旁大略標位高。略似江南畫，即題曰：徐熙。蜀畫星神，便題曰：閻立本，王維，韓滉。皆可絕倒。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 55).

³³² For a translation of its initial sentences see note 239, for further details see also section III.4.2.3 dealing with Mi Fu’s comments on Wang Wei.

IV. The confrontation of Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's painting theory

In chapter IV of the present thesis, I will try to look at what we have learned about Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's texts on painting from an overall perspective and compare the texts of the two writers. The stance the whole work takes is a retrospective one, i.e. it is trying to find out what the relationship of the writings of the late Ming dynasty artist and theoretician Dong Qichang was to his Song dynasty predecessor Mi Fu and his way of formulating the history of painting. The discussion is therefore arranged from the more recent topics, i.e. those present in the texts of Dong Qichang, to the older ones, i.e. Mi Fu's. This perspective will be retained in the final chapter, too. I will try to relate aspects and details of Dong Qichang's texts on painting to those identified in Mi Fu's text and look for similarities and differences, possible adoptions and rejections of older practices etc. Besides discovering interesting parallels and similarities in the general attitude as well as detailed practices of the two theorists, I will try to describe the way in which the construction of the "history of painting" in the late Ming period was inspired by, directly copied or changed from that under the late Northern Song dynasty.

IV.1 Dong Qichang and Mi Fu – the personages

It has been suggested many times that Dong Qichang as a great artist, art-historian and connoisseur emulated different historical figures and that one of them was Mi Fu of late Northern Song dynasty. This is clearly substantiated by Dong's own testimonies voiced in his texts such as *Huazhi* or *Huachanshi suibi* and by the general impression his career and his artistic legacy makes on those interested in his life and work. The closeness of these two artists is, however, in no source available to me elaborated upon in greater detail. In this place,

I will therefore make a short summary of the aspects in which Dong Qichang and Mi Fu can be perceived as similar to each other and in which they differed. It will be also interesting to see which of these proximities and differences can be documented by the evidence found in their respective theoretical treatises.

Even a quick glimpse on the general biographies³³³ of the two men can convince the reader that their lives and careers were full of analogous events and situations, even though they of course differed in details conditioned by the historical situations they lived in. Both Dong and Mi came from families that couldn't boast of many generations of ancestors serving in official positions and both belonged to the first couple of generations in which the official titles and prestigious positions were finally attained. Both Dong and Mi are reported to have been very studious and systematic in their pursuits of official recognition and artistic excellence despite the relatively modest status of their families. Dong Qichang attained the respected title of *jinshi* and held a long series of official positions in the capital as well as in the provinces, while Mi Fu never sat for the state examinations and received his first appointment upon a recommendation under the "privilege system" (*yinbu* 蔭補). It was, however, followed by a similarly impressive series of posts in different places, both favorable positions in the capital as well as appointments perceived as exile in the border regions of Chinese territory. Due to their official duties, both Dong and Mi often traveled long distances, gaining thus the opportunity to become acquainted with scholars and artists residing in different parts of the country and to see their own works of art as well as their collections. Thanks to this, Dong Qichang and Mi Fu both had an intimate knowledge of a large number of ancient and contemporary artworks extant in their times, scattered all over the Chinese territory. Besides, as lovers of landscape, they could contemplate different kinds of landscape sceneries during these journeys (many of which had been carried out aboard a ship) and these

³³³ Wu (1954), Riely (1992), Weng Fanggang (1855), and Sturman (1997).

experiences helped to form their attitude towards landscape both as a subject of painting and as an object of appreciation in the painting of others.

Little information on their actual study of artistic disciplines such as calligraphy and painting survive, but it is obvious that both Dong and Mi mastered a large range of techniques and were acquainted with styles of numerous old masters. This attitude was quite exceptional in the master-oriented tradition of artistic study throughout the long history of Chinese art and started to change slowly only in the 20th century.³³⁴ On the one hand, they could thus experiment in their own work with different historical styles and techniques before arriving at their own unique solution, while on the other hand they could use this knowledge in the process of evaluating and collecting artworks. The record of these activities is the main subject of the theoretical treatises by Dong Qichang and Mi Fu that are the focus of our attention here. The collections of painting and calligraphy amassed by both of these artists were regarded as belonging to the most important private collections of their times and included works treasured as rare old masterpieces. It is significant in our context that there were even artworks that were subsequently part of the collection of both artists, and also that purported paintings by Mi Fu were part of Dong Qichang's holdings and played a vital role in the formation of Dong's own approach toward artistic practice and collecting of art.

A minor, yet interesting parallel can be seen in the fact that both collectors lost in one part of their life or another significant portion of their collection. The issue of elusiveness of such material pleasures as art collecting and related activities consequently represents an interesting topic associated with their pondering over the artistic past and their life philosophy. Their attachment to art and their willingness to pay large sums for rare artworks were, however, in both cases regarded as extreme by their contemporaries and were subject to

³³⁴ For a reference to such a change in the attitude of different masters of 20th-century Chinese ink painting, see Pejčochová (2008: 17–19 and 339).

severe criticism in times of the artists' fall into disfavor.³³⁵ Both were thus in dependence on circumstances at one time admired for their ability to amass a large collection of rare masterpieces, and hated as greedy egoists who lacked the basic Confucian virtue of modesty at another.

It is also worth our attention that Dong Qichang and Mi Fu regarded calligraphy as primary and more significant than painting, which is an attitude common among Chinese literati but often underestimated in Western scholarship, and their writings mirror this situation quite clearly. The introductory part of Dong Qichang's *Huachanshi suibi* is dedicated to discussions on the handling of the brush and various brushstroke techniques that are primarily utilized in calligraphy, though they can be also used in painting. Extensive sections of *Huachanshi suibi* are further conceived as record and evaluation of the calligraphies the author saw and collected throughout his life. Only thereafter Dong Qichang moves to the discussion of paintings and their qualities and the portion of the text devoted to painting is significantly shorter. In Mi Fu's case, two separate texts conceived as art histories survive in his name, one entitled *History of Calligraphy (Shushi)* and the other *History of Painting (Huashi)*. I have already argued above that the prestige assigned to calligraphy under the Song dynasty was higher than that of painting and the status of the theories and histories of these disciplines was perceived analogously.³³⁶ Mi Fu's texts were apparently no exception to this practice and his self-stylization into a Jin dynasty scholar contains references mainly to calligraphy and its context under the Jin period. It is therefore not surprising that the writings on painting by both Dong Qichang and Mi Fu bear the traces of such treatment, which is largely manifest in their loose style and at times colloquial and expressive language. When

³³⁵ For the description of the riot against Dong Qichang and his family and the related documents accusing him of inhumanity and obsession with art see Riely (1992: 410, 416–417). Criticism of Mi Fu's obsession with art is the subject of an illuminating discussion by Egan (2006).

³³⁶ See above section III.1.

studying their texts on painting, we have therefore to bear in mind that these are private and leisurely comments upon the artworks and artistic issues their authors considered as worth attention. In this situation, inconsistencies as well as obscure and otherwise peculiar passages are bound to appear and were pointed out throughout my discussion of Dong's and Mi's treatises on painting in chapters II and III.

IV.2 Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's treatises – their form and contents

The form of the texts that constitute the basis of my study of Dong's and Mi's painting theory was described in detail in the introductory passages to chapters II and III. Here, I will therefore only briefly summarize the most important aspects that are significant for our understanding of the general approach of the two authors to the history of painting. The texts in question, as we saw above, are very similar as to their form and arrangement of material. While Dong Qichang's texts, of which the most important are *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, can be characterized as randomly organized and devoid of any signs of editing or final touch-up, Mi Fu's *Huashi* is furnished with a preface that presents the text as an authorized work and illuminates Mi Fu's motivation for writing it. In spite of this distinction, Dong's and Mi's texts themselves take up a very similar form of separate entries. Each entry usually deals with a specific work of art (most often a painting from Dong's or Mi's collection or one they saw in someone else's collection) or a specific painter and different aspects of his work. Other topics are touched upon by both authors from time to time as described above in the introductory passages to parts II and III, but these are limited in scope and of minor importance in relation to the subject of the present thesis. The entries of neither of the texts are edited with care and grouped together on the basis of their subject or masters discussed. Even though Mi Fu's text is reported to be a finished authorial work, it makes in fact a

similarly disorganized impression as the fragments of Dong Qichang's treatises. Although it shows a basic chronological arrangement into three chapters, mainly the entries of the last chapter are not organized in a chronological order and their dating is usually uncertain. In the texts of both authors, the entries pertaining to the main subject, i.e. painters of the past and their oeuvre, are freely intermingled with paragraphs dealing with other, often quite unrelated matters.

The texts of both authors can be described as typical exemplars of the *biji*, or “pen-notes” genre, which was widely used by the scholars-literati to jot down various thoughts and observations related to the topic of their interest.³³⁷ Fu Daiwie's (2007: 107–109) characteristic of the Song writings in this genre is very pertinent to both Mi Fu's and Dong Qichang's treatises:

“The growing number of *biji* jotted down or written in their leisure hours was one important form of cultivation for this new class, especially in developing their

³³⁷ For a highly illuminating discussion and classification of the *biji* genre under the Song dynasty, see Fu (2007). In Fu's approach, Mi Fu's *Huashi* and *Shushi* belong to the kind of *biji* that is oriented on one specific subject, in contrast to those dealing with various subjects and categories or those concerned mainly with short stories, anecdotes or biographies. It is interesting to note that Fu translates the word *shi* 史 (“history”) in the titles of Mi Fu's treatises as “genealogy”. Although I do not take over this translation in my thesis, it seems to be an apt characteristic of the nature of the texts under discussion here. This translation is substantiated by the nature of the content of most of the paragraphs in Mi Fu's *History of Calligraphy (Shushi)*, in which “Mi Fu was patient and persistent in describing almost every detail within every piece of calligraphy that he was able to get hold of: its existence, the characters that were written, its whereabouts, its provenance, the state of preservation or damage, and the ways (including paper, color, ink, glue, etc.) the calligraphy itself was made.” (Fu, 2007: 120) This characteristic is not entirely accurate with regard to Mi Fu's *Huashi*, which is conceived in a far less systematic and comprehensive manner. The translation “genealogy”, however, at least underlines the fact that the text is by no means a “history of painting” in the modern sense of the word. *Huashi* is also concerned primarily with descriptions of paintings Mi Fu saw and owned throughout his life and provides many details of the kind described above. Ebrey (2008: 97), for her part, translates the title “Painting Chronicles”. Although she does not provide a detailed explanation of her choice, its closeness to Fu's translation is obvious and also seems to be an interesting attempt to escape the toils of a verbatim translation. For my remark on the possible background of Mi Fu's usage of the word “history” (*shi*), see above, section III.2.

specific cultural sensitivities and forming their specific knowledge corpus. Most of these *biji* cover a wide range of affairs in the career life of the literati-officials who were keen on recording, commenting on, and cultivating their life world. ...

Questioning and reinterpreting the ancients was almost unheard of from the Han to Tang dynasties, yet it was now a strong practice within Song literati culture. This practice, in turn, also greatly contributed to the emergence and establishment of new areas of study in Song dynasty, such as evidential research, antiquarianism, epigraphy, philology, 'archaeology', and the like. As a correlate, Song evidential research into ancient texts, antiques, paintings and calligraphies, history of geography and other naturalistic interests, with its many related debates, would most likely find its ideal mode of inquiry and expression in the flourishing *biji*. As we know, most of these new fields could not readily be formulated as a sustained and elaborated theory, but were necessarily more fragmented, both because of the dispersed nature of these textual or naturalistic studies and because the material objects of these studies were fragmented, dislocated, and widely dispersed for literati to collect. Therefore, the practice of *biji* writing – jotting down notes intermittently into various categories – seems well suited to the nature of these new Song fields of study.”

The points on the disparate and intermittent nature of the *biji* jottings as well as on the absence of any coherent theory expressed in these texts are highly relevant to Mi's and Dong's texts on the history of painting. Though formulated in late Ming dynasty, Dong Qichang's writings that have not been edited and polished into a final shape in particular correspond with this description. In Mi Fu's *Huashi*, we have also encountered several passages seemingly unrelated to its main subject and various inconsistencies with regard to the time sequence and subject matter, which are hard to explain. These very aspects are legitimized by the general nature of the *biji* genre, described so aptly in the above quotation from Fu's article. Their appearance in the texts of both authors also documents the fact that, at

least in relation to writings on calligraphy and painting, the nature of the *biji* writings hasn't basically changed between Northern Song and late Ming dynasties. The heterogeneous and incoherent nature of the texts that are the subject of the present analysis is further complicated by the fact that, especially in Dong Qichang's case, the form in which they can be reconstructed today is obviously fragmentary and unfinished. This problem, however, as we saw from Fu's exposition, actually lies directly in the core of the *biji* genre as such. Most of the *biji* texts were being expanded and supplemented time and again by their authors throughout a long period of time and were usually not conceived as "finished" expositions on a specific problem. In the light of this fact, the fragmentary nature of the texts discussed here is thus not so pressing it might seem to be from the point of view of Western textual scholarship.

The contents of the discussed texts are also analogous, and Dong Qichang's direct inspiration with Mi Fu's treatise is obvious from statements recorded in his collected writings.³³⁸ The contents can be, in both cases, generally characterized as a record of paintings the author has seen in different stages of his life and a discussion of the qualities of artists the author considers important for the development of painting as he knows it.³³⁹ In Mi Fu's version, we can see a long succession of paragraphs,³⁴⁰ most of which describe a specific painting or paintings by a single artist, or compare works of a particular painter or painters. Dong Qichang's paragraphs in his texts on painting follow a very similar pattern and it is

³³⁸ See e.g. note 97.

³³⁹ The marginal topics occasionally discussed by both Mi Fu and Dong Qichang are left aside for the purpose of this summary.

³⁴⁰ Ledderose (1979: 53) maintains that Mi Fu was actually the first to record his observations in short separate entries about particular works, and calls these "colophons" instead of "paragraphs" or "entries". (For the entire quotation, see the introductory passage of chapter III.) Some of the paragraphs of Mi Fu's treatise could have indeed originally functioned as genuine colophons, i.e. they were inscribed on the works of art they pertain to. It was, however, not the case of all of them. The entries in Dong Qichang's texts are, too, often transcribed from real works of art, as their titles or introductory sentences reveal, and were thus primarily "colophons" in the strict sense of the word.

clear that Dong's texts can be classified as belonging to the same genre of "pen-notes" related to a specific topic. It is also likely that Dong was inspired by Mi Fu's text to a certain degree, although we do not know, which version of Mi's text Dong read, and as we saw above, it was demonstrably different from the one we have today. Dong's texts on painting are, however, not directly dependant on the structure or subject matter of Mi's *Huashi* and the relation of the two is but loose and abstract rather than direct or practical.

There is moreover a marked difference in the fact that Dong Qichang often links the comments that are flowing from his brush to one of **his own** paintings, and attests thus to an explicit connection between the works of the past and his own painting. In *Huazhi* or *Huachanshi suibi*, for instance, we can read remarks such as:

"... Li Cheng's painting style wouldn't be suitable [for depicting such scenery, and therefore] I had to use [the style of] the two Mis to transmit its spirit appropriately."³⁴¹

"The way in which Mi Fu painted his works can correct the devious manners of other painters. ... Although I [usually] don't imitate Mi Fu's paintings for the fear that he has fallen into the trap of oversimplification, I made this ink play in his manner. I didn't dare to make it completely devoid of the elements of Dong Yuan's and Juran's style. ..."³⁴²

These quotations demonstrate the way in which Dong Qichang links the discussion of a style or a particular work of an old master with a reference to his own painting. The relationship to the original painting or style can be both positive (he liked a style and thus emulated it in his

³⁴¹ For the original Chinese text see note 67.

³⁴² For the original Chinese text see note 76.

painting) and negative (he had reservations about a style and thus used another for his painting).

This seems to be fairly commonplace and only natural for a critic who is a painter himself, but, interestingly enough, we don't find such formulations in Mi Fu's *Huashi*. As a matter of fact, Mi Fu's own painting practice is referred to only once or twice throughout the whole treatise and these references are never directly connected to an existing style or a work of art. Mi Fu's genuine painting style is generally little known and the silence of his texts in this respect contributes greatly to its obscurity. Once we accept it as a fact and extend our notion of Mi Fu's "typical painting" to the portraits of Jin dynasty literati-sages, landscapes that constitute the background to figurative scenes, narrative paintings and the like, we realize that "Mi family paintings" full of wet dots and large areas of ink-wash are most likely a later construction of such Mi family style enthusiasts as Dong Qichang. From the opposite point of view, we can also assume that if Dong Qichang and his followers took Wang Wei and his reputed ink-wash painting as an icon of the Southern School of Painting despite its feeble foundation in reality, the construction of "Mi family painting" can be similarly idealized and unrelated to Mi Fu's genuine creative output.

Moreover, this distinction, which stands out very clearly once we look at the two texts side by side, can be viewed as one of the features of Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's respective approaches to the history of painting. Though by itself quite subtle to be made the basis of far-reaching conclusions, the explicit formulation (or the concealment) of the relationship between the paintings of the past and the artists' own painting activities can be regarded as an indicator of the degree of their own reflection of painting history.

Mi Fu as a Northern Song dynasty painter perceived verisimilitude and lifelikeness as an important value. The term "life-like" (*ru sheng* 如生) appears frequently in his descriptions of paintings in the genre of birds and flowers, while landscapes of vulgar and mediocre

painters are elsewhere described as “lacking in naturalness” (*wu ziran* 無自然). Dong Qichang, on the other hand, concentrated almost exclusively on the emulation of past models rather than picturing the real world. Although he utilizes the concept of *zhen* 真, “true” or “faithful”, it can apply to both, nature and a model painting. This distinction is, interestingly enough, also substantiated by the form their writings about the history of painting take up. Mi Fu’s entries are largely written from a more “objective” perspective as descriptions of the paintings themselves and their qualities. Dong Qichang’s references are, on the other hand, often conceived as descriptions of stylistic features of an old painting or an old master’s style that are somehow related to his own creative efforts. They are usually very subjective and personal in tone and make an impression that Dong’s own painting was the focus of his interest.

IV.3 Individual topics identified in Dong’s and Mi’s texts on painting

Different as they might be in the explicitness of the relationship between their own creative output and the paintings of the old masters they describe, Dong’s and Mi’s treatises are remarkably close to each other as far as some of the subjects discussed are concerned. In this section, I will therefore address different topics that can be found in the texts of both authors and thus offer themselves for a closer comparison. The most important of these are the advocating of the intrinsic value of painting and the problem of emulation of the works of the old masters. Further, in section IV.4, I will move on to the discussion of the perception of the history of painting as presented in Dong Qichang’s and Mi Fu’s texts.

IV.3.1 Arguments in favor of the intrinsic value and significance of painting

It was often the case that authors of histories and theoretical expositions on painting found it necessary to advocate its merit and innate qualities, which, as we saw, were even during the Song dynasty still demonstrably underestimated in comparison with calligraphy and other disciplines practiced by the literati of the day.³⁴³ Both, Dong Qichang and Mi Fu address the problem of merit of the painting practice in their texts and, curiously, both present similar arguments in favor of its intrinsic qualities. Dong Qichang quotes a poem by the early Ming dynasty painter Du Qiong, who writes that during the Jin and Tang dynasties, painting was sometimes underscored as a frivolous amusement unworthy of scholarly endeavors. Du Qiong, on the contrary, finds the creative process that makes things appear out of obscurity equivalent to other literati disciplines, for the reason that it is suitable to record the real appearance of things and convey the lofty ideals of its author. Directly following Du Qiong's verse is a quotation from a poem by the Song dynasty poet Chen Shidao. As I have shown earlier, Chen's line enriches the above arguments with the emphasis on elusiveness and finality of human existence, and thus adds to the feeling of urgency of the whole statement.

Mi Fu, too, cites an old poem and utilizes it to strengthen his own arguments. His quotation of Du Fu's verse illustrates the fact that the Confucian-minded poet lamented the actual superiority of artistic creation to virtuous deeds, when it comes to their permanence and ability to be transmitted to later generations. Mi Fu further offers his own explanation for this situation in a highly immodest and provocative tone, which is very different from Dong Qichang's calm and composed formulation. The use of a verse by a venerated poet to introduce the argument is thus analogous in both treatises, while the diction and tone differ significantly. It can be, however, observed that Dong doesn't hesitate to use similarly bold

³⁴³ See the opening part of the section III.1 above and particularly the arguments of Kohara (1995: 17) quoted there.

statements elsewhere, mainly in the passages dealing with the works of some painters of the past.

IV.3.2 The problem of authenticity of old paintings

Similarly as in case of the merit of painting, Dong's and Mi's treatises present remarkably similar attitudes towards the question of authenticity and copying of the old paintings extant in their times. The quotations from Dong Qichang's *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* translated in section II.2.3.4 exemplify Dong's sober and realistic approach as far as the reliability of the paintings attributed to the masters of "high antiquity" (*taigu zhi shang*) is concerned. On the basis of Dong's list of the masters of different painting genres, the "high antiquity" seems to comprise the Period of Division after the fall of the Han dynasty and probably also the Tang dynasty, for his examples of reliable paintings actually start with Five Dynasties painters. He was also well aware of the commonplace production of fakes, as he wrote:

"...The works of Song and Yuan masters are now all worth hundreds in gold. And if you make a small mistake, you can easily buy a fake. The painters of shallow skills get hold of the brush in the morning and mount the painting themselves in the evening. ..."³⁴⁴

On several other occasions, Dong refers to a painting having been wrongly attributed to a master of renown, while he changed the attribution to another painter. This is especially

³⁴⁴ For the original Chinese text see note 144.

interesting in the case of the reattribution to Wang Wei of a painting formerly ascribed to Li Sixun, which Dong saw in the collection of his teacher.³⁴⁵

On the other hand, we have plentiful documents of the fact that Dong Qichang sometimes relied more on his subjective deductions than on the evidence resulting from a careful analysis of the paintings he had really seen with his own eyes. Some of his generalizations are known to have been made before he really got in contact with a sufficient number of reliable works of the masters they pertain to. It is thus sometimes the case – and the discussion in chapter II provides the arguments for such a conclusion – that Dong’s theoretical statements diverge from the version of the history of Chinese painting modern scholarship has built up around the extant old artworks, although the influence of Dong’s concepts is directly acknowledged even by some of the contemporary (usually Chinese and Taiwanese) scholars.³⁴⁶

Some of the paintings Dong inscribed or described in his treatises as originals have recently been found to be later attributions executed in the style of the master in question, undermining thus partly our confidence in Dong’s connoisseurship. E.g. in the case of Dong Yuan, one of the painters Dong Qichang loved and emulated most in later decades of his career, more than 20 paintings by this master are recorded within the corpus of Dong Qichang’s writings and colophons.³⁴⁷ Those surviving to this day, however, are usually regarded by modern scholars as later works related to the assumed style of Dong Yuan each to a different degree. Cahill (1980: 47–49), for example, lists 27 paintings preserved in different world collections that are attributed to Dong Yuan, but none of them is believed to be authentic. Three or four of them can possibly be of an early date, but even those that carry inscriptions by Dong Qichang are most probably later works executed in the alleged style of

³⁴⁵ For the original quotation see note 103.

³⁴⁶ See note 1.

³⁴⁷ See Unverzagt (2007: 120) quoting Han (1991).

Dong Yuan.³⁴⁸ The same can be said of Wang Wei's paintings discussed in *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* that survive to this day.³⁴⁹

We can thus conclude that some passages of Dong Qichang's texts document the fact that he was a sober and quite practically-oriented connoisseur who was well aware of the problems of the art-market of his day. On the other hand, his theoretical passages, when tested against the present-day knowledge based on the extant old paintings, at times appear to be rather idealistic and unsubstantiated by the evidence of related pictorial documents.

Mi Fu proves to have a similarly sharp eye for judging paintings and painting styles of the past as Dong Qichang. He often warns readers of his *Huashi* that paintings of a certain master or a certain subject (e.g. paintings by Li Cheng or paintings of snowy mountains) are being forged so often that the majority extant in the collections of his day are fakes. Mi Fu is very precise in recording the numbers and at times also details of the style and content pertaining to the paintings by different masters, both genuine and forged in his opinion. These data, however, cannot be taken for absolutely reliable. The numbers given in different parts of the treatise at times contradict each other as they have probably been recorded in different times and/or under different conditions.

Mi Fu also exemplifies a thorough knowledge of paintings originating from the royal courts of the former Five Dynasties and points out repeatedly that works of court painters active there were widely circulated with forged names of the famous artist of the past. Numerous examples of Mi Fu's discovery of a name later inscribed on a painting by a different master or of his knowledge of a painting's attribution being intentionally falsified are recorded in *Huashi*. In an often quoted passage, he even laments that the general reason for this fact is that "The people of today like fakes and don't like originals, it is really

³⁴⁸ Cf. also Unverzagt (2007: 165–166).

³⁴⁹ See section II.2.3.2.

regrettable.” (*Jinren hao wei bu hao zhen, shi ren tanxi.* 今人好偽不好真, 使人歎息.)³⁵⁰ The connotation of this complaint comes very close to the general meaning of Dong Qichang’s passage on the ambitions of some people to acquire paintings by the masters of the “high antiquity”. They are, in Dong’s words, “not only cheating other people, but mainly cheating themselves” when they yield to the temptation to buy paintings of spurious authenticity.

In Mi Fu’s case, it is unfortunately very difficult to make any conclusions about the accuracy of his statements upon authenticity and possible attributions of the artworks he describes. Unlike from Dong Qichang’s time, the vast majority of the paintings Mi Fu describes cannot be located in the present-day collections or related to artworks known today. The overall scarcity of abstract passages and intricately built arguments in Mi Fu’s text nonetheless makes it seem to be less susceptible to the problem of idealization of the past, which can be found in Dong Qichang’s treatises. The emphasis on accuracy when enumerating paintings of different masters or genres and on the technical details related to the time and conditions of their creation makes Mi Fu’s text sound quite trustworthy as far as his judgments on the problems of authenticity are concerned. We have, however, no way to find out the degree of accuracy of his judgments in every individual case he discusses in *Huashi*, as very few paintings from the Song period and earlier survive today.

IV.4 The construction of the “history of painting”

IV.4.1 Grouping and lineages of painters

The elaboration upon the so called Theory of Northern and Southern Schools is usually regarded as one of Dong Qichang’s main contributions in the fields of history and

³⁵⁰ For the quotation of the whole paragraph where this sentence appears, see below note 426.

theory of Chinese painting. It can be therefore interesting to start this section with examining the paragraphs from his texts that pertain to this theory against similar parts of Mi Fu's treatise and see if there are any analogies or differences. I have already pointed out above that Dong was not the first writer to classify the painters of the past into two opposing lineages, one concentrating mostly on monochrome painting executed in the ink-wash technique and the other on colorful images executed in the blue-and-green painting technique. Modern scholars identified several late Yuan and early Ming dynasty writers who introduced similar concepts in their texts and might have thus provided Dong with direct inspiration when writing his own paragraphs, where painters of the past are classified and grouped in two opposite lineages.³⁵¹ In this place, however, I will try to find out if similar passages can be located as early as in the late Northern Song dynasty treatise written by Mi Fu. If so, I will look more closely at their possible relation to Dong Qichang's statements. In other words, I will try to characterize Mi Fu's attempts to group and classify painters of the past and look for possible parallels or differences with the approach of Dong Qichang several centuries later.

IV.4.1.1 Dong Qichang's lineages of painters

First of all, let me summarize once again the crucial paragraphs of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* (including the one that is, as we have seen, repeated in *Huashuo*) and highlight Dong's main arguments related to the Two Schools Theory that can be extracted from these passages. The most notorious entries of Dong Qichang's texts read as follows:

“The literati painting (*wenren zhi hua*) begins with Wang Wei. Afterwards, Dong Yuan, Juran, Li Cheng and Fan Kuan were his direct followers. Li Gonglin, Wang

³⁵¹ For the discussion of Dong's possible predecessors with regard to this theory, see the opening passage of chapter II and note 32.

Shen, Mi Fu and Mi Youren all emulated Dong Yuan and Juran. And the Four great masters of the Yuan dynasty, Huang Gongwang, Wang Meng, Ni Zan and Wu Zhen are their true followers. Wen Zhengming and Shen Zhou of our dynasty are also connected with them. As for Ma Yuan, Xia Gui, Li Tang and Liu Songnian, they are all followers of General Li Sixun. It's nothing good for us to study."³⁵²

“In the teaching of *chan*, two schools, the Northern and the Southern, separated during the Tang dynasty. The Northern and Southern Schools of painting also separated in the time of the Tang dynasty. But their representatives weren't northerners or southerners. The [name] Northern School points to the colorful landscapes of Li Sixun and Li Zhaodao. It was further transmitted into the painting of the Song masters Zhao Gan, Zhao Boju, Zhao Bosu and all the way to the generation of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. The Southern School, on the other hand, starts with Wang Wei, who used washes of light ink and transformed the way of painting the outlines and structural strokes. It was transmitted to Zhang Zao 張璪 (Tang dynasty), Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Juran, Guo Zhongshu, Mi Fu and Mi Youren and all the way to the Four great masters of the Yuan dynasty. It was much like after the Sixth Patriarch, when Maju's 馬駒 (709–788), Yunmen's 云門 (864–909) and Linji's 臨濟 (?–867) descendants flourished, while the Northern School [of *chan*] weakened.”³⁵³

There are, however, other entries that touch upon the grouping or classification of painters of the past and their achievements. In some cases, Dong Qichang classifies the

³⁵² For the original Chinese text see note 99.

³⁵³ 禪家有南北二宗唐時始分。畫之南北二宗亦唐時始分也。但其人非南北耳。北宗則李思訓父子著色山水。流傳而為宋之趙幹，趙伯駒，伯驪以至馬，夏輩。南宗則王摩詰始。用渲淡，一變鉤斫之法。其傳為張璪，荆，關，董，巨，郭忠恕，米家父子，以至元之四大家。亦如六祖之後，有馬駒，云門，臨濟兒孫之盛，而北宗微矣。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3).

painters who excelled in painting of a specific topic (e.g. the cloudy mountains), or used a common painting technique, into one group and even accords them with a common designation (e.g. “the scholar painters”, *shidafu hua*):

“The scholar painters should exhaust the skill and encompass beauty, study and befriend the Creation (*zaohua*). They [must] know [how to] paint Wang Wei and afterwards, they will master Wang Qia with his splashed ink. They [must] know [how to] paint Li Cheng and afterwards, they will master the cloudy mountains of the two Mis. That is enough to seal the mouths of professional painters and to linger in the ears of connoisseurs.”³⁵⁴

“Song dynasty painting after Dong Yuan and Juran got rid of excessive fanciness and overelaborated details and was faithful to the resemblance of the Jiangnan nature. For the depictions of the seaside areas, however, it is necessary to use [the style of] General Li Sixun, while for depicting the groups of travelers crossing the northern mountains, it is necessary to use [the style of] Li Tang. Guo Xi, Zhu Rui and Huang Gongwang specialized in paintings of Mount Haiyu. Wang Meng painted the sceneries in Tiaozha, while Song Di of the Song dynasty specialized in depicting the Xiao and Xiang rivers. Each painter followed what he saw, none of them mixed up [the types of sceneries in their painting].”³⁵⁵

“... That’s why I say: ‘The masters of landscape painting were Li Cheng and Fan Kuan, of trees and fruit Zhao Chang and Wang You, of flowers, bamboo and the feathered creatures Xu Xi, Huang Quan and Cui Shunzhi, of horses Han Gan and Li Gonglin, of buffalos the Daoist monks Li Guizhen and Fan ? (unidentified), of

³⁵⁴ For the original Chinese text see note 65.

³⁵⁵ For the original Chinese text see note 128.

Buddhist images Sun Zhihui, of deities and demons Shike, of cats He Zunshi and of dogs Zhou Zhao. All these painters have already achieved skill and excellence [in their respective genres]. Those literati who have their masterpieces in their collections have paid thousands in gold for them. Why then look for the works of the high antiquity, which cannot be found anymore?”³⁵⁶

“The paintings by Zhao Lingrang, Zhao Boju and Zhao Mengfu, when perceived as a group, were beautiful but not sweet. The paintings by Dong Yuan, Mi Fu and Gao Kegong, when perceived as a group, were unrestrained but had a good technique. The approaches of these two lineages are like two wings of a bird. I have been delving into them for a long time.”³⁵⁷

“During my stay in Beijing, in a letter to Chen Jiru I wrote: ‘The [painters] I want to study are Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Juran and Li Cheng. But genuine paintings by these five masters can only very rarely be found. ...’³⁵⁸

We can see that in some paragraphs, Dong further extols the painters of the so called Southern lineage and describes their work as drawing directly on the mystical process of Creation. In others, he reviews the characteristics of the painting styles and themes common in the works of some artists. These might include hints on a kind of “period style”, as in the statement where the Five Dynasties landscape painters are credited with the achievement of getting rid of excessive elaboration and fanciness. In some instances, Dong adopts the form of a straightforward description, as for example when enumerating the painters representative of individual painting genres. In others, the discussion again acquires the dialectical form

³⁵⁶ For the original Chinese text see note 146.

³⁵⁷ For the original Chinese text see note 92.

³⁵⁸ For the original Chinese text see note 97.

characteristic of the paragraphs pertaining to the Two Schools Theory. In this case, however, the non-literati lineage is sometimes simply juxtaposed with that of the literati painters, while Dong discusses their strong points in quite an impartial way. In other paragraphs still, Dong even enumerates the painters whose works are of special interest to him personally and might have served as models for his own painting.

One entry describes the mastery of Dong's favorite Song dynasty painter Zhao Lingrang and links it with the work of Yuan dynasty masters Wang Meng and Ni Zan, while opposing it with the achievements of the Southern Song dynasty painters Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. These two masters are, as we know, customarily included in the Northern School of painting. This entry is also extremely interesting as for its playful tone and undisguised nonconformity that comes close to Mi Fu's way of presenting his ideas e.g. in the preface to *Huashi*. It thus further illustrates the nature of Dong's interest in the art of some old masters and shows that in case of a painter he admired most, he was even able to directly deny requirements he insisted upon elsewhere as the main prerequisites of a good painting:

“The critics of the past found the painting of Zhao Lingrang even better than storing thousands of volumes of books in your breast. [Even more surprisingly,] Zhao as a member of the Song imperial family didn't have the opportunity to travel extensively. Every time he got hold of a new scene, he pinned it with his eyes and said: 'I have just returned from climbing a hill.' He hasn't traveled tens of thousands miles, hasn't read tens of thousands of books, didn't know Du Fu's poems, and still, the Dao of painting was there! The generation of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui is no match for the Four Great Masters of the Yuan dynasty. When you see

the painting [on the subject of] ‘Reminiscences of Mount Gusu’ (*Gusu huaigu* 姑蘇懷古) by Wang Meng and Ni Zan, you will learn about it.”³⁵⁹

Some of the entries of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* describe the lineages of painters tight together with the teacher – student relationship. It has to be noted, of course, that the relationship was usually not a personal one as we might assume from the term “to study (with) someone” (*shi* 師), but mostly an indirect one. It usually points to the practice of copying and emulating the presumed works of one’s “teacher” or predecessor without ever meeting him in person. In one paragraph of *Huazhi*, Dong Qichang argues:

³⁵⁹ 昔人評大年畫，謂得胸中著千卷書更佳。又大年以宋宗室不得遠游。每得一新境，輒目之曰：‘又是上陵回也’。不行萬里路，不讀萬卷書，看不得杜詩，畫道亦爾。馬遠，夏圭輩不及元季四大家。觀王叔明，倪雲林‘姑蘇懷古’時可知。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 2). Mount Gusu 姑蘇山 can be found in today’s city of Suzhou. It is said to have been the site, where once stood a famous building constructed during the Spring and Autumn period (770–476 B.C.) and poets of later times liked to celebrate it in their poems. I was, however, unable to find any paintings by the Yuan dynasty literati painters on this topic.

This passage is extremely interesting also for the reason that it appears again in *Huachanshi suibi* in quite a different wording. Though the general meaning is similar to that of the *Huazhi* entry quoted here, in the *Huachanshi suibi* it is enriched with the explanation why Zhao’s style is perfect even though his background doesn’t really comply with Dong’s requirements on the literati artistic education (i.e. “to read tens of thousands of books, to travel tens of thousands miles” etc.). In the *Huachanshi suibi* passage, Dong states that it is precisely because the true Dao of painting is present when the painter has the whole universe within his hand (*Hua zhi dao, suo wei yuzhou zai hu shou zhe*. 畫之道，所謂宇宙在乎手者). Further, Dong links this passage with the topic of longevity, which I discussed above in the opening passages of chapter II. The entry closes with the point that those of Yuan dynasty painters whose painting style was lofty and free of elaboration enjoyed long life, while those who painted detailed and colorful paintings were not that long-lived. For that reason and also because the wording of the opening part speaking of Zhao Lingrang does not fit perfectly into the context of the whole argument, it seems that the *Huachanshi suibi* passage might have been compiled out of two separate paragraphs found in *Huazhi*. Anyway, I prefer to quote the version recorded in *Huazhi*, for it represents the idea of the transmission of one’s style to his followers and includes the opposition between the Yuan dynasty scholar painters and the Southern Song dynasty painters.

“... The masters of this dynasty regard the art of Zhao Mengfu as belonging to the divine class. There is a disagreement between those, who think that Ni Zan followed Zhao Mengfu and those, who think that he followed Gao Kegong. It is [further complicated by the fact that] they haven’t seen original works by Gao Kegong. I was able to obtain the painting called *The Village of Dayao* (*Dayao cun tu* 大姚村圖), which is a genuine work by Gao Kegong. Clouds and mist are depicted here with great subtlety and also the expression and rhythm [of the painting] are both rendered in a finished and superior way (*ge yun ju chao* 格韻俱超). It’s something Huang Gongwang and Wang Meng cannot realize even in a dream. I made this painting as an imitation of that picture.”³⁶⁰

This is one of the more complicated records of Dong’s notion of the master-pupil relationship between some of the painters of the past. It shows, however, the way in which he used the evidence of surviving paintings by these masters to solve the problems that emerged in the process of classifying the painters into groups or lineages allegedly linked together by similar painting style. As we can see here, Dong states that ambiguity exists as to the problem whether Ni Zan emulated in his painting the Yuan dynasty master Zhao Mengfu, who was in Dong’s times still regarded as belonging to the supreme class of “divine” painters, or whether he was rather the follower of Gao Kegong. Dong maintains that the argument is caused mainly by the fact that most people haven’t had the opportunity to see genuine works by Gao and thus, we can conjecture, cannot compare what they know about Ni Zan’s painting with them. Dong, however, owns what he thinks is one of a rare masterpieces by the Yuan painter Gao Kegong, the painting called *The Dayao Village*. On the basis of the exceptional

³⁶⁰ ... 勝國名手以趙吳興爲神品, 而雲林以鷗波, 房山所稱許者, 或有異同. 此繇未見房山真跡耳. 余得“大姚村圖”, 乃高尚書真跡. 煙雲淡蕩, 格韻俱超, 果非子久, 山樵所能夢見也. 爲此圖以倣之. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 6).

expression and rhythm present in this work, Dong assumes that he is able to judge the painting style of this master and compare it with the works of others, mainly Ni Zan in this case.

We can see the typical method of Dong Qichang's argumentation at work here: first, he mentions what is generally known about a style of a certain master, then expounds the questionable nature of the arguments usually used and illustrates his own superiority in judging the paintings of the past based on his direct experience with the extant masterpieces. The passage closes in quite a different way than we would possibly expect – it doesn't come back to saying that Ni Zan was definitely a follower of Gao Kegong because their painting styles are so close to each other. But that's what is implied and corroborated by many other passages of Dong's texts, and thus not necessary to be repeated anymore. Instead, Dong mentions the opposite group of painters – in this case Huang Gongwang and Wang Meng, who, although also belonging to the Four Great Masters of the Yuan Dynasty, represent Ni Zan's opposites when it comes to the emulation of Mi Fu's and Gao Kegong's painting style. He thus clearly defines the lineage Mi Fu – Gao Kegong – Ni Zan that, to his knowledge, specialized mainly in paintings of the cloudy mountains, and closes with the note that he himself executed a painting (to which this whole entry might have been attached as a colophon) in the same style, ranking himself alongside these masters of the past.³⁶¹

³⁶¹ The whole issue is further complicated by the fact that in one of the entries of *Huachanshi suibi*, entitled “Inscribing Dong Yuan's painting” (*Ti Dong Beiyuan hua* 題董北苑畫), the painting called *The Dayao Village* in Dong's collection is attributed to Mi Youren. (“*Yu jia you Hu'er Dayao cun tu*. 余家有虎兒大姚村圖.” See *Huachanshi suibi*, vol. 2: “Inscriptions on Dong's own paintings”). It is possible that there were two paintings of the same title, which is, though, not very plausible. It is much more likely that Dong made a mistake here and attributed the painting erroneously to two different painters when writing the entries at two different times. In any case, both alternatives illustrate in an interesting way Dong's idea of the closeness of the Mi family painting style and the style of the Yuan dynasty painter Gao Kegong. Moreover, the painting of the *Dayao Village* is further described as fitting perfectly into the tradition of Dong Yuan's painting style. In the context outlined above, it is even more illuminating to find this unintentional evidence for Dong's classification of Dong Yuan, the two Mis, Gao Kegong and Ni Zan into one lineage at the end of which he would like to place himself.

IV.4.1.2 Mi Fu's lineages of painters

Now, let's have a look at Mi Fu's *Huashi* to see whether similar attempts to group or classify painters can be identified. It has to be stressed right at the beginning that Mi Fu's treatise is mainly a record of paintings that he has seen throughout his life, one that scholars even prefer to call a "genealogy" or a "chronicle" of painting.³⁶² It is highly practically-oriented and abstract passages elaborating on the classification of painters according to their styles or subjects depicted are scarce. A few passages that contain germs of what might be seen as classification of painters can be, though, extracted from the descriptions of individual paintings. Several types of these can be identified after close reading of Mi Fu's text, and broken up into the categories outlined below.

Some of the entries contain a reference to the stylistic affiliation of the author of the painting described to an older master or predecessor:

"Fan Kuan studied [the style of] Jing Hao. ..."³⁶³

"Wang Shen studied Li Cheng's method of applying brushstrokes, but he painted them in gold and green pigment. ... He also painted monochrome [landscapes in] flat distance in Li Cheng's style."³⁶⁴

The second quotation documents that Mi Fu doesn't hesitate to be quite specific as to the details of the stylistic relationship between the painters in question such as the method of applying brushstrokes, the use of color etc. We have seen above in section III.3.1 that Mi Fu

³⁶² For discussion related to the translation of the title of Mi Fu's treatise, see note 337.

³⁶³ For the original Chinese text see note 241.

³⁶⁴ For the original Chinese text see note 242.

sometimes touches upon the characteristics of period styles or features of paintings in the style of some of the old masters. This record of stylistic details of the works by painters linked with the teacher – pupil relationship can thus be perceived as motivated by the very attention to the aspects of the works in question that are central for a connoisseur when solving the problems of authorship, dating and authenticity. In some instances, Mi Fu even provides a whole sequence of arguments that underlie his verdict on the authenticity and dating of a certain painting.³⁶⁵ In this place, it is nevertheless important that he sometimes records the names of painters who in his opinion shared a similar painting style and, on one occasion, even elaborates on the process of the transmission of a style throughout a considerable period of time, namely from the Jin dynasty all the way up to his present day.

“The painting of *Vimalakirti in a Patched Robe* (*Weimo bai bu* 維摩百補) by Gu Kaizhi in the public repository in Yingzhou is [actually] a copy by the Tang [poet and painter] Du Mu 杜牧 (803–852) that has been handed down all the way to the [collection] of the Yingzhou prefect. It remained in the storehouse all the time, never having been taken away [into another collection]. It is picturesque and impressive. It doesn’t bear the least resemblance to the [paintings] preserved in the literati collections [of our day], which are mostly the production of artisans from Jingxi. The landscape and forests painted on the screen [of the *Vimalakirti* picture] are marvelous and antique, the structural brushstrokes on the slopes and banks resemble those of Dong Yuan. From this we can see that [the painting style] labeled as ‘Southern’ was probably the same already since Gu Kaizhi. Through the Sui, Tang and Southern Tang dynasties all the way to Juran, it didn’t change. Even today, Mr. Xie from Chizhou still paints in this style. The Sui dynasty painting *Jinling* (*Jinling tu* 金陵圖) that I acquired from the grandson of Minister Bi is also in this style. Therefore, I inscribed that Gu Kaizhi

³⁶⁵ See the quotation in note 241.

painting with these words: ‘Mi Fu examined [this painting] and concludes that it is the work of Du Mu’ and affixed the seal ‘*Bofa si yin*’³⁶⁶ to it.”³⁶⁷

As we have already noticed when commenting on other illuminating discussions Mi Fu presents in his *Huashi*, the passage records observations precious from the art-historical point of view on the possible relationship of the later much praised landscape styles of the Five Dynasties masters Dong Yuan and Juran to the early landscapes of Gu Kaizhi. Mi Fu states here that although the copy of Gu Kaizhi’s painting by Du Mu features above all the figure of Vimalakirti, it depicts also a screen decorated with a painting of landscape that can be traced as a possible antecedent for the paintings of the southern masters such as Dong Yuan and Juran. He adds the information that it is mainly the overall atmosphere (“the landscape is marvelous and antique”) and the painting technique of the structural brushstrokes that brings the depiction of the landscape in the Vimalakirti picture close to the works of the later masters.³⁶⁸ Besides, it can be added in this place, that this passage represents one of the most distinctive examples of Mi Fu’s attention to the transmission of the stylistic features between

³⁶⁶ Kohara (2005: 115) explains the meaning of the seal inscription as a title of an office Mi Fu held in the year 1103. According to *The Official History of the Song Dynasty*, *Bofa si* 撥發司 was a designation of an office supervising the river transportation of food into the capital Kaifeng during the Song dynasty. Mi Fu reportedly served as a transport supervisor on the river Cai 蔡河.

³⁶⁷ 穎州公庫顧凱之維摩百補是唐杜牧之摹寄穎守本者，置在齋龕不攜去。精彩照人，前後士大夫家所傳，無一毫似，蓋京西工拙。其屏風上山水林木奇古，坡岸皴如董源。乃知人稱江南，蓋自顧以來皆一樣。隋唐及南唐至巨然不移。至今池州謝氏亦作此體。余得隋畫金陵圖於畢相孫，亦同此體。余因題其顧畫幅上云：米芾審定是杜牧之本。仍以撥發司印印之。...Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 55–56).

³⁶⁸ It should be noted that the term “southern masters” (or, exactly speaking, “the so called masters from Jiangnan, *ren cheng Jiangnan* 人稱江南”) in this place really denominates the painters from the south active in the period of the Five Dynasties and early Song dynasty (mainly Dong Yuan and Juran), who are in the histories of Chinese painting traditionally opposed with painters from the north (mainly Guan Tong and Fan Kuan, sometimes also Guo Xi and Li Cheng). It has therefore nothing to do with Dong Qichang’s classification of the painters into the Northern and Southern lineage, which was, as we saw, not based on the geographical criterion.

masters of different periods. He thus constructs a lineage, although not theoretically defined or named with a common term, that is tight together with the criterion of style.

We have also observed that Mi Fu's descriptions of the paintings that he has come across during his career of a connoisseur and collector are often full of technical details pertaining to the quality of silk, brush or ink used by individual masters of different periods. These, too, can be regarded as classifications of a kind, for, as we know, these technical aspects were extremely important for Mi Fu when it comes to the problems of authenticity and dating.

“Ancient paintings up to the beginning of the Tang dynasty all used unsized silk. From the time of Wu Daozi, Zhou Fang and Han Gan onwards, [the silk was] sized, half-sized, covered with powder or hammered like a silver slab. That's why their figures all colorfully and vividly appeared from underneath the brush. ...”³⁶⁹

In some paragraphs, Mi Fu enumerates the names of painters usually perceived as related to each other due to their orientation on similar painting subjects. Mi Fu himself, however, shows a very thoughtful and critical attitude towards these “popular classifications”. He provides sound arguments, which interestingly include also a hint to the matching of painting and poetry, for every instance of his own inclusion of a specific painter or painting into the conventional pattern of classification. His records are sometimes motivated purely by personal interests of a connoisseur, while in other passages we can even come across recommendations for consumers and ordinary collectors as to whose paintings are suitable for a certain type of display or a specific occasion.

³⁶⁹ For the original Chinese text see note 243.

“The vulgar of the world, when they see a [painting of a] horse, they [usually] ascribe it to Cao Ba, Han Gan or Wei Yan. If they see a painting of a buffalo, they [usually] ascribe it to Han Huang or Dai Song. This is ridiculous. The masters of the Tang dynasty were numerous, [and thus the author of a specific work of art] is not easy to ascertain. Only in the collection of Xue Shaopeng, whose courtesy name is Daozu, there is a painting called *Nine Horses* (*Jiu ma tu* 九馬圖) that matches Du Fu’s poem and is a genuine work of Cao Ba. The remaining Tang paintings by far do not resemble [the style of their purported authors]. In Jinling, there is another [genuine] Tang painting of a buffalo by Han Huang. The collectors of today all ascribe it to Dai Song, but it is not skinny enough [to be Dai Song’s work].”³⁷⁰

“Clearly discernible and easy to authenticate are the figure paintings by Gu Kaizhi, Lu Tanwei, Wu Daozi and Zhou Fang; the flowers, bamboos and birds by Teng Changyou, Bian Luan, Xu Xi, Tang Xiya and Zhu Mengsong; and the landscapes by Jing Hao, Li Cheng, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Juran and Liu daoshi. The buffalos by Dai Song, horses by Cao Ba and Han Gan and horses by Wei Yan are difficult to authenticate for they closely resemble each other. The paintings of contemporary masters are unworthy of a lengthy discussion. If you come over [a painting] by Zhao Chang, Wang You, Tan Hong or the like, you can use it to cover a wall. If not, it doesn’t make a difference anyway. [But paintings of] Cheng Dan, Cui Bai, Hou Feng, Ma Fen, Zhang Zifang or the like can only spoil your walls. In the tearooms and wine houses, Zhou Yue’s and Zhong Yi’s inscriptions in draft script can be hung, but those are beyond the present discussion. If you come across ancient anonymous paintings that are difficult to classify, they can also prove to be good friends.”³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ 世俗見馬，即命爲曹，韓，韋，見牛即命爲韓滉，戴嵩，甚可笑。唐名手眾，未易定。惟薛道綽紹彭家“九馬圖”合杜甫詩，是真曹筆。餘唐人大抵不相遠也。又金陵有唐人韓滉畫牛。今人皆命爲戴，蓋差瘦也。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 9).

³⁷¹ For the original Chinese text see note 263.

The last passage I am going to quote here is at first glance a little bit remote from the problem of grouping painters that is the focus of the present section. We will see, however, that an interesting point related to Dong Qichang's most important classification of painters can be made on the basis of its contents. It deals with the problem of identifying some of the anonymous genre pictures common in the pre-Song and early Song dynasty painting with the work of specific masters of the past:

“The painting called *Planting of Gourds* in the collection of Mr. Su surely depicts a historical event. Pictures of this kind were often executed by painters of Shu. It is painted with great skill, but it isn't a work of Yan Liben. Liben's paintings are usually colored and delicate. He used to utilize white lead to portray the moonlight spreading on the ground. Nowadays, when people acquire such painting [like the *Planting of Gourds*], they also sometimes ascribe it to Li Sixun. This, too, is wrong. On the court of Li Yu in Jiangnan, there were many such paintings that were imprinted with seals reading *Neihetong yin* and *Jixianyuan yin*. It must have been paintings acquired from remote areas or precious tributes.”³⁷²

From this entry, we can see that Mi Fu was convinced that many anonymous paintings executed primarily as records of specific events were later inscribed with the name of Yan Liben or Li Sixun and further handed down as works of these masters. Even though such an attribution would probably be plausible with regard to the painting style of these works (they were, as we read above, executed with great skill, colorful and delicate etc.), on the basis of his familiarity with the paintings originating from the royal collections in the regions of Shu

³⁷² For the original Chinese text see note 240.

and Jiangnan during the Five Dynasties period, Mi Fu argues that the painting in question must belong to this kind.

In addition to another inspiring lesson in connoisseurship, we can again make several points based on his description. Firstly, it is the possible stylistic affiliation between the detailed and colorful genre paintings and the work of Yan Liben and Li Sixun, painters who are usually not mentioned side by side in the histories of painting. Even more importantly, it is the suggestion that already in Mi Fu's time the construction of the so called "Yan Liben" and the so called "Li Sixun" was under way, when the ignorant collectors inscribed originally anonymous paintings with their names, no doubt to increase their prestige and monetary value. With a view to Mi's testimony, we can be sure that many of such genre paintings executed in vivid colors and meticulous detail were later transmitted in the name of Yan Liben, Li Sixun and others and helped to form the notion of these masters' oeuvre for the future students and historians of painting as discussed above in chapter II. It is tempting to imagine what kind of "Li Sixun" paintings Dong Qichang might have had in mind when writing his paragraphs on the two opposing lineages of painting, as some of the works attributed to Li Sixun that were extant in his day might actually have been exactly the ones Mi Fu was talking about.

IV.4.1.3 The comparison of Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's lineages of painters

From the above summary of Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's passages that record names of painters of similar stylistic or thematic affiliation, we can make several conclusions. Firstly, the grouping of painters into two opposing "schools" representing literati-monochrome-Southern lineage and courtly-colorful-Northern lineage of painting respectively, which is customarily attributed to Dong Qichang, cannot be tracked as far back as Mi Fu's treatise. In Mi Fu's *Huashi* no trace of such dualistic approach to the history of painting can

be found. No groups of painters opposing each other either in stylistic or in thematic terms, such as those we know from Dong Qichang's treatises, can be found in his writings. The only opposition Mi Fu makes is in the quality of the works of each individual painter or painting in question, using the vocabulary "good" (*jia*), "graceful" (*xiu*) or "divine/untrammelled" (*shen/yi*) in opposition to "not good" (*bu jia*) or "vulgar" (*su*) to formulate his opinion.³⁷³ No reference to groups of painters defined in an abstract way such as "scholar-painters" or "artisan/court painters" is made in Mi Fu's text and was thus probably not part of his notion of the development of painting up to his time. Therefore, if we take Mi Fu's presentation of the "history of painting" as representative of his time, for which I argued in the introductory passages of chapter III, it is likely that in late Northern Song dynasty this kind of antithetical approach was not in operation as part of the construction of the history of painting by the artists and critics.³⁷⁴ For its emergence and elaboration, we have to wait until the texts of Yuan dynasty masters such as Huang Gongwang, who, as Cahill (1982b: 11) has pointed out, begun to distinguish between the "schools" of the followers of Dong Yuan and Li Cheng. Later, Zhan Jingfeng and He Liangjun 何良俊 (1506–1573) represent Dong Qichang's direct predecessors and the Four Wangs of the early Qing dynasty his followers.³⁷⁵

Mi Fu, however, does anticipate Dong Qichang's ideas in several other areas related to the classification and grouping of painters. In several paragraphs of *Huashi*, Mi Fu illustrates particular stylistic lineages of painters linked together with the teacher-student relationship.

³⁷³ For a detailed discussion of Mi Fu's use of this vocabulary to describe the quality of paintings in the *Huashi*, see section III.3.1 of the present thesis.

³⁷⁴ For a detailed account of other texts dealing with the emergence of literati painting and its defining against the painting of artisans and court painters, see e.g. Bush and Shih (1985: 191–240). Neither from the survey of a large range of related texts made by Bush and Shih is it likely that a definition of two opposing traditions was present in the works of other Northern Song dynasty historians and theoreticians.

³⁷⁵ For an illuminating discussion of Dong Qichang's predecessors in this respect, see mainly Liscomb (1991) and also Cahill (1982b: 9–27). For the survey of the development of Dong's ideas by his followers, mainly by the "Four Wangs, Wu Li and Yun Shouping", see Mae Anna Quan Pang (1971: 25–26).

Such formulations defining the ancestry and stylistic affiliation of the painters in question are of course plentiful in the early texts on history and criticism of Chinese painting. In the context of Dong Qichang's historical concepts, we can nonetheless gain new insights once these are juxtaposed with Mi Fu's formulations. Particularly the entry of Mi Fu's *Huashi* where the lineage of landscape painters beginning with Gu Kaizhi and continuing all the way through Sui, Tang and Five Dynasty painters only to culminate in the oeuvre of Dong Yuan and Juran is of interest here.³⁷⁶ For one, we can see that an effort similar to Dong Qichang's tracing of ancestors of his favorite landscape painters was at work in Mi Fu's version of the pondering over history of painting. Moreover, this particular account of Dong Yuan's early predecessors extends Dong's most cherished lineage of monochrome landscape painters several hundred years before Dong Yuan, all the way to the celebrated Jin dynasty painter Gu Kaizhi. Mi Fu's highly technical formulation, which was, as we saw, uttered almost incidentally as a part of an examination of a particular work of art, represents a rare evidence in the corpus of the surviving texts on the early history of Chinese painting. In the context of Dong Qichang's account of the early history of Chinese painting, it can be again stressed that in Mi Fu's treatise no important position in the early development is ascribed to Wang Wei and neither is Wang quoted as part of any stylistic lineage featuring Mi Fu's favorite landscapists such as the above quoted example connecting Gu Kaizhi with Dong Yuan and Juran. From the perspective of Dong Qichang's most influential lineages, it can be concluded that the designation of Wang Wei as the pivotal figure of one of the lineages is in no way connected to Mi Fu's writing on the history of painting.

Finally, another kind of customary grouping of painters characterized by the enumeration of different painting genres, each represented by a significant and in a way approved master of the past, is present in both Dong's and Mi's treatises. As we have noted

³⁷⁶ See above note 367.

above,³⁷⁷ the paragraph where individual genres and their representatives are listed is quite an unusual and not often quoted passage from Dong Qichang's texts on painting. It differs markedly from those classifying the painters into two opposing lineages, for it conforms fully to the conventional accounts of different disciplines and genres that are part of the large area of Chinese painting and therefore represents a traditional element of Dong's exposition.

Yet when we put Dong's enumeration of the painters traditionally associated with painting of e.g. landscape, fruits, birds, horses, buffalos and figures side by side with Mi Fu's account, interesting details are revealed. Dong for example states that "The masters of landscape painting were Li Cheng and Fan Kuan, of trees and fruit Zhao Chang and Wang You, of flowers, bamboo and the feathered creatures Xu Xi, Huang Quan and Cui Shunzhi, of horses Han Gan and Li Gonglin ...". Mi Fu, on the other hand, argues that already in the late Northern Song period, most of the collectors were unable to distinguish the paintings of horses by the individual masters who were known to have been working in this field. As Mi Fu tells us, they usually resorted to a conventional attribution and inscribed the paintings with the name of Cao Ba, Han Gan or Wei Yan.³⁷⁸ In reality, however, when a collector such as Mi Fu was really aware of the individual features of the works by the painters in question, their labeling under a collective name was absurd and contributed to the confusion in regard to authenticity and dating. From Dong Qichang's simplified account, we can subsequently perceive that he perpetuated rather than clarified this issue. His assertion that "The masters of ... horses [were] Han Gan and Li Gonglin" in comparison with Mi Fu's "The vulgar of the world, when they see a [painting of a] horse, they [usually] ascribe it to Cao Ba, Han Gan or Wei Yan" reveals that Dong's account in this instance is not very reliable. It can also make us

³⁷⁷ See above section II.2.3.4.

³⁷⁸ The paintings of animals and other non-literati genres, as we know, were and still are often preserved without a signature or date, resulting in the practice of inscribing these anonymous paintings with a counterfeit signature of the most suitable famous painter of the past to increase its value on the art market.

wonder whether Dong might have applied similar logic when writing about other important issues such as the classification of landscape painters etc.

Actually, if we look back at the quotation and single out the representatives of landscape painting, it is quite striking that Dong refers only to Li Cheng and Fan Kuan and doesn't include other, elsewhere so often mentioned masters such as Wang Wei, Li Sixun or Dong Yuan, to name just the few most important ones. In chapter III, we have seen that already in Mi Fu's time the painting style of Li Cheng and Fan Kuan was perceived as very close and connoisseurs argued about attributions of particular paintings to these two masters.³⁷⁹ As for the quotation of Dong's paragraph on the masters specializing in various genres, it therefore seems that he really resorted to a conventional formulation or possibly even quoted an earlier source, without recording its name as usual. Such occurrence, in any case, should alert our vigilance as to what Dong's very motivation for the inclusion of the names of painters in various lineages or groups might have been in every particular instance. For it seems that, similarly as in the case of his appointing Wang Wei the head of the literati painting lineage,³⁸⁰ some of the scattered references to different painters and their purported painting styles or subjects were just perpetuating a conventional formulation or even simplifying the traditional account associated with the oeuvre of a specific master or a group of painters.

³⁷⁹ See note 303 for the quotation from Mi Fu's *Huashi*, that goes: "... Li Cheng [used] light ink [and his works] look misty and dream-like, his rocks resemble moving clouds. [His works are] very elaborate and lack true expression. Although Fan Kuan's expression is vigorous and majestic, his works are dark like a gloomy night; the rocks are not set apart from the ground, while the objects possess a kind of obscure elegance. I would classify [his work] as superior to Li Cheng's."

³⁸⁰ See above section II.2.3.2.

IV.4.2 The construction of Mi Fu

After examining the overall concept of classification and grouping of painters of the past in the writings of Dong Qichang and Mi Fu, we will proceed to the comparison of the image of different painters presented by the two writers in their respective treatises. The chapter II begins with the survey of Dong Qichang's references to his counterpart throughout this thesis, the late Northern Song dynasty painter and theoretician Mi Fu. In this place, I will therefore again start with Mi Fu and will try to find out what the analysis of Dong's comments on Mi Fu's works tells us when confronted with the testimony of Mi Fu's own text.

IV.4.2.1 Dong Qichang on Mi Fu

First of all, let us summarize what the corpus of Dong Qichang's texts reveals about his knowledge of and relationship to Mi Fu, his painting and art criticism. As discussed in detail in the section II.2.3.1, the passages of Dong's texts where Mi Fu and his works are mentioned, can be broken up as follows:

1. Mi Fu as the author of paintings of cloudy mountains
2. Mi Fu as the proponent of the painting style called "ink plays" (*moxi*)
3. Mi Fu as the member of the lineages of painters
4. Mi Fu's passion for strange stones
5. Mi Fu as the author of the *History of Painting* and the *History of Calligraphy*

From the above summary and mainly from the discussion in section II.2.3.1, it is obvious that Dong Qichang emphasized particularly those aspects of Mi Fu's painting that are related to

the creation of monochrome paintings in the style of the literati-monochrome-Southern tradition that Dong himself liked and emulated. A few other paragraphs deal with Mi Fu's passion for stones and his authorship of art-historical treatises, but these constitute a minority in Dong's writings and don't reveal much new information as to Dong Qichang's relationship to Mi Fu's painting oeuvre. The essence of Dong's pondering over Mi Fu's work thus lies in his enthusiasm for and advocacy of Mi Fu's paintings of cloudy mountains, often designed as "ink plays", the creation of which ranks Mi Fu, in Dong Qichang's perception, among the masters of the literati lineage of painting. The three topics, i.e. Mi Fu's inclusion in the lineage of "Wang Wei/Wang Qia – Dong Yuan – Mi Fu" together with his orientation on the subject of cloudy mountains and sometimes also its prevailing style of execution called "ink plays" are typically articulated together, such as in the following quotation:

"The painting of cloudy mountains doesn't begin with Mi Fu. It can be traced to the 'splashed ink paintings' of the Tang dynasty painter Wang Qia. Dong Yuan was also fond of painting cloudy scenes and when there are clouds and mists changing and hiding, it is a picture in the style of Mi Fu. From Mi Fu's *White Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, the *samadhi* of his ink plays was revealed to me and thus, I used this style to paint the mountains of Chu."³⁸¹

Dong's passion for this kind of painting is repeated over and over again and vividly illustrated with the references to his own works executed under the impression of the paintings in what he characterized as Mi Fu's (or "the Mi family") style, such as the one we can see in the above quotation. The picture of Mi Fu as an author of cloudy mountain paintings or "ink-plays", which Dong Qichang probably had in mind when writing his treatises, looms intensively before us when reading the relevant paragraphs of *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, for virtually

³⁸¹ For the original Chinese text see note 64.

no mention in any other context (except for the two minor fields such as strange stones and authorship of art-historical writings) is made of Mi Fu whatsoever.

IV.4.2.2 Mi Fu on his own painting and on the subject of mists and clouds

It has been already observed that very few references to his own painting practice are to be found in Mi Fu's *Huashi* and the scarcity of reliable early material contributes markedly to the obscurity of the picture of Mi Fu's painting activities during his lifetime we can form today. Ledderose (1976: *Painters*, p. 125) aptly summarizes the enigma of Mi Fu's original painting oeuvre as follows:

“Mi Fu has also been very famous as a painter but there are no reliable works by him extant today. The provenance of his paintings has been rather obscure from early times on. Although they were highly valued in the imperial collection of the Shaoxing era (1131–1162), Deng Chun mentions only two paintings by Mi in his *Huaji*, compiled in 1167, that is 60 years after Mi Fu's death, and there were only seven of Mi's paintings seen by Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298) and recorded in his *Yunyan guoyan lu* 雲煙過眼錄 [*The Record of Clouds and Mist Passing before One's Eyes*] (after 1291).”

In the entries of *Huashi*, Mi Fu didn't usually link his experiences with older paintings with his own creative efforts in the way Dong Qichang did and this fact by itself can be perceived as a stipulative difference between their respective approaches to the painting of the past. It is obvious that Song dynasty critics and theoreticians made efforts to create a kind of objective “painting history” by listing the artists together with their surviving or purported works of art

in a more impartial way.³⁸² In Ming times, on the other hand, the prevalent painting practice was entangled with the legacy of the past to such a degree that speaking of a painter's own creative endeavors involved the enumeration of his own stylistic and thematic predecessors almost as a *sine qua non*. Dong Qichang's writings on painting are a prime example of such an approach. The inexhaustible energy with which he advocates his choice of models, I dare say, actually boosted and solidified this method of art-historical writing and became the prototype for his contemporaries as well as the writers of the ages to come.

In the whole *Huashi*, Mi Fu records only two paintings he himself has created. Both depict famous Jin dynasty figures and are called *Wang Xianzhi Writing on a Silk Gown* and *Zhidun, Xu Xun, Wang Xizhi and Xie An Taking a Walk in a Landscape*.³⁸³ These paintings both depict famous Jin dynasty literati-artists whom Mi Fu admired and emulated in his studies of calligraphy.³⁸⁴ As corroborated also by the context of the quotation, the figures in the paintings of this kind were usually rendered in great detail and set against a landscape background. They can be thus classified more plausibly as figure paintings than landscapes, even though the landscape setting was obviously of enormous interest with regard to the

³⁸² For other examples of Song texts on the hitherto painting history, see Guo Ruoxu's 郭若虛 *An Account of my Experiences in Painting* (*Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志), Liu Daochun's 劉道醇 *Critique of Famous Painters of the Present Dynasty* (*Shengchao minghua ping* 聖朝名畫評) or Huang Xiufu's *Yizhou minghua lu*. These writers are not known to have made use of their critical findings in painting practice. Their approach to writing the "history of painting" up to their time can be, however, regarded as typical for the Northern Song dynasty. Mi Fu's closest contemporary and fellow-artist, who was a collector and painter himself and also left behind a treatise on the history and theory of painting, is Shen Gua with his *Mengxi bitan*. All these texts exemplify the impersonal method of recording the facts pertaining to the painters of the past and their works. A similar approach, with minor variations that can mostly be characterized as an extreme emphasis on the judgment over the painters' achievements, is discernible from Mi Fu's *Huashi*.

³⁸³ For the quotation of the whole paragraph from *Huashi*, see note 293.

³⁸⁴ For details of Mi Fu's study and practice of calligraphy in different stages of his life, see Sturman (1997).

development of the landscape genre in the early periods of Chinese painting.³⁸⁵ The depictions of literati-heroes of the past are mentioned by Mi Fu on other occasions, such as the painting by Li Cheng that is likened to Wang Wei's rendering of the Tang dynasty poet Meng Haoran. The landscape setting of some of these figures was similarly detailed and meticulously executed in the blue-and-green style prevalent in the Tang dynasty landscape painting and can in itself serve as a testimony of a today largely unknown facet of the work of some of the Song dynasty landscape painters.

In the reference to his own painting of the Jin dynasty figures, Mi Fu appends an interesting commentary that goes:

“When I try to seek guidance from the landscapes old and new, there are seldom such that stand out of the mediocre rubbish, and therefore I gave freedom to my brush [to execute mine in accordance with my own vision]. It is full of mists and clouds that obscure the sun and the trees and rocks are not delineated in detail. It does justice to [my] idea and that's enough.”³⁸⁶

It tells us that Mi Fu was not quite satisfied with the prevailing manner of the landscape paintings “old and new” and when working on his own paintings, he preferred to leave out the excessive details. He, on the contrary, concentrated rather on the painting of “mists and clouds that obscure the sun” and fit more properly into his own vision of a landscape.

Another instance where Mi Fu refers to the depictions of clouds and mists as part of landscape painting can be found in a paragraph that presents a kind of recommendation for connoisseurs and collectors:

³⁸⁵ See e.g. the above quotation in note 367, where the landscape depicted on a screen of a figure painting is by Mi Fu himself taken as an evidence of the development of the landscape genre from Gu Kaizhi all the way to the masters of the Five Dynasties and the Northern Song dynasty.

³⁸⁶ For the quotation of the whole paragraph from *Huashi*, see note 293.

“When contemplating and evaluating paintings, the most valuable are Buddhist images and narrative paintings, because they possess didactic qualities (*quan jie*). Next come landscapes with their potential for expressing the infinity, especially the scenes of mist and clouds and hazy sceneries are fine. Next come bamboos, trees and waterside rocks and next still flowers and grass. As for beautiful women, feathered creatures, elegant outings and theatre scenes, these do not belong to the refined objects of amusement.”³⁸⁷

Here, we can see that the landscape as a painting genre was seen by Mi Fu as a medium endowed with the “potential for expressing the infinity” and especially the hazy sceneries full of mist and clouds were perceived as a suitable means of expression in this respect. When it comes to the classification of the painting genres, Mi Fu nevertheless ranks landscape painting next to the Buddhist images and narrative paintings that portray a specific historical event and record the appearance of the influential figures of antiquity. The figure and narrative paintings served as a means of instruction and elevation for the viewer, which was regarded as the most important merit of painting since the olden times. As it was believed that a painting is capable of transmitting the moral qualities of the figure depicted, the contemplation of the painting could thus make these qualities visible to the viewer and serve as a means of recognition and guidance for the future generations. It is therefore remarkable that in his recommendation, Mi Fu retains this age-old premise and makes it one of the advices for collectors and connoisseurs. By ranking landscape painting between the figure painting on the one hand and the “lesser genres” such as trees, rocks, flowers etc. on the other, he in fact articulates very clearly the importance that the classical hierarchy of painting genres still held towards the close of the Northern Song dynasty. Based on the later image of Mi Fu as an unconventional landscape painter who contributed largely to the development of its

³⁸⁷ For the original Chinese text see note 260.

literati qualities, we would probably expect him to assign landscape a prominent place among the painting genres. Still, the opposite is true, as the figural and narrative painting obviously continued to occupy the topmost position in his description. We can thus conclude, in a slightly elliptical manner, that the painting of landscapes full of mists and clouds was important for Mi Fu, but only second to the depictions of famous figures and events of the past.

Aside from the mention of the mists and clouds as part of the unconventional execution of the landscape setting in his own figurative paintings, Mi Fu refers to this manner of landscape painting four more times in *Huashi*. As we have seen in chapter III, one of the references is part of a paragraph dealing with the landscape painting of Li Cheng, who is credited with “using light ink, so that his works look misty and dream-like and his rocks resemble moving clouds.”³⁸⁸ But in this entry, surprisingly, Li Cheng’s works are further described as elaborate and lacking in naturalness and ranked inferior to Fan Kuan’s. We can thus assume that the depiction of mists and clouds alone was by no means a guarantee of success in Mi Fu’s view, for even the misty and dream-like landscapes could have been judged as excessively elaborate. In other words, they probably have not been painted in the free brushwork used as part of the ink-wash technique we usually associate with the depictions of clouds and mists in the literati tradition of landscape painting.

The remaining three paragraphs where mists and clouds are mentioned all refer to paintings by Dong Yuan, whose image in the texts of Dong Qichang and Mi Fu will be examined in the next section. In this place, I will confine myself to examining the subject of mists and clouds in landscapes that form a part of Dong Yuan’s oeuvre as described by Mi Fu. As we have seen above, the praise Mi Fu lavishes on Dong Yuan is great and the subject of

³⁸⁸ See the quotation in note 303.

misty landscapes plays a significant role in its justification. The descriptions of Dong Yuan's oeuvre by Mi Fu go as follows:

“...The peaks and summits appear and vanish; clouds and mist reveal and cover [the objects]. There are no traces of artificial elaboration, everything is ‘natural and spontaneous’. ...”³⁸⁹

“Juran studied [the work of] Dong Yuan. Many of his paintings are still extant. [They are full of] mists and vapors and are limpid and fresh. The composition is often ‘natural and spontaneous’. ...”³⁹⁰

“The misty scene by Dong Yuan in my collection has a horizontal format. The structures of the mountains are now hidden and then appear again, the tips of the branches stick out and disappear; the overall feeling is lofty and antique.”³⁹¹

The three quotations reveal that in relation to Dong Yuan's work, the qualities of appearing and vanishing, being ‘limpid and fresh’ and being ‘natural and spontaneous’ are all linked to the painting of mists and clouds in a landscape. Moreover, it is obvious that these very qualities make the paintings by Dong Yuan so attractive to Mi Fu and constitute the core of his praise for this artist, unprecedented among the painters past and present. The topic of mists and clouds thus, indeed, represents an important entity in Mi Fu's pondering about the history of painting. Once coupled with the natural and spontaneous expression, which is likely to represent the opposite of elaborateness and lack of naturalness referred to in the critique of Li

³⁸⁹ For the original Chinese text see note 304.

³⁹⁰ For the original Chinese text see note 230.

³⁹¹ For the original Chinese text see note 306.

Cheng's work, it can produce paintings with which even "those of elegant manners that belong to the divine class cannot compare".³⁹²

IV.4.2.3 Dong Qichang and Mi Fu on Mi Fu's painting, on the subject of misty landscapes and "ink plays"

Now when we juxtapose the two accounts outlined above, the picture of Mi Fu's identity as perceived by Dong Qichang and its possible relation to the reality of Mi Fu's own time becomes more distinct. Using the quotations from Dong Qichang's treatises, I have shown that for the late Ming painter and theorist, Mi Fu represented basically the icon of a landscape painter who specialized mainly in the subject of landscapes lost in mists and clouds often depicted in the manner of "ink-plays", i.e. in the ink-wash technique full of uninhibited wet brushstrokes. This more or less conforms to the image of Mi Fu that is perpetuated by the pre-modern and modern scholarship, usually based on the surviving works labeled as Mi Fu's or in the style of Mi Fu, if any extensive discussion of his possible painting style is attempted at all.³⁹³ This was a facet Dong Qichang admired as representative of the core of the literati-monochrome-Southern lineage of painting and himself often emulated in his painting. The question, however, arises again as to which paintings (and textual records) he had based his

³⁹² See note 225.

³⁹³ See e.g. Ledderose (1976) and Ho (1959), who express reservations about our ability to get to know Mi Fu's actual painting style from the works preserved today. They nevertheless enumerate the paintings linked with Mi Fu's name in the world collections and these point clearly to the image of Mi Fu as a painter of misty sceneries executed in the ink-wash technique discussed above. The authoritative introduction to the history of Chinese painting from the ancient period up to the 20th century published as Barnhart (1997) interestingly gives no details about Mi Fu's purported painting style at all and doesn't mention any of the surviving paintings attributed to him. This might well be due to the spurious authenticity of the extant paintings ascribed to Mi Fu in the world collections. It therefore represents a contemporary example of the actual negligence of Mi Fu's real painting style and of the transformations of its perception throughout the centuries after his death.

notion of Mi Fu's style on and what was their relationship to the "real" Mi Fu, the late Northern Song dynasty painter.

In the text of Mi Fu's *Huashi*, we have found two mentions of Mi Fu's own works, both describing a painting of figures set against a landscape background. This by itself is nothing Dong Qichang ever refers to, even though his texts, too, supply ample material on figurative paintings by different masters past and contemporary, a fact that is seldom accounted for by later historians and students of Dong's legacy. From the emphasis the entries of his texts dealing with Mi Fu's painting unanimously put on the subject of misty landscapes and the technique of ink-plays, it seems that no other kind of "Mi Fu" existed for Dong Qichang, definitely none like "Mi Fu the painter of figures of the Jin dynasty sages". It can be remarked here that Dong Qichang himself is known to seldom place figures into his own landscapes. It seems that he either didn't know or more probably didn't take into account the fact that many of his favored early models, including Wang Wei, Mi Fu and Li Cheng, were also painters of figures and often executed landscapes merely as a background surrounding their figures. Being well versed in the theoretical and historical texts where the most authentic picture available of the painters he wrote about is created by contemporary or slightly later writers, he must have simply eliminated the information that was not conforming with his preferred notion of the painters' personality or oeuvre.³⁹⁴ This is one point that looms large when examining Dong's account of the painting by different masters of the past against the sources contemporary with their period of activity.

Interestingly enough, the picture of Mi Fu the painter of misty landscapes is nevertheless not entirely unfounded in Mi Fu's own textual records. Mi Fu himself highlights the fact that he preferred to render the landscape setting of his figural compositions in a free, uninhibited brushwork, creating scenes with mists and clouds that differed substantially from

³⁹⁴ Dong's selectiveness with regard to the sources available to him is emphasized in different contexts also by his most competent biographers, such as Riely (1992: 402 and passim). See also note 113.

most of the paintings of landscapes by the past and present masters. Besides that, from his discussions of the works of other painters throughout the text of *Huashi*, it is clear that those he admired and praised most – especially Dong Yuan – also specialized largely in the paintings of misty landscapes executed in natural and spontaneous manner.

Additional information (or, more accurately, the absence of information) pertaining to the possibly “authentic” Mi Fu active on the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries we can get from his *Huashi* includes the fact that no mention of the later so popular painting technique of the “Mi family dots” (*Mi dian*) can be found whatsoever. He occasionally refers to the use of structural brushstrokes (*cun*), or the absence of structural brushstrokes (*bu cun* 不皴),³⁹⁵ in the paintings of other masters, making it obvious that he was aware of the fundamental difference between the landscape styles of the early masters and the contemporary practice, when different types of brushstrokes started to appear in the work of the Song dynasty painters. No “Mi family dot”, however, existed for Mi Fu as far as we can get to know him today from his text of *Huashi*.

Besides, and what is even more striking, there seems to be no evidence to be found in Mi Fu’s text that he preferred the ink-wash technique over the technique of painting in ink outlines filled in with colors.³⁹⁶ Similarly, no trace of what might be likened to the painting manner later called “ink plays” is present in *Huashi*. Mi Fu discusses sometimes the use of ink in the works of other painters, such as “Li Cheng [used] light ink [and his works] look misty and dream-like ...”³⁹⁷ or “Fan Kuan [when painting] landscapes ... in his old age was immoderate in the use of ink, so that it is impossible [in his paintings] to distinguish the

³⁹⁵ See e.g. the quotation in note 239.

³⁹⁶ For more details, see the discussion in section III.4.2, mainly the part devoted to Mi Fu’s records pertaining to Li Cheng in section III.4.2.4.

³⁹⁷ See the quotation in note 303.

stones from the soil.”³⁹⁸ He nonetheless shows no sign of a preference for paintings executed in what became later known as the ink-wash technique and definitely not of his own use of such a technique. The only affinity that can be seen between his descriptions and the later notion of his painting style articulated among others by Dong Qichang can be seen in the subject matter, i.e. the cloudy mountains, but not so in the technique of their execution. It can be of course argued that the cloudy mountains as we know them from the extant attributions and the works of later followers of the “Mi family painting style” are commonly executed in the ink-wash technique, but Mi Fu’s criticism of Li Cheng’s misty scenes for being too elaborate and lacking in naturalness should prevent us from drawing such straightforward conclusions. The fact remains that many of the so called “landscape paintings” Mi Fu describes are in fact paintings of figures depicted against a landscape setting and even the painting style of the “pure landscapes” Mi Fu mentions in his *Huashi* remains often unclear when relying solely on the information he himself records.

Coming back to Dong Qichang and the relationship of his concept of “Mi Fu” to the actual evidence derived from Mi Fu’s *Huashi*, I have to conclude that except for the germ of the much praised and admired subject of the cloudy mountains, no direct correlation between Mi’s own records and Dong’s concepts can be established. It rather seems likely that Dong Qichang was drawing mainly on later sources and the extant attributions to Mi Fu. These transformed the facet of Mi Fu’s landscape painting executed in monochrome ink with the use of free, uninhibited brushwork, originally subsidiary at best, into a whole concept of his painting of misty landscapes in the ink-wash technique. In other words, we have encountered another icon of a painter in Dong’s writings, this time even more sophisticated and portrayed in much more vivid detail than e.g. the icon of Wang Wei we have discussed above.

³⁹⁸ 范寬山水... 晚年用墨太多, 土石不分. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 39–40).

To make justice to the modern scholarship on Chinese painting history, it can be remarked that e.g. Shih Hsio-yen (1976: 130–131) seems to have been aware of the principal role later critics and historians played in the process of establishing the so called “Mi family style”, for in the biography of Mi Youren he observes:

“Southern Song and later critics realized that a new technique in landscape painting had been introduced by Mi Fu in his later years, then developed and refined by Youren in his own style. Their virtuosity in use of brush and ink was unequalled in their time for abbreviated yet dense effects, not defining but suggesting amorphous landscape forms revealed and concealed in the uncertain light between rain and clear weather.”

He too, however, takes as granted that Mi Fu developed and bestowed on his followers an original painting technique that relied mainly on the use of brush and ink, a premise that is not corroborated by Mi Fu’s text of *Huashi* as it survives today.³⁹⁹ It might have been used for the depiction of Mi Fu’s recorded landscapes that served as a background for the figures of his favorite personages of the past, it might have even been the very painting technique Mi Fu used to execute his rarely recorded “pure landscapes”. These are, nonetheless, sheer conjectures based on the records of later critics from the Southern Song times on, when the subject of dream-like landscapes painted in the ink-wash technique gained enormous

³⁹⁹ It is of course possible that Mi Fu has once written other treatises concerned with the technique and subjects of landscape painting where he elaborated on these issues in greater depth. It is, however, not very plausible as no later source mentions other texts than his *Huashi* (*History of Painting*) and *Shushi* (*History of Calligraphy*) and not even fragments of his other writings survive in the texts by later historians and critics. From the confrontation of Mi Fu’s *Huashi* as we know it today with the evidence of e.g. Dong Qichang’s texts, we know that certain parts of the text of *Huashi* are lost today, but no reference to other texts by Mi Fu is made by Dong either. When discussing Mi Fu as a critic and painter today, we have therefore to rely solely on the material supplied by the present version of his *Huashi* and based on it, no evidence for Mi Fu’s alleged ink-wash painting technique can be located there.

popularity.⁴⁰⁰ It is therefore quite possible that only with the Southern Song artists and critics the image of Mi Fu as later known to Dong Qichang, and still today to us, started to be molded with a reference to a few murky and indirect evidence pointing to his enthusiasm for paintings of misty landscapes. That would not be unlike the icon of Wang Wei as the predecessor of the literati lineage of landscape painting, which was constructed only later on the basis of a few scattered remarks in the early biographical and historical records.⁴⁰¹ We should bear in mind Mi Fu's own words on the commonplace practice of inscribing names of famous painters of the Tang dynasty onto the paintings actually originating in the courts of the Five Dynasties. Like that, we can easily imagine the way "Mi Fu paintings" might have been created out of anonymous depictions of misty sceneries or even works by painters of lesser renown in the Southern Song times, a period when a large part of the artistic heritage of the Northern Song dynasty was lost during the flight of the imperial court and a great number of the literati families south. As the problem of establishing Mi Fu's personal painting style is not the subject of the present thesis, I will confine myself to voicing a doubt concerning his introduction of a new style of ink-wash technique in landscape painting elsewhere called "the Mi family dot" or "the Mi family style", based on the evidence of his writings on painting. For the time being, it can serve as a mere hypothesis, which is expected to become the topic of further art-historical and textual research.

⁴⁰⁰ For an illuminating discussion of the development of landscape painting under the Southern Song dynasty, see Ortiz (1999).

⁴⁰¹ For the quotation of a rare reference to Wang Wei's "broken ink paintings" that seems to have been pivotal in the construction of his identity as a painter of monochrome landscapes, see above note 89.

IV.4.3 The construction of Dong Yuan

To open this section, a remark has to be made right at the beginning that the treatment of Dong Yuan's art in different critical and art-historical texts has been brilliantly summarized in German by Christian Unverzagt (2007). It is therefore possible to refer the reader interested in this issue to the much broader and detailed discussion of different aspects of the texts dealing with Dong Yuan's oeuvre available there. In this place, I will, however, present my own comparison of Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's remarks about Dong Yuan and his painting that can be found in their treatises. Based on them, I will attempt to draw an independent conclusion as to the significance of the passages mentioning Dong Yuan for our understanding of the concept of painting history as part of Dong's and Mi's respective approaches.

IV.4.3.1 Dong Qichang on Dong Yuan

For Dong Qichang, as we have seen in chapter II, Dong Yuan's painting represented a crucial point in the development of the monochrome-literati-Southern lineage of painting. References to Dong Yuan are associated with Wang Wei's name in the notoriously quoted passages dealing with the distinction between literati painting (*wenren zhi hua*) and the painting tradition of Li Sixun. In other paragraphs, Dong Yuan is sometimes referred to separately together with Juran as masters who brought about the turning point in the development of painting from the detailed and colorful tradition of the Tang dynasty to the monochrome painting of later landscape masters:

“Song dynasty painting after Dong Yuan and Juran got rid of excessive fanciness and overelaborated details and was faithful to the resemblance of the Jiangnan nature. ...”⁴⁰²

I have argued above that this account of the development of landscape painting is close to the version presented by modern histories of Chinese painting based on the surviving pictorial evidence. It therefore represents a more realistic facet of Dong’s notion of his own artistic past in comparison with the idealized scheme that puts Wang Wei at the head of the monochrome painting lineage. These passages can also document the ambivalence the statements presented in Dong’s treatises at times encompass if we try to position them on the scale stretching between idealism and experience-based realism. While Wang Wei’s monochrome paintings, as I have shown above, had probably hardly if ever served as a direct impetus for the formulation of Dong Qichang’s ideas in his treatises, the descriptions of Dong Yuan’s works reveal an honest search for the similarities and differences in comparison with the works of other early masters and later followers such as the Yuan dynasty landscapists. This is of course not to say that the paintings labeled as “Dong Yuan’s”, which Dong Qichang owned and emulated, were of a fundamentally different nature than those labeled as Wang Wei’s or Mi Fu’s that we have discussed above.⁴⁰³ Their presence is nevertheless much more distinct in Dong Qichang’s quotations than the presence of the works of Dong Yuan’s purported predecessor Wang Wei, when we take the body of Dong Qichang’s paragraphs dealing with Dong Yuan as a basis for our discussion.

Dong Qichang’s entries mentioning Dong Yuan clearly reveal his notion of the importance of this painter’s oeuvre for the later development of the monochrome painting

⁴⁰² For the original Chinese text see note 128.

⁴⁰³ I have to stress again the contribution of Christian Unverzagt’s (2007) study for our understanding of “Dong Yuan’s oeuvre” as an entity changing in the course of time in no different way than e.g. the picture of “Mi Fu” or “Wang Wei” we encounter in the texts of later historians and critics of painting.

tradition in the art of the Four Great Masters of the Yuan dynasty, most notably Ni Zan, Huang Gongwang and Wang Meng.

“This is an imitation of Ni Zan’s brushwork. Ni Zan mainly modeled his trees after Li Cheng’s ‘wintry forests’, his mountains and stones after Guan Tong and his brushstrokes after Dong Yuan, but he transformed all those styles. ...”⁴⁰⁴

“The painting of Wang Meng was based on the style of Zhao Mengfu’s works, that’s why it extremely resembles [the expression] of his uncle. He also emulated quite a few Tang and Song dynasty masters and made Dong Yuan and Wang Wei his model. That’s why his own painting was unrestrained and has many faces, while often reaching out of the framework set by Zhao Mengfu. ...”⁴⁰⁵

The references to their emulation of Dong Yuan’s painting are at times closely related to the issue of studying the painting style of one’s master. It even seems as if Dong Qichang has intentionally used the case of the Yuan painters’ emulation of Dong Yuan to demonstrate his point on the necessity to study and transform the manner of one’s teacher, which lies at the core of the literati painting theory. It is therefore highly plausible that the very experience with the study of the painting styles of the Yuan masters and the subsequent search for their source in Dong Yuan’s painting enabled Dong Qichang to develop and refine his idea of the “creative copying” of the works of ancient masters. His attitude is clearly expressed in other passages, some of which also assign Dong Yuan a position of great importance in the process of future development:

⁴⁰⁴ For the original Chinese text see note 138.

⁴⁰⁵ For the original Chinese text see note 142.

“Juran studied Dong Yuan, Huang Gongwang studied Dong Yuan, Ni Zan studied Dong Yuan, Mi Fu studied Dong Yuan. There was only one Dong Yuan, so why do the expressions of these masters differ? If common people do it in the way that [the copy] is identical with its model, how can [their work] be transmitted to later generations?”⁴⁰⁶

Based on the examination of Dong Qichang’s passages dealing with the art of Dong Yuan, his perception of this Five Dynasties master can be summed up as a personage standing at the birth of the monochrome-literati-Southern lineage much in the same way as Wang Wei. Besides, the actual qualities and distinctive features of Dong Yuan’s painting are much better documented in Dong’s texts than those of Wang Wei. Dong Yuan’s painting style is particularly discussed as a source of the literati painting tradition that was later developed and transformed by the Four Masters of the Yuan period. Some entries mentioning Dong Yuan illustrate the notion of the creative copying Dong himself engaged in and shed fresh light on the way we should understand this concept as a significant device of the literati painting practice.

IV.4.3.2 Mi Fu on Dong Yuan

In one of the paragraphs of *Huashi*, Mi Fu states that throughout his career, he has seen five paintings by Dong Yuan, while the works of Juran and Liu daoshi he has seen amount to “more than ten each”.⁴⁰⁷ Given the uncertain dating of the different entries recorded in *Huashi* as it is extant today, it is however impossible to establish the relationship of this

⁴⁰⁶ For the original Chinese text see note 134.

⁴⁰⁷ Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 18). There are, however, other passages that refer to more paintings allegedly by Dong Yuan in different collections Mi Fu might or might not have seen in person. Cf. also Unverzagt (2007: 25–26).

statement to the other entries mentioning Dong Yuan, which are, as we have seen in chapter III, numerous and remarkably positive as to the quality of Dongs painting.

As summarized above, Mi Fu portrays Dong Yuan mainly as a painter who liked to depict landscapes full of mists and clouds – the subject Mi himself is believed to have developed in his otherwise not very well known painting oeuvre. Besides, Mi Fu credits Dong Yuan with the ability to paint in a “natural and spontaneous way”, so that his pictures are limpid and fresh and embody an antique flavor. The elements of landscape in his renderings are described as appearing and vanishing again, so that the spirit of the southern landscape is faithfully transmitted in their indistinct and dimmish appearance.⁴⁰⁸

The crucial aspects of Dong Yuan’s oeuvre as perceived by Mi Fu can be illustrated with the following quotations:

“Dong Yuan[’s works] were mostly even and light, natural and spontaneous. In times of Tang dynasty, such quality didn’t exist. [Dong Yuan] is superior to Bi Hong. Of the contemporary paintings [even] those of elegant manners that belong to the divine class cannot compare with him. The peaks and summits appear and vanish; clouds and mist reveal and cover [the objects]. There are no traces of artificial elaboration, everything is ‘natural and spontaneous’. The vapors are heavy and lush, tree trunks vigorous and towering. The streams and bridges, fishermen and islets here and there, a real piece of southern landscape!”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ Unverzagt (2007: 21) goes as far as characterizing the image of Dong Yuan constructed in Mi Fu’s *Huashi* as a master embodying in his work a “Jiangnan quality”, or, in other words, combining in an ideal way the spirit of the place with the artistic capacity of the painter.

⁴⁰⁹ For the original Chinese text see note 304.

“The misty scene by Dong Yuan in my collection has a horizontal format. The structures of the mountains are now hidden and then appear again, the tips of the branches stick out and disappear; the overall feeling is lofty and antique.”⁴¹⁰

The ranking of Dong Yuan even higher than Bi Hong, whose paintings Mi Fu liked and enthusiastically described in other passages of *Huashi*, further documents the measure of Mi Fu’s praise for the artist. All the other aspects of the assessment of Dong Yuan’s painting, such as the repeated usage of the terms “even and light” and “natural and spontaneous”, the praise of the misty sceneries and the reference to the absence of the slightest trace of excessive elaboration or vulgarity, accordingly point to the special importance of Dong Yuan’s oeuvre for Mi Fu in his pondering over the history of landscape painting up to his time.

IV.4.3.3 Dong Qichang and Mi Fu on Dong Yuan

Now when we place the descriptions of Dong Yuan and his painting by the two authors side by side, a marked consonance is revealed at the first sight. While a strong feeling that Dong Qichang and Mi Fu both knew a different Wang Wei or a different Mi Fu was brought about by the comparisons drawn above, a profound similarity can be seen in the pictures of Dong Yuan they formed in their treatises. They both, to be sure, used their own language to illustrate the aspects of Dong Yuan’s painting they enjoyed and considered worth emulating, they both introduced their particular theoretical concepts to illuminate the qualities of Dong Yuan’s painting. Dong Qichang stressed the absence of fanciness and elaborated details in his works and credited him with the responsibility (together with Wang Wei) for the creation of what later became the literati lineage of landscape painting. Mi Fu uses in the

⁴¹⁰ For the original Chinese text see note 306.

descriptions of his works the terms “even and light” and “natural and spontaneous”, which are mainly developed in his writings on calligraphy and in relation to the history of painting are used only four times, three of them being references to Dong Yuan’s and Juran’s paintings. Both Dong Qichang and Mi Fu point to the prevalence of misty landscapes depicting southern sceneries full of rivers and cloudy mountains, a subject customarily associated with the work of Dong Yuan up to the modern times.

In contrast to the inconsistent images of some other painters of the past that can be traced in the writings of Dong Qichang and Mi Fu, I have to conclude that the basic features of the “icon” of Dong Yuan as outlined in their texts are markedly similar. Several explanations of such situation can be attempted, none of them uninteresting as far as the overall picture of Dong’s and Mi’s construction of the history of painting is concerned.

It is fairly possible that as for Dong Yuan’s painting, Dong Qichang followed more closely or even adopted Mi Fu’s statements, while in cases of other painters he transformed them significantly or hasn’t used them at all. Some of Dong’s paragraphs suggest that he might even have directly quoted from Mi Fu’s treatise. Compare e.g.:

Dong Qichang:

“Song dynasty painting after Dong Yuan and Juran got rid of excessive fanciness and overelaborated details and was faithful to the resemblance of the Jiangnan nature. ...”⁴¹¹

Mi Fu:

⁴¹¹ For the original Chinese text see note 128.

“Dong Yuan[’s works] were mostly ‘even and light’, ‘natural and spontaneous’. ... There are no traces of artificial elaboration, everything is ‘natural and spontaneous’. The vapors are heavy and lush, tree trunks vigorous and towering. The streams and bridges, fishermen and islets here and there, a real piece of southern landscape!”⁴¹²

We have seen above that Dong Qichang explicitly quotes Mi Fu’s judgments of Wang Wei’s works, which nevertheless can not be found in the version of *Huashi* as it is preserved today. Here, on the contrary, even though the wording of the two entries differs slightly, the actual contents and even the structure of the arguments are so markedly similar that it might be a loose formulation of Mi Fu’s original passage in Dong Qichang’s own words.

Be it as it may, a far deeper reason for the similarities in Dong Qichang’s and Mi Fu’s accounts can perhaps be found in the remarkably close notion of “Dong Yuan’s oeuvre” as perceived by the two writers. In other words, the image of the painter Dong Yuan possibly did not change so markedly in the course of time as the images of other painters constructed in their treatises. Or, even more precisely, it is possible that the image of Dong Yuan as a painter of misty southern landscapes didn’t change dramatically between Mi Fu and Dong Qichang. It is quite possible that the very interest of both Mi and Dong in the misty landscapes depicting the Jiangnan nature, however more implied than substantiated by historical evidence in Mi Fu’s case, might have been the cause of the closeness of their construction of “Dong Yuan”.

This is of course not to say that the real Five Dynasties master Dong Yuan actually painted exclusively the misty southern landscapes they speak about. As pointed out by Unverzagt (2007: 11–12), the original oeuvre of Dong Yuan is similarly obscure as that of many other pre-Song painters, and the sources from Dong Yuan’s own period of activity and slightly later are surprisingly silent about him. It seems more likely that his identity as a painter who in his oeuvre embodied the above mentioned “Jiangnan quality” started to be

⁴¹² For the original Chinese text see note 304.

constructed in a time range markedly coinciding with the emergence of the literati artistic theory under the Northern Song dynasty. Mi Fu's and Dong Qichang's accounts then closely follow this track when invoking the spontaneous, unelaborated misty landscape style together with the subject of dream-like landscapes full of vapors and clouds. In the case of Dong Yuan, so to say, they might have pointed to the same ideal of "Dong Yuan", the master of misty landscapes, which probably started to be formed in the late Northern Song period in texts of critics closely associated with the literati circles, as represented e.g. by Shen Gua's *Mengxi bitan* and later developed by the writers of Southern Song and Yuan dynasties.⁴¹³ Mi Fu with his advocating of the significance of Dong Yuan's oeuvre for the formation of the "Jiangnan painting style" was probably one of those standing at the birth of this icon of Dong Yuan for the ages to come, while Dong Qichang became one of its most important proponents in the later periods.

IV.4.4 Construction of the early history of painting

When discussing the images of the above mentioned landscape painters as presented in the treatises of Dong Qichang and Mi Fu, we have realized that quite a different picture of a painter's oeuvre can be constructed using the references made by each of these theorists. It might be therefore interesting to leave the issue of individual painters for the moment and look more closely on the overall picture of the early history of painting that can be formed on the basis of Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's writings. In this section, I will therefore try to form an idea of who were the painters of the early periods recorded in Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's expositions and what can be learned about their possible painting styles and other issues pertaining to the construction of the history of painting. This should facilitate better

⁴¹³ Cf. Unverzagt (2007: 14–18 and 31–34).

understanding of the early history of painting the two theorists operated with when writing their treatises and provide a background in which the isolated “icons” of individual painters we have defined above can be set. A remark can also be made in this place that both Dong Qichang’s and Mi Fu’s treatises preserve unique information on otherwise obscure or forgotten painters active in the formative phases of the history of Chinese painting. Some of them can be pointed out here and made available for further research and debate.

IV.4.4.1 Dong Qichang on the early history of landscape painting and related genres

In section II.2.3.4 dealing with the problem of copying and emulating the styles of ancient masters, I have quoted a paragraph from Dong’s *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi* that is very instructive as far as our understanding of his attitude towards the early history of painting is concerned. It reads:

“The masters of olden times are far away, indeed. Today there is nobody who has ever seen a painting by Cao Buxing or Wu Daozi. Even the works of the followers of Gu Kaizhi and Lu Tanwei, are there any to be found? That’s why, when discussing painting, you must rely on what you can see with your own eyes. If someone says of [a painting by] a master of the distant past: ‘This is Gu Kaizhi’ or ‘This is Lu Tanwei’, he is not only cheating other people, in fact, he is mainly cheating himself! That’s why I say: ‘The masters of landscape painting were Li Cheng and Fan Kuan, of trees and fruit Zhao Chang and Wang You, of flowers, bamboo and the feathered creatures Xu Xi, Huang Quan and Cui Shunzhi, of horses Han Gan and Li Gonglin, of buffalos the Daoist monks Li Guizhen and Fan ? (unidentified), of Buddhist images Sun Zhihui, of deities and demons Shike, of cats He Zunshi and of dogs Zhou Zhao. All these painters have already achieved skill and excellence [in their respective genres]. Those literati

who have their masterpieces in their collections have paid thousands in gold for them.

Why then look for the works of the high antiquity, which cannot be found anymore?”⁴¹⁴

In this passage, Dong makes it clear that for him, i.e. based on his own experience with the paintings preserved in the collections he has seen, the history of painting begins with the masters active in the Five Dynasties period and the early Song dynasty. The works of painters of the high antiquity, i.e. the Period of Division after the fall of the Han dynasty and even the Tang dynasty were rarely if ever to be found in his day. The works labeled as “a painting by Gu Kaizhi” or “a painting by Lu Tanwei” were according to him of dubious authenticity and should preferably be approached as such. What Dong makes here is a kind of summary of the most important painters representative of different genres and subjects of painting that can serve as a guideline for his fellow collectors and connoisseurs. For us, it can represent a skeleton of his knowledge of the ancient painting, which can be of course further expanded by references to other painters made elsewhere in his texts.

As early painters of landscape, Li Cheng and Fan Kuan are listed. Interestingly, this entry doesn't mention the masters of the landscape painting active earlier. From other passages, we can however infer that Dong often extended his discussion into the Tang dynasty times, when Wang Wei and Wang Qia as well as Li Sixun and Li Zhaodao were regarded as the originators of two opposing landscape styles.⁴¹⁵ Further, Zhang Zhihe 張志和 (Tang dynasty) and Lu Hong 盧鴻 (Tang dynasty) are mentioned in a curious passage dealing with the untrammelled nature of the work of the Yuan dynasty painter Ni Zan. Of all the masters of the past, only these two together with no one else than Mi Fu are elevated by Dong Qichang as being superior to their contemporaries in pursuing a unique path, incomparable with the

⁴¹⁴ For the original Chinese text see note 146.

⁴¹⁵ See chapter II, mainly section II.2.3.2.

rest of the painters who are as if “molded by the same matrix” (*yu jie cong taozhu er lai* 余皆從陶鑄而來).⁴¹⁶ Zhang Zhihe is further referred to as a forefather of the subject called “The Joy of Fishermen” (*Yu le tu* 漁樂圖):

“Song dynasty masters such as Juran, Li Cheng or Fan Kuan all painted pictures of ‘The Joy of Fishermen’. This originates with Zhang Zhihe’s [paintings of] ‘Boys Fishing amidst Mists and Waves’ (*Yan po diao tu* 煙波釣徒). When Yan Zhenqing presented Zhihe with a poem, he made it into [such] painting. This practice was common under the Tang dynasty and people of later times emulated it. They usually referred to [those paintings as depicting the] ‘Fishermen Recluse’ (*Yu yin* 漁隱). They were especially abundant under the Yuan dynasty. That’s probably because the Four Great Yuan masters lived in Jiangnan and were thus familiar with the joys of fishing.”⁴¹⁷

It seems therefore that another precursor of the “Jiangnan painting style” as represented by Mi Fu and later by the Four Great Masters of the Yuan dynasty can be found in the work of the otherwise quite obscure Tang dynasty painter Zhang Zhihe. The other painter mentioned as comparable with Ni Zan is Lu Hong, a Tang dynasty master described elsewhere as a recluse who accepted the invitation to the court but didn’t refrain from his unorthodox manners even when approaching the emperor. Dong also records ten scenes depicting the surroundings of Lu Hong’s thatched hut that were later immortalized in a painting by Wang Yuanqi 王原祁

⁴¹⁶ *Huachanshi suibi*. (Vol. 2: “The origin of painting”).

⁴¹⁷ 宋時名手如巨然, 李, 范諸公, 皆有漁樂圖。此起于煙波釣徒張志和。蓋顏魯公贈志和詩, 而志和自爲畫。此唐勝事, 后人蒙之。多寓意漁隱耳。元季尤多。蓋四大家皆在江南葭菼間, 習知漁釣之趣故也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 10).

(1642–1715).⁴¹⁸ Not stating explicitly that those were paintings by Lu Hong himself, Dong maintains that Lu accompanied each of them by a *fu* rhapsody and that he, after all, was himself a painter of a similar standing as Wang Wei.⁴¹⁹ This by itself demonstrates Dong Qichang's high evaluation of Lu Hong as a landscape painter and for us, it can represent an example of the importance of an otherwise obscure painter for the formation of the later literati painting tradition. In another place, Dong refers to the Tang dynasty painter Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737–830) as a source of inspiration for his countryman and fellow painter Xiang Shengmo 項聖謨 (1597–1658)⁴²⁰ or mentions an otherwise forgotten Tang dynasty female painter of flowers and birds named Yao Yuehua.⁴²¹

As for the painting of the Five Dynasties and early Song dynasty period, Dong Qichang records various observations concerning the work of famous landscapists such as Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Juran and Li Cheng. In the above quotation, however, we have seen that he lists several names of otherwise obscure painters specializing in a number of different subjects, such as a painter of buffalos named Li Guizhen, a master of Buddhist images called Sun Zhihui or painters of cats and dogs named He Zunshi and Zhou Zhao. Besides, in one paragraph a painter of landscapes called Gu Dazhong 顧大中 (Song dynasty) is mentioned, who originated in Jiangnan and allegedly painted sceneries surrounding the local watercourses, possibly in a similar vein like his famous compatriot Dong Yuan.

Concerning Gu Dazhong, Dong Qichang however remarks:

⁴¹⁸ The album entitled *Ten Views of Lu Hong's Thatched Hut* (*Lu Hong caotang shi zhi tu* 廬鴻草堂十志圖冊) is now in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

⁴¹⁹ Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 5). For further discussion of the paintings depicting Lu Hong's thatched hut, see Harrist (1998).

⁴²⁰ Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 15).

⁴²¹ See above note 166.

“In the past, Gu Dazhong from Jiangnan once traveled by boat through Nanling, and made a picture on the subject of Du Mu’s poem *Afloat in Nanling* (*Nanling shui mian* 南陵水面). At that time, Dazhong was unknown and nobody acknowledged his importance. Later, he died in poverty and only after that people started admiring his work. ...”⁴²²

This, as well as another record of an almost forgotten painter named Sima Huai,⁴²³ is a rare reference to a work of a master who might have played a significant role in the later development of the literati landscape tradition, but fell into oblivion in the course of time as his work was not accorded attention by later students, historians and critics. Such remarks together with what we know about the actual process of formation of the images of famous painters by later followers and enthusiasts, as documented for instance by the above discussed cases of Mi Fu or Dong Yuan, offer at least a fleeting glimpse of today unknown aspects of the origins of the literati landscape tradition.

IV.4.4.2 Mi Fu on the early history of landscape painting

Mi Fu, who lived in the final decades of the Northern Song dynasty, in his text naturally preserves numerous references to long forgotten personages active at the dawn of the painting tradition that later grew into one of the principal currents of Chinese painting history. In this place, we can therefore summarize some of his passages that offer interesting insights into the issue.

⁴²² 江南顧大中，嘗于南陵巡捕舫子上，畫樊川南陵水面詩意。時大中未知名，人莫加重。后爲客竊去，乃共嘆惋。... Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13).

⁴²³ See section II.2.3.4, quotation in note 147.

First of all, the importance accorded to the Jin dynasty painter Gu Kaizhi has to be emphasized. In the first chapter of *Huashi* as well as in several paragraphs of the following chapters, Mi Fu devotes considerable space to the paintings attributed to this master and describes in detail the features that make them remarkable and most likely authentic or, on the contrary, inferior and unreliable. From the comparison of the writings of our two critics, we can thus see right at the beginning that while for Dong Qichang Gu Kaizhi represented the “high antiquity” of which close to nothing was preserved in his day, for Mi Fu Gu Kaizhi still belonged to the significant early phase of the history of painting that was worth of discussing in terms of quality and authenticity. Besides recording rare details of the paintings presumably by Gu, which he himself owned or saw in other collections, such as the picture of *Vimalakirti and Celestial Maidens* or the famous *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies*,⁴²⁴ Mi Fu’s *Huashi* contains also an interesting discussion of the possible link between the “Jiangnan painting style” of Dong Yuan and the work of Gu Kaizhi. A paragraph quoted above in the section IV.5.1.2 records Mi Fu’s conviction that

“... The landscape and forests painted on the screen [of the *Vimalakirti* picture] are marvelous and antique, the structural brushstrokes on the slopes and banks resemble those of Dong Yuan. From this we can see that [the painting style] labeled as ‘Southern’ was probably the same already since Gu Kaizhi. Through the Sui, Tang and Southern Tang dynasties all the way to Juran, it didn’t change. Even today, Mr. Xie from Chizhou still paints in this style. ...”⁴²⁵

⁴²⁴ Two versions of the *Admonitions* scroll, both of them being probably later close copies, now survive in the British Museum in London and in the Palace Museum in Beijing.

⁴²⁵ For the original Chinese text see note 367. Cf. also Unverzagt (2007: 21–22).

As I argued above, this passage contains a reference to the possible fountain-head of the later “Southern” painting tradition long before the period of activity of the Northern Song dynasty literati. Besides documenting at least partly Mi Fu’s attempt to construct the past not unlike Dong Qichang, it preserves a notion of continuity in the work of the southern masters throughout the long period between the Jin and Song dynasties. As it was dim in Dong Qichang’s time, when Gu Kaizhi was associated with the period of “high antiquity” of which no reliable works survived, it might represent an important textual document of the early roots of some of the later painting styles. Similarly intriguing are Mi Fu’s references to Wang Wei, whose oeuvre seems to be quite controversial already in Mi Fu’s time. The legacy of Wang Wei was identified mainly with the paintings of his Wangchuan Villa and the subject of “snowy landscapes”. However not yet regarded as an unattainable ideal into which it was transformed later, under the late Northern Song dynasty it was, according to Mi Fu, already corrupted with copies and forgeries to such a degree that most of the paintings which circulated among collectors were preferably to be regarded as spurious.

Of the lesser known painters, Mi Fu records for example an instance of a painting by the Five Dynasties master Li Sheng being changed into a painting by Li Sixun:

“Once, I bought from Mr. Ding a landscape scroll by Li Sheng from Shu. It was subtly graceful and fresh. In the top part, there were precipitous cliffs, in the lower part, there were bridges and streams, waterfalls in the middle and also more than thirty pine trees. On one of the tree trunks, small characters of the signature were visible: ‘Li Sheng from Shu’. [Some time later] I exchanged it with Liu Jing for an old autograph. Liu scraped away the signature and inscribed [the painting with the name of] Li Sixun, [and

subsequently] exchanged it with Zhao Shu'ang. The people of today like fakes and don't like originals, it is really regrettable.”⁴²⁶

Another curious testimony of the practice of inscribing names of famous masters onto paintings of lesser or anonymous painters again makes one wonder if this might not have been one of the works that formed the idea of “Li Sixun” for later generation of painters and critics including Dong Qichang. This entry moreover shows how a work of quite an obscure painter aroused Mi Fu's interest and was accorded a fairly impartial description in his *Huashi*, which was, as we learn from the passage, probably not very common among his contemporaries. Because “people liked fakes and didn't like originals”, the names of painters like Li Sheng are today missing in the painting histories and their role in the formation of the Chinese painting tradition is indistinct at best. Mi Fu mentions Li Sheng once more as an author of colorful narrative paintings and landscapes painted without the use of structural brushstrokes.⁴²⁷

IV.4.4.3 Dong Qichang and Mi Fu on the Five Dynasties and Song dynasty landscape painters

Both writers accord considerable space to landscape painting of the Five Dynasties and Song dynasty periods. In this place, we can therefore make a short summary of their comments pertaining to the masters active in this time range and look at them side by side. Such a survey can illustrate the notion of the landscape painting of this period that Dong and

⁴²⁶ 余昔購丁氏蜀人李昇山水一幀。細秀而潤，上危峰，下橋涉，中瀑泉，松有三十餘株。小字題松身曰：蜀人李昇。以易劉涇古帖。劉刮去字，題曰：李思訓。易與趙叔盦。今人好偽不好真，使人歎息。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 19).

⁴²⁷ Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 52).

Mi operated with when writing their texts and reveal their attitude towards different masters and painting styles of the time.

The Five Dynasties and Northern Song dynasty painters – the formative period of Chinese landscape painting

Both Dong Qichang and Mi Fu record a number of comments on the works and different stylistic aspects of the oeuvre of painters usually regarded as the most important personages of the formative era of Chinese landscape painting – Jing Hao, Guang Tong, Li Cheng, Fan Kuan, Dong Yuan, Juran, Xu Daoning, Guo Xi, Guo Zhongshu, Huichong, Yan Wengui 燕文貴 (967–1044) and others. Moreover, references to masters active in the literary circles of the Northern Song period (and Southern Song period in case of Dong Qichang's texts) are preserved in the treatises in question that help us understand Dong's and Mi's attitude towards this current in Chinese landscape painting. Naturally, Dong Qichang's texts provide rich material for the period after Mi Fu's death, which therefore has no counterpart in Mi's writings, but even from the glimpse on late Northern Song painting Mi Fu's text does offer a telling comparison of the perception of this period by the two authors can be made.

The first thing that strikes one once the texts of the two writers are read side by side is the fact that Dong Qichang records a much wider range of painters than Mi Fu does. While of the Five Dynasties and early Northern Song painters, only Jing Hao, Guang Tong, Li Cheng, Fan Kuan, Dong Yuan, Juran, Xu Daoning and two or three other, less significant names are discussed in Mi Fu's *Huashi*, also paintings by Guo Xi, Guo Zhongshu, Huichong, Yan Wengui and several other masters are recorded in Dong Qichang's treatises. This can be of course to certain extent due to different individual experience both theorists had with the paintings extant in the collections of their time. It can, however, also in part account for their

different attitude towards the painting of this period. While Mi Fu was apparently recording the paintings he saw during his career of a collector and a connoisseur in quite a straightforward manner, an active search for masters whose paintings are known from the textual sources and as yet missing from Dong Qichang's collecting experience is obvious in some of his entries. One of the most illustrative examples is e.g. this passage from the *Huachanshi suibi*:

“During my stay in Beijing, in a letter to Chen Jiru I wrote: ‘The [painters] I want to study are Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Dong Yuan, Juran and Li Cheng. But genuine paintings by these five masters can only very rarely be found. In the South, the works of Song masters are not even worthy examining. Please, look for them on my behalf and [should you find any] remember them well in the way the people of Song used to do. Once my own book is ready, we can include them in it. Even if we can't own them, we can amuse ourselves with them, so that Mi Fu is not the only one who composed a *History of Painting*.’”⁴²⁸

The “case of Dong Yuan”, who was recognized as the source of the painting style Dong Qichang admired and emulated, can be quoted in this context. Riely (1992: 401) describes in vivid detail Dong Qichang's quest for the paintings by Dong Yuan, whose oeuvre he decided to study at one stage of his career. It is mentioned e.g. in his statement recorded in the inscription preserved on the painting *Privileged Residents of the Capital* in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei:

“In the year *xinmao* 辛卯 (1591) I requested leave [from the Hanlin] and returned home. There I searched everywhere for paintings (lit. splashed-ink works) by the

⁴²⁸ For the original Chinese text see note 97.

four painters of my district. Eventually I decided that I should trace the source [of their style] and [realized] that I should take only Beiyuan [Dong Yuan] as my master.”⁴²⁹

Similarly, Dong Qichang also makes a record of the fact that while his collection at one time already comprised paintings by the most important masters of Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, only the small format paintings by the Song dynasty painter Yan Wengui were missing from his possession. He was therefore delighted to have the opportunity to see Yan’s *Streams and Mountains in Wind and Rain* (*Xishan fengyu tu* 溪山風雨圖) in a collection of one of his acquaintances and was even inspired to paint his own picture in response.⁴³⁰

It is also possible that painters not yet regarded as significant in the Northern Song dynasty gained importance from the perspective of the later development and were thus accorded Dong Qichang’s attention. This is obviously the case of Guo Xi, whose name is all but missing from Mi Fu’s accounts, but is mentioned at least four times by Dong Qichang. The same is the case of the painter of architectural subjects and colorful landscapes Guo Zhongshu active in the first decades of the Song dynasty,⁴³¹ whose works, even though belonging to the “Northern lineage of painting” in Dong Qichang’s opinion, are discussed several times in his *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*. One of his works is even praised with the words:

“Guo Zhongshu’s *Landscape with Buildings and Pavilions* (*Louge shanshui* 樓閣山水) is painted with a human skill that reaches the ability of Heaven itself. It is

⁴²⁹ See note 126.

⁴³⁰ Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 5). Riely (1992: 425) infers that the date recorded in this paragraph points to the fact that this event took place in the year 1624.

⁴³¹ For a short introduction of this painter and a reproduction of a painting attributed to him see Barnhart (1997: 102–104).

nothing the generation of Li Song 李嵩 (1166–1243) can accomplish even in a dream. This painting resembles the surroundings of Jinshan and Jiaoshan. When there was someone who doubted it, I said: ‘If you, sir, had seen the area of Jin and Jiao in the Five Dynasties, you would agree without hesitating.’⁴³²

Even though Mi Fu records numerous works depicting narrative and architectural subjects, there is no mention of a painting by Guo Zhongshu in his *Huashi* whatsoever.

Besides these occasional mentions of other painters active in the formative period of Chinese landscape painting, Dong Qichang’s comments on the great masters of the Five Dynasties and early Northern Song dynasty painting are usually directly connected with Dong’s theory of the two opposing lineages of landscape painting. The art of Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Fan Kuan, Li Cheng, Dong Yuan and Juran is mentioned several times in the paragraphs listing the painters of the two lineages as part of the literati-monochrome-Southern tradition.⁴³³ In several entries, the painting of some of these masters is discussed as a direct source of the styles of the Four Great Masters of the Yuan Dynasty, above all Dong’s favorite Yuan painter Ni Zan. Now and then particular features of their painting styles, such as Li Cheng’s way of painting trees⁴³⁴ or Jing Hao’s renderings of the subject of cloud-covered mountain peaks⁴³⁵ are mentioned. On the whole, it can be however observed that these painters are usually regarded as a group of masters significant in the formative period of what is by Dong referred to as “the Southern school” and no detailed descriptions of the aspects of their individual painting manners or particular works by these artists are recorded in Dong Qichang’s texts. The only exception are the works of Dong Yuan, which have been already

⁴³² 郭恕先樓閣山水可謂人巧極天工。錯非李嵩輩所能夢見也。此圖似金焦境界。或疑不類，余曰：君曾見五代時金焦，即當首肯耳。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 10).

⁴³³ For the translation of these paragraphs, see above section III.4.2.

⁴³⁴ Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 7).

⁴³⁵ See Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 3).

discussed in detail above, that, probably due to Dong Qichang's particular interest in this master's individual painting style, are mentioned several times including the titles of the works Dong saw or owned and that inspired his own creative efforts. One can only wonder which paintings by the other masters formed Dong's idea of their qualities or whether he had, which is quite possible to imagine, based his notion of their belonging to the "Southern lineage" more on the traditional accounts pertaining to their oeuvre than on the actual experience with their paintings.

From Mi Fu's treatise, although the range of the painters active in the formative period is not so extensive, a much more varied and animated picture of these painter's oeuvre can be formed. One of the causes of this situation is readily conceivable, namely the fact that the paintings of the masters only about 150 years senior to the writer himself were of course much easily accessible in his time than several hundred years later, when Dong Qichang was undertaking his search for the roots of the literati painting tradition. The "case of Dong Yuan", however, demonstrates that when Dong Qichang decided to accord an old master a considerable attention and searched actively for his works throughout the country, he was even in the late Ming period able to locate a number of works attributed to him. From the treatises subject to our analysis it moreover seems that in case of Dong Yuan, Dong Qichang was even able to arrive at a notion quite close to that epitomized in Mi Fu's text. It is therefore tempting to imagine what the picture of Li Cheng or Fan Kuan might be had Dong Qichang tried to pursue the actual qualities of their works further.

Mi Fu's text can in fact be one of the textual sources later writers drew on when collecting the information on the painting styles of the great masters of the formative period of Chinese landscape painting. As we have seen in chapter III, Mi Fu discusses in detail a number of paintings by these authors he has seen in different collections:

“Of Guan Tong’s authentic pictures, I have seen twenty. Fan Kuan’s I have seen thirty, and his followers are also numerous. ... Of Juran’s and Liu daoshi’s [authentic paintings], I have seen more than ten each. Dong Yuan’s [authentic paintings] I have seen five and Li Cheng’s authentic paintings I have seen two. Of his false paintings, I have seen three hundred. ...”⁴³⁶

In other places, Mi Fu furnishes his descriptions of the works by these masters with his own evaluations and quality judgments. From the above quoted passage, we can learn e.g. that as for Li Cheng’s paintings, the collections of the wealthy families of his day were crowded with pictures attributed to him, while Mi Fu considered them vulgar and lacking in naturalness. Mi Fu himself regarded only two paintings signed as Li Cheng’s of the several hundreds he has seen as genuine. He valued them highly mainly for their supreme rendering of trees and the graceful quality of the overall execution.⁴³⁷ Besides that, Mi Fu records also a set of Li Cheng’s paintings that depict figures in landscape setting, a facet of Li’s oeuvre not very well known in later periods.

The art of Jing Hao and Guan Tong is referred to several times as a stylistic source for other landscape painters, most notably Fan Kuan and Li Cheng. Fan Kuan is the one of the above listed early landscape painters whose works Mi Fu praises most. In one entry, his “snow covered hills” are mentioned as being painted in the style of Wang Wei, which might be a rare reference to the monochrome painting style of Wang Wei in the early texts.⁴³⁸ Mi Fu points to Fan Kuan’s paintings several times as being an indispensable part of a good collection (together with those of Juran) and also notes the stylistic closeness between Fan Kuan’s painting and the work of his alleged model Jing Hao. In one paragraph he even

⁴³⁶ 關仝真迹見二十本。范寬見三十本，其徒甚多。... 巨然，劉道士各見十本餘。董源見五本，李成真見兩本。僞見三百本。... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 18).

⁴³⁷ See section III.4.2.4.

⁴³⁸ See note 283.

provides a short analysis of Fan Kuan's early and later works with regard to their changing dependence on the stylistic features of Jing Hao.⁴³⁹ In the following passage Mi Fu discusses the relationships between some of the early landscape masters' styles and concludes that Fan Kuan's painting is even more mature and attractive than that of his teacher Jing Hao:

“Of Jing Hao's paintings, there is a hanging scroll in the collection of Bi Zhongyu, whose courtesy name is Jiangshu. A hand scroll can be found in the collection of Duan Jian, but I haven't so far seen one that would be superior and astonishing. It seems thus that Fan Kuan surpassed his master (*qing yu lan* 青于藍). It is also said that Li Cheng studied Jing Hao, but I haven't as yet found similarities in their brushwork. As for his emulating Guan Tong, the leaves and trees [in the paintings of these two masters] resemble each other.”⁴⁴⁰

Moreover, Fan Kuan's work is considered superior to Li Cheng's:

“... Li Cheng [used] light ink [and his works] look misty and dream-like, his rocks resemble moving clouds. [His works are] very elaborate and lack true expression. Although Fan Kuan's expression is vigorous and majestic, his works are dark like a gloomy night; the rocks are not set apart from the ground, while the objects possess a kind of obscure refinement. I would classify [his work] as superior to Li Cheng's.”⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ See note 241.

⁴⁴⁰ 荆浩畫畢仲愈將叔處有一軸。段緘家有橫披，然未見卓然驚人者。寬固青於藍。又云李成師荆浩，未見一筆相似。師關仝則葉樹相似。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 18).

⁴⁴¹ For the original Chinese text see note 303.

On the basis of the above summary, we can conclude that Mi Fu obviously had an opportunity to see quite a large number of paintings attributed to the early landscape masters extant in his time. Throughout his career, he studied in detail the stylistic qualities of the works he happened to come across and performed a thorough stylistic analysis to reconstruct the picture of possible relationships and influences present in the oeuvre of the painters in question. His *Huashi* preserves numerous records of his opinions and judgments and provides a penetrating picture of the Five Dynasties and early Song dynasty landscape painting as preserved in the collections of the later days of Northern Song dynasty.

The Northern and Southern Song dynasty literati painters

As for the late Northern and Southern Song dynasty literati painting, Dong Qichang's writings contain much more plentiful references to different masters and their oeuvre than those pertaining to the early period of the development of landscape painting. It seems that Dong Qichang had more material on hand to nourish his enthusiasm about this current in landscape painting and many of the works he studied inspired him to execute his own pictures in response. Next to Mi Fu and Mi Youren, the references to whose oeuvre have already been examined in chapter II above, we can find records pertaining to the work of Song Di, Wang Shen, Zhao Lingrang, Li Gonglin and Ma Hezhi 馬和之 (1131—1162), to name just the most important personages. Dong also devotes considerable space to the discussion of the opposite current of painting of the time, namely the continuation of the "Northern tradition" in the late Northern and Southern Song period. In connection to its development, he stresses particularly the role of Li Tang, Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, who are notoriously recognized as the representatives of the Southern Song dynasty court landscape painting.

It is obvious that Ding Qichang was keen about paintings by the literati painters of this period and described stylistic features of some of them in much more detail than the works of the painters active in the formative period discussed above. His writings reveal that he probably valued most the painting of Zhao Lingrang, whom he considered one of the crucial figures in the transitory period between Northern Song and Yuan dynasties. We can find references to the closeness of his style to that of Wang Wei, such as e.g.:

“The brushwork expression of the hand scroll *Clear Summer in the Villages at the River* (*Jiangxiang qing xia juan* 江鄉清夏卷) by Zhao Lingrang is entirely based on Wang Wei. I obtained it in the capital. Every day I look at it several times and it really strikes an accord with my innermost feelings (*jue you suo hui* 覺有所會). Zhao Lingrang and Wang Shen both got rid of the courtly style and follow mainly Wang Wei and Li Cheng. Wang Shen still has some remnants of it, while Zhao Lingrang has achieved entire freedom from the earthly dust. On the 30th of the 7th month of the year *bingshen* (1596) I was on my way to assume my post in Jifu 吉府 and was traveling by the pavilion of the Ma family in Qiantang [i.e. present day Hangzhou]. I had a lot of spare time waiting for the tide. I took out this hand scroll and copied it. [This is what I] subsequently wrote on the painting.”⁴⁴²

Above, I have shown that in another passage Dong uses a reference to “the critics of the past” to point out Zhao Lingrang’s achievement of conveying the “Dao of painting” in his works:

⁴⁴² 趙令穰江鄉清夏卷筆意全倣右丞。余從京邸得之。日閱數過，覺有所會。趙與王晉卿皆脫去院體，以李咸熙，王摩詰為主。然晉卿尚有畦逕，不若大年之超軼絕塵也。丙申七月三十日奉旨持節封吉府渡錢塘次馬氏樓。待潮多暇，出此卷臨寫，因題後。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 10).

“The critics of the past found the painting of Zhao Lingrang even better than storing thousands of volumes of books in your breast. [Even more surprisingly,] Zhao as a member of the Song imperial family didn’t have the opportunity to travel extensively. Every time he got hold of a new scene, he pinned it with his eyes and said: ‘I have just returned from climbing a hill.’ He hasn’t traveled tens of thousands of miles, hasn’t read tens of thousands of books, didn’t know Du Fu’s poems, and still, the Dao of painting was there! ...”⁴⁴³

Given the prominence and positive tone of the references to Zhao’s works in Dong’s writings, this statement in fact exemplifies rather Dong Qichang’s own conviction about the qualities of Zhao Lingrang’s painting. Dong Qichang’s proclamation that one has to travel tens of thousands of miles and read tens of thousands volumes of books in order to achieve excellence in painting is well known. This passage with its witty contradiction to the ideal formulated elsewhere thus further emphasizes Dong’s perception of the superiority of Zhao’s work.

Further, paintings by Li Gonglin are also highly valued by Dong Qichang. They are referred to in context of the argument in favor of the intrinsic quality of painting⁴⁴⁴ and in several places quoted as equal to Wang Wei’s painting. In one entry, a name of Li Gonglin’s follower, now an almost forgotten painter Fan Long 梵隆 active in the Southern Song period, is made, which again testifies to the incompleteness of our knowledge of the situation surrounding the early development of the literati painting:

“This is a work of Fan Long, a brilliant disciple of Li Gonglin. In the same way as Dong Yuan’s disciple Juran, they both were not inferior to their teachers.

⁴⁴³ For the original Chinese text see note 359.

⁴⁴⁴ See Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 16).

Altogether, I got four of his hanging scrolls and one inscription recording the words of a sutra from the Duanping period (1234–1237). It is really nothing the professional masters of the Duanping period would be capable of.”⁴⁴⁵

Li Gonglin is also recognized as a skilled figure painter and Dong Qichang mentions the proliferation of copies of his paintings of Arhats in the late Ming period.⁴⁴⁶ Li’s paintings of horses are also referred to,⁴⁴⁷ and Dong notes several times the importance of Li’s works on these subjects for the great Yuan dynasty masters. It seems thus that Dong had quite a profound knowledge of paintings ascribed to Li Gonglin that were extant in his time and could have therefore based his comments and ideas on a thorough observation not unlike Mi Fu’s knowledge of the Five Dynasties and early Northern Song paintings.

Mi Fu, on the contrary, left behind only a partial and fragmentary record of the literati painting of his period, which can of course be explained by the limitations of one’s ability to reflect properly the features of the period of his own activity. To close this section, we can however take a brief look at the details pertaining to the oeuvre of the literati painters of Mi Fu’s time and see if there are any aspects that would prove helpful for our understanding of the parallels and differences in Dong’s and Mi’s respective approaches.

Of the above mentioned masters, Mi Fu records Song Di, Wang Shen, Li Gonglin and Zhao Lingrang. As for Wang Shen, Mi Fu mentions mainly his collection of old paintings, which he probably knew well, as he often viewed and discussed paintings together with Wang Shen. An interesting remark about a snowy landscape by a minor master being changed into a “Wang Wei” landscape is made in one paragraph:

⁴⁴⁵ 此梵隆之筆, 蓋龍眠高足. 如北苑之有巨然, 皆不讓於師者. 凡得四軸, 而有端平間一題偈. 實非端平間畫師所能措也. Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 11).

⁴⁴⁶ See Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13).

⁴⁴⁷ See Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 16).

“As for Wang Shiyuan’s 王士元 (active in the early Northern Song dynasty) landscapes, he painted a *Snowy Landscape on an Islet with a Fishing Village* (*Yucun pu yu xuejing* 漁村浦嶼雪景). It belongs to the genre of ‘Jiangnan paintings’.

Wang Gong, whose courtesy name is Dingguo, owned four of his paintings. Later, he presented [one of them/them] to Wang Shen, who changed its/their attribution to Wang Wei. Zhao Shu’ang, whose courtesy name is Bochong, has a copy of that/those painting/s.”⁴⁴⁸

Mi Fu mentions Wang Shen’s own painting only once in the whole *Huashi*, but fortunately, he records also several important features of Wang Shen’s painting style:

“Wang Shen studied Li Cheng’s method of applying brushstrokes, but he painted them in gold and green pigment. ... He also painted monochrome [landscapes in] flat distance in Li Cheng’s style.”⁴⁴⁹

We can thus see that Wang Shen, although tending to the monochrome painting technique and the subject of landscapes in the flat distance (*pingyuan* 平遠) characteristic of the Southern Song and Yuan dynasty literati painting, also executed landscapes in gold and green pigments, i.e. the archaic technique that dominated the Tang dynasty landscape painting. This might corroborate Dong Qichang’s remark that while “Zhao Lingrang has achieved entire freedom from the earthly dust,” Wang Shen hasn’t as yet completely got rid of the “courtly style”. It

⁴⁴⁸ 王士元山水作漁村浦嶼雪景。類江南畫。王鞏定國收四幅。後與王晉卿，命爲王右丞矣。趙叔盍伯充處有摹本。Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 40).

⁴⁴⁹ For the original Chinese text see note 242.

also echoes Dong's conviction that Wang Shen in his landscape painting followed mainly Wang Wei and Li Cheng.

As for Zhao Lingrang, Mi Fu also records numerous paintings of the old masters that were once in his collection and mentions one example of Zhao's own work. It is a snowy landscape in the style usually connected with the name of Wang Wei:

“Lingrang of the imperial family, whose courtesy name is Danian, painted a small hanging scroll entitled *Snowy Landscape, Limpid and Beautiful* (*Qingli xuejing* 清麗雪景). It resembles the paintings conventionally labeled as Wang Wei's. The islets and water birds contribute to its atmosphere of [a landscape full of] rivers and lakes.”⁴⁵⁰

Here again, the closeness between Zhao's style and the style of the snowy landscapes often attributed to Wang Wei is emphasized. We should, however, bear in mind that Mi Fu himself regarded the majority of the conventional “Wang Wei” attributions as spurious, as he explained in another passage of the *Huashi*. We can thus wonder if the closeness of Zhao's style to that of Wang Wei, suggested by Dong Qichang in the entry quoted above, might not have been based exactly on this kind of conventional opinion that Wang Wei was the author of limpid and beautiful snowy landscapes depicting the waterside areas of Southern China. For it is highly probable that those were, as Mi Fu himself has argued, later fabrications of the so called “Wang Wei snowscapes”, which were widespread already during late Northern Song dynasty.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ 宗室令穰大年作小軸清麗雪景. 類世所收王維. 汀渚水鳥有江湖意. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 25).

⁴⁵¹ See above section III.4.2.3 entitled “Mi Fu and Wang Wei”.

Mi Fu also records that Zhao Lingrang acquired some pieces in his collection from the former royal collections of the Five Dynasties period:

“Danian acquired the seal with the characters *Jixianyuan yushu* 集賢院御書 originating in the Southern Tang dynasty and used to impress it on the calligraphies and paintings in his collection. The old works on silk, horizontal scrolls inscribed with sutras, calligraphies and paintings from Danian’s collection are all of finer quality than the pieces in other collections of our time. ...”⁴⁵²

This passage thus documents the fact that Zhao Lingrang, being a member of the Song imperial family, was lucky enough to acquire for his collection some rare pieces of the early calligraphies and paintings and even the seal *Jixianyuan yushu yin*, which can be found on some works formerly housed in the royal collection of the Southern Tang dynasty. We can therefore infer two interesting facts from Mi Fu’s relation. The first is that not all the paintings and calligraphies that bear the seal *Jixianyuan yushu yin* had necessarily once formed a part of the Southern Tang dynasty collections – some of them might have been impressed with this seal only during the late Northern Song dynasty by the hand of Zhao Lingrang. The seal itself is thus not a sufficient proof of their pre-Song origin.

The second, and more important in our context, is that Zhao Lingrang had demonstrably had a good access to the former royal and imperial treasures. It should thus not be so striking that, using Dong Qichang’s words, although he hadn’t traveled tens of thousands of miles and hadn’t read tens of thousands of volumes, his paintings were of a very

⁴⁵² 大年收得南唐集賢院御書印, 乃墨用于文房書畫者. 大年收古絹本, 橫卷經, 書畫皆精過于當時. ... Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 41). The word *mo* 墨 in this passage is sometimes used in connection with the use of seals in Chinese painting and means “to impress”. The red paste utilized to daub Chinese seals onto is sometimes also called *youmo* 油墨, or “oily pigment”.

good quality. He was, as we saw, actually one of the very few painters of Chinese history lucky enough to be able to study a large range of paintings of the past. He could have nourished his skills with the works of the old masters and, had he been studious enough, transformed their features into his own painting style. We can, however, conclude that in this case again, Dong Qichang has proved to have a good eye to discern this quality in the works of Zhao Lingrang and has been wise enough to choose exactly these paintings as a model for his own work.

Song Di is mentioned in one paragraph as being a follower of Li Cheng.⁴⁵³ Mi Fu praises his painting, especially the tenderness of his pine needles, as the best of the three masters who modeled themselves after Li Cheng, the other two being Yan Su 燕肅 (991–1040) and Liu Chen 劉忱 (active in late 11th cent.).⁴⁵⁴ Li Gonglin is referred to only once as a painter who followed Wu Daozi but couldn't surpass the constraints of his style.⁴⁵⁵ Mi Fu states that he, on the contrary, took inspiration directly from the paintings of Gu Kaizhi and wasn't influenced by Wu Daozi's work at all. He also remarks that Li Gonglin had his right arm injured for more than three years, which is a well known part of his biography, for it is said to have been the cause of his retirement from office and seeking refuge in his villa in the Longmian Mountains, where he engaged mainly in painting and other scholarly activities.

IV.4.5 Painters of non-landscape subjects

We have seen above that a wide range of comments on the early development as well as the literati current of landscape painting can be found in Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's treatises and that the writings of these two theorists even in a way supplement each other in

⁴⁵³ See Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 42).

⁴⁵⁴ For more details on these two painters, see Kohara (2003b: 61).

⁴⁵⁵ See Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 19).

this respect. In the above sections, I have recapitulated the most important passages that reveal Dong's and Mi's opinions related to the landscape painting of the periods in question and pointed out the possible ways of correcting our understanding of the two separate versions of the "history of painting". To close this chapter, we can leave the field of landscape painting and have a brief look at the references to works depicting other subjects.

For Mi Fu as a Northern Song dynasty artist, it seems to be a commonplace fact that landscape painting is only a small part of the artistic heritage of the past, the rest being formed by paintings of figures, flowers, trees, animals and other subjects. Mi Fu therefore devotes considerable space to comments and evaluations of the works of masters specializing in these genres. It is, however, interesting to note that Dong Qichang, too, in his texts describes much wider range of subjects, including Buddhist figures, flowers and birds, bamboo and others, which is quite surprising given his inclination towards landscape painting and particularly its literati lineage. In the final section of this study, I would therefore like to summarize the passages of Dong's and Mi's texts dealing with non-landscape subjects and look at them side by side to see, if any parallels or contrasts can be found in this field as well.

IV.4.5.1 Dong Qichang on the painters of non-landscape subjects

In chapter II devoted to Dong Qichang's writings on painting and particularly in section II.2.3.5 that examines Dong's comments on the art of his contemporaries, I have quoted several examples of his comments on works depicting other than landscape subjects. Dong's writings contain several passages where the works of several masters of figural compositions are documented. We have seen that Dong valued highly the art of the individualist figure painters Ding Yunpeng and Wu Bin.

Ding Yunpeng's painting *Luohan Dressed in a Robe Made from Aquatic Plants* is praised as being skillfully painted, strong and lively, but not stiff or dry.⁴⁵⁶ He even goes as far as stating that it is important to reach subtlety in your painting, but it has to be based on skillfulness similar to that achieved in Ding's painting. It seems thus that in case of a figure painting he likes, Dong is able to voice opinions that go against his general conviction on the importance of getting rid of excessive fanciness and elaboration. It is also highly possible that the liveliness and subtlety of expression of Ding's figures, which classifies him alongside the eminent literati painters of his day, made such an impression on Dong Qichang that he expressed his acclaim irrespective of his own aversion to painting figures or incorporating figures into his own landscapes.

As for Wu Bin, Dong mentions a painting of strange stones that he executed for a lover of bizarre stones, Mi Wanzhong:

“Wu Bin painted for Mi Wanzhong a hand-scroll with the bizarre stones in his collection. Mi Wanzhong came on official duty three thousand miles and showed it to me. ...”⁴⁵⁷

In this entry, Dong goes on to relate details pertaining to the collecting of strange stones in history and mentions also Su Shi's and Mi Fu's enthusiasm for them. In this way, instead of pointing out the extraordinary stylistic details such as in the case of Ding Yunpeng's painting of an Arhat, he sets the painting by Wu Bin and the collection of Mi Wanzhong into a context of literati activities originating with the famous Song dynasty figures. This then might be one of the points we have to bear in mind when pondering upon his non-landscape subject

⁴⁵⁶ For the translation of the passage in question see above, the original Chinese text is reproduced in note 158.

⁴⁵⁷ 吳文中爲米仲詔畫所藏石一卷. 仲詔走信三千里視余. ...Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 17).

passages – their contents, even though not devoted to landscape, remain within the framework of the literati interests.

Another aspect that has been already noted in the section on the painting of Dong's contemporaries above is his attention to the work of female painters of the past and present. These include the Tang dynasty poetess Yao Yuehua, who painted flowers and birds so fresh and lifelike that Dong was persuaded to keep her paintings in his collection for amusement. Again, a quality seemingly contradictory to his general opinion is praised by Dong, when he states that the flowers were painted using dark and light ink, so that their appearance becomes very realistic.⁴⁵⁸ Given the general fashion of female painting in the literati circles of the late Ming dynasty, corroborated also by the references in Dong's own writings, and the reputed subtlety and freshness of Yue Yaohua's paintings that were reputedly unmatched among other female painters of the genre, it can be again seen as a part of his overall enthusiasm for extraordinary and fine paintings conforming to the literati taste. The same can be said about paintings of bamboo by another famous female painter of the history – Zhao Mengfu's wife Guan Daosheng, which Dong Qichang mentions in another paragraph.⁴⁵⁹

Further, paintings of narcissi and plum blossoms are discussed in one entry:

“The paintings of narcissi by Zhao Mengjian 趙孟堅 (1199–1295) are on the par with Yang Wujiu's 楊無咎 (1097–1171) paintings of plum blossoms. Zhao Mengjian lived in the Southern Song dynasty and Zhou Mi and Liao Yingzhong 廖瑩中 (?–1257) held his work in high esteem. Once, I moored my boat under the rapids of Yanling and saw the new moon coming out of water. I laughed loudly and said: ‘This is what Wengong [i.e. Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824)] called *So green and*

⁴⁵⁸ For the original quotation see note 166.

⁴⁵⁹ For the original quotation see note 167.

calm that I don't dare to breathe out'. That's how my 'water immortal' [i.e. narcissus] appeared."⁴⁶⁰

From this poetic passage we can see how Dong Qichang actually perceived the works of art he studied and created. Being an integral part of the literati pursuits, the activities like contemplating landscape, pondering about paintings and poetry of the old masters and critical opinions voiced about them by others are inseparable from each other in his mind and artistic practice. In another passage with a similarly poetic finale, the orchids by Dong's countryman and younger contemporary Zhu Wei 朱蔚 (*jìnshì* 1601) are praised as a memory of Dong's home town in times of his service in Fujian.⁴⁶¹

A humorous entry about Li Sixun's painting of a fish that unexpectedly came to life is a rare example of a reference to other than the most notorious literati subjects:

"Li Sixun was once painting a fish. When he was nearly finished, only the water weed was missing, someone knocked at the door. Li went to the door, invited the guest in, and realized that the fish he had painted disappeared. Li sent a child to look for it and he caught sight of it just as the wind blew it into the pool, only blank paper was left. Afterwards, Li painted several fish for fun, dropped them into the pool, left them there day and night, but they never left the paper anymore."⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ 趙子固畫水仙，欲與楊無咎梅花作敵。子固南宋人，周草窗，廖瑩中極重其品。曾刺舟嚴陵灘下，見新月出水。大笑云：此文公所謂“綠淨不可唾”。乃我水仙出現也。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13).

⁴⁶¹ See Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 15).

⁴⁶² 李思訓畫一魚甫完，未施藻荇之類，有客扣門。出看，尋入，失去畫魚。使童子覓之，乃風吹入池水。拾視之，惟空紙耳。后嘗戲畫數魚，投池內，經日夜，終不去。Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13). In *Huachanshi suibi*, the story is preceded by a passage recounting the experience of the painter Shen Mingyuan 沈明遠 (dates unknown), who presumably painted a fish without the pupils in its eyes. When a child incidentally finished the painting by adding the pupils, the fish is said to have jumped away from the picture. It was believed to have changed into a dragon and gone away. Both of these stories obviously refer to the famous passage of Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai*

Paintings of fish do not usually belong to the repertoire of the literati genres. On the contrary, they are a common subject of the folk paintings that embody congratulatory and auspicious meanings. The references to popular legends associated with painting fish are quite unique in Dong Qichang's texts, otherwise strongly permeated with literati values. These passages, however, document that even Dong's thinking was far from being free of the age-old beliefs and superstitions, even if presented as witty stories for amusement.

As the last quotation in this section, I will quote an interesting passage from *Huazhi*, where Dong discusses the painting of his older contemporary Wang Yipeng 王一鵬 (active at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries), who was reputedly a skillful painter of both landscapes and “paintings from life”:

“Wang Yipeng was a famous artist of the previous generation in our prefecture. He was a contemporary of Qian Fu 錢福, the poems they exchanged were extremely elegant. I got possession of several volumes of his [Wang's] diary. Whenever I come across an entry containing a record of an inscription or a praise of a painting, I write it down. It is similar to Zhou Mi's *Record of Clouds and Mist Passing before One's Eyes*. Its author was obviously far from the vulgar concerns. His landscape painting was also of mature brushwork and honest openness, something like the innate qualities of Shen Zhou's art. These four ‘sketches from life’ (*xiesheng* 寫生, i.e. paintings in the genre of ‘flowers and birds’) display

minghua ji, where the dragons painted onto the walls of a monastery by the celebrated figure painter Zhang Sengyou are said to have come to life after being finished with adding the pupils into their eyes.

skillfulness stemming from clumsiness, it's nothing the painters of our day are able to even approximate. After him came Sun Kehong from Zhoushan. ...⁴⁶³

From the quotation we can see that not only Mi Fu's *Huashi*, but also the miscellaneous writings of other literati such as Wang Yipeng served as a source for locating details about the calligraphies and paintings the writers saw or owned. The reference to Zhou Mi's *Record of Clouds and Mist Passing before One's Eyes*, too, is telling in this context, for it is obvious that the texts like Mi Fu's *Huashi*, Zhou Mi's *Record*, Wang Yipeng's miscellaneous jottings and Dong Qichang's treatises formed a historical line of related writings that were close to each other in form and content and became a source of inspiration for the literati of later times. As for the painting subject of flowers and birds, the passage is an interesting example of a description where primarily the master's skills in the genre of "paintings from life" is accentuated, while his landscape painting is mentioned only in passing.

To summarize the information on non-landscape painting subjects gained from the above quoted passages, it can be said that discussions of subjects favored by literati painters from Southern Song times onwards, such as fine depictions of figures, bamboo, orchids, plum blossoms, narcissi and strange stones predominate in Dong's texts. It can be thus concluded that even though discussing paintings in these genres, usually perceived as "minor" by the Chinese literati, Dong shows an inclination to project his literati tastes into the descriptions. It is all the more obvious in the passages like the one on the narcissi painting, which mirror the complex relationship of real landscape sceneries, paintings of these sceneries, poems composed about them and critical opinions pronounced by historians and theorists.

⁴⁶³ 王西園爲吾郡先輩名流，蓋與錢鶴灘同時。酬倡甚有高韻。余得其日記數冊，每遇書畫題詠，隨手紀錄。如周密烟雲過眼錄之類。思見其人絕去俗事。山水畫亦老筆紛披，似啓南本色。此寫生四種，拙中有巧，非時師所能湊泊也。後有孫漢陽，周山人。... Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 13).

It can be also observed that in case of the descriptions of paintings in other than landscape genres, Dong Qichang often discusses the art of his contemporaries or only slightly older painters. References to paintings by early masters such as the Five Dynasties painter Huang Quan are occasionally made, but are quite rare. Only mentions of historical paintings of bamboo and strange stones defy this rule. The reason can be possibly found in the scarcity of early paintings of flowers and birds that would conform to the late Ming literati taste on the one hand and a large proliferation of these executed by Ming dynasty literati painters on the other. When moving on to the examination of Mi Fu's passages dealing with non-landscape subjects, however, it would perhaps be useful to note that due to this fact, the number of painters discussed by both theorists and thus available for a direct comparison is likely to be rather small.

IV.4.5.2 Mi Fu on the painters of non-landscape subjects

The recapitulation of the contents of Mi Fu's *Huashi* in the introductory passage of chapter II shows that, contrary to Dong Qichang's treatises, a large part of Mi Fu's text is filled with discussions of other than landscape paintings. It is not difficult to understand, given the hierarchy of painting genres common in the pre-Song times and actually still during the Northern Song dynasty. From both, textual and pictorial documents, we know that before the emergence of the literati theories of painting in the later half of the Northern Song dynasty, the paintings of figures and depictions of historical events occupied the top position in the conventional hierarchy of painting genres and only since the late Northern Song times, landscape painting started slowly to take its place. The importance of figure paintings and

figures in landscape was noted with surprise in the above discussion of some entries of Mi Fu's *Huashi* that were supposed to be dealing primarily with landscape paintings.⁴⁶⁴

As expected under these circumstances, the first two chapters of *Huashi*, i. e. “Jin dynasty painting” and “Six Dynasties’ painting”, and also the opening part of the third chapter entitled “Tang dynasty painting supplemented with the painting of Five Dynasties and the present dynasty” are devoted entirely to the discussion of old masterpieces of figure painting extant in Mi Fu’s day or paintings attributed to the great figure painters of the past. Like that, paintings by or signed as the works of Gu Kaizhi, Dai Kui, Zhang Sengyou, Lu Tanwei, Yan Liben, Wu Daozi, Zhou Wenju and Gu Hongzhong, to name at least the most famous artists, are discussed by Mi Fu and judged in terms of quality and authenticity. Mi Fu also devotes extensive passages to the description of anonymous mural paintings in monasteries and tombs,⁴⁶⁵ and thus provides us with interesting first-hand documents of works now largely lost.

The description of the mural paintings and other decorative objects found in the Temple of Sweet Dew (*Ganlu si*) in Runzhou, close to which Mi Fu built his dwelling, belongs to the most interesting passages dealing with figure paintings as far as the informativeness of the content is concerned.⁴⁶⁶ From this entry, we learn that the decoration of the Temple of Sweet Dew included a painting by Zhang Sengyou entitled *Four Bodhisattvas* (*Si pusa* 四菩薩) long four *chi* and a board (presumably with paintings) eight *chi* in length. Further, there was a painting of a deity by Lu Tanwei that was vivid and striking. On the ceiling, two walking monks were depicted by Wu Daozi. Further, a bronze statue of the Tang dynasty Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (here referred to as Minghuang 明皇, r. 627–649) survived, according to Mi Fu, a former burning of the temple. In the Yuanfu era (1098–1100), however,

⁴⁶⁴ See e.g. the part on “Mi Fu and Li Cheng” in section III.4.2.4 above.

⁴⁶⁵ See e.g. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 20–21, 35, 45–46).

⁴⁶⁶ For more details on Mi Fu’s residence in Runzhou, see Sturman (1997: 1–3).

the temple experienced a disastrous fire again and consequently, no Jin dynasty works were extant on the left bank of the River anymore (*Liuchao yiwu guidi, Jiang zuo geng wu yi Jin bi cang*. 六朝遺物歸地, 江左更無一晉筆藏).⁴⁶⁷ From Mi Fu's account, which is quite rare in the whole *Huashi* as for its content and the punctuality of the description, we can sense a deep personal interest in the condition the furnishings of the temple were in and a genuine regret at their destruction, which might result from his familiarity with the temple in whose neighborhood he spent an important period of his life.

The attention to the details of the paintings and other objects housed in the temple moreover documents his concern for Buddhist art, which was by no means lesser than his concern for different subjects of landscape painting expressed elsewhere. In relation to Dong Qichang's expositions on ancient painting recorded in *Huazhi* and *Huachanshi suibi*, it can be concluded that what were for Dong "works of the high antiquity, which cannot be found anymore", was still a living heritage for Mi Fu that could be protected or lost through disasters.

Further, Mi Fu records paintings in the genre of flowers, bamboo and trees and also paintings of horses, buffalos, cats and other animals. Masters such as Xu Xi and Xu Chongsi, Huang Quan, Xue Ji, Tang Xiya, Han Gan and several less famous ones are mentioned, some of them repeatedly, as working in these genres. Some of them are discussed both as authors of landscape paintings and paintings in other genres. Xu Xi and Tang Xiya, for example, were quoted as masters of "snowy landscapes" that a collector should acquire first of all together with similar paintings by Fan Kuan or Juran. From Mi Fu's account, his conviction that occasionally a painter could have achieved great renown in both landscape painting and in the genre of flowers and birds was obvious. The most significant example of such a master is Xu Xi, whose work as presented in *Huashi* was already discussed above in section III.4.2.6. It is

⁴⁶⁷ Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, pp. 20–21).

interesting to note that Mi Fu regarded his landscapes as similarly mature as e.g. Juran's, for in the later times the specialization on flowers and birds overshadowed his skills in the other genres.

One of the very few comparisons that our two texts offer can be made with regard to Xu Xi's paintings of flowers and birds. The relatively plentiful accounts of Xu Xi's works and their qualities in Mi Fu's *Huashi* include a comparison with Huang Quan's paintings such as:

“Huang Quan's paintings are unworthy of being collected, they are easy to be imitated. Xu Xi's paintings cannot be imitated.”⁴⁶⁸

In another place, Xu Xi is again quoted as an example of the best painters in this genre, while Huang Quan's paintings are described as vulgar:

“The flowers of Teng Changyou, Bian Luan, Xu Xi and Xu Chongsi were all very life-like. Only Huang Quan's lotuses cannot compare with them; although plump and attractive, they are all vulgar.”⁴⁶⁹

It can be thus observed that Mi Fu considered Xu Xi as a prominent representative of the flowers and birds genre, while Huang Quan was regarded as inferior to him.

Dong Qichang, too, quotes the names of both Xu Xi and Huang Quan as eminent masters of this genre in the passage that summarizes the most popular painting genres and their representatives.⁴⁷⁰ In another place, however, he mentions Huang Quan quite

⁴⁶⁸ 黄筌画不足收, 易模. 徐熙画不可模. Deng Shi; Huang Binhong (1936: vol. 2, sec. 9, p. 32).

⁴⁶⁹ For the original Chinese text see note 218.

⁴⁷⁰ See note 146.

surprisingly as an extraordinary master of the past, who excelled both in landscape painting and in the genre of flowers and birds:

“It is impossible to excel both in ‘paintings from life’ (*xie sheng* 生與) and landscape at the same time. Only Huang Quan was capable of that. The painting of *Collating Books* (*Kan shu tu* 勘書圖) in my collection is in the style of Li Sheng, while the *Pigeons with a Golden Plate* (*Jin pan bo ge* 金盤鵓鴿) emulate Zhou Fang. Both are painted with a mastery surpassing their models. In our dynasty, Shen Zhou is the only master [like that]. ...”⁴⁷¹

Obviously, Dong must have seen or even owned paintings of landscapes by Huang Quan, or figures in landscape setting, which would perhaps be a more suitable description of a painting entitled as *Collating Books* and would also better conform to the pre-Song dynasty notion of a landscape, as we have seen above in the case of landscapes by Li Cheng and other early masters. It is, however, quite surprising given the present-day knowledge of Huang Quan’s work that is based mainly on realistic paintings of birds preserved in his name, such as the *Sketches of Birds and Insects* (*Xiesheng zhenqin tu* 寫生珍禽圖) in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei.⁴⁷² Moreover, the testimony of Mi Fu, a stern connoisseur and judge of the old masters’ abilities, shows Huang Quan as a painter specializing predominantly on the genre of birds and flowers and of mediocre abilities at best. Xu Xi, who was seen as a more skillful painter in Mi Fu’s account, was described rather as Huang’s follower by Dong Qichang:

⁴⁷¹ 寫生與山水不能兼長。惟黃要叔能之。余所藏勘書圖學李昇。金盤鵓鴿學周昉。皆有奪藍之手。我朝則沈啓南一人而已。... Yu Anlan (1937: *Huazhi*, p. 12).

⁴⁷² For a reproduction, see e.g. Barnhart (1997: 91).

“It is said that Huang Quan from the Western Shu achieved mastery in multiple genres of painting and became thus famous in his time. Xu Xi from Jiangnan followed him and painted ink landscapes. Divine energy was flowing [from his works]; they were lively to an extraordinary degree. ...”⁴⁷³

Here, Huang Quan is again praised as a painter who achieved mastery in multiple genres and, interestingly, a predecessor of Xu Xi with his ink landscapes, which are unfortunately not characterized in greater detail by Dong Qichang. It is quite possible that Dong didn't actually know any extant work of this kind by Xu Xi and was only repeating the textual records in this place. The reference to the monochrome landscapes, however, makes it easier for us to understand Dong's sympathies for these two painters and the mention of their names in the discussion of the relationship between a painter and his alleged follower, which is the main topic of the rest of the above quoted paragraph. For the purpose of our comparison of Dong's and Mi's accounts of the “history of painting”, the case of Huang Quan and Xu Xi can nevertheless serve as an illustrative example of a radically divergent view of these two critics. We can only speculate that it might have been caused by the fact that different (and presumably very few) paintings were extant in Dong Qichang's time to allow for a more intimate knowledge of the actual work of the two masters, while in Mi Fu's time the relative abundance of material still preserved in the collections of his contemporaries permitted for a better analysis of their painting styles. The legend on their interesting landscape styles, especially in Xu Xi's case, no doubt further enriched Dong Qichang's imagination that is likely to have been the source of the above quoted comments.

⁴⁷³ 傳稱西蜀黃筌畫，兼眾體之妙，名走一時。而江南徐熙，后出作水墨畫。神氣若涌，別有生意。...
Huachanshi suibi, vol. 2: “Inscriptions on Dong's own paintings”).

V. Conclusion

The subject of the present study were the treatises conceived as “histories of painting” by the late Ming dynasty scholar, artist and collector Dong Qichang and the Northern Song dynasty scholar, artist and collector Mi Fu. Throughout the whole history of Chinese art, the texts left behind by these two personages were regarded as important contributions to the art-historical writing but, interestingly, were not accorded detailed analysis by modern art historians. The present study’s aim was therefore to discuss in depth the contents and contexts of the texts devoted to painting by Dong Qichang and Mi Fu and to find out the manner in which the concepts of the two critics are related to each other. The main objective thus lied in presenting a detailed analysis of the texts of each of the two artists separately, defining the most important topics the authors elaborate on, summarizing the information they record on different artists of the past and consequently forming a picture of the artistic past each of the two writers worked with when discussing the “history of painting”. The ensuing comparison of the notions of the history of painting the two authors operated with when writing their treatises aimed at finding possible relationships, influences or rejections, which can be traced in their theoretical writings. Simultaneously, the discussion tried to illuminate the way in which the writers of more recent periods, and particularly Dong Qichang himself, constructed the “icons” of the artists of the past to support their own vision of the “history of painting”, which has been consequently often perpetuated by art-historians up to the present day.

The first chapter summarized the information on the treatises in question, i.e. Dong Qichang’s *Huazhi*, *Huachanshi suibi*, *Huayan*, *Huashuo* and other, mostly fragmentary pieces of writing, and Mi Fu’s *Huashi*. After reading through the large body of secondary literature, it can be concluded that no modern study has sufficiently elaborated on Dong Qichang’s treatises on painting and discussed in detail the topics and concepts addressed in his writings.

Subjects other than the division of the history of painting into two opposing lineages, customarily called the Northern and Southern Schools of Painting, were so far neglected by modern scholarship, and even this notorious topic was seldom discussed in the context of the texts of other periods and writers. Mi Fu's *History of Painting* was translated and annotated in French by Nicole Vandier-Nicolas (1964) and in Japanese by Kohara Hironobu (2009) and (2010), but a consistent discussion of the whole range of information it supplies and its relationship to later theory of painting is also missing.

The second and third chapters were therefore devoted to the analysis of the treatises by the two writers in question. Different topics addressed by Dong Qichang and Mi Fu were discussed in depth and put into context of the contemporary as well as later development in the area of Chinese painting. In Dong Qichang's texts, the topics identified were above all the advocating of the merit of painting; old philosophical concepts and their relationship to artistic creation; discussion of the achievements of different painters of the past and their inspiration for Dong's own painting; Dong's opinions on authenticity of old painting and his attitude towards copying and plagiarism and his attention towards contemporary painting and the activities of women painters. In the course of the discussion of Dong Qichang's comments on the work of different painters of the past, his selectiveness and idealism rather than realism with regard to the facts recorded was noted. In this way, he was able to construct icons of painters he liked and tried to emulate in his own work. The most interesting cases were defined as the icon of "Wang Wei as the predecessor of the Southern lineage of painting"; the icon of "Mi Fu as the author of misty landscapes and the so called ink-plays" and the icon of "Dong Yuan as the painter of southern landscape and one of those who brought about a fundamental change in the predominant style of landscape painting". Even when based solely on the internal evidence of Dong Qichang's texts, the image of the painters in question was

found not very consistent and not conforming to the available pictorial evidence. More material on this problem was subsequently gathered in chapter IV.

In connection to Mi Fu's text on painting, the topics discussed were again his advocating of the merit of painting; his treatment of different technical aspects of painting practice and of the preservation of old works of art; Mi Fu's views on the problem of authenticity and copying of old painting and his comments on the styles and techniques used by different painters of the past, namely his records of information related to the painting of Wang Wei, Li Cheng, Dong Yuan and Xu Xi. The details pertaining to each of these topics gathered in the course of the analysis of Mi Fu's *Huashi* subsequently formed the basis for the comparison of different aspects of Dong Qichang's painting theory that was the subject of the final chapter.

Chapter IV was devoted to the comparison of Dong Qichang's and Mi Fu's writings on the history of painting. Its main objective was to define the way Dong Qichang's writings on painting can possibly be related to the text written by Mi Fu under the late Northern Song dynasty. Not only were the lives and careers of the two artists found to be interestingly similar to each other, but also the topics discussed in their treatises proved to be at times close to each other. Both Dong Qichang and Mi Fu, even though separated in time by several centuries, voiced remarkably similar opinions on the problems of the merit of painting and artistic creation in general, the authenticity and copying of the paintings by the old masters and the importance of certain painting styles, most notably the paintings of misty landscapes depicting southern mountain sceneries.

On the other hand, a number of differences in the records pertaining to the work of individual artists of the past were found in Dong's and Mi's versions of the "history of painting". The juxtaposition of their respective comments on the paintings of some masters and particularly the examination of Dong Qichang's statements related to different painters of

the past against the testimony of Mi Fu's *Huashi* as a contemporary or in terms of time much closer source, has revealed interesting information. When confronted with Mi Fu's records and particular facts that his *Huashi* reveals, Dong Qichang's notion of the artistic personae of some of the painters proved to be constructed on the basis of his preferences and selective approach to the pictorial material rather than impartial comments and records.

Dong Qichang's overall vision of the "history of painting" seems to refer predominantly to the early painters who can be accorded a position in the two-track system of the Northern and Southern Schools, while of later painters mostly those of the literati orientation are recorded in considerable number and detail. In Mi Fu's version, the works of different masters of the past are accorded descriptions and comments that reveal no such classification or assortment. The literati painters active in Mi Fu's time are, on the other hand, addressed only occasionally and more often as collectors than as painters in their own right.

As for the comments on the work of individual painters, the idea of Wang Wei standing at the birth of the Southern-monochrome-literati tradition of painting has been found to be entirely unfounded on the pictorial evidence recorded both by Dong Qichang and Mi Fu. Given its prominence in Dong's passages on the two opposing lineages in the development of Chinese landscape painting up to his day, it is rather likely to be based on other textual sources, some of them obscure even in Dong's time. Moreover, not only the artistic persona of Wang Wei, the Tang dynasty literati painter, but also the icons of other early painters, such as Mi Fu, the Northern Song dynasty painter of misty landscapes, or Dong Yuan, the Five Dynasties master of southern sceneries, were found to be constructed in a similar manner by Dong Qichang. Mi Fu's celebrated style of painting designated as "ink-plays" and his allegedly predominant subject of misty mountain sceneries are corroborated neither by his theoretical treatise nor by the surviving paintings and records thereof. In Dong Yuan's case, on the other hand, the ideas presented by Dong Qichang and Mi Fu remarkably correspond

with each other. When examined against still earlier sources, however, they both seem to be a similar construction with a feeble foundation in the contemporary material, quite similar to Dong's constructions of the icons of different Song dynasty painters.

This points to the fact, partly corroborated even by the testimony of Mi Fu's own statements describing the reality of Song dynasty collecting and art-market activities, that the construction of the icons of painters, who were perceived as crucial for later development of painting in China, was under way already in Mi Fu's time. It might well have been one of the by-products of the increased interest in history and theory of painting of the past periods that occurred together with the appearance of the literati theory of painting in the Northern Song dynasty with its emphasis on specific techniques and methods of painting on the one hand and its extreme attention to one's stylistic genealogy on the other.

Being one of the fundamental forces operating throughout the history of Chinese painting, the tendency to construct icons of painters that take up individual forms in the authors' framework of painting history irrespectively of the painters' original oeuvre would therefore deserve a closer examination in a much broader scope of textual sources in different periods of Chinese history. As exemplified by the above instances of the construction of "Wang Wei", "Mi Fu" and "Dong Yuan", to quote just the few artists the present thesis provides the most substantial evidence for, ancient historians and critics of Chinese painting often used older textual sources, paintings of different quality attributed to the masters in question and individual concepts and beliefs to form "icons" of painters. These "icons" were further enhanced and codified by writers of subsequent generations, who relied on the reputation of great critics and connoisseurs of the past such as Mi Fu and Dong Qichang. Grouped together and elaborated upon in art-historical and critical treatises, these "icons" later formed "the history of painting" composed by old Chinese historians and critics and also influenced the perception of Chinese painting history in the earlier phases of its study in the

West. It would be therefore interesting to study more closely the textual evidence old critical texts supply for different Chinese painters of the early periods. Based on the information these texts provide and in conjunction with the results of modern art-historical research, more plausible images of the early artists would be possible to form. As this thesis tried to argue, they would be often quite different from their “icons” constructed throughout the history of Chinese writing on painting, some of which still influence modern scholarship on Chinese painting. First attempts of this kind, such as the study of Christian Unverzagt (2007) on the historical construction of the artistic persona of Dong Yuan, already started to appear. This thesis, for its part, endeavors to become a similar contribution by examining material gathered in Dong Qichang’s and Mi Fu’s treatises. It is hoped to become the basis for further elaboration and expansion by scholars studying the textual sources for Chinese painting history and also for subsequent deeper comparisons with the pictorial sources extant in world collections of Chinese painting.

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