

# On Telling Images of China

## Essays in Narrative Painting and Visual Culture

Edited by Shane McCausland and Yin Hwang



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# Abstracts

## 1. Competing Lives of Confucius: The *Shengji tu* at Kongzhai—Julia K. Murray

In the first decade of the seventeenth century, officials and local literati of Qingpu, Songjiang (now part of metropolitan Shanghai) created a shrine to Confucius at Kongzhai, where his clothing allegedly had been buried by a descendant a thousand years earlier. Three of the shrine's patrons also sponsored a set of stone tablets illustrating the life of Confucius, called *Kongzi shengji tu*. Consisting of thirty scenes and six accompanying texts, it reproduced rubbings from the earliest illustrated biography of the ancient sage, which had been created in 1444 and preserved on incised stones in Ningbo. Their choice of models is noteworthy, as they knew but did not copy a more hagiographical 112-scene version displayed since 1592 at the primordial Temple of Confucius in Qufu, Shandong.

The Qingpu tablets were scattered in the 1644 Qing conquest. In the 1670s a local resident started collecting them to install at Kongzhai, and had replacements made for the missing tablets. The reconstructed set was completed in 1682, just after the Qing magistrate of Qingpu had a second version of the illustrated biography carved on stone tablets for display at Kongzhai. The latter contained thirty-six scenes and was based on yet another model, possibly a coloured handscroll circulating as a purported work by the noted Yuan court-painter Wang Zhenpeng. In the late Ming and early Qing periods, a flourishing market for colourfully painted illustrations of classic works of literature and historical anecdotes included a considerable demand for Confucian-themed narrative illustrations, including depictions of the life of the sage himself.

The present article explores iconographical differences between the Kongzhai's two sets of stone tablets portraying the life of Confucius, their relationships to the hagiographical Qufu set and to other versions in circulation, the motivations of their respective sponsors, and their significance as a medium for promoting Confucian values.

## 2. Transcendence, Thunder and Exorcism: Images of the Daoist Patriarch Zhang Daoling in Books and Paintings—Noelle Giuffrida

Revered as the founding patriarch of Celestial Master Daoism, Zhang Daoling

(34–156) has inspired numerous biographies and images over the many centuries since his association with the founding of the Way of the Celestial Masters (Tianshi dao) in Han-era Sichuan. Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) pictures featuring Zhang survive in many forms including illustrated scriptures and books, occasional and liturgical scroll paintings, and printed talismans. Woodblock-printed books from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth century provide one of the richest reservoirs for studying stories about and representations of religious figures. The two collections of serried immortals and patriarchs, the pair of contemporaneous compendia of gods and the volume of vernacular short stories addressed in this essay include textual biographies and visual portrayals of dozens of figures, including Zhang. The links and variances between such printed images of the master highlight different aspects of his biography and exploits, while consideration of several small hanging-scroll paintings brings out connections and distinctions between representations of Zhang in different media. In the group of paintings and prints considered, we find both imaginary portraits and images of an iconic event that operate on several levels. My aim is to explore how these diverse representations embodied, triggered and conveyed stories about Zhang, shaping audiences' understanding of his overlapping roles as immortal, patriarch and exorcist. This examination will reveal efforts to claim, fashion and locate Zhang Daoling for viewers of the time, and contributes to the recovery of a more nuanced picture of engagement with this seminal Daoist.

### **3. Exemplary Complicity: The Pictorial Lives of Han Court Beauties in Two Narrative Handscrolls of Mid-Ming Suzhou—Shane McCausland**

This study explores You Qiu's visual narration in the handscroll format via two paintings in the Shanghai Museum, *Lady Zhaojun Leaves China* (*Zhaojun chusai tu*) of 1554 and *Spring Morning in the Han Palace* (*Hangong chunxiao tu*) of 1568. The first scroll, an extended mono-scenic rendition of figures in a landscape, describes the journey made by the Han palace lady Wang Zhaojun to marry a nomad chieftain, an act of self-sacrifice that ushered in a prolonged era of peace between Han China and the Xiongnu nomads. The second painting, in twelve discrete scenes, illustrates the life-story of two femmes fatales—Zhao Feiyan and her sister, Hede, favourites of the Han emperor Chengdi (r. 33–7 BC) whose conduct almost toppled the empire. The first scroll consists of You Qiu's painting alone, whereas in the second, You Qiu's painting is part of an assembly of related texts, one inscribed by Wen Zhengming.

The study offers close readings of the paintings. It investigates and extrapolates the visual narrative techniques within, including how text is translated to image, and explores aesthetic choices in light of the historical position of the two artworks. It considers the social, political and artistic contexts of the paintings in the latter part of the Jiajing reign, and the ways in which such artworks could have functioned as veiled admonitions, even as paintings that were not to be seen at court but rather in Suzhou scholar society. The argument, concerning the visual imagination of a journeyman painter tasked with illustrating popular tales, relates to studies of an ‘obsessive’ model of selfhood and desire among Ming collector-connoisseurs as well as to studies on irony as an aesthetic mode in Ming culture. In sum, this essay aims to think beyond the fact that these picture-scrolls draw conventionally on historical precedents to provide illusions of similarity and historical parallelism, and to investigate elements of audience complicity in how they manipulate those precedents.

#### **4. Expressing Innate Knowledge of the Good: The Implied Meaning in Guo Xu’s ‘An Old Lady Feeds a Hero’—Lizhong Ling**

This essay focuses on a leaf entitled ‘An Old Lady Feeds a Hero’ from an album by the Ming artist Guo Xu (1456–c. 1529) depicting various Daoist immortals and historic figures. The leaf depicts a story in the early career of the great minister Han Xin, who helped Liu Bang unify China and establish the Han dynasty. The album stands out because of the odd number of leaves—eleven; careful examination also reveals physical differences between the leaf discussed here and the remaining ten. In the context of historical events and incidents in the artist’s life, and supported by inscriptions on the leaf itself, I suggest that ‘An Old Lady Feeds a Hero’ was painted separately from the other leaves and for the rare purpose of political admonishment.

Guo Xu came from Taihe, Jiangxi, and lived during the reign of the Ming emperor Zhengde. During this period Zhu Chenhao, the fourth prince of Ning in Nanchang, Jiangxi, began to hatch a rebellion, as well as secretly organizing an army. He sought out many celebrated literati, including the well-known artists Tang Yin, Wen Zhengming, Xie Shichen and Guo Xu himself. Eventually the prince of Ning raised his army in revolt, but the attack was suppressed by the military commander Wang Shouren with the help of his supporters Lei Ji and Liu Jie. The leaf bears inscriptions ascribed to Lei and Liu. According to later biographies, Guo had politely declined Zhu Chenhao’s overtures, taking Wang

Shouren's suggestion of offering an inscribed painting as an expression of his intention. I believe that this painting was 'An Old Lady Feeds a Hero'. Guo used the tale of Han Xin to implore the prince of Ning to abandon his scheme, thereby expressing his own loyalty to the throne. Clearly the prince did not heed Guo's warning, his rebellion having been put down by the government in 1519 and his entire family wiped out as punishment.

### 5. Narrative Painting Viewed as Major Art in Sixteenth-Century Suzhou —Cédric Laurent

Narrative illustration in which a succession of scenes unfold in a continuous handscroll format is a topic of considerable interest in the field of Chinese art history. In many cases the earliest illustrations are now lost, but later versions and copies that were produced in and around Suzhou in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries testify to their existence (as seen, for example, in the copies of Qiu Ying's work). Ming copies are useful for research into the early stages of the illustrative traditions not only for their fidelity to the original models, but also for their divergence from Song prototypes in both iconography and significance.

My paper emphasizes the phenomenon of Ming narrative painting itself: the revival of interest in narrative illustration, the archaic styles associated with it and the cultural context for this movement. The purpose is to understand what the issues at stake in narrative scrolls are, and why painters preferred to produce such complex paintings when they could have illustrated the same subjects in a more simplistic manner.

The literary aspect of the painting appears to have been the main objective of the literati who painted or commissioned the handscrolls. Painting seems to have been done with the aim of enhancing 'ancient-style prose' (*guwen*), and Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), leader of the *fugu* ('return to antiquity') movement, played an important role. This perspective gives us a new understanding that literati painting in mid-Ming times differs from the modern literati tradition which regards illustrative painting as a minor art.

### 6. Historicity, Visuality and Patterns of Literati Transcendence: Picturing the Red Cliff—Yu-chih Lai

The Battle of the Red Cliff was one of the most famous military campaigns in Chinese history. Its conclusion not only solidified the contention between the Three Kingdoms, but the heroic event in which a smaller army defeated a larger



one led it to become one of the most popular themes in various literary formats, including poems, ballads, tales, novels and dramas. However, the direct depiction of the Battle of the Red Cliff in art or paintings relating to the Three Kingdoms did not flourish to the same extent as literary works. Rather, it was not until Su Shi visited a certain site in Huangzhou in 1082 and composed his former and latter rhapsodies on the Red Cliff that the literati and their nostalgic illustrations of the Red Cliff rose in popularity. Many famous literati through the ages took great pains to depict the theme in calligraphic or pictorial format or to collect works on the subject, and scholars with lofty literati aspirations would often advertise themselves by means of their Red Cliff illustrations or collections of works. The imagery seems therefore to have become closely related to the formation of literati status.

How did a battle and its story of a group of heroes come to be widely appreciated by the literati? What is the relationship between the subject matter and the sense of identity in literati status? How did painters through the ages interpret and explain the theme? How do the variations in depiction explain the differences among literati over the centuries? Taking Su Shi's trip to the Red Cliff as a starting point, this study addresses how the Battle of the Red Cliff became a subject that bound together the lives of so many literati, and explains how literati over the ages recast its imagery in the context of their own period. Finally, the study will discuss how the Red Cliff expanded from a literati theme to emerge in such fields of populist culture as printmaking and encyclopaedias, and most significantly, how these popularized images help create a familiar cultural heritage associated with, yet extending beyond, the texts. It is on the basis of this cultural heritage that Luo Zhenyu and other Qing loyalists, as well as their Japanese friends in the twentieth century, evoked, consumed, and even capitalized their sentiments and identities.

## 7. Visiting Steles: Variations of a Painting Theme—Clarissa von Spee

In China, the practice of placing inscribed stone steles in a landscape setting began with the reign of the First Emperor (r. 221–210 BC). Narrative paintings that depict travelling rulers or scholars posing in front of a memorial stone stele have existed at least since the Song dynasty.

Paintings of this genre are often referred to as 'images of reading (or visiting) memorial steles' (*dubei*, *guanbei* or *fangbei tu*). From the Ming dynasty onwards, the courtly theme appears both in Zhe School paintings as well as in prints and paintings of a more popular nature. In this case the motif may be associated

with historical anecdotes or make reference to theatre plays. With the emergence of the Epigraphical School movement in the eighteenth century, the ‘visiting steles’ motif was adopted by scholar-painters, who used it to document their archaeological and scholarly activities.

It is the aim of this article to trace this theme through various dynasties, explore changes in form and content, and discuss possible layers of meanings, agendas and audiences.

### **8. The Posthumous Careers of Wang Zhaojun, of Mencius’s Mother, of Shi Chong and of his Concubine Lüzhu (Green Pearl) in the Painting and Popular Print Traditions—Ellen Johnston Laing**

In China, as elsewhere, personalities and celebrities from great antiquity were in the public domain; their stories and images could be modified and recycled to serve different purposes. There is not just one story, and not just one social or moral role. In addition, in the pervasive fluidity of popular culture, all of this is unpredictable. Several individuals depicted in the paintings for the elite market included in the *Telling Images of China* exhibition also appear in woodblock and lithographed prints for the mass market. This paper focuses on the painted and printed representations of Wang Zhaojun, the beautiful imperial concubine married to a nomad chief; of Mencius’s mother, a model of exemplary conduct; and of the wealthy Shi Chong and his lovely, ill-fated concubine Green Pearl. The prints reflect plebeian culture, and in them Wang Zhaojun, Shi Chong, Green Pearl acquire new lives, for example as one of the ‘four beauties’, as ‘a living wealth god’ or as ‘a flower spirit’. Depictions of the stories of Mencius’s mother moving her home or cutting her weaving may be presented as narratives through the inclusion of additional figures or the use of extensive landscape and architectural settings. Analysis of the representations of these four individuals provides glimpses into how these famous people were seen and appreciated by the ordinary public.

### **9. From Paragon to Butcher: Iconography and Identity in the Early Portraiture of Ren Bonian (1840–95)—Roberta Wue**

The conventions of Qing informal portraiture often matched sitters with cultural archetypes, drawn from a standard pantheon of famous sages, scholars and officials. The early portraiture oeuvre of the Shanghai painter Ren Bonian stands out in the late Qing for his particular uses of the standard iconography of the literatus

to create new representations of the artist and the artist's identity. This paper focuses on portraits from the early part of Ren's career, just prior to his arrival in Shanghai in 1868, when he made good use of his remarkable skills in portraiture to establish his reputation and make connections in the Jiangnan art world. His images of friends, intimates and colleagues sought to be more than flattering likenesses, radically and wittily casting his sitters in new roles that alternately flatter, parody and comment on their shifting social and professional identities. Although the use of striking role plays was a consistent feature of his portraits, his early works are notable for their evocation of historical and literary role models, with Ren often alluding to the model of popular cultural heroes such as Su Shi, Lu You or Mi Fu. Frequently drawing on popular imagery and sources, these references are layered over vivid and vividly contemporary representations of his sitters, creating idiosyncratic portraits in collaboration with his subjects that offer a joint exploration of the modern artist's identity.

#### **10. Endless Stories? Narrative Themes from the Poets of the Past Reflected in the Paintings of Fu Baoshi—Eric Lefebvre**

The end of the imperial period in 1911 and the rise of modernity had tremendous effects on Chinese culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. Confucian thought, which had been the cultural background to the apparition and development of many narrative themes in the history of Chinese painting, was no longer considered fundamental for the state ideology, suggesting that these illustrations of a bygone world would soon come to an end. Nevertheless, the enduring life of literary subjects, and the vivid representation of poets from the past in the paintings of Fu Baoshi, seem to demonstrate the significant role of these patterns in the definition of 'Chinese painting' (*guohua*) in the Republican period. As an historian of art, Fu Baoshi was highly conscious of the different possibilities for narrative expression which had been developed within the space of the Chinese scroll painting tradition since Gu Kaizhi. As a painter, he was relying both on his wide knowledge of past masters and on his personal interpretation of famous poems in order to create singular visions of these classical themes. The fact that his representations of the poets of the past feature them together with calligraphers and painters in a personal pantheon of 'cultural heroes' raises the question of the paradoxical affirmation of the artist's self in the modern era.

### **11. Chinese Art History as Contemporary Art History: An Outsider's Perspective—Kathleen James-Chakraborty**

However different Chinese painting may appear to be from its European counterpart, the ways in which it is discussed remain well within the mainstream of an ever-changing discipline. Like the stories art tells us, the stories we tell about art have a great deal in common. Art history and visual culture have shifted away from understanding works of art as reflections of the cultures in which they were made, to interpreting their creation as part of the process of constructing identity. Art is driven by desires, not all of them sexual. Governments always want to be seen as secure and powerful, and patrons as handsome or beautiful. Stories of failures are cautionary, with appropriate punishment handed out to those who do wrong. Although not all of them focus directly on the rhetorical qualities of the art that is their subject, the many and varied implications of this turn are on clear display in the essays published here.

This essay situates the approaches taken by the authors of this volume among those current within the discipline as a whole. Here pictorial communication assumes the same communicative status as the written word, popular as well as fine art is mined for what it can tell us about the culture that produced and consumed it, and the role of women as subjects and viewers is addressed. Moreover, Chinese culture is understood to be dynamic rather than static, with art of the past two centuries as valued as that of classical periods.

## Contributors

**Noelle Giuffrida** is Assistant Professor of East Asian Art in the Department of Art History at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. She holds a PhD from the University of Kansas (2008). Her research focuses on Chinese Daoist visual culture of the Ming and early Qing with a keen interest in exploring visual narratives in printed books and scriptures as well as in painting and sculpture. Her article on Zhenwu, the Perfected Warrior, will appear in 2013. Giuffrida's work also addresses issues surrounding collecting and exhibiting Chinese painting in mid-twentieth century America, with a book-length project in planning and an essay forthcoming in *The Reception of Chinese Art across Cultures* (Cambridge Scholars, 2013).

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**Lizhong Ling** is Professor in the Department of Painting and Calligraphy at the Shanghai Museum. His publications include studies of several leading Ming and Qing artists and their work, including Dong Qichang, Wen Zhengming, Shitao and Chen Hongshou (1598–1652). He is the co-author, with Liao Lu, of *A New Study of Literati Painting History* (*Wenren huashi xinlun*; Shanghai, 2002).

**Shane McCausland** is Reader in the History of Art of China in the Department of the History of Art and Archaeology at SOAS, University of London. At the Chester Beatty Library between 2004 and 2009, he was Curator of the East Asian Collections and latterly Head of Collections. He holds a doctorate in art history from Princeton University, and is the author of several books and articles on Chi-

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**Michael F. Ryan** was Director of the Chester Beatty Library until his retirement in 2010, and is a member and former president of the Royal Irish Academy. He has published extensively on Irish archaeology and on early mediaeval art history.

**Clarissa von Spee** is Curator of the Chinese calligraphy and paintings, prints and Central Asian collections at the British Museum. She received her PhD from Heidelberg University, and is the author of *Wu Hufan: A Twentieth Century Art Connoisseur in Shanghai* (Berlin, 2008). She is also the editor of the exhibition catalogue *The Printed Image in China from the 8th to the 21st Centuries* (London, 2010) and author of *The Perfect Brush—Chinese Painting 1300–1900/Der Perfekte Pinsel—Chinesische Malerei 1300–1900* (Köln, 2010) and *Modern Chinese Ink Painting: A Century of New Directions* (London, 2012).

**Roberta Wue** is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of California, Irvine. She specializes in the art and visual culture of late Qing and twentieth-century China, with an interest in issues of audience and artist identities. Wue received her PhD from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in 2001, and has published articles on painting, photography and advertising in nineteenth-century China.

# Editors' Introduction

Shane McCausland and Yin Hwang

This volume presents the papers, now fully revised and collated, that were delivered at an international colloquium held over two days in May 2010 at the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, in conjunction with the exhibition, *Telling Images of China: Narrative and Figure Paintings, 15th–20th Century, from the Shanghai Museum*. Some of these essays are studies of paintings included in that exhibition, while others attend to issues in visual narration and illustration or else explore the figural work of featured artists. A function of this Editors' Introduction is, indeed, to introduce those papers, which we are pleased to do later on. It is also the appropriate place to introduce the volume itself, as a product of the *Telling Images* exhibition, and to examine the relationships between the exhibition and its contents, and the research published in these scholarly papers. In presenting these essays to readers as a cohesive body of art-historical research, as we believe it is, we may remark upon the kinds of question they collectively raise. What common themes and goals can be identified in this study of the narrative and figural arts of China? What new directions in the history of art and culture in China can be identified here? What interdisciplinary and intercultural issues arise? Finally, how might this research on China be related to practices within the wider discipline of art history or its new incarnation, visual culture? Some of these areas of common ground and endeavour will be explored further in the first part of this Introduction.

## **On the Exhibition**

Comprising thirty-eight artworks dating from the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644) up to 1950, loaned by the Shanghai Museum, the *Telling Images* exhibition explored how a variety of narrative types—from folk and religious lore, to ballads, poetry and fiction, to biography—came to be illustrated in pictorial-art formats in early modern China. Not only did the sources and subjects of these paintings range widely across time, from ancient legends right up to fictional characters of late modernity, and across social classes, from servants to emperors and empresses, but the painters were also from a variety of backgrounds and times across the last six centuries. The earliest works were by early Ming court and professional



masters; the latest, dated 1950, by the modern master Qi Baishi (1864–1957). A handful of paintings, including Chen Hongshou's *Elegant Gathering* (cat. no. 4), Shitao's *Elegant Gathering in the West Garden* (cat. no. 28) and Hua Yan's *Golden Valley Garden* (cat. no. 12), as well as Guo Xu's *Album of Figures* (cat. no. 9) and Cui Zizhong's *Jade Woman among Clouds* (cat. no. 5), all belonged in or around the Shanghai Museum's 'category 1 object' (*yiji pin* 一級品) grouping as to quality and value. Other paintings, which played no lesser role as part of the exhibition, were by obscure or even unknown painters.<sup>1</sup>

The exhibition took form over time, growing organically following its inception in 2004, and we explore the rationale for it here, to serve in part as an apology for this volume. First, the venue was to be the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, a member of Ireland's grouping of National Cultural Institutions and at the time the only museum in the country with dedicated displays of Chinese art and a specialist East Asian curatorship.<sup>2</sup> Temporary exhibitions of this kind brought into the Library through partnerships with other museums necessarily related to the Library's material collections as well as to its strategic aims. In this case, *Telling Images of China* complemented areas of the Library's Chinese collections, which comprise: late Qing-to-early Republican handscroll paintings acquired by Chester Beatty in Peking in 1917; manuscript and woodblock-printed books; Qing imperial jade books (or more accurately, tablets) (*yu ce* 玉冊), numbering a dozen and a half; and numerous pictorial engravings and woodblock prints dating from the seventeenth century to the present day.<sup>3</sup> In terms of its focus on narrative painting, the exhibition also related closely to the Japanese paintings collection, notably to the vernacular narrative picture-scrolls known as *Nara ehon* 奈良絵本 ('Nara picture-books'), which number over seventy titles mainly early Edo (17th century) in date, and to the Library's outstanding work of East Asian painting, the pair of *Chōgonka gakan* 長恨歌画卷 (*Song of Lasting Sorrow*) picture-scrolls orchestrated by the head of the Kyoto branch of the Kano School, Kano Sansetsu (1590–1651), in the late 1640s. For a number of years, the Library's strategic approach to developing the East Asian collections had been geared toward these Japanese narrative paintings, which were the focus of exhibitions, publications and collaborative research efforts, notably with the HUMI (Humanities Media Interface) Project of Keio University in Tokyo.<sup>4</sup>

Following initial contacts, by 2005 the time was ripe for collaboration with a leading national museum in China, the Shanghai Museum, which had been the originator of a steady flow of international loan exhibitions since the 1990s. The thematic coherence of *Telling Images of China*, such as it was, developed

in response to the challenge of borrowing artworks from a collection strong in paintings of the early modern period, works that were to be displayed in an Irish library of national standing. Also to be considered were the literary predilections of an Irish audience weaned on the writing of home-grown Nobel laureates, from Yeats and Shaw to Beckett and Heaney, and familiarity with the collaborations of these and others with visual artists; the timing; the gallery space and display cases available; and not least, the curators' research interests within the field of Chinese art history.

Previous Shanghai Museum loan shows had included one in 2000 on the Shanghai School painters at the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh.<sup>5</sup> The following year saw the figure-painting exhibition *Ancients in Profile* mounted at the Hong Kong University Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>6</sup> Two exhibitions appeared in 2004, including one on landscape paintings entitled *Fantastic Mountains* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney.<sup>7</sup> The other, which lasted into 2005, entitled *In the Shade of the Pines: Masterpieces of Chinese Art from the Shanghai Museum* at the Musée Rath in Geneva, featured furniture, paintings and decorative arts.<sup>8</sup> In 2008, the Shanghai Museum teamed up with the Liaoning Provincial Museum to hold its own exhibition of pre-modern figure paintings, entitled *Shimao fengqing* 世貌風情, or *Highlights of Ancient Chinese Figure Paintings*.<sup>9</sup> The *Telling Images of China* exhibition necessarily drew from some of the same areas of the Shanghai Museum painting collection as the previous loan exhibitions, notably *Ancients in Profile* (2001), but the distinctive focus on fifteenth- to twentieth-century narrative and figure paintings was a response to a specific set of local institutional and global disciplinary demands. Perhaps the most pressing of these, after all, was the need to create an element of visual enchantment coupled with narrative interest which would both appeal to and inform an Irish audience as yet unfamiliar with the Chinese tradition.<sup>10</sup>

The theme of the *Telling Images* exhibition has been determined, up to now, to a degree consistent with its presentation to a broad public. In presenting it, with this volume, to a scholarly audience, it is appropriate to revisit its particular network of intellectual foundations—both within the discipline and within the culture at institutional and historical levels, to pave the way for the discourses by contributors which follow.

Although the official Chinese title for the exhibition was *Miaohui Zhongguo* 描繪中國 (literally, 'picturing the Middle Kingdom'), the show was generally referred to by the Shanghai Museum staff who worked on it as the 'story-painting' (*gushi hua* 故事畫) exhibition. During the selection of paintings, the

question which had repeatedly come up—and was a criterion for inclusion—was, does this painting tell or refer to a story? The English subtitle, ‘narrative and figure paintings’, threw a blanket over a tightly grouped core of Ming and Qing narrative works but also over more difficult to pigeon-hole subjects, notably generic pictorial narratives. In fact, during the early planning, Shan Guolin, then head of the calligraphy and painting department, had tended to construe the emerging exhibition theme as that subgenre of figure painting, ‘genre painting’ (*fengsu hua* 風俗畫), with a focus on folk customs and manners.<sup>11</sup> This pattern of thinking is revealing, since underlying a good many Chinese genre paintings are stories or myths. Some of these myths have even become entwined with the literary record—one thinks of the legend of the Weaver Girl and the Cowherd and its appearance in Bai Juyi’s (772–846) ‘Song of Lasting Sorrow’ and how that connection then becomes part of the cultural memory of the legend in later pictorial portrayals on the theme of *qiqiao* 乞巧 (‘pleading for skills’) or *qixi* 七夕 (‘the night of sevens’). In part it is also understandable since the Chinese term for ‘narrative painting’ (*xushu hua* 敘述畫) has a technical ring to it that is hardly appropriate for a museum audience, and it was clear that not all the paintings were unproblematic as narratives, being in some cases excerpts or vignettes from, or references to, stories of some kind. Nonetheless, the term ‘story-painting’, while suiting a modern pragmatism and need for flexibility, is not without its own cultural history in China, as will be discussed further below.

### Historiographic Prelude

The development of the topic of *Telling Images* related to a growing interest over recent decades, not just in the China field but across Asian art history, in visual narratives and pictorial illustration.<sup>12</sup> The review of that trend which follows makes no claim to comprehensiveness, and remains partial and indicative. As Kohara Hironobu argued in 1985, the Japanese narrative picture-scroll tradition had been relatively well studied to that point, but less so the Chinese.<sup>13</sup> His comparison of the two traditions implied numerous reasons for this, clustered around themes of subject matter, narrative technique and conventions of representation, and the role of copying. In his admirably broad survey of extant East Asian narrative scrolls, Kohara mentioned few dating to later than the fourteenth century, which serves to highlight the value placed by researchers up to the late twentieth-century on the ‘early’ period. In 1998 Julia K. Murray framed an interrogative approach, in a landmark article in *The Art Bulletin* entitled ‘What is Chinese narrative illustration?’, and laid down some guidelines for responses to it; her

later work has emphasized its link with the Confucius cult.<sup>14</sup> The Percival David Foundation and British Museum's collaborative conference and exhibition on the famous *Admonitions of the Court Instructress* scroll attributed to Gu Kaizhi (c. 344–c. 406) in 2001 might be marked as another waypoint. The resulting publication featured more of the work of Murray, and also of another pioneering researcher on early narrative painting, Chen Pao-chen.<sup>15</sup> By 2009, the Department of Fine Arts at The University of Hong Kong could convene a meeting entitled 'Rethinking Visual Narratives from Asia: Intercultural and Comparative Perspectives', which not only proposed to *rethink* the perspectives and methods, but also to embrace topics from across South, Southeast and East Asia, and to break the theme out of its 'early' box with studies on early modern/Ming-Qing narratives.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to these research activities, the publication or reassessment of a number of narrative paintings, some of which have come down to us as it were under the radar, has breathed new life into this area of study, while also having the effect of subtly altering the canon of literati painting. To consider just that bridging moment under Mongol Yuan rule, which is hardly well known for its narrative art, various narrative paintings have surfaced. One is a painting in the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, which has been renamed *Episodes from the Career of a Yuan Official* (58.10).<sup>17</sup> The long handscroll by Chen Jizhi entitled *Treaty at the Bian Bridge* (*Banqiao hui meng tu*), probably of 1320, in the Palace Museum, Beijing, is another,<sup>18</sup> and a third is *Liu Chen and Yuan Zhao Entering the Tiantai Mountains* by Zhao Cangyun (late 13th–early 14th century), which has entered The Metropolitan Museum of Art collection from that of the late C. C. Wang.<sup>19</sup> The essays which follow now bring to our attention and map out an array of visual materials that are not just post-Yuan in date, but range across formats from picture-scrolls to printed books and prints, and even contemporary 'new media' art.

We should not pretend, therefore, that narrative illustration is other than a problematic genre in the Chinese context. The comparison with research on Japanese picture-scrolls makes this clear, especially in terms of the visual development of a narrative—or the apparent lack thereof in China, as does the English-language historiography. One of the first art-historical considerations on early narrative appeared in John Hay's 1972 study of Zhao Gan's (act. 937–75) *Along the River during Winter's First Snow* in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Hay mooted three categories: the moral-narratives that most paintings were up to the seventh century, the genre-narratives of the period from the eighth to the eleventh century and the literary-narratives that emerged from about the eighth century

on. Over the formative first half of the dynastic period, through the interventions of critics and collectors, patterns and boundaries of reception shifted so that, as Hay argues, a picture that might in the late Han have had a genre function subsequently became subservient to didacticism, but may later again have been seen as a genre painting. Hay's finding that Zhao Gan's painting 'lies along the development . . . of a sustained, horizontally narrated genre scene' infers the wide degree of tolerance to his definition of narrative, which is nevertheless historically focused and culturally themed.<sup>20</sup> More recently, in her synthetic study on narrative illustration, Julia Murray critiqued Hay's 'rudimentary but influential taxonomy', finding his categories not mutually exclusive, and also intervening approaches by Wu Hung and Wen C. Fong, as well as Kohara. 'All of these scholars', she notes, 'have a conception of Chinese narrative representation that is useful for their specific purposes, which are varied'.<sup>21</sup>

Even as early as the period between 1100 and 1300, a critical mindset was beginning to crystallize in dynastic China. The appearance of the term *gushi tu* 故事圖 (which for convenience we render as 'story-pictures') in the *Huashi* 畫史 (*History of Painting*) by Mi Fu (1051–1107), who surveyed the early critical tradition up to his own time, is a useful starting point, in part because of Mi Fu's pre-eminence in the classical tradition of the arts and in part because of the solidifying effect of his prognosticating text in later art and criticism of the Ming, Qing and Republican periods, which is the subject of new research by the contributors to this volume. Embarking on a list of painting genres in order of importance, Mi Fu remarks as follows:

When scrutinizing and viewing Buddhist portraits and story-pictures, those which advise and warn are the best. Next come landscapes . . . then [the genre of] 'bamboos, trees, waters and rocks'; then flowers and plants. Finally, [paintings of] fine ladies, of rare birds and of the nobility at leisure are for playful viewing, and do not enter [the realm of] pure [i.e., high-minded, as opposed to frivolous] enjoyment.

鑒閱佛像故事圖，有以勸誡為上。其次山水，有無窮之趣，尤其是煙雲霧景為佳。其次竹木水石。其次花草。至於士女、翎毛、貴遊，戲閱，不入清玩。<sup>22</sup>

How do 'story-paintings' fare in this colourful taxonomy of painting? As regards Mi Fu's purview of painting subjects as a whole, there is to the modern ear an element of the fantastical found in, for example, the imaginary Chinese encyclopedia cited by Borges in an essay on the science of taxonomy.<sup>23</sup> Even within Mi Fu's

overall hierarchy, from paintings which provide lofty 'pure enjoyment' to those that are merely for vulgar 'playful viewing', there are these shifting subdivisions within the bands, for instance, so that in the first case (Buddhist portraits and story-pictures), the best of the category are morally improving, whereas in the second (landscapes), the best are delightfully bathed in mists and fog. The last group—encompassing painted ladies, peacocks, parrots and aristocrats—is hardly granted the status of a category at all, but presented as a rag-bag of frivolities which are neither high-minded nor pure.

However bizarre certain categorizations may seem to us, we may note the two uncertainly related types of picture within the top category, Buddhist portraits and story-pictures. What was Mi Fu referring to: Buddhist images in story-pictures, or two less clearly related sets? The Buddhist pictures may have approximated the genre we know from Japanese *engi* or *emaki*, or at least the pioneering format of illustration of Buddhist scriptures in horizontal scrolling format, rather than Buddhist portraits as single-image hanging scrolls.<sup>24</sup> The story-pictures presumably were multiple-scene handscrolls of the moral-narrative type that serve to provide models, admonish or correct conduct according to Buddhist, Daoist or Confucian precepts: story-pictures in the sense of 'pictures of the affairs of the ancients'.<sup>25</sup>

The value placed upon paintings that 'advise and warn', that is, figural story-paintings that better people's conduct by illustrating exemplars, was arguably a powerful anachronism stemming from the sunrise of painting criticism in the period between the Han (206 BC–220 AD) and Tang (618–907).<sup>26</sup> The exemplary function of the subjects portrayed in paintings was stressed again and again in the fledgling canon of painting criticism, if not also previously. Xie He's opening remark in the *Gu hua pin lu* 古畫品錄 (*Record of the Classification of Old Painters*) is: 'As for pictures and paintings, there is not one but illuminates an exhortation or warning' 圖繪者莫不明勸誡.<sup>27</sup> In the *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 of 847, Zhang Yanyuan lists numerous examples of how such paintings helped save or else doom regimes. Even the redoubtable Han sceptic Wang Chong, whose *Lun heng* 論衡 (*Critical Essays*) Zhang Yanyuan cites with dismay, observed how the paintings which people love to contemplate depict exemplary figures from antiquity.<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding, Zhang begins his text with a statement that contextualizes the role of admonishment in a more positive way: 'Now painting is a thing which perfects the civilizing teachings (of the Sages) and helps (to maintain) the social relationships . . .' 夫畫者，成教化，助人倫……<sup>29</sup>

A rough contemporary of Mi Fu's was the late Northern Song critic Guo Ruoxu who, in the second of the Prefatory Discourses to the *Tubua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志, entitled *Xu zi gu gui jian* ('On looking into the mirror since antiquity'), argues that the ancients regarded painting as a mirror—in the sense of a tool of transformation in the present. Pointing to the mirror, in other words, to a painting recording *gushi* (literally, ancient matters) or the deeds of a worthy or a fool, was a way 'to throw light upon order and chaos'. He cites the example of Lady Ban, who declined the invitation of emperor Xiaowudi [*sic*] to share his carriage, citing as her reason the light in which he would be seen, given how paintings depict good rulers in the company of wise men and bad rulers in the company of women. Guo Ruoxu fills one of his other prefaces with a long list of ancient paintings which exemplify this function.<sup>30</sup> In Hay's version, this marked the end of the genre-narrative, and after a short revival, the moral-narrative, while the literary-narrative was to embark on 'a long and complex history'.<sup>31</sup> One of its major themes, Su Shi's *Chibi fu* 赤壁賦 ('Odes to the Red Cliff'), is explored in this volume.

The nuances to Mi Fu's terminology may be teased out by considering how later literati regarded it. Writing about two centuries after Mi Fu for the early Yuan collector-connoisseur, the critic Tang Hou (1255/62–before 1317), in the *Gujin huajian* 古今畫鑑 or *Hua jian* (*Mirror of Painting*), consciously echoed but also rationalized Mi Fu's hierarchy of genres:

The guidelines for collecting paintings [hold] Buddhist and Daoist [pictures] to be superior, no doubt because the ancients applied their efforts to this [genre], intending that viewers adopt an attitude of respect and decorum [before them]. Next are figure paintings, which may advise and warn. Next are landscapes . . . then flowers and plants; and horses . . . As for ladies and foreigners, however fine they may be, they are not fit to be enjoyed in the scholar's studio. These are Yuanzhang [Mi Fu's] views.

收畫之法，道釋為上。蓋古人用工於此，欲覽者生敬慕尊禮之意。其次人物，可為鑒戒。其次山水，有無窮之趣。其次花草。其次畫馬，可以閱神駿。若仕女、番族，雖精妙，非文房所可玩者。此元章之論也。<sup>32</sup>

Although he did not employ the term *gushi tu* 故事圖 here, Tang Hou was reiterating Mi Fu's taxonomy and values, with only minor changes. He read Mi Fu's 'Buddhist portraits' as 'Daoist and Buddhist' paintings, and split off Mi's 'story-pictures' into another category, in second place in the sequence, redefining the

contents as paintings of human figures which encouraged, warned or admonished the viewer by dint of their contents. Then follows landscape, as in the *Huashi*.

Tang Hou's reconfiguration of Mi Fu's ideas may be understood in light of their transmission through the prism of the Song emperor Huizong's (r. 1100–25) *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (*Xuanhe Painting Manual*). Tang Hou's top category of 'Daoist and Buddhist' paintings, for example, draws straight from the manual. In addition, both of Tang Hou's top categories made sense within the totality of his text, notably in light of the venerated paintings and painting subjects listed in the two sections, Jin and Six Dynasties paintings, wherein almost all the paintings are either stories or Buddhist portraits.<sup>33</sup> Morally worthy, these two types were clearly distinguished from lesser figural genres, like horse paintings 'in which one can view divine thoroughbreds', and genres regarded by Tang Hou as utterly frivolous, however well executed, such as pictures of fine ladies and tribes of foreigners.

Elsewhere in the *Huajian*, Tang Hou did employ the similar but variant term *gushi* 故實 paintings; possibly, Tang Hou used the two terms *gushi* 故事 and *gushi* 故實 more or less interchangeably. Discussing Zhan Ziqian (c. 531–c. 604) in the 'Six Dynasties' section of the *Huajian*, Tang Hou refers first to Zhan Ziqian's landscapes and then to his figures, before discussing the various *gushi renwu* ('narrative figure paintings') he has seen. The first one (or ones) he describes sounds not unlike the sole extant work by Zhan Ziqian, today entitled *Spring Outing* (Palace Museum, Beijing);<sup>34</sup> the second is a historical narrative probably in a single scene.<sup>35</sup> *Spring Outing* is said to depict a vignette or genre scene of people venturing out in the early spring to pick the earliest plum blossoms.

Although Tang Hou occasionally distinguishes figural narratives, *gushi renwu*, from figural paintings in general (*renwu hua*), it is not clear how these differ in terms of illustrative technique and format. Some of the stories discussed must be mono-scenic depictions that epitomize rather than expand upon their topics, an illustrative mode that can be regarded as the default if we consider the overwhelming proportion of this kind of painting in China.<sup>36</sup> However, elsewhere, Tang Hou indicates that as far as the mounting format for figural tales goes, 'it is certainly best to obtain horizontal scrolls' 故實人物必須得橫卷為佳,<sup>37</sup> implying that at least some of these are extended narrative handscrolls. Today, inferring a cultural affinity between the narrative content of a painting and its viewing-in-time as a handscroll is not so problematic; but we may be less comfortable with the social exclusivity attaching to figural paintings which because of the story they told were or were not fit for the category of 'pure' viewing. In fact, Tang Hou dis-



cusses several versions of *Night Revels of Han Xizai* painted by Zhou Wenju and Gu Hongzhong (act. second half of 10th century) at Li Houzhu's command, and sounds for a moment like Mi Fu in regarding them as 'not for pure enjoyment in the scholar's studio, yet they may be taken as warnings against the pleasures of sexual indulgence'.<sup>38</sup> The social justification for the enjoyment of paintings by collectors, it would seem, never goes out of fashion, and precedes any consideration of narrative or illustrative format.

As far as Chinese narrative illustration goes, Kohara highlighted what he regarded as the limitations of the Chinese handscroll by contrast with the diversity and inventiveness of Japanese *emaki*, while Murray emphasized the effect of 'epitomization' in single or reduced scene formats over 'expansion' into multiple or extended scene ones.<sup>39</sup> Studies in these pages explore new evidence that questions these perceptions. In his essay on narrative art in mid-Ming Suzhou, Cédric Laurent, approaching the topic from a literary angle, presents a major challenge to the view that Ming literati art eschewed extended narrative formats. Indeed, he argues that narrative painting was a major, not a minor, literati art form. Two other studies touch upon the question of what one might call the modern units of narrative measurement—*duan* 段 ('passage, section'). McCausland's study of You Qiu's (act. 1553–83) narrative scrolls notes the patron Wang Shizhen's (1526–90) reference to the division of a twelve-scene narrative painting into a number of *duan*, but fails to reach any conclusion about how he understood the measure. In Eric Lefebvre's essay, the term *duan* resurfaces in a word applied by Fu Baoshi (1904–65) in his painting criticism: *duanluo shi* 段落式 or 'section mode', derived from the Japanese *danraku shiki*, is used by Fu to describe an intermediary stage in the evolution of the use of space in early narrative handscrolls from Gu Kaizhi to Zhang Zeduan (act. early 12th century).

As we have noted, for Mi Fu and Tang Hou the notion of a figural painting subject being appropriate for 'pure enjoyment' was paramount, as was the moral worth of a picture, but there are reasons to think of Tang Hou as having been dogmatic in these respects. There is a literati partisan tone to his declassifying or demoting certain paintings, and a palpable rancour to the way he dismissively equates ladies of fashion, well-mounted princes and plumed birds. He channels his efforts in the wake of Mi Fu in a kind of hypostatized psychological state, a reminder of how misguided we would be to depend on such texts alone. Arguably, Tang Hou was not simply 'behind the curve' but in denial of developments in contemporary painting. He did not permit a special Yuan category of animal—

the thoroughbred horse—into his realm of ‘pure enjoyment’, yet this was one of the most significant outlets for literati voices in painting.

Specific types of figural image by this date could function as signifying references on new levels. Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) incorporated Tang-style formal allusions into his horse paintings as part of a new meta-narrative for art history, and presented these works to his peers for their ‘pure enjoyment’.<sup>40</sup> Such works not only presupposed but played upon knowledge of legendary tales about such sagely judges of horseflesh as Jiufang Gao and Bole—enveloping, defining narratives seemingly able to participate in a painting’s reception. Literati viewers of Gong Kai’s (1222–1307) well-known painting *Jungu tu* 駿骨圖 (*Emaciated Horse*) in the Osaka Municipal Museum would have read the image in its material configuration as a scroll painting and through the artist’s appended inscription, with its eccentric calligraphic look.<sup>41</sup> In addition, by virtue of their education, they could hardly have been unaware of a literary allusion to an anecdote, also mooted by Zhang Yanyuan, in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, connoted by the painting’s inscribed title, *jun gu* (literally, ‘thoroughbred bones’). A story told by Guo Wei to King Zhao about an ancient royal adviser buying the bones of a dead thousand-mile horse is an allegorical parable about how a ruler attracts talents to his court by putting a high value on the bones of deceased ones.<sup>42</sup> The *gushi* or ‘ancient affair’ inherent in the painting bearing this title remains but one of a number of possible readings, alongside formal interpretations.<sup>43</sup>

The images we study provide possibilities for interpretation that are multivalent and seemingly not bounded by conventional parameters of art-historical learning. We need to be as aware of blind spots, trips and lurches in the historical process as we are wary of the effects of vision, learning, prescription and leadership. The modern category of ‘figure painting’ (*renwu hua* 人物畫)<sup>44</sup> would seem to be something of a catch-all, embracing various sub-categories, including genre painting, customs and manners painting, plain figures, portraits, narrative figures, figures-in-landscapes, ladies of fashion and the nobility at play, although importantly it carries no moral implication of betterment or admonition, nor any requirement that it provide a socially defined ‘pure enjoyment’.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, it is that type of illustrative figural painting dubbed *gushi* painting that is not part of the common verbiage of taxonomy, despite the discrete but continuous presence of ‘ancient matters’ within the genre. Some of the intersections between figures and stories, across narrative and illustration over the Ming-Qing period, are explored in the essays collected here.

## Where Does the Story Lie? Narratives in Chinese Painting and Visual Culture

The order of essays and the categories under which they have been grouped in this volume are somewhat different from their original presentation at the colloquium in Dublin. As a result of the lively panel sessions that ensued after delivery, papers were revised and, during the course of editorial meetings, overarching themes emerged. The subtitle of this volume, 'Essays on Narrative Painting and Visual Culture', as opposed to the classification of 'narrative and figure painting' in the exhibition title, reflects not only a realignment of focus but also a plurality of methodology and material that falls within a field once defined as 'Chinese painting studies'.

We have also tried to incorporate material taken from transcripts of these panel discussions to try and give a flavour of the cut-and-thrust of debate at the conference. In so doing, we hope that the raw edges of discussion will run through the volume, working against the idea of nicely finished, complete papers written in proverbial ivory towers. Discussants repeatedly returned to the thorny issue of defining 'narrative illustration', but with particular reference to paintings on view in the exhibition as well as to the material that formed the subject matter of the papers. It was clear that no hard-and-fast criteria could be laid down for categorization, and terms like *xushi hua*, *gushi hua* and *renwu hua* had to be used with care and understood in both modern and historical contexts. In the course of discussion, two related questions arose: Is visual narrative different from its literary counterpart? How do images function/interact in relation to texts? Both relate to the agenda of art historians as interpreters of pictures rather than texts and to the realm of interdisciplinarity; however, the latter question is part of a larger issue which loomed over the conference and is addressed in some form or other in all the essays, while a more immediate response can perhaps be provided for the former. Julia Murray observes that the literary definition can be largely helpful in setting out the parameters for the visual one: the necessity of having a change in the situation of the protagonist or other characters in the story allows us to distinguish narrative from expositions of enumerations or series of things that are iterative and merely occupy time and space.<sup>46</sup>

As if complicit in acknowledging these difficulties of definition, the contributors to this volume have largely adopted a broader interpretation of the term, to designate essentially any pictorial or figurative depiction that pertains to a story from religious lore, legend, literature or history. While the essays here cover works and imagery that explicitly relate to some form of narrative, the context in which

they are discussed in this section attempts to extract the 'embedded' narrative of the development of themes and issues in the widened field now referred to as 'visual culture'.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, as the conference emanated from an exhibition on Chinese paintings, contributors have taken paintings, many of which were on display, as their starting point.

### Representing Paradigms

The exemplar, whether good or bad, is a powerful trope in Chinese culture, functioning both as an embodiment of values and beliefs, and as a didactic tool ('to advise and warn', in Mi Fu's words). In the section 'Representing Paradigms', depictions of Confucius, Zhang Daoling (34–156), famous beauties from the Han court and the military strategist Han Xin (d. 196 BC) are discussed. Through their studies of Confucius and Zhang Daoling, Julia K. Murray and Noelle Giuffrida examine the genre of pictorial biography and hagiography, which the former notes had a 'discrete' identity by the Ming period.

Although Murray has previously explored pictorial depictions of the sage, Confucian paragons and their stories, she breaks new ground here with a specific case study.<sup>48</sup> The two sets of illustrations incised on stone tablets from a now demolished temple in Kongzhai on the outskirts of Shanghai, which are the foci here, represent a rare instance where competing depictions of Confucius's life existed on the same site. Erected in 1682, they offer an opportunity for extended study on the pivotal late Ming to early Qing transition. The *raison d'être* for these 'lives of the saints' lay in their content and not their artistry. Since these stories were already well known, mere recognition of a subject would trigger the story in a viewer's mind. Murray thus makes the pertinent observation that narrative response was not elicited from careful examination of the pictures; thus such sequential narratives evidently adhered to texts and pictorial conventions. Nevertheless, the physical appearance of these illustrations is dependent on a range of factors, from the media (for example, stone carvings, rubbings, woodblock prints and paintings) to the requirements of patrons and the creative selectivity of the artist/illustrator. While the two competing biographies appeared to have gone without comment by visitors to Kongzhai, from our viewpoint today, the differing motivations of the patrons shed light on a social tension that existed amongst literati between sojourning officials and local gentry, with both sides pitting personal ambition and aggrandizement against community service. In locating the possible models for these illustrations, Murray has noted the resemblance of one set to an illustrated album in Tokyo, which provides evidence that Suzhou *pian*

蘇州片 (so-called 'fakes') may have served as prototypes. Long a difficult area in the dating of Ming-Qing painting and the authentication of oeuvres like Qiu Ying's (c. 1494–1552),<sup>49</sup> the new lines of enquiry opened here suggest that the genre can be analyzed more constructively from perspectives of the circulation and seriality of images.

The arts related to Daoism and Daoist practice have in the last decade been the focus of major exhibitions in the US, Europe and Hong Kong, and their presence as a distinct body of materials in museum collections has been acknowledged.<sup>50</sup> While still meagre in comparison to the wealth of studies that exists on Buddhist material, new scholarship has gone some way to dispel the view among art historians and sinologists in the West that the primary indigenous religion in China was 'nothing more than superstition and folk religion'.<sup>51</sup> The desire for self-cultivation, freedom of thought and eremitism that is identified with literary and literati thought is underpinned by Daoist beliefs. By situating her study in the Ming-Qing transition, Noelle Giuffrida examines the changing iconography of Zhang Daoling in the context of the explosion in illustrated-book publishing during this period.<sup>52</sup> As imagery of the founding patriarch and Celestial Master circulated in biographies, compendia of deities and vernacular short stories aimed at educated urbanites, episodes from Zhang's life, and in particular the testing of his disciple Zhao Sheng, acquired new prominence. Moving away from the liturgical and talismanic representations, Zhang acquired further magical powers enabling him to 'preside over thunder' and 'protect against poison'. The interface between depictions of Zhang in painting and print, and in Buddhism and Daoism, reveals the conditions in which these works were viewed and used.

Murray's and Giuffrida's framework of reference materials reflects the gradual shift away, since the mid-1990s, from 'painting' as a specific category of art production defined by materials, method, media and style towards the practices of 'picturing'. Adopting an objective stance akin to an anthropologist, such approaches view art as phenomena, analyzing it at cultural and social levels, and taking into account factors like social status, cultural roles, relationship networks, social obligations, print technologies and publishing economies.<sup>53</sup>

By comparison, the co-curators of the *Telling Images* exhibition, Shane McCausland and Lizhong Ling, have adopted an object-based approach, which stems from their development of the exhibition concept and their lengthy study of the paintings during the selection process. Both focused specifically on three Ming period paintings that were on view. While mindful of the historical context, their analyses remain grounded in the paintings themselves, although their formalist

approaches come from different roots. Careful observation of the paintings as pictures and as objects sheds light on the moral potential of narratives to warn, teach and admonish those who view them.

Since the storyline in the exhibition was a way of presenting Chinese painting to an audience largely unfamiliar with the medium, McCausland takes the stance that structural analysis of narrative painting can also be universal.<sup>54</sup> Two handscrolls respectively depicting the stories of Wang Zhaojun and the notorious Zhao sisters, Feiyan and Hede, provide contrasting approaches to visual narration.<sup>55</sup> In his reading of visual components as syntax and grammar, McCausland advances the formalist approach that emphasizes the 'structural qualities of painted forms',<sup>56</sup> relying on them as devices for revealing the tales rather than for periodization. When set against the Jiajing emperor's (r. 1522–67) foreign policy preferences, concerns for ritual propriety and interest in Daoist sorcery, the themes and expressive forms in these paintings take on an ironic meaning that was understood by its intended audience. There is perhaps another point to be made in the latter scroll with regard to the image-text relation or perhaps the lack of text. During the panel discussion, Julia Murray noted the curious absence of texts in *Spring Morning in the Han Palace*: 'Separate scenes are just juxtaposed with each other. It would be very unremarkable if there were text in between so you would not be disturbed by these sharp breaks between the scenes. Here it is almost like an album taken apart and laid out except that the scenes seem too wide to have ever been part of one. Although we tend to associate the flow of scenes with Japanese narrative illustration, and the Chinese are capable of it, why was it absent here?'<sup>57</sup>

Using the skills required in traditional connoisseur practices—the observation of brushwork and composition, the decipherment of seals, the reading of inscriptions and colophons, and the study of the artwork's materiality—Lizhong Ling was able to discern the oddness of a single leaf entitled 'An Old Lady Feeds a Hero' ('Qi shi piao mu' 乞食漂母) from the remaining ten paintings in an album of Daoist and historical figures by Guo Xu (1456–c. 1529) in the collection of the Shanghai Museum. By establishing a chronology for the artist and a network of relationships from contemporary primary sources and the work's accompanying inscriptions, Ling sets the artist's activities against the politics and regional relationship networks of his time. He offers a convincing hypothesis of how the story of Han Xin (d. 196 BC), the military strategist who helped Liu Bang establish the Han dynasty and then turned against him, was used as a form of political admonishment to a rogue royal prince.

### Interpreting Literary Themes and Narratives

Cédric Laurent, Yu-chih Lai and Clarissa von Spee re-evaluate themes and conceived notions that are crucial to the formation and enforcement of the Chinese literati identity, of which painting was a significant part. Covering works and practices that extend from the Song period to the twentieth century, these three papers highlight the significance of ‘contemplating the Past’, the transcendence of literati values and classic literary narratives over time and space, addressing issues concerning the impact of memory on artistic production.<sup>58</sup> In so doing, they have addressed key movements, concepts and groups which contribute significantly to the ‘literati’ branding, in particular, the *fugu pai* 復古派 (‘return to antiquity’), *beixue pai* 碑學派 (‘epigraphical movement’) and the *yimin* 遺民 (‘leftover subjects’ from dynastic change).

While the papers themselves largely relate to literati practices and art, we have subtitled the section ‘literary narratives’ instead, referencing the content rather than the nature of the painting.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the use of the term ‘literary’ also comes with its burdens. The connotation is too often that of the text-image relationship, and the immediate response of the art historian is to try to map the text to the images. However, during the discussions, Lai makes the suggestion that we should be thinking about a network of images instead—which is to say that imagery has its own life, evolving, making connections and growing instead of being merely dependent on text.<sup>60</sup> This is an aspect which Lai herself and von Spee address in their papers.

The pictorial focus of Cédric Laurent’s essay is the narrative handscroll comprising successive scenes in a continuous background or landscape. These works, mostly in the blue-green mode and often regarded as being in the perceived oeuvre of Qiu Ying, and the later copies known as Suzhou *pian*, have long presented problems (rarely addressed) in a Chinese painting history that privileged authenticity.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the fact of their existence cannot be ignored. Taking an approach that differs from Julia Murray’s, Laurent regards such works as copies of earlier prototypes, and argues persuasively for a reorientation in our understanding of the fundamental nature of literati painting, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and within the context of the *fugu* movement headed by Wen Zhengming (1470–1559). Contrary to the perceived notions that the paintings of the literati were expressive and non-representational, Laurent demonstrates that interest in illustrating literary narratives like *Luo shen fu* 洛神賦 (*The Nymph of the Luo River*), *Taohua yuan* 桃花源 (*The Peach Blossom Spring*) and the ‘Odes to the Red Cliff’ was sustained by a flourishing interest in

*guwen* 古文 ('ancient prose'). Here, the text-image relationship is not examined from the perspective of specific works but rather from the perspective of a body of original *guwen* editions and about forty extant narrative paintings.

Su Shi's two rhapsodies on the Red Cliff were a personal meditation on how to transcend the frustrations of life and career. Since their creation in the late eleventh century, these prose poems have been a touchstone of literati aspirations. Since the poems are often depicted and written about, the Red Cliff has become mired in its own myth. While the Red Cliff is known in early history as the site of a heroic battle during the Three Kingdoms period, the imagery described as 'Red Cliff' was derived from Su Shi's poems.<sup>62</sup> Yu-chih Lai has sought to restore the historicity of Red Cliff imagery by examining the inextricable links between the cultural practices and visual form. In so doing, she has been able to trace the practices engendered by the appreciation of Red Cliff poems and paintings, and the autonomous development of the imagery independent of its text.

Clarissa von Spee examines the genre of depiction referred to as 'images of reading (or visiting) memorial steles' (*dubei*, *guanbei* or *fangbei tu* 讀碑, 觀碑, 訪碑圖) and its changing meaning in painting from the Song to the Qing period. Inscribed steles were erected throughout China since the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC) to celebrate military victories, honour meritorious officials and men and women of virtue, display religious texts, commemorate philanthropy, or to record buildings. In their physical manifestation as monuments, steles helped to shape collective memory and define social practices.<sup>63</sup> As a visual representation, the generic composition of 'visiting steles' had multiple meanings: as a mono-scenic story-painting (*gushi hua*) depicting the tale of how Cao Cao (155–220), the Three Kingdoms general, and his superintendent of records Yang Xiu (175–219) solved the riddle of a memorial stele they encountered; as a cultural icon of a scholar contemplating the past; as a personal expression of loss and nostalgia and, when set against an 'exotic' landscape, as a signifier of going beyond the pale. Notwithstanding their divergent contexts, all were 'triggers or *aides-mémoire* for the retelling of powerful stories, acting as starting points for viewers' reminiscences on a figure's humanity or place in culture'.<sup>64</sup>

As a whole, these papers open up lines of enquiry on the painting of literary themes. They raise more general issues on paintings as cultural capital. Beyond the *fugu* movement, why do narrative paintings subsequently become so popular that they apparently are commercial products? Would such commercial products have been really concerned with great intellectual debates, or were they just fun because they were good stories? Responding to questions from the audience,



both Laurent and Murray agreed that Suzhou *pian* in the seventeenth century were expensive works created with precious materials. However, while Laurent believes that they would have appealed to the nouveau riche, Murray believes that they also appealed to an educated audience, who were more interested in them for their uplifting content than as works of art. Their differing opinions raise issues (perhaps, speculative) on the transmission, the circulation and the meaning of pictures as narratives or as motifs. Laurent takes the view that the sixteenth-century narrative paintings were transmitted to workshops, making the assumption that the *fenben* ('sketchbooks') of Qiu Ying circulated widely after his death, although this is a very complex question with no answer. He further asked if motifs when transmitted could have a new meaning and significance, to which Lai provocatively countered, 'Do all the details and images in a painting have to be meaningful? I don't know. Sometimes, it just seems that the methodology of iconography doesn't really apply to narrative painting.'<sup>65</sup>

### The Medium and Modernity

The essays by Ellen Johnston Laing, Roberta Wue and Eric Lefebvre are on works and materials firmly located in the 'modern' era—in these instances from the late nineteenth century to the present day. While addressing diverse genres, formats, media and practices—New Year prints (*nianhua* 年畫), portraiture, *guohua* 國畫 and 'new media'—all three essays indicate the longevity of narratives and thematic depictions in Chinese visual culture. Over time and space, stories like the 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove' and 'Yang Guifei' have been readapted, reinterpreted and recontextualized.<sup>66</sup> From the domestic idiom of *nianhua* to the commercialized treaty-port environment of Shanghai, from the Pan-Asian discourse on national painting to the transnational practice of contemporary Chinese art, narrative imagery reflects changes to scopic regimes as responses to the challenges of modernity.<sup>67</sup>

Laing, the keynote speaker at the conference, has long been known for her sustained interest in figure painting and its subject matter, even at a time when much of the field was devoted to landscape painting, literati art and period-style analysis. Here she takes three stories featured in the exhibition—Wang Zhaojun, Mencius's Mother, Shi Chong and his concubine Green Pearl—and explores the development of their imagery in the context of various painting traditions, from the Zhe School to the Yangzhou Eccentrics, and print types, from Yangliuqing *nianhua* to the calendar posters of the early twentieth century. She had been instrumental in bringing visual material like popular prints and posters into the fold

of art-historical studies with two important publications in 2002 and 2004.<sup>68</sup> By focusing on art and aesthetics, she redirected the almost singular focus on subject matter in *nianhua* studies<sup>69</sup> towards aspects like patterning and the relationship to line and colour. In her exploration of the calendar posters, Laing was able to draw connections between woodblock-print illustrators, *guohua* practitioners and their interests in cutting-edge photography and product design. Her research has come full circle as she returns to these narrative themes and their connections to painting within a widely expanded field of Chinese visual culture.

Once regarded as a lesser genre in Chinese painting, another area that has gained increasing interest in art-historical studies of China is portraiture. While informal portraits often drew on accepted pictorial conventions and referenced traditional literary tropes and cultural heroes, by the late imperial era they had become an expression of the sitter's aspirations, desires and agenda as typified by the 'costume portraits' of the emperors Yongzheng (r. 1723–35) and Qianlong (r. 1736–95).<sup>70</sup> Roberta Wue focuses on Ren Bonian's (1840–96) depictions of friends, colleagues and patrons in his early oeuvre.<sup>71</sup> The artist was particularly productive in the late 1860s, in the aftermath of the Taiping Rebellion, with at least twelve works known in the year 1868. Close readings from several early works and one late work afford startling insights beyond their superficial allusions to auspicious motifs and popular figures like Lu You and Mi Fu. Wue argues that narratives form the basis of a dialogue between the sitter/patron and the artist, often resulting in unusual juxtapositions like a 'divine child' torturing a cat and ambiguous representations that, for example, simultaneously suggest both the scholar-hermit and the raggedy vagrant. Ren does not use conventions but 'hijacks' them. The process of transfiguration witnessed in his portraits finds full expression in later work from his Shanghai period, as seen in the portrait of Dadian, depicting an unknown sitter as a dog-butcher, dressed in monk's clothing. The role-playing had extended beyond established narratives and into everyday life; as Wue explains, while intending to shock, these paintings were also creating commentary on the commercialized artist as lowly vendor.

Using the subject Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove as an example, Eric Lefebvre adopts a comparative approach to understanding how a theme can be utilised by two very different artists working in very different media in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, namely *guohua* painter and theorist Fu Baoshi and contemporary media artist Yang Fudong (b. 1971).<sup>72</sup> The main plot explores how Fu used his knowledge of early painting, aesthetic theory and literary texts, and began to help forge an art history for China and define a national style for paint-

ing.<sup>73</sup> He created a pantheon of cultural heroes that included Qu Yuan, Tao Yuanming, Li Bai, Su Shi and Shitao, and adapted them as models in painting and literary endeavours for the ideological needs of the new People's Republic and its leaders. In contrast to Fu's 'passive' acts of appropriation, classic themes and narrative paintings like Yang's *Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest* reflect the phenomenon of active appropriation and restaging seen in new media like photography and film, where the artists and his friends are cast as historical characters in a contemporary context.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, similarities lie between Fu and Yang not just in their explorations of the question of self and its expression, but also in their use of dynamic (*dong* 動) formats like the handscroll and the moving film: the notion that both are flexible visual forms that can be adapted to the expression of complex narratives is a persuasive one. Challenging the divide that separates writing on traditional forms of artistic expression and contemporary practices, Lefebvre urges historians of painting to think between the two-dimensional and beyond paper, colour and ink; as he notes: 'If the influence of ancient painting on early cinema is well established, the influence of the cinema on painting theory is less so.'

While all three essays do not expressly discuss the concept of modernity, the works that form the basis of Laing's, Wue's and Lefebvre's discussions allude to its presence, but perhaps in different senses. 'Modernity' is a word fraught with implications and a plurality of meaning. In the arts of China, modernity has been characterized as 'the liberation of artistic standards from aristocratic control and the negation of established norms as a means of negotiating artistic autonomy'.<sup>75</sup> In Chinese painting, it has been used with some controversy by Jonathan Hay to refer to the work of Shitao.<sup>76</sup> The understanding of modernity in Laing's and Wue's material can be seen in the opposition to 'tradition' and as a socio-economic condition that takes into account the globalizing effects of culture and commerce.<sup>77</sup> In Lefebvre's essay, 'modernity' is negotiated through different eras in the modern People's Republic, with the search for national identity balanced against the expression of individualism. And as such, modernity is not 'a moment' but 'a process', or as Hay will have it, 'a *longue durée* condition'.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

It is not the goal of this volume to arrive at any definitive categorization of narrative illustration in China. Rather, it seeks to raise issues and highlight challenges to art historians as to how they can engage with objects in a more embracing manner, from material, contextual, discourse and cross-cultural practices.

We hope that some of the ideas presented and the discussions raised here have achieved these aims.

In extracting the 'embedded narrative', we discovered that many of the approaches and developments cited in this Introduction reflect studies by scholars trained in or working in the West.<sup>79</sup> It also reveals that the study of visual narratives in China is bounded by other dichotomies: the global and the local, the historical and the contemporary. Is the predilection for identifying with figures from the past and mapping them onto those from the present, and using stories from the past to talk about contemporary concerns, particular to China? Or can we think of other cultures that have similar ways of living with the past?<sup>80</sup> Moreover, the continued relevance of ageless themes and stories seems to go against the grain of discourses on artistic modernity or modernism that call for the dismantlement of these narratives.<sup>81</sup> As the essays have revealed, this did not happen in China; as Laing and Lefebvre have shown, historical narratives have continued to respond to changing technology and nationalisms. So how do they fit within the global discourse?

This dialogue of paradoxes and dichotomies continues to lead to a new understanding on many levels, by the exhibition viewer, by the curators and 'sinologists', and by the wider academic community, but at the same time, it intrigues and provokes. From the perspective of *Telling Images*, however, here are the positives:

For the Shanghai Museum, the concept of *Telling Images* was one which was new to them since their past exhibitions had emphasized the history of Chinese painting, but it also made them aware of the need for 'popular' approaches to museum displays in China. Lizhong Ling has noted that the stories were as much about 'depicting China' (*miaohui Zhongguo*) as they were about 'depicting humanity' (*miaohui renlei* 描繪人類), emphasizing how narratives can build bridges of understanding between different cultures.<sup>82</sup>

The universality of the human spirit reflected in stories and tales opens narrative paintings to study under a more inclusive field of Global or World Art History, perhaps more so than other genres of Chinese painting such as landscape. In her closing remarks to the volume, Kathleen James-Chakraborty addresses these possibilities, and attributes them to the movement away from understanding artistic production from the perspective of specific cultures to regarding them as constructions of identity.

Narratives are instinctive to every culture, and in our own process of reading, viewing and understanding them, we create our own. Narratives are not just a product of the imagination, but are also a function of collective memory. The

essays in this volume have addressed themes and stories that are both specific narratives and schematic narrative templates.<sup>83</sup> These ideas on narrative organization, and its impact on visual and historical consciousness and the collective memory, have remained largely unarticulated, leaving scope for further studies on the topic in Chinese painting and visual culture.

In answering the question posed at the heading of this section: Where, then, do the stories lie? Within and without the artwork, through layered readings and on varied levels, they lie in pictures themselves, in a work of art as an object, in the process of its creation, in the histories of their long survival and in their continued re-creation and reinterpretation. Narratives never stop being made.

#### Notes

1. See Shane McCausland and Ling Lizhong, *Telling Images of China: Narrative and Figure Paintings, 15th–20th Century, from the Shanghai Museum* (London: Scala, 2010); [www.cbl.ie/china](http://www.cbl.ie/china) (cited 23 April 2012).
2. The National Museum of Ireland (Decorative Arts and History branch, at Collins Barracks) has since opened a new Asian art gallery and published a catalogue: Audrey Whitty, *The Albert Bender Collection of Asian Art in the National Museum of Ireland* (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 2011).
3. Some of the collections are published at [www.cbl.ie](http://www.cbl.ie). For the jade books see William Watson, *Chinese Jade Books in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1963). A recent acquisition was the Muban Foundation portfolio (published as Muban Foundation, An Bin, Julia F. Andrews, David Barker, Hwang Yin, Ellen Johnston Laing and Frances Wood, *The Art of Contemporary Chinese Woodcuts* [London: Muban Foundation, 2003]).
4. A series of facsimile volumes of the *Nara ehon* appeared in bilingual editions from Bensey Publishing Inc. in Tokyo, and a collaborative study by Shane McCausland and Matthew P. McKelway, *Chinese Romance from a Japanese Brush: Kano Sansetsu's Chōgonka Scrolls in the Chester Beatty Library* (London: Scala, 2009). The *Nara ehon* collection has been digitized almost in its entirety through ongoing collaboration with the HUMI Project at Keio ([www.humi.keio.ac.jp](http://www.humi.keio.ac.jp)).
5. Curated by Anita Chung. See *Chinese Paintings from the Shanghai Museum, 1851–1911*, exh. cat. (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2000).
6. *Ancients in Profile: Ming and Qing Figure Paintings from the Shanghai Museum*, exh. cat. (Hong Kong: University Museum and Art Gallery, University of Hong Kong, 2001).
7. Curated by Liu Yang; see Liu Yang, with Edmund Capon and Stephen Little, *Fantastic Mountains: Chinese Landscape Painting from the Shanghai Museum*, exh. cat. (Sydney: Art Gallery NSW, 2004).
8. Helen Loveday, *A l'ombre des pins: chefs-d'oeuvre d'art Chinois du Musée de Shanghai*, exh. cat. (Geneva: Musée d'art et d'histoire, 2004).
9. *Shimao fengqing: Zhongguo gudai renwuhua jingpin ji (Highlights of Ancient Chinese Figure Paintings from the Liaoning Provincial Museum and the Shanghai Museum)*, exh. cat. (3 vols;

- Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2008). A scholarly conference was also held during the rotation although its proceedings have not been published.
10. On Irish-Chinese relations, see Jerusha McCormack (ed.), *China and the Irish, The Thomas Davis Lectures* (Dublin: New Island Books, 2009).
  11. On this point, we may note that when the Shanghai Museum organized its own exhibition of figure paintings in 2008, the thematic thrust was on customs and manners—on ordinary genre scenes and aspects of folklore.
  12. We may note that the concept of narrative illustration/visual narrative as a distinct topic for research remained as yet unarticulated in Jerome Silbergeld's 1987 summing-up of developments in Chinese painting studies, and was only alluded to in 'studies of content' and briefly discussed in the context of the illustration of traditional literary themes (Jerome Silbergeld, 'Chinese Painting Studies in the West: A State-of-the-Field Article', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 46:4 [November 1987]: 867–74).
  13. Kohara Hironobu, 'Narrative Illustration in the Handscroll Format', in *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting*, edited by Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong (New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 247–66. See also his 'Emaki keishiki ni yoru Chūgoku setsuwaga ni tsuite' 絵巻形式による中国説話画について ('Narrative scrolls in China'), *Nara Daigaku kiyō* 奈良大学紀要, 14 (December 1985): 89–110.
  14. Julia K. Murray, 'What is Chinese Narrative Illustration?', *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 4 (December, 1998): 602–15; *Mirror of Morality: Chinese Narrative Illustration and Confucian Ideology* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).
  15. See Shane McCausland (ed.), *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions Scroll (Series Percival David Foundation Colloquies in Art and Archaeology, No. 21)* (London: British Museum Press, 2003).
  16. Two of the contributors to this volume attended the meeting: Julia K. Murray, as keynote speaker, and Shane McCausland. The proceedings are published as Alexandra Green (ed.), *Rethinking Visual Narratives from Asia: Intercultural and Comparative Perspectives* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013). For details of papers by Dore Levy, Yeewan Koon, Katherine Stuer, Roslyn Hammers, Marion S. Lee and others, see <http://conference.finearts.hku.hk/> (cited 4 March 2011).
  17. See the late 13th century *Episodes from the career of a Yuan official* (detail) from The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, in James C. Y. Watt and Maxwell K. Hearn, *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 45, fig. 51.
  18. Handscroll; ink on paper, 36.2 cm x 774.9 cm. See Yu Hui, 'A Study of Ch'en Chi-chih's *Treaty at the Pien Bridge*', in *Arts of the Sung and Yuan: Ritual, Ethnicity and Style in Painting*, edited by Cary Y. Liu and Dora C. Y. Ching (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999), 152–79; also published in *Gugong Bowuyuan yuankan*, no. 1 (1997): 17–51.
  19. See <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2005.494.1> (cited 28 February 2011). Other handscrolls that might be mentioned are the Liu Songnian attribution, *Erlangshen Exorcising Mountain Demons (Soushan tu)*, the anonymous *Marrying Off a Daughter in the Village*, Ren Renfa's *Zhang Guolao's Audience with Minghuang* and works by Wang Zhenpeng such as *Boya Playing the Qin*, all in the Palace Museum, Beijing (collections search at <http://www.dpm.org.cn/shtml/520/@/96565.html>).

20. John Hay, “Along the River During Winter’s First Snow”: A Tenth-Century Handscroll and Early Chinese Narrative’, *Burlington Magazine* 114, no. 830, *Special Issue Devoted to Chinese Landscape Painting* (May 1972): 292–303; quote on 301. Hay noted his debt to an earlier study on the problems of narrative scrolls, Roderick Whitfield’s unpublished PhD dissertation on Zhang Zeduan’s *Along the River during the Qingming Festival* (Princeton University, 1965).
21. Murray, 2007, 8–9.
22. *Huapin congshu* edition, 52.
23. Jorge Luis Borges’s 1942 essay, ‘The analytical language of John Wilkins’, which was cited by Michel Foucault (1926–84) as the inspiration for his *The Order of Things* (1966).
24. Julia Murray has argued that narrative subjects were more likely to expand from a mono-scene into a multi-scene cycle rather than the reverse. See her ‘Buddhism and Early Narrative Illustration in China’, *Archives of Asian Art* 48 (1995): 17–31.
25. Later illustrations providing role models to imitate are discussed by Murray in *Mirror of Morality*, especially Chapters 5–7.
26. Pace Murray, whose *Mirror of Morality* traces these images through the later imperial era.
27. *Gu hua pin lu*; in William R. B. Acker (trans. and annot.), *Some T’ang and Pre-T’ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: Brill, 1954; reprint, Westport, CT: Hyperion, 1979), 4.
28. *Lidai minghua ji*, *juan* 1; in Acker, 1979, 61–80. The reference to Wang Chong is on 78–79, where Acker cites Wang Chong’s original text (78, n. 3).
29. Acker, 1979, 61.
30. Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, *juan* 1, in *Huashi congshu*, edited by Yu Anlan (5 vols; Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chubanshe, 1963; reprint, 1982; hereafter *HSCS*), vol. 1, 3. Guo Ruoxu uses the term *gushi* in the title of *juan* 8, ‘Gushi shiyi’ (‘Assembled remnants of ancient affairs’), to refer to miscellaneous anecdotes and stories about painters and paintings.
31. Hay, 1972, 301.
32. For Tang Hou’s text, see Diana Yeongchau Chou, *A Study and Translation from the Chinese of Tang Hou’s Huajian (Examination of Painting): Cultivating Taste in Yuan China, 1279–1368* (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005).
33. Chou, 2005, 108–10; text on 157–58.
34. See <http://www.dpm.org.cn/shtml/117/@/5612.html> (cited 30 March 2011).
35. Tang Hou, *Hua jian*; Chou, 2008, 158 (our translation of the text differs from Chou’s): 余嘗見故實人物春山人馬等圖又見北齊後主幸晉陽宮圖。
36. On these modes, see Julia K. Murray, ‘Patterns of Evolution in Chinese Illustration: Expansion or Epitomization?’, in Liu and Ching (eds.), 1999, 120–51.
37. Tang Hou, *Hua jian*; Chou, 2005, text on 104.
38. Tang Hou, *Hua jian*; Chou, 2005, text on 163 (cf. translation on 125): 李後主命周文矩顧弘仲圖韓熙載夜燕圖余見周畫二本至京師見弘仲筆與周事蹟稍異有史魏王浩題字並紹勳印雖非文房清玩亦可為淫樂之戒耳。
39. For Murray’s response to Kohara, see *Mirror of Morality*, 9.

40. See the inscription to his *Horse and Groom* painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art; <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1988.135> (cited 31 March 2011).
41. See *Masterpieces from the Osaka Municipal Museum of Art* (Osaka, 1986), cat. no. 13, 41.
42. *Lidai minghua ji, juan 1*, 'Xu hua zhi xingfei'; in Acker, 1979, 130 and n. 3.
43. As noted by Julia Murray during a panel discussion, the word *gushi* is not only understood as 'story' in the modern sense but also as a historical precedent to be applied to a latter-day case, for example, a Han dynasty episode to a Ming period situation. Stories were not simply for entertainment but had a point, often with regard to issues of governance (transcript of panel discussion, 1 May 2010).
44. As defined since the early twentieth century, with the development of the history of Chinese art as an academic discipline.
45. During the discussion, Murray also takes up the point that Shane McCausland makes about the distinction between figure painting and narrative illustration/painting: 'It seems that there are two kinds of figure painting: one where figures can be identified by an informed viewer who can bring something to the interpretation of those figures, as opposed to the generic, stock figures who populate the edges of so many scenes' (transcript, 1 May 2010).
46. Transcript, 1 May 2010, which she also discusses in Chapter 1 of *Mirror of Morality*.
47. We have adopted with some licence Richard Vinograd's terminology in charting the 'historiographic or art-historical narratives' in Chinese painting and in examining the contrasting approaches of James Cahill and Craig Clunas. See Richard Vinograd, 'Narrative and Metanarrative in Chinese Painting', in *Stones from Other Mountains: Chinese Painting Studies in Postwar America*, edited by Jason C. Kuo (Washington, DC: New Academia, 2009), 167–98.
48. Apart from *Mirror of Morality*, Murray's numerous publications on Confucian depiction and ideology include 'The Temple of Confucius and Pictorial Biographies of the Sage', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 55:2 (May 1996): 269–300 and, more recently (with Wensheng Lu), *Confucius: His Life and Legacy in Art* (New York, NY: China Institute in America, 2010). See the bibliography for a more extensive list of her writing on this subject.
49. Ellen Johnston Laing, "'Suzhou Pian" and Other Dubious Paintings in the Received "Oeuvre" of Qiu Ying', *Artibus Asiae* 59, no. 3/4 (2000): 265–95.
50. Stephen Little, with Shawn Eichman, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Chicago, IL and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Yau Chi On and Yau Hok Wa (eds.), *Shuzhai yu daochang: Daojiao wenwu (The Studio and the Altar: Daoist Art in China)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Center for Daoist Studies, 2008); Galeries nationales and Musée des Arts Asiatiques Guimet, *La voie du Tao: Un autre chemin de l'être* (Paris: RMN, 2010); Lennert Gesterkamp, Klaas Ruitenbeek, Ka Bo Tsang, *Beyond Clouds and Waves: Daoist Paintings in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: ROM, 2010); and Shih-shan Susan Huang, *Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012).
51. Little, 2000, 13.
52. By comparison, many other studies have focused on works from the mediaeval period. See, for example, Lennert Gesterkamp, *The Heavenly Court: Daoist Temple Painting in China, 1200–1400* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Shih-shan Susan Huang, 'Summoning the Gods: Paintings of Three Officials of Heaven, Earth and Water and Their Association with Daoist



- Ritual Performance in the Southern Song Period (1127–1279)', *Artibus Asiae* 61, no. 1 (2001): 5–52.
53. Vinograd, 2009, 170–73; as exemplified by the works of Craig Clunas. See, for example, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) and *Elegant Debts: The Social Art of Wen Zhengming* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).
  54. Various writings on literary theory and criticism take this position. See, for example, the Roland Barthes classic 1966 text, 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', translated by Lionel Duisit, *New Literary History* 6, no. 2, *On Narrative and Narratives* (Winter 1975): 237–72.
  55. The continuous narrative and the mono-scenic vignettes; where the theme of the painting is self-explanatory and when the illustration accompanies a text.
  56. First propounded by Wen Fong and often referred to in the context of 'period style'. See Silbergeld, 1987, 852–54.
  57. Transcript, 1 May 2010.
  58. Memory studies is an emerging multidisciplinary field that spans a range of humanities and social sciences. See Henry L. Roediger III and James V. Wertsch, 'Creating a New Discipline of Memory Studies', *Memory Studies*, 1 (2008:1): 10–23. In the Chinese art-history context, recent studies have looked at the role of monuments and ruins in the collective cultural memory, see Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, 'Retrieving the Past, Inventing the Memorable: Huang Yi's (1744–1802) Visit to the Song-Luo Monuments', in *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade*, edited by Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 37–58; Tonia Eckfeld, 'Reinventing the Past, Inventing a Dynasty: Inspiration of Monuments of the Past and Tang Dynastic Topography', in *Reinventing the Past: Archaism and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*, edited by Wu Hung (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Center for the Art of East Asia, 2010), 155–78; Wu Hung, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).
  59. During the panel discussion, Cédric Laurent made the observation that the term 'literati art' mostly referred to a formal style of painting, perhaps without colours, or created by literati as opposed to professionals, while 'literary painting' merely refers to works that allude to literature, a distinction that he adapts in his paper (transcript, 1 May 2010).
  60. Yu-chih Lai, transcript, 1 May 2010.
  61. For a rare discussion, for example, see Laing, 2000.
  62. The exact location of the battle site is not known, but Su Shi's Red Cliff is in Huangzhou, Hubei Province.
  63. For a brief explanation on the definitions and qualities associated with the term 'monument', see, 'Introduction', in Nelson and Olin, 2003, 1–8.
  64. McCausland, 'Telling Images of China', in McCausland and Ling, 2010, 20.
  65. Transcript, 1 May 2010.
  66. The adaptation of Chinese narratives—in particular Bai Juyi's 'The Song of Everlasting Regret' (白居易, 長恨歌)—in Japanese painting was discussed in a paper given in Dublin by Matthew P. McKelway, 'Kano Sansetsu's Chōgonka Scrolls: Painting a "Song" without a Text', but not published in this volume. For the publishing and transmission of illustrated

- Chinese editions of the 'Song' in Japan from the late Ming period onwards, see Hiromitsu Kobayashi, 'Search of the Cutting Edge: Did Ukiyo-e Artists Borrow from the Erotic Illustrations of the Chinese Fengliu juechang tu?', *Orientalisms* (April 2009): 62–67.
67. See the work of Martin Jay, 1988 and 2002. Usually viewed from the perspectives of technologies of mechanical reproduction and ocular devices, here referring to post-woodblock print technology, photography, moving images, cross-cultural aesthetic discourses and their impact on painting and viewing practices. For Pan-Asianism and the rise of national painting, see Aida Yuen Wong, *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).
  68. *Art and Aesthetics in Chinese Popular Prints: Selections from the Muban Foundation Collection* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002) and *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).
  69. See, for example, David G. Johnson and Po Sung-nien, *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems: The Iconography of Everyday Life in Village China* (Berkeley, CA: Chinese Popular Culture Project, 1992); John Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); and the work of mainland scholars like Wang Shucun (collected writings in *Zhongguo minjian nianhua shi lunji* [Tianjin: Tianjin Yangliuqing Huashe, 1991]) and Aying (*Zhongguo nianhua fazhan shilüe* [Beijing: Chaohua Meishu Chubanshe, 1954]).
  70. See Wu Hung, 'Emperor's Masquerade: "Costume portraits" of Yongzheng and Qianlong', *Orientalisms* (July/August 1995): 42–50.
  71. Other aspects of Ren Bonian's work have been well explored before. See, for example, Yuchih Lai, 'Remapping Borders: Ren Bonian's Frontier Paintings and Urban Life in 1880s Shanghai', *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 3 (September 2004): 550–72; and Chialing Yang, *New Wine in Old Bottles: The Art of Ren Bonian in Nineteenth-Century Shanghai* (London: Safran Books, 2007).
  72. The screening of Yang's long video artwork, *Seven Intellectuals in a Bamboo Forest*, at the Chester Beatty Library during the run of the *Telling Images* exhibition, was made possible by Lorenz Helbling, Shanghaiart Gallery, Shanghai.
  73. A retrospective of works by Fu Baoshi was shown at The Cleveland Museum of Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2011–12. See Anita Chung et al., *Chinese Art in an Age of Revolution: Fu Baoshi (1904–1965)* (Cleveland, OH: The Cleveland Museum of Art; New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2011).
  74. See, for example, *Night Revels of Lao Li*, 120 cm x 960 cm, 2000, a photographic handscroll by Wang Qingsong which restages *Night Revels of Han Xizai*, replacing the original historical figures with well-known Beijing intellectuals ([www.wangqingsong.com](http://www.wangqingsong.com); cited 24 July 2011).
  75. Martin Powers, 'Re-examining the West: Shifting Perspectives in the Narrative of Modern Art', in *Chinese Painting in the Twentieth Century: Creativity in the Aftermath of Tradition*, edited by Cao Yiqiang and Fan Jingzhong (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin Meishu Chubanshe, 1997), 467.
  76. See Jonathan Hay, *Shitao: Painting and Modernity in Early Qing China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For opposing views on Hay's use of 'modernity', see reviews by Jerome Silbergeld, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62, no. 1 (June 2002): 230–39 and Craig Clunas, *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 4 (December 2002): 686–89.

77. A perspective first discussed by Wen-Hsin Yeh in her 'Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City', *China Quarterly* 150 (1997): 375–93.
78. Peter Gue Zarrow, 'Introduction', in *Creating Chinese Modernity: Knowledge and Everyday Life, 1900–04* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2007), 9 and Jonathan Hay, 2001, 22.
79. James Elkins, using Chinese painting as an example, has argued that art history is an essentially Western discipline. See his *Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).
80. Julia K. Murray, transcript, 1 May 2010.
81. Which Western philosophers like Arthur C. Danto refer to as 'modes of available influence'. See Danto, 'The Shape of Artistic Pasts: East and West', in *Philosophical Imagination and Cultural Memory: Appropriating Historical Traditions*, edited by Patricia Cook (Burnham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 125–38.
82. Hwang Yin, 'Stories My Ancestors Told Me: An Interview with Ling Lizhong', *Orientalisms* (April 2010): 52–54.
83. For a discussion on these terms, see James V. Wertsch, 'Specific Narratives and Schematic Narrative Templates', in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, edited by Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 49–62.

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