

The Flight of the Dragon: Modernism in China and Art at the Last Emperor's Court-in-exile

Shane McCausland

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Abstract: After his expulsion from the Forbidden City in 1924, China's 'last emperor', Henry Puyi 溥儀 (1906-1967), settled in Tianjin where he later presented parting gifts to his former English tutor, Reginald F. Johnston 莊士敦 (1874-1938), including an album by the Nanjing painter Chen Shu 陳舒 (active c. 1649-c. 1687) from the ex-Qing (1644-1911) imperial collection and an inscribed folding fan. These are now reunited in the library collection of SOAS University of London, where Johnston taught Chinese after his return to Britain in 1931. Together with Puyi's preface transcribed by courtier-calligrapher Zheng Xiaoxu 鄭孝胥 (1860-1938) for Johnston's memoir, *Twilight in the Forbidden City* (1934), these artworks pave the way for an investigation of the practice of connoisseurship at Puyi's court-in-exile in China's era of modernism, including Puyi's use of the imperial collection and his selection of these gifts even while he also shaping to become Japan's puppet-emperor in Manchuria (r. 1934-45). The study roams beyond the well-known network of Puyi and his court advisors among the *yilao* 遺老 (Qing 'old guard') to uncover an unexpected modernist connection with the progressive young artist, publisher and taste-maker Zheng Wuchang 鄭午昌 (1894-1952), a leading actor in the reform of *guohua* 國畫 ink painting. The study rediscovers how Zheng Wuchang contributed the painting to an inscribed handscroll, *Flight of the Dragon* (or, *A Storm and a Marvel* 風益圖),

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which commemorated, for the court inner circle, Puyi's dramatic escape from the Forbidden City amid the realities of a modern, Republican world.

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Author Biography: Shane McCausland is Percival David Professor of the History of Art in the Department of History of Art & Archaeology and Head of the School of Arts at SOAS University of London. As an undergraduate he read Oriental Studies (Chinese) at Cambridge University and received his PhD in Art History with East Asian Studies from Princeton University in 2000. He has curated exhibitions and published widely on Chinese and East Asian arts. His most recent book is *The Mongol Century: Visual Cultures of Yuan China, 1271-1368* (Reaktion/Hawaii, 2015).

This study calls attention to a handful of commemorative artworks that have been largely overlooked due to their connection with the tainted after-life of the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644-1911) in the era of modernism, or the Jazz Age, under the new Republic of China (1912-). Two of these artworks are parting gifts: an early Qing album by Chen Shu (active c. 1649-c. 1687; [figs 5, 7, 9-11](#)) and a farewell fan ([fig. 1](#)), given respectively in 1926 and 1930, by Aisin-Gioro Henry Puyi (1906-1967), known as China's Last Emperor (Xuantong, r. 1908-11), to Sir Reginald F. Johnston (1874-1938), his English tutor from 1919-24. Another is the preface ([fig. 3](#)) presented in 1931 by Puyi to Johnston for his memoir, *Twilight in the Forbidden City* (1934), the calligraphy transcribed by Puyi's advisor and de facto court calligrapher, Zheng Xiaoxu (1860-1938). The last, also reproduced in *Twilight*, is a scroll-painting orchestrated by Zheng Xiaoxu between 1925-31 to commemorate Puyi's escape from the Forbidden City in 1924, *Flight of the Dragon* ([figs 14-15](#)). It featured a title-piece by Puyi's tutor Chen Baochen (1848-1935) and a painting by Zheng Wuchang (Zheng Chang; 1894-1952), a progressive young art editor and painter acting, as a one-off, in the role of Qing court artist.¹

The only non-courtier among all these men and therefore a casual intermediary with the mainstream of modernism developing in China's art world, Zheng Wuchang emerges as a crucial figure to help elaborate the issues here and to situate Puyi's court circle in relation to the society of artists, aesthetic discourses on ink painting, typology and lineages, and the modernization of the art canon. Through examining this group of artworks and their constituent networks, we open up a new investigative angle on the process of modernist reform in "national [ink] painting," *guohua* 國畫, in 1920s China. As such, we revisit a narrative that stabilized quite early around catalyst figures through binary aphorisms like "Wu in the south, Qi

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in the north" (Wu nan Qi bei), referring to the Shanghai master and doyen of turn-of-the-century painting in China, Wu Changshi (or Wu Changshuo; 1844-1927), often seen as the Chinese counterpart to the Japanese *bunjinga* painter Tomioka Tessai (1837-1924), and the adoptive Beijinger, Qi Baishi (Qi Huang; 1864-1957), the son of Hunanese peasants and one-time carpenter who became an archetypal modernist.

More recent studies on modernism have delved into the role of Shanghai and Sino-Japanese dialogue and commerce: in the forging of a new mode of art publishing in Japan and in China, by Zheng Wuchang and others, that presented the creation of art history as a pedagogical means of modern nation building;² and in the promotion by modernists north and south of early modern China's *xieyi* 寫意 ("sketch conceptualist") masters, such as the monk-painters Bada Shanren (c. 1626-1705) and Shitao (1642-1707), Ming-dynasty (1368-1644) minor royals who in the Qing had been classed as stateless refugees or "left-over people" (*yimin*) but, in the early Republic, became "icons of modernity" who embodied the spirit of Europe's avant-garde and enabled Chinese individualism.³ The (re)invention of the *xieyi* tradition since the sixteenth century did indeed underpin the performative, individualist practices of modern ink painters—but at a time when *xieyi* was a widely invoked and flexible term, being used, for example, even in the discourse on art photography to differentiate images that merely copy from those (*xieyi*) that reveal the practitioner's inner life.⁴

I want to see how the unravelling of the late imperial aesthetic order in Republican China could be instructive about the conditional agency of artworks and their social-political situation within modernism. In mapping these "court" and related artworks, I retrace their lives

as objects, and adduce contingent evidence to investigate how through commemoration, for example, values and symbols of royalty were perpetuated by Puyi's "court". I want to understand how the principals involved (re)constituted these artworks, decided upon their contents, framed their formal implications and determined the dedications. Mindful of Puyi's awkward and unstable existence in the later 1920s as both a deposed Qing monarch who still bore an imperial title and wielded imperial seals, and as puppet-emperor in waiting of Japan's vassal state in north-east China, Manzhouguo (1931-45), I want to reconstruct how these artworks fitted deictically into their historical situation and could have served to redeem the troubled monarchy, if only truly for the inner circle of advisors.

In the process, we appraise historicity and "visual time" within modernism in 1920s China, including the parallels mooted with *xieyi* artistic individualism and political instability of the late Ming-early Qin. A study in critical iconology, the essay traces lines of enquiry in the abductive mode of Alfred Gell's theory of "art and agency" as applied in art history, as a means to map the unfolding story, from the royalist posturing of Puyi and his immediate circle to the modernist interventions of Zheng Wuchang in painting and art historiography.⁵

So, broadly, this paper addresses the art historical situation, visual rhetoric and social agency of Puyi's gifts and various contingent artworks and textual sources, underscoring their transcultural modern condition. It considers the fate of the ex-imperial collection in China after 1911, at the hands of a teenage ex-emperor buffeted by forces of modernity and politics, as well as the Republican art world and canon reform. It also points towards how these artworks and events have been framed in China's fractured post-1949 legacy. After a brief introduction

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of the protagonists and modernist networks, the article deals in turn with the Johnston album, fan and preface; curatorship and the modernism of connoisseurship at Puyi's court; the *Flight of the Dragon* handscroll and its creators; and, finally, it returns to the modernist standing of the artist of the Johnston album, Chen Shu.

Protagonists

Reginald Johnston has been seen to play a cameo role in China's modern art history because of Puyi, while Puyi's chief contribution, as it were, has been seen to lie in his curatorship of the former Qing collection, under the eye of Chen Baochen and Zheng Xiaoxu. Artworks feature prominently in how we visualize the Puyi-Johnston relationship. The Chen Shu album, for instance, was likely a selection from the ex-imperial collection, illustrating how, on a practical level, such a gift made a virtue of necessity. For Puyi, artworks from the vast ex-Qing imperial collection constituted his treasury. Up to 1924, he had these artworks at his immediate disposal in the palace and he had pragmatically formed the habit of using them in lieu of cash.⁶

Beautifully researched, Bernardo Bertolucci's acclaimed film, *The Last Emperor* (1987), highlighted Puyi's close bond with tutor Johnston, exemplified by the presentation of the blue farewell fan in Tianjin in 1930 (fig. 1). Valuing this and the other tokens gifted to him by Puyi, Johnston remained true to his pupil: *Twilight in the Forbidden City* (probably mostly complete by around 1932) was dedicated to "His Majesty the Emperor Puyi... by His faithful and affectionate servant and tutor."⁷ The publication in 1934 coincided awkwardly with the completion of Japan's annexation of Manchuria, but Johnston portrayed himself as

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disinterested in (although not disapproving of) Puyi's new role as puppet-emperor of the new state of Manzhouguo (r. 1934-45), preferring in his own twilight years to relive his glory days as tutor to the last emperor, symbolized visually by these gifts in his illustrations. Johnston retired in 1937 and died the following year.

As for Puyi, his ex-royal status and lifelong self-interest were a blessing for both Japan's wartime leadership in the formation of Manzhouguo, and for the leadership of the People's Republic (1949-) in defining a role for an ex-emperor of China within a Marxist teleology. In his "autobiography," Puyi detailed his appropriation of the Qing art collection while also denouncing Johnston's influence as pernicious. *Wode qian bansheng* (The First Half of My Life; 1960) was the fruit of a decade of Communist political re-education.⁸ Brilliantly ghosted by a Party cadre named Li Wenda, this text, which stands as a model of the confessional narrative favored by the Communists, shows Johnston infecting Puyi with decadent and bourgeois Western culture.⁹

Although a prominent cultural figure in Republican China, Zheng Xiaoxu, a chief apologist for Puyi, is not today a celebrated or much collected artist, although, as he was a conscientious diarist, his writings are important historical sources.¹⁰ A noted calligrapher and former Qing scholar-official, he had served as a diplomat in Japan in the 1890s, later settled in Shanghai where he worked in the Commercial Press with Zheng Wuchang and, only in late 1923, joined Puyi's inner court as an advisor on the recommendation of his friend, Chen Baochen. With Chen Baochen, a noted antiquarian, he was a member of the Super Society (Chao She), whose membership was a veritable "who's who" of relics of the former Qing, the prominent

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loyalist scholars and antiquarians known as the *yilao* 遺老 (the Qing "old guard"). Other members included: Wu Changshi; the Qing statesman and calligrapher Kang Youwei (1858-1927); Luo Zhenyu (1866-1940), a relative by marriage of Zheng Xiaoxu and later a courtier to Puyi in Manzhouguo from 1932-38; and Luo's protégé Wang Guowei (1877-1927).¹¹

Zheng Wuchang has emerged in art history as one of the pivotal modernist artists and art publishers in the new Republican mold, along with Huang Binhong (1865-1955) and Pan Tianshou (1897-1971). By the 1920s he was already an influential and well-connected art-world figure, especially in the reform of ink painting, but is less celebrated today perhaps due to his relatively early death, modernist views on individualism and human agency (anathema under the early People's Republic), and republican leanings.¹² The deaths between 1927 and 1940 of a generation of older artworld leaders, including Wu Changshi, Kang Youwei, Wang Guowei, Chen Baochen, Luo Zhenyu and Zheng Xiaoxu, made Zheng Wuchang an important bridging figure in art history.

As an artist, Zheng Wuchang grew up the early twentieth-century maelstrom of canonical transition and reform. Bada and Shitao were emerging as standard-bearers of modernist individualism, as if their rightful place as *maestri* in the expressionistic *xieyi* lineage had historically been marginalised by the Qing mainstream Orthodox School. Already by around 1920, the Chinese painter Wang Yun (1887-1938), a follower of Wu Changshi and his pre-eminent pupil Chen Shizeng (Hengque or Hengke; 1876-1923), was lashing out at the popularity of and commerce in this mode: in his inscription on a painting entitled *Crow* (a Bada subject in

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Shitao-style brushwork, *circa* 1920) he criticized those who “today horse around painting in the name of Shitao and Bada” by painting facile and arbitrary smears of ink.¹³

Bada Shanren had been seriously re-discovered from around 1900 by Wu Changshi and his followers, including Chen Shizeng and Qi Baishi.¹⁴ Aided and abetted by the changing times, Qi Baishi underwent a remarkable mid-career transformation into a modern artist, which began after he was mentored by Wu Changshi (from around 1905) and began, on his travels, to encounter works by *xieyi* artists, including the unconventional later Ming artist Xu Wei (1521-1593), Shitao, Bada Shanren, and the Yangzhou eccentric Jin Nong (1687-1763).¹⁵ Then, after disturbances in his home region compelled him to move to Beijing in 1917, Qi was befriended and promoted by Chen Shizeng, a friendship that afforded him access, for instance, to the long Xu Wei handscroll, *Miscellaneous Flowers (Zahua tu)*, now in Nanjing Museum (fig. 4). We may assume they viewed it together in the early 1920s as it bears both of their seals.¹⁶ This was the kind of encounter Qi Baishi reflected on in inscriptions on his own paintings of the 1920s and 30s.¹⁷ Despite Qi Baishi's friendship with Chen Shizeng and other scholar-artists, like the conservative landscapist Hu Peiheng (1892-1962), there is no evidence that he had any connection with Puyi's court and in the eyes of some scholar-artists, despite his fame and commercial success in China and Japan, he was never anything but a country bumpkin.

Meantime, underscoring the transnational context of China's modernism, Japanese led the way in collecting and studying Shitao, as seen in the first monograph on his art in 1926 (Chinese translation: 1928), in which the author Hashimoto Kansetsu (1883-1945) pitted Shitao's art against that of the Qing orthodox masters (“Four Wangs”).¹⁸ In the late 1920s, a

progressive younger *guohua* artist like Zheng Wuchang, who himself adopted an eclectic approach to historical models, championed Shitao's iconoclastic stance. Consider also Zheng Wuchang's close friend and fellow New Progressive School (Xinjinpai) ink-painter, the tyro Zhang Daqian (1899-1983), who exhibited a Shitao-inspired misty landscape in the First National Fine Arts Exhibition in 1929.¹⁹ In the context of this cosmopolitan exhibition, which also included art by Zheng Xiaoxu and Chen Baochen, Zhang Daqian's Shitao-style expressionistic work, despite its derivation, was more in tune with shifting modern notions of artistic selfhood than artwork by followers of the Qing orthodox canon. Artists of the so-called Return-to-Antiquity School (Fugupai) of *guohua*, exemplified by Hu Peiheng,²⁰ ostensibly perpetuated the erstwhile mainstream landscape mode in the wake of the "Four Wangs," a practice that we might have expected Puyi's advisors, like Zheng Xiaoxu, to have openly championed – but, as we shall see, did not.

Situating the Johnston album, fan and preface

We begin with the textual framing of these three commemorative artworks, which are our entrée to Puyi's in-between world.²¹ On the verso of the front cover of the album, a fountain-penned inscription in English reads (fig. 2): "To Mr Johnston / From the Manchu Emperor. / 6th July, 1926." This may be Johnston's own interpretive rendering of Puyi's dedication to the right in Chinese brush calligraphy, which states: "The year *bingyin*, fifth month, 27th day. [As] Our teacher Zhuang Shidun [Johnston's Chinese name] returns to his country, We gift this as a memento. Imperially inscribed by the Xuanton [emperor]."²² The fan of 1930 is inscribed by

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Puyi with two ancient poems about departure and separation, and politely but intimately dedicated to “tutor Zhidao” (*Zhidao shifu* 志道師傅), that is, using Johnston’s Chinese literary alias, the traditional form of address to a scholar in writing, matching the gift of the farewell fan (fig. 1b). The 1931 preface for *Twilight*, on its own page, is concluded with a seal reading “Xuandong imperial brush” (Xuandong yu bi), formalizing Zheng Xiaoxu’s role as amanuensis calligrapher (fig. 3).

Ever present, despite the Republic, is the anachronism of Puyi still being Xuandong emperor (r. 1908-11): he and his courtiers’ perpetuation of Qing tradition was key to the maintenance of Puyi’s identity and status, as well as his solvency. In progressive art criticism, the idea that fragmentary times and spaces could co-exist (in a Cubist artwork, for instance) was current, and articulated in late 1920s Shanghai by the cartoonist and essayist Feng Zikai (1898-1975).²³ Yet, the Puyi court strategy in Tianjin was to continue to assert a kind of post-Qing legitimacy by extending linear history. It mattered, for example, that in the late imperial painting tradition, each additional inscription and seal impression on an artwork had added more in this fashion. This practice of textual accretion on artworks had gathered momentum across the dynastic era culminating in the massive incontinence of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-95).

The “tradition” was indeed carried forward into the twentieth century by collectors, connoisseurs and scholar-artists. Speaking of Wu Changshi, however, Aida Yuen Wong has argued that inscriptions on paintings in the modernist era were a vehicle for the lyric voice, whereby the traditional false modesty of the Chinese scholar-artist could be one of the “tropes

to emphasise individualism.”²⁴ Adopting this scholarly practice in 1920s Beijing, Qi Baishi, our foil in this essay, used self-inscriptions on paintings to shape and adapt his artistic persona as an outsider figure and a modernist, through a strategy of referencing *xieyi* masters, men largely eschewed by the Qing court. We saw, above, how for Qi Baishi, Bada Shanren was an inspirational master whose art possessed talismanic powers, an echo of folk superstition.²⁵ Juxtaposed beside Qi Baishi’s practice as a mainstream modernist example, Puyi’s quasi-imperial use of commemorative inscriptions and seals in the 1920s echoed his status in being at the same time reactionary and provisional.

Turning now to Johnston’s album, each of the ten leaves bears an inscribed flower painting by a scholar-artist, Chen Shu, who was active in Nanjing in the early decades of the Qing dynasty.²⁶ The flowers comprise peony, pomegranate, lily and chrysanthemum and some unidentified others, mostly paired with poetic couplets composed and transcribed in visual dialogue with the images by the artist. The album has some successful, if repetitive arrangements. Spiky compositions speak to the rectangular edges of the frame: branches and stalks at jaunty angles are boxed in by it. Compliant blooms are tipped toward the picture plane, on display. Leaf 8 depicts an arching pale pink lily stem (fig. 5). Dark inky composite strokes (unusually mixing ink and color) capture the outlines and springy forms, deep verdant hues and waxy textures of leaves and stalks. Here is a complex tone-and-color loading on the brush, so that a single integrated stroke produces an ideosyncratic half-blend of colors and shades across its breadth and along its length--again, evoking Xu Wei. Note also the modulated, softer prancing outlines of the main lily flower and the faded backwash for the pale pink of the flower

petals, in contrast with the intense ochre and apple green of the sepals below, overlaid with scumbled ink.

As in many of the leaves, the inscription elaborates on the scene with narrative effect and synaesthetic appeal:

This flower mostly grows by the water's edge. Among the reeds I picked this 'pure display' to avail of its wild fragrance later. Yuanshu.²⁷

In lyric voice, the artist reveals how he supposedly plucked the lily stem from a water garden, for a *scented* "pure display" (清供 *qinggong*), a seasonal flower arrangement for a household of taste. If this remark triggers our olfactory sense, or even anticipation of it, this is because of a carefully confused looping of the sensory responses. The image becomes momentarily functionally real even as its facture as a painting is underscored by the ink-and-paper materiality of the album, the ragged individualist brush mode and the lodging of poetic text in the picture surface. Curving around the bloom, the inscribed lines toggle between being a visualisation of the wafts of fragrance emanating from the flower, words on or in the picture surface, and a frame around another form in a picture. A quirky formal indexicality in dialogue with the virtual presence of the forms provides a measure of the painter as a late-seventeenth-century scholar-artist and of his literary urban audience.

This combined poetry-and-painting format is seen also in one of Chen Shu's finest extant works, also in this *xieyi* mode, the handscroll of *Winter Vegetables for the Recluse's Kitchen*, which Puyi evidently took to Manchuria and sold there as it is now in Jilin Provincial Museum (fig. 8). This aesthetic, rather than seasonal grouping of nature was first popularised by the

spiritual patron of the miscellany of inky flowers, and supposed progenitor of this painting lineage, Xu Wei.²⁸ Critically, as we will explore below, Chen Shu was loosely positioned in relation to the *xieyi* lineage, as a follower of Xu Wei and a contemporary of Bada Shanren and Shitao. Chen Shu's album is iterative of this expansive monochrome ink-painting mode, although it incorporates colors into the ink tonalities, and shows a similar preoccupation with iconic scaling, shading and silhouetting, and a comparable mapping of floral forms to an array of brush textures and ink tones that lie, self-consciously, at an eccentric distance from the center ground of the Chinese painter's descriptive repertoire.

Let us turn to the fan of 1930. The year after receiving the Chen Shu album from Puyi, Johnston returned to China to be the last British commissioner at Weihaiwei in Shandong Province (1927-30). He paid Puyi several visits across the Yellow Sea in Tianjin. On the last occasion in 1930, Puyi presented Johnston with the farewell fan. Johnston wrote, "I was about to leave China and it was uncertain whether we should ever meet again," and Puyi hinted that "his exile in Tianjin would soon come to an end."²⁹

Puyi's gifting of this bespoke occasional artwork consciously re-enacted an imperial convention. Historically, such objects were often fans--the word *shan* 扇, "fan," is a homophone for *san* 散, "to go off"--bestowed upon meritorious courtiers *leaving court*, like Johnston, as Puyi would have known from examples in the ex-Qing imperial collection.³⁰ The fan for Johnston fits this category. To model this bestowal practice diachronically would be to situate the 1930 folding fan at the end of a timeline, implying also its validity and posterity, of

this traditional art practice of “farewell pictures,” a figure that must be seen as an indexical component of its agency.

Johnston regarded the front as the side with Puyi’s transcriptions in gold ink on the blue paper, which he reproduced in *Twilight* above the caption, “Fan presented to the author by the emperor with autograph copy of a Chinese poem of farewell” (fig. 1b).³¹ The other side features a painting, also in gold ink but unsigned, showing an epic if generic journey out of the gates of the capital (far left), and taking in many multi-storey temples and grand buildings along a road that winds across the fan to the right and back again through remote mountainous terrain with scarcely a tree (fig. 1a). The arcing skyline, echoing the scalloped top edge of the fan, is formed of a single chain of faded peaks. In this middle-brow rendition, the imaginary traveler is shown having arrived at his destination, where he stands silhouetted in the entrance of a double-tiered, hip-roofed building at the top of some steps toward the end of the road in the upper middle of the fan.

Above the painting is a short inscription by Puyi containing a half couplet of poetry, matching the painting: “Peaks and ridges, capes and headlands all intertwined in the brightness.”³² This is followed by the lunar date and a small imperial seal impression on white paper, cut out and stuck onto the fan. Puyi may have bought the folding fan from a specialist fan shop ready-painted on one side and blank on the other, or else he commissioned the painting of a parting journey on one side anticipating the poems of farewell he was going to inscribe on the other.³³

The inscription on the other side was certainly penned by Puyi himself on the evidence of the calligraphy, which is qualitatively unexceptional and close to that in the dedication on Johnston's album (fig. 2). There is, additionally, a telling anomaly in the layout of the inscription. It begins in the chosen format of five characters to one line followed by two in the next. The transcription (from right to left) comprises two poems of farewell (*pace* Johnston), "The Road Leads Ever Onward" (行行重行行 *Xingxing chong xingxing*) and "Out of the City's Eastern Gate I Go on Foot" (步出城東門 *Bu chu cheng dong men*).³⁴ The text of the first repeats the 5/2 formula 11 times with three characters over (*jia can fan* 加餐飯). The second then continues straight on in the middle of this five-character column, where the first left off, before completing another two-character column (城東 *cheng dong*) and then repeating the full 5/2 format two and a half times more (i.e., 5/2/5/2/5). Here, Puyi switches to smaller-sized characters in a sequence of unevenly numbered lines (8/3/5/1), having realized his miscalculation of the space and having to improvise: He had originally worked out that the two poems fitted in their entirety across the fan in the 5/2 format but had neglected to calculate how much space would be taken up by the all-important personal dedication, which only by virtue of the adjustment could, at last, appear in the final two lines: "[The year] *gengwu*, summer months, the first dogdays [July 19-28, 1930], inscribed for tutor Zhidao."³⁵ The schoolboy error by a man in his mid-20s makes this a most personal gift.

Everything about these two objects points to their being examples of those carefully graded compliments that we imagine royals schooled in court protocol know instinctively how to give: gifts somehow both personally commemorative and yet majestic, matched in value to the occasion and the recipient, and also embodiments of ideals and values of a displaced court.

Concerning the preface to *Twilight*, Johnston returned to China, again unexpectedly, the following year, and held what would be his final meetings with Puyi, in Tianjin. The Mukden incident, Japan's *casus belli* for annexing Manchuria, occurred on September 18th, 1931, just before he touched in Japan. After docking in Shanghai, he went straight on to Tianjin (October 7th), where he spent two days in company with Puyi and the inner circle. Rumours were rife that Puyi would soon leave for Manchuria, by now a "leased" territory under Japanese control. Johnston travelled the country during October and November for his conference and meetings with Puyi, power brokers and ministers. "On November 13th I returned to Shanghai and learned from a private telegram that the emperor had left." Though most people saw Puyi as imperialist Japan's puppet, for Johnston, this represented Puyi's royal destiny: "The Dragon has come back to his old home," he wrote in *Twilight*,³⁶ affording an insight also into the mindset of Puyi's court circle. There is remarkably little sense here of the degree to which the ambition to restore Puyi in Manchuria was placing his and his court's filiation with Japan increasingly at odds with Chinese condemnation of Japan's imperialism in China, including in satire on Puyi's weakness and greed.³⁷

During one of those last meetings with Puyi in October 1931, Johnston asked for and secured Puyi's preface to the memoir he had begun, which would publicly set a seal on their relationship. When *Twilight in the Forbidden City* appeared in 1934, the preface was proudly flagged up on the cover and reproduced on page 11 (fig. 3) with Johnston's annotated translation on page 13. He maintained that "The Preface was written by the emperor at Tianjin and transcribed by his devoted servant the famous poet, statesman and calligraphist, Zheng Xiaoxu, about a week before they both left for Manchuria [in November 1931], to become Chief

Executive and Prime Minister, respectively, of the new State.”³⁸ The transcription was executed in a highly professional manner by an evidently accomplished and intellectually *au fait* hand. A neat square composition is well suited to the page format, while the modulated small-script brushstrokes and characters in rich fluid dark ink, redolent of late Qing *jinshixue* (“metal and stone studies”) aesthetics, are yet easily legible, with little use of “flying white” technique (streaks of paper-white showing within rapidly executed strokes, common in the epistolary tradition) or narrow ligatures between strokes, which would not have reproduced well.³⁹

Puyi’s preface to *Twilight*, which in its opening lines lauded Johnston – in his own translation--for being “chiefly instrumental in rescuing me from peril,” highlights one last instance of quitting court which overshadows all of the other examples:⁴⁰ Puyi’s own escape in November 1924 from the Forbidden City, depicted in *Flight of the Dragon* (figs 14-15). When Johnston arrived in Tianjin on October 7th, 1931, and attended the reunion dinner of Puyi’s old inner circle, this was surely one of the topics of conversation.⁴¹ They may even have viewed the scroll painting, but, probably at this moment, Johnston took or obtained the photographs he used to reproduce parts of the scroll in a foldout in *Twilight*. We come back to this painting later.

Curating and connoisseurship at Puyi’s court

We might wonder how the callow Puyi, having been expelled from the Forbidden City in 1924, came to have in his possession an artwork like the album by Chen Shu; and to what degree (if any) he was even aware of ongoing critical manoeuvres in the art canon, in which the stock of a

xieyi artist like Chen Shu was rising. The method underpinning Puyi's actual appropriation of the pick of the former Qing collection is no secret. Inspired by Johnston's education, in the summer 1922, he and his brother Pujie determined to escape from the Forbidden City to study at their tutor's alma mater, Oxford, but their attempt in the spring of 1923 failed when Puyi was double-crossed by eunuchs.⁴² The *Autobiography* states:

The first stage of [our] escape plan was to provide for our expenses. The way we did this was to move the most valuable pictures, calligraphy and antiques in the imperial collections out of the palace by pretending that I was giving them to Pujie and then store them in the house in Tianjin. Pujie [who came into the palace for lessons] used to take a large bundle home after school every day for over six months [autumn 1922-spring 1923], and the things we took were the very finest treasures in the collections.

The extent of corruption in the Imperial Household service was such that their takings apparently went unnoticed. By the 1920s, art treasures pilfered by eunuchs were being openly sold in antique shops owned by their family members set up outside the northern "back gate" of the palace. This eunuch graft had already prompted the heads of the Household Department and imperial tutors to begin inventorying the art collections. It is likely that Puyi's Xuantong seal was impressed during this process on the artworks, positioned typically below the seal of the Qianlong (1736-95) emperor's son and successor, the Jiaqing emperor (r. 1796-1820), since few of the intervening nineteenth-century emperors had impressed any, creating a powerful visual continuity with the High Qing. Ironically, this inventory enabled the brothers to choose the "very highest grade" of artworks to appropriate.⁴³

This stock-take was probably also the cause of the arson attack by eunuchs, to conceal thefts, on the Jianfugong palace on night of June 27th, 1923.⁴⁴ In the aftermath, Puyi battled to reorganize the palace. Chen Baochen turned to his own circle to bring in new advisors, including Zheng Xiaoxu as comptroller, and to consult other *yilao* including Luo Zhenyu. But it came to nothing, and when Puyi was expelled on November 5th, 1924, it became clear that he was little more than pawn in north China's warlord rivalries.⁴⁵

In Puyi's estimate in 1964:

We must have removed over a thousand handscrolls, more than two hundred hanging scrolls and pages from albums, and about two hundred rare Song Dynasty printed books. All these were taken to Tianjin and later some dozens of them were sold. The rest were taken up to the Northeast by the Kwantung Army adviser Yoshioka after the foundation of "Manzhouguo" and disappeared after the Japanese surrender [in 1945].⁴⁶

We know that after Puyi was reunited in 1925 in Tianjin with his smuggled treasures, he started selling or mortgaging pieces, such as the Zheng Sixiao (1241-1318) handscroll, *Ink Orchid* of 1306 (Abe Collection, Osaka Municipal Museum of Art), via Chen Baochen's nephew in Japan.⁴⁷ Many other pieces were later dispersed in Manchuria, such as the Chen Shu handscroll in Jilin (fig. 8) and, famously, Zhang Zeduan's early-eleventh-century masterpiece, *Going Upriver on the Qingming Festival* (Palace Museum, Beijing), rediscovered intact there and first published in 1954.⁴⁸ Circumstantially, Johnston's album was likely to have been part of the hoard Puyi brought to Tianjin from the Forbidden City, since Puyi had no other sources of old master paintings and was not in the habit of buying artworks in the market.

The album bears no Qing imperial stamps pre-dating Puyi's viewing seal. This tallies with its absence from the palace records. It is not among the three works by Chen Shu listed in the catalogue of the Qing imperial collection, *Shiqu baoji sanbian* (1816), meaning that it passed under the critical radar.⁴⁹ Puyi certainly removed one of those three listed, as just noted: the still unpublished 1673 handscroll *Winter Vegetables for the Recluse's Kitchen* in Jilin (fig. 8).⁵⁰ The other two, both hanging scrolls, he appears to have left behind, although they would have been reviewed by his tutors, who impressed his Xuantong seal. Later taken by the Republican government to Taiwan with two other Chen Shu paintings undocumented in *Shiqu baoji*, they are now in the National Palace Museum:⁵¹ *Great Fortune for the New Year (Xinnian daji)*, which celebrates the year of the cock (fig. 6);⁵² and *Flowers of the Fifth Month (Tianzhong jiahui)*, for the Duanwu Festival (Double Fifth), depicting an arrangement of seasonal flowers: holyhock, oleander, day lilies in flower and ripening locquats (*pipa*) (fig. 7).⁵³

While these hanging scrolls present Chen Shu's more decorative "pure display" mode for festivals, the Jilin handscroll, befitting its literary format, aspires to belong in a more expressive literary mode (fig. 8). The inscription accompanying its 1673 frontispiece praises the poet-painter Chen Shu as having "ridden forth alongside Qingteng [Xu Wei]," which is borne out in the dynamic combination of text and image, pictorial and calligraphic brush modes.⁵⁴ The paintings in Johnston's album patently have some characteristics of this expressive mix of poetry, calligraphy and painting, but belong also in the more decorative "pure display" mode, free from complex lyrical content.⁵⁵

Take another leaf, leaf 10, a painting of perhaps a gardenia or camellia spray (fig. 9). The inscription reads: "Amid the snow a rosy fragrance reveals a precious pearl."⁵⁶ As before, the artist uses synaesthetic images (snow-white petals; a pink fragrance; a jewel amid the intangible) to commingle the senses of touch, sight and smell. Standard late imperial-era epigraphic skill and poetic literacy are assumed here, but there is nothing beyond anyone with a mainstream education such as Puyi and Johnston had. And there is no likelihood of a 'pure display' picture bearing any profoundly cryptic message that might mar the ritual enacted either through display (or viewing) or in the re-purposing of the album as an imperial parting gift.

There are cases where such albums, in the Qing context, were seen to have a key leaf or leaves embedded within. The inquistional Qianlong emperor, for example, was ever sensitive about Qing authority and legitimacy even a century after the fall of the Ming in 1644. The surname of the Ming royal family, Zhu 朱, means red in Chinese and the color was sometimes used to symbolise loyalism to the fallen regime by elements, such as Bada Shanren (Zhu Da) and Shitao (Zhu Ruoji). When the Qianlong emperor detected seditious content in an innocent-looking painting of a red peony, he used the opportunity to enact petty censorship: he had the offending Chinese scholar-artist posthumously disgraced and almost succeeded in scrubbing him from history.⁵⁷ Growing up in a post-sumptuary capitalist world, Puyi's strategy, by contrast, was to acquire works that his tutors deemed critically of highest value, which he evidently assumed could be most effectively monetized.

Of all the leaves in the Chen Shu album, one clearly illustrates Puyi's rationale in choosing the album, speaking to the purport of the gift, namely the first leaf, a pink peony (fig. 10). Though Puyi's *Autobiography* was ghost-written, the remarks upon Johnston's learning, character and tastes ring true. He was: "a connoisseur of Chinese poetry;" "I used to see him wagging his head as he chanted Tang poems just like a Chinese teacher, his voice rising, falling and pausing;" and "He was a lover of Chinese tea and peonies."⁵⁸ So, Johnston may have especially liked the subject of the first leaf. For the royalist's pleasure, Puyi here added his imperial seal: a Xuanton royal stamp, its legend reading "Xuanton imperially reviewed" (Xuanton yulan 宣統御覽), maintaining the fiction of his royal title.⁵⁹ Judging by the (poor) quality of the paste and the (messy) seal impression, he did this himself.⁶⁰ Johnston would also have appreciated the poetic inscriptions. The inscription on leaf 1 refers to an intimate friendship between two people: 'Neither [of us two] says a word yet we know each other's minds.'⁶¹ If only on the basis of this first leaf, this was a well-chosen *personal* gift.

There was more elsewhere for Johnston to appreciate. On leaf 9, the chrysanthemum, which also bears an unidentified collector's seal (fig. 11), the inscription, with its wholly mainstream allusions, reads:

Zimei's [Du Fu; 712-770] poetic emotion returns; Yuanming's [Tao Qian; 365-427] wine euphoria borrowed.

[The year] *xinyou* [1681], after the Double [Yang] festival, painted at leisure in the Mountain City Pavilion.⁶²

Perhaps China's greatest poet, Du Fu is someone whose poetry Johnston would have known by heart. Likewise, Tao Qian, the early landscape poet. Johnston would immediately have connected Tao Qian with the subject of the chrysanthemum. Since medieval times in East Asia, this subject has been inextricably linked with him, after he famously quit his post in 405 during the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420) to return to his country estate to cultivate chrysanthemums, write poetry and drink wine. This connection was often celebrated in paintings of chrysanthemums, and was still scarcely avoidable in inscriptions on paintings of chrysanthemums in 1920s China.⁶³

For Puyi, this had the potential to be an awkward topic, because Tao Yuanming had quit *in disgust* at court corruption and had composed an ode, *Returning Home*, which was ever after celebrated as the classic of the demoted, exiled or otherwise frustrated Chinese scholar-official. However, for much of later imperial history this was enough of a cliché to lack any critical edge. I would posit that for Johnston and Puyi, the primary value of the album lay in an uncomplicated interpretation of the iconography of the pictures and the accompanying poetry, but this is not to say that its cultural and historical associations and iconology were not also recognised as appropriate by Puyi and his advisors.

Take the dating of the album, lurking amidst the cursive inscription, to the chrysanthemum festival, an annual occasion when ancestors are honoured.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the year of the the album, 1681, loops back from 1926 to the start of the Qing dynasty. For Puyi and his courtiers, his royal ancestry was core to his status and identity, something they reinforced whenever he or they impressed his Xuantong seal on old master paintings, beside his

predecessors'. Johnston too savoured Puyi's ancestry, evinced by the double-page family tree showing Puyi's place in the Qing royal succession, which he reproduced as an appendix in *Twilight* under the heading, "The Pedigree of the Manchu Emperors."⁶⁵ The Qing dynasty's heyday spanned the long eighteenth century, the so-called Kang-Yong-Qian reigns. More precisely, Chen Shu's album was painted in the year, 1681, usually marked as the start of this golden era, with the second founding of Qing by the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662-1722), following the quelling of the seven-year Rebellion of the Three Feudatories, bringing to an end the creatively free-wheeling Transitional period of the mid-seventeenth century. The album dated historically to the moment of Qing consolidation, making it loosely nostalgic for the start of a dynasty that was in 1926 all played out.

In our evaluation of this album, this date of 1681, also prompts us to see it in a wider-angled view of 1920s modernism, a significant moment of recovery--as historical precedent--of individualism in art. We have already seen Chen Shu linked with Xu Wei and the *xieyi* lineage. He is also linked with Shitao, who knew Chen Shu in the 1680s when he resided in Nanjing, the city where he painted the disturbingly modern masterpiece, *Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots* (whereabouts unknown), in 1685.⁶⁶ We also know that Shitao admired Chen Shu's art, from his remarks in a 1694 album of *Landscapes* (fig. 12):

Those who enter through the ordinary gate to reach the Dao of painting are nothing special. But to achieve resounding fame in a given age—isn't that difficult to accomplish? For example, the lofty antiquity of the works of gentlemen like Kuncan, Cheng Zhengkui and Chen Shu; ...'⁶⁷

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In the art canon (of which more below) Chen Shu is generally classed as a third-tier painter. Yet, here, Shitao praised him for achieving fame with his “lofty antiquity” (*gaogu*), and in the company of better-known masters, the monk-painter Kuncan (1612-1673), one of the Four Monks (with Bada and Shitao), and Cheng Zhengkui (1604-1676), a follower of the great Dong Qichang (1555-1636). It is typical of Shitao’s cross-grained, even modern thinking to shape a diachronic concept like ‘lofty antiquity’ in the terms of present agency.

The critical choice of the Chen Shu album

We considered above how and why Puyi--or he and his advisors--might have chosen the Chen Shu album as a personal gift for Johnston, starting with the iconography of the content (a seasonal bouquet) and genre (“pure display”). To further parse its undocumented state and relatively minor canonical status we need to consider the state of the art canon and the critical hierarchy and artistic networks of Puyi’s tutors and advisors up to 1926. Chen Baochen drew upon his *yilao* friends, Kang Youwei and Luo Zhenyu, and Zheng Xiaxu joined the inner circle after the Jianfugong fire.⁶⁸ In 1924, Puyi’s triumvirate of loyal advisors included Chen, Zheng and Johnston, but the change in Johnston’s role in 1924 from tutor to part-time diplomatic advisor, makes it unlikely that took a very active part in connoisseurship activities at any time. There were, nevertheless, moments of extreme tension between the three men, including regarding who took credit for securing Puyi’s asylum.⁶⁹

So if connoisseurship at Puyi’s court in the 1920s was broadly aligned with the art worldview of the *yilao*, what did this mean in practice? Reform of connoisseurship under the

early Republic evidently proceeded from the late imperial situation whereby court art practice, which had the power to define practices more widely, had become fused with Qing kingship and political legitimacy. Given the degree to which Qing court practices of connoisseurship and creativity were constituted in palace and elite society, we might expect Puyi's courtiers to have maintained a default reactionary stance, even in their relatively marginalized position at the fringes of the new Republican canonical discourse. However, as Cheng-hua Wang has argued, as a social and intellectual collective, the *yilao* were notably disparate, complex and changeable.⁷⁰

Continuing by default into the early Republic, the basic formulation of Qing canonical practice had occurred under the Qianlong emperor, who amassed and catalogued in *Shiqu baoji* and other compilations, the vast imperial collection that Puyi inherited. The conservative painter and critic, also a Manchu bannerman, Tangdai (1673-after 1752), exemplifies this conservative, courtly mode. In his writings, Tangdai equated the "orthodox school" (正派 *zhengpai*) or "correct tradition" (正傳 *zhengchuan*) in painting with the Confucian tradition of moral philosophy from Confucius (551-479 BCE) and Mencius (372-289 BCE) to Wang Yangming (1472-1529) in the Ming, and contrasted it with other philosophic traditions like Daoism, which was framed as deviant or unorthodox. He justified painting by reiterating the citation used since the earliest (medieval) critical texts on art: "As is traditionally said: 'Painting completes civilisation: it illuminates human relationships, probes divine transformations, fathoms deep subtleties, and is equal in merit to the Six [Confucian] Classics.'" ⁷¹ He extended the "tradition" into his own time. In painting, the Manchu Qing orthodox lineage adopted the mainstream Chinese late Ming (early 17th century) schema of two traditions or lineages, dubbed the Northern and Southern Schools by Dong Qichang, stretching from Wang Wei (699-761) in the

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Tang (618-907) to Dong Qichang in the late Ming. It only remained for Tangdai to rehearse the Qing succession of this lineage, comprising Wu Li (1632-1718) and the "Four Wangs," namely Wang Shimin (1592-1680), Wang Jian (1598-1677), Wang Hui (1632-1717), and Tangdai's teacher, Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715). Conservative artists under the Republic were at liberty to extend this into their own time.

Iconologically, under the mantle of Manchu patronage, Tangdai injected Baroque elements into Chinese modes, media and formats for painting. An example is *In Imitation of Fan Kuan's "Waterfalls Among Autumn Mountains"* (National Palace Museum, Taipei), a landscape in the mode of a pioneering Northern Song (960-1127) master of the landscape genre, which is inscribed by the Qianlong emperor at the top with the character *shen* 神 ("divine"), placing it in the top category of painting. Another collaborative work, also in Taipei, *The New City of Feng*, illustrates and hence instrumentalizes an event in history when the founder of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang (r. 202-195 BCE), remodelled and repopulated parts of the Han capital to make his relatives, who missed their homeland of Feng, feel more at home.⁷² With its Baroque spatiality embedded and elaborated in the Chinese media and format, the painting exemplifies how the ruling Manchus could use the appropriation and synthesis of other cultures--from Italy and China--to domesticate Manchu-Qing Beijing.

Despite the political vicissitudes of modern China, the core of this model of practice and connoisseurship has not been readily displaced and the *Shiqu baoji* attributions largely still stand in museums. Only in the last two decades, as part of its demotic turn, has the one of East

Asia's flagship cultural institutions, the National Palace Museum in Taipei, publicly expressed doubt about a few traditional attributions of famous artworks in *Shiqu baoji*.⁷³

Returning to the early Republican period, an example of the connoisseurship of Luo Zhenyu shows how the Qing framework was retempered by a member of the *yilao* in Puyi's service. It is relevant that Johnston greatly admired Luo Zhenyu, who along with Kang Youwei, he noted, was famous outside China, and that Luo, along with perhaps Wang Guowei, Zheng Xiaoxu and his son Zheng Chui, was likely among those whom Johnston referred to in *Twilight* as his "modernist" friends, for whom masculinity equated to a vigorous temperament and strength of purpose, seen to be mirrored also in their calligraphy.⁷⁴

Luo wrote an ekphrastic colophon in 1937 to a handscroll painting called *Landscape in the Four Seasons*, now in the Metropolitan Museum and today dated to the fifteenth century, a relegation in traditional terms. Maintaining the standard later dynastic distinction between the two "great traditions" (大宗 *dazong*) of Song landscape (or, Northern and Southern Schools), Luo ascribed this painting to an unknown master of the middle Song period, i.e., twelfth century, working in the (critically inferior) Northern mode. His *modern* critical outlook emerged with his final lament about the spurious addition of the signature of the mid-Song court master Li Tang (c. 1070s–c. 1150s): "With a fine painting like this, why was it necessary to add the signature [of Li Tang] for it to be treasured?"⁷⁵ Lineage and art historical status mattered but were trumped by the role of the artist as an individual. Luo's connoisseurly framework indicates how the *yilao* could, intellectually, both espouse conservatism and favor self-expressive creativity over factional loyalty and name recognition value. This is a useful analogy for how

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Zheng Xiaoxu and Chen Baochen could have viewed Johnston's Chen Shu album: from a conservative standpoint it had low canonical status, not having appeared in *Shiqu baoji*, but, turning now to the next step in the argument, it could also be appreciated for its mode of lyrical expression.

Political fragmentation, internationalisation and internal social pressures were all forces enabling or promoting self-expression in the late Qing art world, and these coalesced into urgent calls in the early Republic of China for the mass modernisation of society and culture. In 1919, the May Fourth demonstrations ushered in the New Culture Movement, led by public intellectuals including Lu Xun (1881-1936), Xu Zhimo (1896-1931) and Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), which promoted education reforms such as replacing classical Chinese with vernacular literature and brushes with fountain pens for writing. However, such events were "despatched in a couple of sentences" in the diary of Zheng Xiaoxu.⁷⁶

Outside Puyi's court bubble, advances in technology were transforming print media, spurring the growth of public opinion informed by pictorial magazines such as, from 1926, *Liangyou huabao (Young Companion)*.⁷⁷ In 1925, the Shanghai press was the outlet for a furore regarding the use of nude models in the new art academies. The life-painting studio even became a topic of oil painting itself.⁷⁸ Artists, including some women, who studied oil painting in Japan and Europe were feted on their return, like Pan Yuliang (1895-1977) and Guan Zilan (1903-1986). Bilingual (Japanese-English) fine arts publications like *Kokka* (Flowers of the Nation; 1889-), presented an Asian sensibility to the global art world, which in Nihonga, for example, highlighted the psycho-physical presence of figures conjured with delicate outlines and ink-

wash auras. Puyi's preference was for cheap illustrated magazines, various of which famously lay scattered about, along with biscuits and a half-eaten apple, on the morning of his expulsion from the Forbidden City.

In this mix, expressive, masculine, metropolitan ink painting thrived, but not in such a way as to afford easy points of connection with Puyi's world. Wu Changshi moved in the circle of Puyi's courtiers but was based in Shanghai. Exemplifying the social flux of the new Republic was Qi Baishi, who became famous for his ragged brushwork, inventive design using layering and framing, and his industry--the new modernist look inspired by the *xiayi* masters (fig. 13), historically, and by Wu Changshi. But Qi's social elevation, exemplified by invitations to join the art department of Beijing University in 1927 and 1928, had its limits and he was never a member of the societies of educated Chinese painters, never mind hereditary elite circles. The reality that, among Puyi's courtiers, Zheng Xiaoxu and Chen Baochen exhibited their work in the same art world context as Qi speaks to the cosmopolitanism of the time.

The Flight of the Dragon

In his later court role, Johnston was almost wholly concerned with the diplomatic side of the Warlord Era in north China (1916-28). Although not an antiquarian as such, he was not a complete outsider, aesthetically. He had a role in the commemoration of Puyi's escape during the duststorm in the winter of 1924-5, in *The Flight of the Dragon*. Puyi's first flight was out of the Forbidden City, on Wednesday, November 5th, after the warlord Feng Yuxiang entered Beijing during a *coup* and surrounded the palace with cannon. Given three hours to leave, Puyi

took refuge temporarily in his father, Prince Chun's mansion at Beihai, north of the Forbidden City. For several weeks, as rumor, politicking and "wild soldiery" swirled about the city,⁷⁹ he and his family may have feared the same fate as the Romanovs in July 1918. A few weeks later, on the stormy 29th, aided principally by Johnston and Zheng Xiaoxu, Puyi fled again across the city concealed in a car, into Japanese protection in the legation district south-east of the Forbidden City. He remained there under Minister Yoshizawa's protection from late 1924 to early 1925, with Johnston living nearby in the British Legation. Puyi and his family then resettled in a mansion, the Jingyuan (Garden of Serenity), in the Japanese Concession in the treaty port of Tianjin (February 1925 to November 1931).

We know only of the two sections of the scroll reproduced in half-tone in a fold-out in *Twilight*. One is the presumed title-piece section, reproduced by Johnston or his publisher to the *left* of the painting rather than to the right, where one would expect the title. In it, Chen Baochen entitled the scroll *A Storm and a Marvel* by inscribing, with qualities of righteousness and dignity, the two large, frontal and upstanding characters, *Feng yi* (fig. 14). This is followed by his five-line inscription in small characters--a calligraphic hand pegged by Johnston as "delicate and graceful"--in which Chen appended a commemorative poem, translated by Johnston as follows:⁸⁰

Sukan [Zheng Xiaoxu] drew this picture to commemorate the events of the third day of the eleventh month of the year *jjazi* [November 29th, 1924], and I, Baochen, wrote on it the following stanza:

There was the roar of a sandstorm as the sun sank in the west.

Where was a refuge to be found in this hour of crisis?

The poetic spirit of Changli [Han Yu, 768-824] animates this picture

Portraying the flight of the dragon through murky skies and over a darkened earth.

Here, Johnston coined the English title of the scroll-painting, *Flight of the Dragon*. He himself also wrote an inscription in English in the backing paper but he declined to reproduce it in *Twilight*, saying that all the details in it were in his text anyway.⁸¹

This facia of collaborative spirit masks a darker jostling for credit apparent in comparison of the sources. Despite Puyi's preface to *Twilight*, the scroll indicates that Johnston failed to convince the British to give him sanctuary and that, meantime, Zheng Xiaoxu obtained this from Yoshizawa. Chen Baochen asks, "Where was a refuge to be found?" And he answers through the allusion to "the poetic spirit of Changli," referring to the writing of the Tang (618-907) statesman and poet Han Yu, a stalwart figure admired by Zheng Xiaoxu. Not coincidentally, Han Yu had also used the image of wind soughing in pines as a poetic image when he was demoted and banished.⁸² With such a conventional figurative association, Chen Baochen unequivocally credited Zheng for finding Puyi his refuge "in this hour of crisis."

Curiously, as noted, in his foldout reproduction of the handscroll, Johnston (or his publisher) appears to have reversed the likely order of, and conjoined as if they were sequential, the two reproduced sections of the scroll. He explains Chen Baochen's inscription and his own as colophons (題跋 *tiba*) invited by Zheng Xiaoxu in the backing paper following the painting (拖尾 *tuowei*). However, the large size of the title characters *Feng yi* and the introductory nature

of Chen Baochen's inscription are what one would expect in a title-piece in the frontispiece (引首 *yinshou*), which is typically done on a separate sheet of paper mounted before the actual painting, known as the "painting heart (or pith)" 畫心(芯) (*huaxin*). In addition, Chen Baochen's inscription appears to have been written on, and indeed composed to fit on a single separate sheet within the mounting: the right end of this sheet is cropped, but the left end is clear enough to indicate the size of the whole and how the inscription was composed to fit it-- which is consistent not with a colophon but with a frontispiece, as seen in the handscroll of Chen Shu's *Winter Vegetables* in Jilin (fig. 8).

Reproducing the painting directly to the right of Chen Baochen's presumed title-piece does, from a Sinitic perspective, strangely transform Chen's inscription into a colophon in the backing paper. If Johnston had forgotten the order and this was his supposition, it suggests he was unfamiliar with the anatomy of handscrolls in general and of this one in particular. If he did "remount" the scroll's components in his preferred order, seeing the painting and the inscription as standing for Zheng Xiaoxu and Chen Baochen, respectively, perhaps he wished to equate his role in the critical evolution of the scroll to that of Chen Baochen. This would be an example of Johnston's silent curatorship of his Chinese source materials for his Anglophone audience.

Putting aside, for the moment, the authorship of the painting, we can see that the short composition is anchored at the left end by *two* large wind-torn pine trees amid some smaller trees (fig. 15). The large pines are traditional symbols of stalwart scholars like Han Yu, and an elite male subject painted by both Zheng Xiaoxu (fig. 16) and Chen Baochen. If one of these two

pinus represents Zheng Xiaoxu, then the other is likely Chen Baochen, rather than Johnston, who must be one of the lower, lesser trees. At least, this would tally with Zheng Xiaoxu's belief, corroborated by Chen Baochen, that he and not Johnston had secured Puyi's safety at the Japanese Legation.⁸³ In the middle, seen through the dust storm over the outer walls of the Forbidden City, the palace rooftops all askew recede into the middle distance. To the right, flying half hidden in a swirling cloud of dust, is the young dragon: the escaping emperor going off alone. The abnormal effects, for a Chinese handscroll painting, include the disorienting left to right movement and vertiginous aerial looping of the composition over the palace city, the markedly dishevelled and forlorn pines and the rakish angling of tiered palace buildings out of the orderly grid matrix of the city.

The scroll Zheng Xiaoxu produced embodies Chinese painting tradition but in uncharted modern waters. It depicts the emperor and advisors engaged in affairs of state, the classical function of painting reasserted by Tangdai, and this is presented through the lyric voices of scholar-officials, using symbolic figures, like the pines and dragon (i.e., emperor) flying off--but it all takes place in Republican times. It evokes Qing court art in its collaborative production by courtiers but also in its visual and historical referencing. Members of Puyi's circle would not have missed the allusion to Ma Yuan's (c. 1160-1225) [*Dragon-rider*](#) (National Palace Museum, Taipei), which bears a Xuantong viewing seal;⁸⁴ and as educated readers they would not have missed the allusion to historical accounts of a dragon flying off from the palace in a storm marking the end of a dynasty.⁸⁵ The painting still has a compelling contemporary look, which draws upon Zheng Xiaoxu's wider social network, while the various active continuities with the

past constitute a modern reflexivity about its purpose as an emotive record of Qing deracination from the Forbidden City after 280 years.

As Johnston postured around the *The Flight of the Dragon*, he either mistakenly or deliberately identified the painter as Zheng Xiaoxu, whose literary alias was Sukan. If this was a mistake, it was easily done for various reasons. The tone of self-congratulation in Zheng Xiaoxu's diary shows the pride he felt in having secured Puyi's safety in the Japanese Legation,⁸⁶ and he had no reason to undecieve Johnston, if the latter believed the painting was by him. In addition, Chen Baochen's inscription states, 蘇堪作圖 *Sukan zuo tu*, literally, "Sukan made this picture," although in classical Chinese this can also be glossed as "Sukan had this picture[-scroll] made," which is what Chen meant. The signature in the lower left corner of the painting is also confusing, particularly if Johnston had only a grainy photograph as a record and no reason to question his assumption. It in fact reads "Respectfully painted by Zheng Chang" 鄭昶恭繪 (*Zheng Chang gong hui*), and is penned in small formal script in this anachronistic formula: the third and fourth characters read *gong hui* or "respectfully painted," in the manner of artists at the Qing court. It was clearly a commission from a modern artist game enough to play the part of Qing court painter, working *for the emperor*, although, this being the early twentieth century, not to the extent of adding the traditional superscript, 臣 *chen* ("Your servant"), which would have preceded the family name of any Qing court artist doing such a work.

As to this painter's two-character name, 鄭昶 Zheng Chang, the surname is the same as Zheng Xiaoxu's, while the second character (昶 Chang) is not easily legible in the reproduction in Johnston's book,⁸⁷ and it is possible Johnston had forgotten or never knew who this artist

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was, or thought the signature was one of Zheng Xiaoxu's aliases. When Zheng Xiaoxu transcribed a text for Puyi, like the Preface to *Twilight* (fig. 3), it was punctuated with a royal seal, "Xuandong imperial brush," as noted. Presumably Zheng Xiaoxu had called for this painting to be signed in this way by Zheng Wuchang.

Johnston's confusion about the identity of the painter may also have owed to Zheng Xiaoxu's fame, which Johnston acknowledges, as a painter of pines as well as a calligrapher: the first National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1929 featured examples by Zheng of both arts.⁸⁸ Johnston would have supposed, rightly, that Zheng could easily transpose strokes from calligraphy to paint pine trees, as scholar-artists had done for centuries. The basic formula of his paintings backs that up: partial, cropped views of pines which foreground ink and brushwork techniques (fig. 16). But Zheng was not a painter of scenery like in *Flight of the Dragon*, which required mastery of a wider range of pictorial and not just calligraphic techniques, such as scale and depth, wash and texture, and more complex, descriptive brushwork, composition and conceptual framing to generate iconological effects of nostalgia and epic dynastic transition.

Zheng Wuchang and modernism

The painting *Flight of the Dragon* features various visual idioms of early works (from the later 1920s) by the young artist who signed it, Zheng Chang or Zheng Wuchang, notably the anchoring clump of trees in the lower left and the composition that ranges back into and across the picture frame. In addition, the gray wash of the sky serves equally well for the dust-strewn air in *Flight of the Dragon* and the moonlit skies seen through layered bare branches in the

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undated *Willow Bank and Hazy Moon* and *Willow's Eternal Poetic Feeling* of 1926 (cf. fig. 18).⁸⁹

The trees and also the signatures in the 1926 willow painting and in *Pine-covered Ridge and Flying Waterfall* (1928; fig. 17),⁹⁰ are very close to those in *Flight of the Dragon*, as would be expected if the three were more or less coeval. Zheng Wuchang's oeuvre is yet to be systematically studied but *Flight of the Dragon* should now be incorporated into the body of early works. It is a painting that would have become politically toxic for him had it surfaced under Communist China's Maoist utopianism after 1949 and one that may yet colour the way he is evaluated there.

Known in his early artistic period as Zheng Chang, he attended Beijing Normal University from 1915-18, but spent most of his life thereafter in Shanghai working as a painter and art publisher, up to his death in 1952 aged 59 *sui*. Nicknamed Willow Zheng (Zheng Wanliu), he was a well-connected member of the Nine Society (Jiushe) painting group, and a sociable creature: a portrait of Zheng Xiaoxu features in a handscroll painting commissioned of him in 1930, to record a tea party, entitled *Tasting Tea*.⁹¹ An influential scholar-artist with an international, modernist outlook, he was evidently a sympathetic brush for Zheng Xiaoxu, one who completed refreshing works quoting or 'sampling' old masters with an airy modern touch.⁹² In his own words, and sounding like proto-moderns such as Shitao, Zheng Wuchang advocated "studying painting not in order to take the past as one's teacher but actually so as to eject oneself from the old-master tradition (*dadao*)" and "becoming a master in one's own right by fusing [present] reality with brush techniques of the ancients."⁹³ A fine example of his painting in this mode is a hanging scroll, *Enjoying Music*, dated 1931, after Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322) (collection

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unknown; fig. 19). This and Zheng Wuchang's aesthetic outlook help to unpack the facture and agency of *Flight of the Dragon*.

By the mid-late 1920s Zheng Wuchang had become a leading figure in the first phase of the establishment of the field of Chinese art history,⁹⁴ and a leading artist of modern literati-style landscape hanging scrolls. In 1929, aged 35, at least one of his landscapes was selected for the National Fine Arts Exhibition,⁹⁵ and he was named in an important review by one of the exhibition's committee members, Chen Xiaodie (1897–1989), outlining the six categories of *guohua* on view in the exhibition. Zheng Wuchang was cited as an exemplar of two: the New Progressive School, along with Zhang Daqian, and the Literati School, along with Wu Hufan (1894-1968), grandson of Wu Dacheng (1835-1902).⁹⁶

As an art editor, Zheng Wuchang's *magnum opus* was the compilation, *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, published in May 1929, the title of which featured a trendy neologism, *huaxue* (painting studies).⁹⁷ Although chiefly written in an historiographic mode of embedded quotations from critical texts (conventionally without footnotes or illustrations--as with Tangdai, above), the section on 'extant works' of Qing painting remarks on the richness and quality of the Qing imperial household collection. The evidence he cites for this is the *Neiwubu guwu chenliesuo shuhua mulu*, likely a reference to the ten-volume title of 1925.⁹⁸ It is not clear if Zheng Wuchang had access to those paintings through contacts like Zheng Xiaoxu or if he just relied on this and other unillustrated reference works. Technical leaps in reprography in the 1920s meant that Zheng Wuchang's tome could have been widely illustrated but the inclusion of just a few halftone images of his own paintings (e.g., fig. 18) suggests this would have been

expensive. While it was not unusual in the new Republic for art publications to reproduce artworks by authors and contributing writers, nevertheless, as Juliane Noth has shown, the process of remediation of visual artworks in this era was complicated: art books were in part educational about the author, his aesthetics and practice, but the historiography of such publications also doubled for the process of modern nation building.⁹⁹

Illustrating his emerging standing as a modernist scholar-artist, Zheng Wuchang secured prefaces for his book by three mavens of China's art world. The 83-year-old Wu Changshi contributed a manuscript title page, dated 1926, the year before he died; Zheng Xiaoxu contributed a manuscript preface (dated 1927); and the landscape painter Huang Binhong (1865-1955) provided another preface (dated 1928). Zheng Xiaoxu states that the book took five years of preparation, suggesting that Zheng Wuchang had started work as early as 1922. In sum, Zheng Wuchang was patently a considered choice on Zheng Xiaoxu's part as painter of *Flight of the Dragon*. The painting would have been an appropriate act of reciprocation (*guanxi*) for the preface.

The modernist standing of Chen Shu

Zheng Wuchang's critical outlook can also inform our readings of other practices and artworks of concern here. For example, in Zheng Wuchang's *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, Chen Baochen and Zheng Xiaoxu are both listed as painters of the scholar genre of pine trees, underscoring their national standing as artists.¹⁰⁰ As for Johnston's album of flowers, the artist Chen Shu is situated behind his better-known mainstream contemporaries in the "orthodox school of

realism" (*xiesheng zhengpai*), such as his contemporary Yun Shouping (1633-1690), who was part of the mainstream traditional grouping, "Four Wangs, Yun [Shouping] and Wu [Li]." While Chen was recognised as being famous in his time (echoing Shitao), the praise is qualified: "Mr Chen's bird and flower, grass and insect [paintings] are reminiscent of [the Ming painters] Qingteng [Xu Wei] and Baiyang [Chen Chun, 1483–1544], though one may object to his brush and ink handling as too bright [or 'flashy'] and to the lack of any distinctively untrammelled flavour."¹⁰¹ We should recall the temporal displacement at work here. Zheng Wuchang's evaluation, which is based on stylistic lineages, followed late imperial philological practice in rehashing the assessment of Chen Shu by his contemporaries, including the prominent critic and collector Zhou Lianggong (1612-1672), illustrating the incremental philological basis of Zheng Wuchang's scholarship as well as the nature of artistic modernism in 1920s China.¹⁰²

Elsewhere in *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, Chen Shu is listed in the third string of Qing painters in the genre of flowers, one of 'over thirty masters who excelled either by dint of technical prowess or else free spiritedness, who essentially were all capable of enlivening with color [or "enlivening beauty'] and giving life to fragrant [flowers] and hence were famous in their own time."¹⁰³ To imagine Chen Shu's "technical prowess," a slightly pejorative notion which connotes the meticulous crafting of descriptive painting, consider the inoffensive hanging scrolls in Taipei (figs 6 & 7), which exemplify the "pure display picture." Although Chen Shu employed this term in the lily leaf (fig. 5), we have seen how stylistically Johnston's album of flowers had more literary ambition, proffering a mode that justified Chen's being likened to Xu Wei and Chen Chun. The multi-leaf album format--handled for viewing by one person alone (hence its appropriateness as a personal gift)--was also a natural environment for the scholarly

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play of free-spiritedness, as seen in both the handscroll in Jilin (fig. 8) and in the album's expressively linear paintings and cursive inscriptions. The demanding critic acknowledged that Chen Shu brought fragrant flowers to life but adjudged him, even in his free-spiritedness, to have fallen short of the standards of those Ming pioneers Xu Wei and Chen Chun in using 'flashy' brushwork and displaying a certain lack of originality or sublime disinterest.

All this is useful in gauging how the contextual value of Puyi's gift to Johnston was actually somewhat above the artist's traditional (i.e., in the Qing critical framework) third-tier status. Even if, as a painter, Zheng Wuchang was himself catholic in his scholarly allusions, he nevertheless stood in the van of the progressive scholar-artist movement and was associated with others, like Wu Changshi and Zhang Daqian who did directly study *xieyi* masters like Bada Shanren and Shitao. Zheng Wuchang's exemplar in *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi* is, in fact, Wu Changshi, who is listed as the last in the line of the top tier of Qing-dynasty painters included in the first-rate band:

He paints flowers, bamboos and rocks in an unaffected and light-hearted manner, with vigour and archism, somewhere between Qingteng [Xu Wei] and Xue'ge [Bada shanren]. Indeed he profoundly captures the spirit of 'metal and stone' [late Qing epigraphic antiquarianism]. Among modern scholars he is the pinnacle of fashion.¹⁰⁴

We can now see more clearly how Xu Wei served as a likely, unconventional exemplar for modern scholar-artists, as they mooted artistic parallels between the Ming-Qing transition and their own time. For a start, Xu Wei emerged as a famous painter late in life, and so afforded a model for the new modern artist type, Qi Baishi, his follower. Aspects of Xu Wei's biography

fitted with modernist, individualist notions of selfhood: he suffered bouts of serious mental illness (he self-harmed by driving a nail into his ear, served a jail term for the murder of his wife) and he enjoyed mixed commercial and critical success as a painter in his lifetime. His paintings often featured ironic, self-mocking calligraphic inscriptions. Likewise, Bada Shanren was known for his quirky, arresting ink paintings with cryptic inscriptions. To the philological mind, such “outsider” biographical details became fused with this *xieyi* mode of expansive, individualistic brushwork, carving a furrow for followers in a *xieyi* lineage and, crucially, establishing a retrospective model for modernist individualism.

Consider Wu Changshi’s antiquarian artworks like *Peonies in a Bronze Vessel* (fig. 20), in which Wu painted in the flowers and added his inscription on a sheet of paper previously prepared with an ink rubbing from an ancient bronze vessel and its inscription. Zheng Wuchang’s evaluation of Wu Changshi in the *Complete History* positioned him as torch-bearer in the art of Metal and Stone or Epigraphic Studies (*jinshixue*) antiquarianism within the wider “evidentiary scholarship” (*kaozhengxue*) movement. In these, a scepticism toward the historical past, and especially towards texts transmitted (and hence corrupted, technically and ideologically) through manuscript copies, notably the classical (epistolary or Two Wangs) tradition of Chinese calligraphy espoused at court, manifested in an insistence on the primacy of unblemished, unmediated sources of history. In *Peonies*, the direct--though technically composite--impression of a bronze vessel well-known enough to have a name, the “Zhou-dynasty [c. 1046–256 BCE] Wuzhuan *ding* [tripod vessel],” substantiated an immediate link with high antiquity and did so with modern, intellectual rigor. In “evidentiary scholarship” calligraphy, this equated to modelling one’s own hand not on the classical epistolary style but on the

archaic, chiselled qualities of ancient epigraphic inscriptions in bronze ritual vessels and on stone carvings mostly dating to the period before the advent of the epistolary tradition of responsive brush-on-paper calligraphy, i.e., the first two millennia of writing in China. In *Peonies*, Wu Changshi's pictorial contribution was to add modern inky flowers with stiff dark stalks echoing the qualities of his calligraphy: the image of the flowers in the bronze vessel represented, therefore, a marriage of material antiquity and intellectual modernity. One can see why critics lauded the manner in which he short-circuited the Qing critical hierarchy by means of the modern intellectual kinship he proffered visually with those political outsiders of the *xieyi* lineage.

We can situate this modernist visual discourse within the early Republican art world by reference to Zheng Wuchang's section on "Qing works of painting." Zheng was familiar with the imperial and leading private collections, which were naturally populated with works by the Qing orthodox masters associated with the court (the "Four Wangs" and so on), but he also chose to feature an equal number of artists who, by the later twentieth century, would be dubbed individualists, eccentrics and regional masters. In the mid 1920s, Zheng Wuchang positioned Wu Changshi among the latter, these emerging early modern greats, "somewhere between Xu Wei and Bada Shanren."

Zheng Wuchang may have had in mind paintings like Wu Changshi's ink sketches inspired by Bada Shanren's odd-ball renderings of birds, as he experimented in 1927 with images of birds in album leaves.¹⁰⁵ For Zheng Wuchang, Wu was the heir to and exemplar of this invigorated individualist, or conceptualist lineage. His celebration of the individual artist in

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Republican China chimed with a new set of post-dynastic values, informed through international publications and travel by “modernism,” but this was couched, here, in terms of a native Chinese artistic lineage. Underscoring the continuing authority of precedent in modernism, an expressive modern painting mode was being retroactively positioned as core to scholar-painting and the associated lineage continued to be framed such that it was proleptically founded by Xu Wei and Chen Chun in the Ming and continued by Bada and Shitao, and later Yangzhou painters in the Qing.

Compare this with other artistic contexts in which Puyi's circle were exposed. The second of the two volumes of the catalogue of the National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1929 contained a selection of close to 100 “ancient” (*gu*) works (of uneven quality): 18 pre-Ming; 13 Ming (including only one by Dong Qichang); 36 Qing (including two by Shitao and two by Bada); 11 ink rubbings; and 17 “recent works” by recently deceased masters mostly of the Shanghai School. There is here a palpable sense of the canon of art in transition, as the Beijing-centered Qing order was being dismantled and reformed in recognition both of Shanghai's revolutionary contribution and of a modern Chinese scholar-artist culture. Part of the new framework was revitalizing this expressive lineage of non-denominational scholar-painters with carefree, sketchy brushes, and according to Zheng Wuchang, Wu Changshi's art supremely exemplified this visual discourse of “modern scholars” within the 1920s ink painting fraternity.

Conclusion

This study has shown why the figure of Puyi, despite being an object of satire by the early 1930s, can scarcely be ignored in modern China's art history: in part because of his possession and dispersal of a major swathe of the former Qing imperial art collection and in part because of the national recognition his courtiers Chen Baochen and Zheng Xiaoxu enjoyed as scholar-artists and members of the *yilao* circle. The study has shed new light on the unexpectedly modernist aesthetic consciousness and network of Puyi's "court" in the 1920s, and in particular of Zheng Xiaoxu and his young friend Zheng Wuchang.

The selection for and gifting to Johnston in 1926 of the Chen Shu album of flowers, likely from Puyi's treasury of ex-Qing artworks, was revealing of anachronistic royalist values – values of a kind later put on display for transnational public consumption in Puyi's preface for Johnston's memoir, *Twilight in the Forbidden City* (1934), penned in 1931 by Zheng Xiaoxu. Yet, our assessment of the significance of Johnston's Chen Shu album is complicated. It evidently had elements of Puyi's personal choice: the "pure display" pictures, in a quasi-Xu Wei *xieyi* mode, mixing flowers and poetry, were evidently to Johnston's taste and liking as perceived by his erstwhile pupil, as was the addition of Puyi's Xuantong royal seal and personal calligraphic dedication. Meantime, the standard criticism pegged Chen Shu as a third-tier Qing artist and the artwork itself is not cited in *Shiqu baoji*, unlike several other examples identified, such as the Jilin handscroll. This made Puyi's gift sufficiently royal but also appropriately condescending for an ex-tutor, at least in the eyes of protocol-minded courtiers, while, pragmatically, having also little potential as a monetizable asset.

Also colouring this choice, and of growing contextual importance, exemplified by the eminence of ink painters like Wu Changshi and Qi Baishi and the emerging stature of Zheng Wuchang, was the fact that Chen Shu worked in this fashionable conceptualist ink mode, one touted as a precedent for modernist individualism; and that Chen Shu was a contemporary of and worked in a similar mode to two emerging greats of the *xieyi* lineage, Bada Shanren and Shitao. This was a taste developing across and among the shifting, disparate and overlapping circles of Chinese and Japanese men of culture, the *yilao*, young progressives, and the men who Johnston called his “modernist friends.”

The Chen Shu album commemorated past personal and courtly relationships between emperor and tutor Johnston, but the artist’s relatively low critical ranking was partly redeemed by this “new progressive,” scholarly quality of the 1920s, which spoke, as we saw, in particular to Zheng Xiaoxu’s artistic network. That network of elite, modernist artistic connections was uncovered in the retracing of the lost *Flight of the Dragon* handscroll orchestrated by Zheng Xiaoxu between 1925-31, featuring the calligraphy of Chen Baochen and the painting of the key figure of Zheng Wuchang. Investigation of Zheng Wuchang’s art and writing enabled us to imagine, critically, the efficacy of the choice of Chen Shu and to suppose how Chen Baochen and/or Zheng Xiaoxu helped Puyi to pick it out, if only by contrast with Puyi’s lame artistic performance with the 1930 fan for Johnston. The fan was probably sourced for Puyi by Zheng Xiaoxu, who may also have suggested poems to transcribe, but Puyi was left largely alone to his own devices in his blundering inscription for Johnston. Puyi’s calligraphic and indeed intellectual competencies were brutally exposed, particularly in the contrast with Zheng Xiaoxu’s polished preface for *Twilight*.

The Chen Shu album seemed at first like a simple memento selected from Puyi's teenage art trove, but it subsequently helped uncover a trail of evidence showing the complexity of Republican China's confused art world, of politics in turmoil, of a canon in transition, and even of the validity of obsolescing royalist codes in shaping reactions to events and desires for the future. As for the *Flight of the Dragon*, this scroll painting exemplified the contradictions of a troubled ex-Qing monarchy in Republican times and revealed the unexpected modernist leanings of Puyi's diehard royalist advisors. Its awkward constitution as a modernist "court" artwork, in limbo between the defunct Qing and puppet Manzhouguo empires, has ripples in its unknown fate. After 1949, neither the Chinese Communists, nor the ousted Nationalists, nor Japan under its post-war constitution, had much reason to cherish Puyi and his late courtiers, who made it, as their reputation became enmeshed in the legacy of imperialism, nationalism and Communist teleology in twentieth-century East Asia.

[13,287 words]

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Endnotes:

¹ The album and fan remained in Johnston's possession after his final return to Britain in 1931 but got separated after his death, and have not previously been related to other artworks or made to shed light on their agency and its artistic context. Parts of Johnston's personal collections ended up at SOAS University of London (where Johnston taught from 1931-37), some in 1935, while other parts arrived at different times after his death in 1938. The fan (MS 381195; "SOAS Digital Collections," accessed March 17, 2019, <http://digital.soas.ac.uk/AA00000009/00001>) was apparently among papers given by his fiancée, Mrs Elizabeth Sparsholt, to the Sir Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, University of London, and later transferred in 2009 to SOAS, a loan formalised in December 2017. The album, also in SOAS Library (MS 62612; "SOAS Digital Collections," accessed March 17, 2019, <https://digital.soas.ac.uk/LOAA005730/00001>), is listed as part of 'the Reginald F. Johnston bequest.' The original inventory number, 58.5, which appears on the wooden outer album cover and in the typed label on the verso of the cover (fig. 2), suggests it was not catalogued until 1958 although it may have entered the collection before this date. Johnson's service to Puyi has naturally been of interest to researchers at SOAS; see, e.g., Ch'en, "The Last Emperor." I am grateful to T. H. Barrett for this reference.

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Chinese is Romanized throughout this paper using the *Hanyu pinyin* system; older systems (e.g., Wade-Giles) in quotations have been updated.

² Noth, "Reproducing Chinese Painting;" Shen, "The Japanese Impact." On the period in general see Andrews and Shen, *The Art of Modern China*.

³ Wong, *Parting the Mists*, especially 36, 68ff and 73-75; quote on 73.

⁴ For the use and flexibility of the term *xieyi* across painting and photography, see, e.g., Wang, "Sketch Conceptualism;" Kent, "Early Twentieth-Century Art Photography in China," which discusses Liu Bannong (1891-1934).

⁵ Moxey, *Visual Time*. In the context of comparative art history, rather than Alfred Gell's (1945-1997) hastily completed *Art and Agency*, art historians could consult, e.g., Chua and Elliott, *Distributed Objects*, or Osborne and Tanner, *Art's Agency and Art History*. See also Curtis, *The Pictorial Turn*.

⁶ Under "Articles of Favourable Treatment" Puyi was permitted by the Republic to remain in the Forbidden City, retain his title, and receive a state stipend; document reproduced in Johnston, *Twilight*, 462, translated on 96-7. For an exhibition catalogue see Chang, *The Last Emperor's Collection*. When in 1923 Puyi wanted to donate to the relief effort after the Kantō earthquake, 'short of ready cash I sent antiques, paintings and calligraphy that were valued at about US

\$300,000;' Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi (hereafter Puyi), *From Emperor to Citizen*, 143. Johnston gives the figure as Chinese \$200,000; Ch'en, "The Last Emperor," 355.

⁷ Johnston, *Twilight*, 5. Having been knighted on his return to Britain, Johnston had taken the chair of Chinese at the School of Oriental Studies (now SOAS) in the London Institution, but as Professor Sir Reginald F. Johnston, he cared little for this role, which he mocked as 'trying to teach Chinese in the murky caverns of Finsbury Circus;' Johnston, *Twilight*, 368. See also Bickers, "'Coolie work'." Biographies include: Airlie, *Scottish Mandarin*, and Lamont-Brown, *Tutor to the Dragon Emperor*.

⁸ Aisin-Gioro Puyi, *Wode qian bansheng*; translation: Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*; review: Ch'en, "The Last Emperor." See also McAleavy, *A Dream of Tartary*. Given the political value of Puyi and of the legacy of the Qing in Republican and Communist China, it could be expected that relevant primary sources, even as they intertwine with the arts, continue to serve as instruments for other non-artistic agendas, including in Sino-Japanese tensions over Japan's wartime legacy in Manchuria and China, and Chinese Marxist teleology; these are mapped out in the analytical framework of Wong, *Parting the Mists*.

⁹ From Johnston, Puyi developed an 'intoxication with a European way of life.' As to their intimacy, Puyi observed that 'his [Johnston's] movements were still deft and skilful;' and, 'By my last year of studying [1924]... Johnston had become the major part of my soul'; Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, 109ff. Puyi's homosexual tendencies and practice were asserted with prejudice, following the publication of *Wode qian bansheng*, in the otherwise careful review by Jerome Ch'en, "The Last Emperor." Writing when homosexual acts were still illegal in the UK,

Ch'en (340) asserts Puyi's homosexuality "based on [his] own confession" (citing Pan, *Modai huangfei*, II: 22) and on the testimony of his brother Pujie's Japanese wife, Aishinkakura Hiro, *Ruten no ōhi*, discussed in McAleavy, *A Dream of Tartary*, 238. In contemporary post-Socialist China, a fascination about their subsequent relationship obtains--it has been supposed that Puyi was Johnston's catamite; see Rennie, "Emperor 'corrupted by Scottish teacher'"--but this is not an avenue we venture down here. Unquestionably, Johnston made an immediate impact on Puyi and his manhood. Cutting the Manchu queue hairstyle had become an important topos in early-twentieth-century portrait photography around shifting masculinities in the fin-de-siècle transition to a republic. The thirteen-year-old Puyi sheared his off, effectively ending the Qing custom, after Johnston's off-hand reference to the queue. Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, 114; Ch'en, "The Last Emperor," 342. Wu Hung, *Zooming In*, chapter 3, 'Birth of the Self and the Nation: Cutting the Queue' and illus. 66, 'Puyi's Queue,' after *Palace Museum Weekly (Gugong zhoukan)*, January 1931. It is said that the queue is still kept in a box in the Palace Museum.

¹⁰ Zheng Xiaoxu, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*; Marjorie Dryburgh, "The Fugitive Self."

¹¹ On the Super Society, see Wong, *The Other Kang Youwei*, 57ff. On Chen's circle see, e.g., Yang and Whitfield, *Lost Generation*; Maeda, "The Kyoto Circle," 220-23.

¹² For studies, see Shen Kuiyi, "Zheng Wuchang de huihua yishu;" and Shi Yunwen, *Zheng Wuchang*. See also n. 98 [CHECK XREF].

¹³ Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 73ff and fig. 18 (collection of Ozaki Kenji, Osaka): 「豈如今人胡鬧，而又託名石濤、八大。可嘆！」

¹⁴ Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 55; on Wu Changshi, see 77-91. For a 1908 Chen Shizeng landscape in Shitao style, see fig. 14; and fig. 16 for another by Jin Cheng (1878-1926).

¹⁵ See the chronology of Qi Baishi paintings in Beijing huayuan, *Zhongguo jindai huihua jujiang: Qi Baishi*, including *Fish after Bada Shanren* (1907), no. 118; and Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 108, citing Ye Qianyu, "Qi Baishi's Late Transformation," 90-93.

¹⁶ For these details, I am grateful to Charlotte Chin-chi Yang whose doctoral project, currently underway at SOAS University of London, is entitled 'Social Reality, Taste, Art Market and Genre: Canon Formation in the Painting of Xu Wei.'

¹⁷ See, e.g., a painting in Beijing Fine Art Academy entitled *Duck after Bada Shanren* (after 1917; illustrated in Beijing huayuan, *Zhongguo jindai huihua jujiang: Qi Baishi*, no. 21), where he recalled how he had recovered his transcription of a Bada album (made while travelling in Guangxi) from the ashy ruins of his home (burnt in 1917) and "sighed with Master Zhu's embittered heart," but claimed that "even though this was a free-copy made in a later age, it still provided protection against devils and spirits," endowing Bada's art, even in its modern facsimile form, with the talismanic power that enabled his painting to survive the flames: 「... 嘆朱君之苦心。歲後世之臨摹本，猶有鬼神呵護耶。」

¹⁸ Hashimoto, *Sekitō*. On Japanese interest in Shitao from as early as 1897 see Lee, "Exploring Visual Modernity and National Identity in Twentieth-Century China," pp. 66-67.

¹⁹ Included in the select, retrospective catalogue, Quanguo meishu zhanlanhu, *Meizhan tekan*, vol. 1 (*Jin*, 'Contemporary'), n. p. The division of *guohua* into six schools is discussed below, see

n. 96 [CHECK XREF]; Chen Xiaodie, "Cong meizhan zuopin ganjuedao xiandai guohua huapai," 1-2.

²⁰ See, e.g., Hu Peiheng, *Deep in the Mountains, A Small Path* (1926); "National Art Museum of China," accessed January 2, 2018, http://www.namoc.org/zsj/gczp/cpixs/201304/t20130417_220888.htm.

²¹ On the genre, *songbie tu* 送別圖 (farewell pictures), see Clapp, *Commemorative Landscape Painting*.

²² Transcription: 「丙寅五月廿七日，莊士頓師傅歸國，贈此以誌紀念。宣統御題。」

I have supposed the English handwriting is Johnston's in that it is far more confident than Puyi's, for which see the fair copy of a passage of Mencius which Johnston reproduced in Johnston, *Twilight*, 246-8.

²³ Feng Zikai, "Xing ti geming yishu (Litipai)," 1: 434; cited in Schaefer, *Shadow Modernism*, 158. On heterochrony see also Moxey, *Visual Time*. Slavoj Žižek also writes of nostalgia as a temporal complex of past and future, a longing for a future that lay ahead in the past; *In Defence of Lost Causes*, 141.

²⁴ Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 96-97. See also Hong, "Issues of Provenance in the Last Emperor's Art Collecting."

²⁵ See above, n. 15 [CHECK XREF]. For another example, see the 1935 *Little Duck after Bada Shanren* (Beijing Fine Art Academy), on which Qi mentioned having visited Nanchang (Bada's

hometown in Jiangxi) and seen Bada's work aged 41 (c. 1905); illustrated in Beijing huayuan, *Zhongguo jindai huihua jujiang: Qi Baishi*, no. 116.

²⁶ Chen Shu 陳舒; distinguish the 'female scholar', *nvshi* 女史, Chen Shu 陳書 (same tones; 1660-1736).

²⁷ Transcription: 「此花多生於水際，蘆葦之間採此清供，以助晚來幽味。原舒。」 I am grateful to Tu Chung-kao and Liu Zhengcheng, as well as Bai Qianshen, Shu-chi Shen and Joseph Chang for their assistance with transcribing the cursive and seal texts of the Chen Shu album; any errors are mine.

²⁸ For Xu Wei, see Ryor, "Fleshy Desires and Bodily Deprivations."

²⁹ Likely on the day of his departure by steamer for Weihaiwei, September 15, 1930; Johnston, *Twilight*, 442 & 446.

³⁰ A Xuanton seal appears on Zhu Yuanji (1399-1435), *The Marquis of Wu Takes His Ease* (1428; Palace Museum, Beijing), painted for a retiring general; illustrated in Clunas and Harrison-Hall, *Ming: 50 Years that Changed China*, fig. 152. A Song example is the fan by Song (1127-1279) emperor Lizong (r. 1224-64) and Ma Lin (c. 1180-after 1256) presented in 1256 to a retiring courtier (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1961.421; "Clevelandart," accessed January 14, 2018, <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1961.421>).

³¹ Johnston, *Twilight*, between 448-9; with Johnston's translation of the poems on 447.

³² Transcription: 「岑峯岬嶠滿纈英。庚午初伏題。」

³³ Specialist fan shops existed, for example, in Hangzhou. I am grateful to Shao Yan for details of an anonymous Qing fan depicting a busy scene around West Lake (*Xihu fanhui tu*) produced by the Shulianji company in Zhejiang 浙省舒蓮記, in the collection of CAFA Art Museum, Beijing (e-mail message to author, January 14, 2019); illustrated in Fan Di'an, *Zhongyang meishu xueyuan meishuguan cang jingpin daxi*, 071.

³⁴ Tr. Johnston, *Twilight*, 446:

The road leads ever onward, And you, my friend, go this way, I go that.

Thousands of miles will part us – You at one end of the wide world, I at the other.

Long and difficult is the journey – Who knows when we shall meet again?

The Tartar horses breathe the northern winds, The birds of Yue build their nests in southern trees.

Our farewells are said, we are far apart; Already I grow weak with pining.

The sun is hidden by the drifting clouds, The traveller journeys on, turning his head no more.

Thinking of you, I seem to have grown old. The months have swiftly passed, a whole year has gone.

It is all over. There is no more to be said, I must make myself strong for the strenuous days to come...

Transcription, *Xingxing chong xingxing*: 「行行重行行，與君生別離。相去萬餘里，各在天一涯；道路阻且長，會面安可期。胡馬依北風，越鳥巢南枝。相去日已遠，衣帶日已緩；浮雲蔽白日，遊子不復返。思君令人老，歲月忽已晚。棄捐勿復道，努力加餐飯！」

Out of the city's eastern gate I go on foot, To gaze longingly at the road that leads to far Jiangnan.

On that day of storm and snow, Here it was that we parted, and my friend went away.

I want to follow him across the river, But the river is deep and has no bridge.

Oh that we were a pair of herons, That we could fly home together.

Transcription, *Bu chu cheng dong men*: 「步出城東門，遙望江南路。前日風雪中，故人從此去。我欲渡河水，河水深無梁。願為雙黃鵠，高飛還故鄉。」

³⁵ Transcription: 「庚午夏月初伏為志道師傅書。」

³⁶ Ibid., 448-50. On 8th: leaves for Beijing, meets powerful ex-warlord of Manchuria, Zhang Xueliang; 15th: back to Tianjin to meet Puyi; 21st: reaches Shanghai for the Pacific Conference; November 10th: in Nanking, meets Mr T. V. Soong, finance minister and acting foreign minister to discuss Puyi's situation.

³⁷ In Mu Shiying's story "Yezongli de wuge ren" (Five in a nightclub; 1933); Schaefer, *Shadow Modernism*, 167.

³⁸ Johnston, *Twilight*, 13, n. 5.

³⁹ Zheng Xiaoxu diarises his almost daily calligraphic practice in *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*.

⁴⁰ Tr. Johnston, *Twilight*, 13. Text: 「莊士頓師傅首翼予出於險地。」

⁴¹ In addition to two younger men, Zheng Xiaoxu's eldest son Zheng Chui and Kang Youwei's pupil "Chui Leong" (Xu Liang 徐良); Johnston, *Twilight*, 448. I have not kept Johnston's Romanization, Chen Baoshen 陳寶琛; Chen Baochen seems to be preferred currently.

⁴² Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, 129ff.

⁴³ Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, 129.

⁴⁴ An estimate of lost scrolls was 1,157. The scandal led to the expulsion of all but a few eunuchs from the palace; Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, 133-6.

⁴⁵ The Qing Royal Estates Management Committee, appointed by the Republican government, took over. During a search of the Yuanxindian Palace by the committee on July 31st, 1925, a list of paintings "awarded" by Puyi to Pujie and a list of what Pujie received were discovered and soon published, but many of the artworks smuggled out were not on these lists. See Qingshi shanhou weiyuanhui, *Gugong yiyi shuji shuhua mulu*; for a volume, see Chang, *The Last Emperor's Collection*, no. 26. See also Shih, "From Imperial Collection to National Treasure," and Shih, "Qingshi shoucang de xiandai zhuanhua."

⁴⁶ Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, 128-9.

⁴⁷ Illustrated: "Google Cultural Institute," accessed December 30, 2017,

<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/orchid/1gEcSkwNr9CjOQ?hl=en>. To

Japanese taste, this painting was pawned on Puyi's behalf, while in Tianjin, to the Japanese collector Abe Fusajirō (1868-1937), through the intervention of Chen Baochen's nephew Liu Xiangye, who travelled frequently to Japan. See Yang, *Guobao chen fu lu*, 347; Maeda, "The Kyoto Circle," 217. For Abe Fusajirō's collection, see Abe and Abe, *Sōraikan kinshō*.

⁴⁸ Yang, "The Story Behind," 9. Yang Renkai (1915-2008) was the connoisseur appointed by the new Ministry of Culture in 1950 to assist public security in recovering Puyi's former treasures in the northeast. His estimates more or less tally with Puyi's: 1,300 handscrolls of painting and calligraphy, 40 albums, 21 [sic] hanging scrolls, 200 sets of early books; Yang Renkai, "The Story Behind," 5, where he quotes a later (1952) inventory by Yan Zhenwen, the then caretaker. See also Yang, *Guobao chenfu lu*, 375, for the Jilin handscroll.

⁴⁹ Yinghe, *Shiqu baoji sanbian*, "Chinese Text Project," accessed January 10, 2018, <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=33142&page=24> ff.

⁵⁰ Yang, *Guobao chenfu lu*, 375. Chen, *Gugong yiyi shuhua mu jiaozhu*, listed only the same scroll by Chen Shu (p. 26b), as well as seven by Chen Chun (21a-b), three by Xu Wei (22a), none by Bada Shanren or Shitao and barely one by Yangzhou "eccentric" painters (Li Shan, 33a).

⁵¹ No paintings by Chen Shu are listed in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing; "The Palace Museum," accessed January 10, 2018, <http://www.dpm.org.cn/Public/static/CCP/huihua.html>, search page 19/532.

⁵² Inv. no. 故-畫-003672; "The National Palace Museum," accessed February 16, 2018, http://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=13578.

⁵³ Inv. no. 故-畫-002906; "The National Palace Museum," accessed September 20, 2017, http://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=6557. Distinguish this from another scroll with the same title (inv. no. 故-畫-002905; with Jiaqing and Xuantonq seals) depicting pomegranate, oleander and day lilies in flower around a rock; "The National Palace Museum," accessed September 20, 2017, http://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=6556. See also Chu, "Qing Chen Shu hua *Tianzhong jiahui*."

⁵⁴ By Dai Qi (act. late 17th) following his frontispiece title (旨蓄足山厨): 「當於青藤方駕並驅。」 I am grateful to Andy Guoxuan Ye for obtaining photographs of this unpublished scroll. The colophon is also quoted in Hu Jing (1769-1845), *Hushi shuhua kao san zhong*, "Chinese Text Project," accessed January 10, 2018, <http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&file=37961&page=56&remap=gb>.

⁵⁵ The portable album format is also significant. It is evident from the taxonomy in the (albeit Republican) 1925 catalogue of calligraphy and paintings in the Forbidden City that the hierarchy of formats placed albums before handscrolls, followed by hanging scrolls, screens and lastly horizontal pictures. Albums and handscrolls appear to have been valued critically above hanging scrolls, making them more likely to have been removed by Puyi and Pujie, in addition to their being generally smaller and hence more portable. See He Yu, *Neiwubu guwu chenliesuo shuhua mulu*, where almost no *xieyi* painters are listed, apart from a handscroll by Chen Chun, 27b.

⁵⁶ Transcription: 「雪裏紅芳見寶珠。」

⁵⁷ Chiem, "Painting, Peonies, and Ming Loyalism."

⁵⁸ Puyi, *From Emperor to Citizen*, 110-111.

⁵⁹ A vertical four-character seal in the lower right giving probably the name of a studio (Yi shen [?] [?] 益神□□) is only partly legible due to the poor-quality of the paste and impression (like the imperial seal). If it is Puyi's, it may refer to a place in the Forbidden City and may have meant something to Johnston.

⁶⁰ Impressions of the Xuantong imperial seal, typically placed below the Jiaqing seal by by experienced hands, are generally very crisp. Sometimes, further Xuantong seals were added later (i.e., after 1924) to increase a scroll's sale value. The Zheng Sixiao *Ink Orchid* may be a case in point: the Xuantong seals include the square one with a thick red border in the upper left corner of the painting, in this case below the oval Qianlong seal, and the further two (later added?) on the border panel at the left edge of the painting.

⁶¹ Transcription: 「洛水橋南三二月，兩無言語各知心。原舒詩畫。」

⁶² Transcription: 「子美詩情重，淵明酒興賒。辛酉重[陽]後偶作於山城閣中。原舒。」

⁶³ On the subject, see Nelson, "What I Do Today is Right."

⁶⁴ The specific 'double' date is not straightforward due to the ideosyncratic script. 'Pure display' paintings are typically keyed to a particular festival, which in the sinosphere often falls on 'double dates' in the lunar calendar, like the Double Fifth (i.e., fifth day of the fifth month; **fig 7**).

The painting here is of a chrysanthemum, a flower celebrated during its own festival in the early autumn on the Double Ninth, or Double Yang (重陽 *chongyang*). That the chrysanthemum has its own festival makes it less likely that the artist would be referring to any other 'double' date. We would expect the character after *chong* to be *yang*, therefore, but it is not convincing as an example of the cursive form of *yang*. Most likely, the calligrapher omitted the character *yang*, so that where we expect *yang* we actually have the next character, 後 *hou* ('after'), giving 重[陽]後 *chong[yang]hou* or 'after the Chong[yang Festival].' For cursive variations of *yang* and *hou*, respectively, see Hong, *Caozi bian*, 1:526ff and 2:1129ff. I am grateful to Joseph Chang and Bai Qianshen for their helpful suggestions and references.

⁶⁵ Johnston, *Twilight*, double-page insert between 454-5.

⁶⁶ Illustrated in Hay, *Shitao*, 252-3.

⁶⁷ Transcription: 「此道從門入者，不是家珍，而以名振一時得不難哉。高古之如白禿、青谿、道山諸君輩。」; tr. Fu and Fu, *Studies in Connoisseurship*, 52-53.

⁶⁸ Chang, *The Last Emperor's Collection*, 140.

⁶⁹ Chen Baochen did regard Johnston as a fellow tutor and peer: Johnston received an autograph poem from Chen Baochen, dated 1920 and reproduced in *Twilight*, in acknowledgment for a visit to Johnston's weekend retreat at Cherry Glen in the Western Hills outside Beijing (photo between 360-1), in which Chen called him, roughly, "my friend Reginald" (志道吾友 *Zhidao wuyou*). However, Johnston acknowledged that he 'could not aspire to be a fitting companion for him in the sphere of Chinese scholarship.' Johnston, *Twilight*, 191-3.

⁷⁰ Wang, "Luo Zhenyu and the Formation of *Qiwu* and *Qiwuxue*."

⁷¹ Tangdai, "Zhengpai," *Huishi fawei*, in Yu Kun, *Zhongguo hualun leibian*, 2:843: 「傳曰：『畫者，成教化、助人倫、窮神變、測幽微，與六籍同功。』」

⁷² Inv. no. 故-畫-003122; "National Palace Museum," accessed February 22, 2018,

http://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=6754.

⁷³ E.g., *Xiao Yi Attempting to Acquire the Orchid Pavilion Preface by Deception* (which has a Xuantong seal): the museum's website concedes it may be a Song (i.e., 10th-13th century) copy, rather than an original work by Yan Liben (600-673); "National Palace Museum," July 7, 2017,

http://painting.npm.gov.tw/Painting_Page.aspx?dep=P&PaintingId=6.

⁷⁴ Johnston, *Twilight*, 192 & 367.

⁷⁵ Text: 「此卷出天水中葉，清勁沉著，真得荆、關神髓。雖不能遽定作者姓名，然必為高手無疑。卷末李唐款為後人所加，蓋不知畫派者所為也。如此妙跡，豈必託名于晞古而後足重哉。」 For the full transcription, see "Metropolitan Museum of Art," accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/45673>.

⁷⁶ Dryburgh, "The Fugitive Self," 117. It is doubtful Puyi was encouraged to read writers like Lu Xun, whose critique of traditional mores and gender inequality, "My Views on Chastity," appeared in 1918.

⁷⁷ See Lin, *History of the Press and Public Opinion in China*.

⁷⁸ The confrontation in the press in 1925 was between Liu Haisu (1896-1994), director of the Shanghai Art School, and conservative politicians. An oil painting by He Sanfeng of a female nude model fraternizing with male artists, *In the Painting Studio*, featured in the National Fine Arts Exhibition of 1929; Quanguo meishu zhanlanhui, *Meizhan tekan*, vol. 1, "Oil paintings," n. p.

⁷⁹ Puyi, "Preface," in Johnston, *Twilight*, 11 & 13; the Palace of Prince Chun beside Beihai is marked on "Cook's Skeleton Map of Peking", between 160-1.

⁸⁰ Transcription: 「風益。蘇堪作圖以記甲子十一月初三日之事，寶琛系之意詩曰：風沙叫嘯日西垂，搖心何門正此時。寫作昌黎詩意讀，天昏地黑扈龍移。」 Seal: 陳伯潛。

⁸¹ Johnston, *Twilight*, 431.

⁸² On Han Yu's the image of wind sounding in pines as a lament on being demoted and rusticated, see Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China*, 165.

⁸³ Ch'en, "The Last Emperor," Appendix, 345-5.

⁸⁴ I am grateful the editor for this reference.

⁸⁵ E.g., at the end of the Yuan dynasty; see Brook, *The Troubled Empire*, 6-7.

⁸⁶ The characterization is Dryburgh's, "The Fugitive Self," 119-20, citing Zheng, *Zheng Xiaoxu riji*, 2020-26, 2030-1;

⁸⁷ I am grateful to Chen Yunru, Wai-hing Tse and He Tianye for their assistance in puzzling out this signature and finding relevant references.

⁸⁸ Quanguo meishu zhanlanhui, *Meizhan tekan*, vol. 1 (*Jin*), n. p.

⁸⁹ Shi Yunwen, *Zheng Wuchang*, nos 56 and 1.

⁹⁰ Shi Yunwen, *Zheng Wuchang*, no. 3.

⁹¹ Shi Yunwen, *Zheng Wuchang*, no. 5.

⁹² Zheng, *Zhongguo meishu shi*, 1, where he cites Herbert Read. See also Shi, *Zheng Wuchang*, no. 2 (1927), after Dai Benxiao (1621-1691); no. 3 (1928), after the Four Yuan Masters; no. 6 (1930), recalling the Yangzhou master Huang Shen (1687-1772); and no. 18 (1940), after the painting of a groom and two horses attributed to Han Gan (706-783) in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

⁹³ Shi Yunwen, *Zheng Wuchang*, 125: 「學畫而不師古，是自棄於大道也。」 「豁爾自化而遮於古，融會貫通古人筆法而自成一家。」

⁹⁴ With Chen Shizeng and Pan Tianshou; see Shen, "The Japanese Impact," 229.

⁹⁵ Quanguo meishu zhanlanhui, *Meizhan tekan*, vol. 1 (*Jin*), n. p..

⁹⁶ Chen, "Cong meizhan zuopin ganjuedao xiandai guohua huapai," 1-2. See also Shen, "Zheng Wuchang de huihua yishu," 5-17.

⁹⁷ Zheng, *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*. On the term *huaxue* see Wan, "Fundamental Changes in the Study of Chinese Painting: 1796-1948;" Wong, *Parting the Mists*, 48-50.

⁹⁸ He, *Neiwubu guwu chenliesuo*; Zheng, *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, 455.

⁹⁹ *True Record (Zhenxiang huabao)* regularly devoted pages to works by its staff; see, e.g., “Art Paintings by In-house Staff Members,” *Zhenxiang huabao* 1, no. 10 (1912), n. p.; Noth, “Reproducing Chinese Painting.”

¹⁰⁰ Zheng, *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, Appendix 4 (modern painters), 22 & 30.

¹⁰¹ Zheng, *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, 450: 「陳氏花鳥草蟲得清藤、白陽遺意，所嫌筆墨太光，無奇逸之趣。」

¹⁰² Zhou, *Duhua lu, er, juan* 4: “Chen Yuanshu;” “Chinese Text Project,” accessed November 30th, 2017, <http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=32498&page=53>, see pp 53-55; quote on 54: 「在陳道復、徐青藤之間」. See also the inscription by Dai Qi to the Jilin handscroll, cited above, n. [XREF to 57], in which the critic pairs Chen Shu with Xu Wei.

¹⁰³ Zheng, *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, 496: 「三十餘家，或以巧勝，或以縱逸勝，要皆能活色生香，著名一時者也。」

¹⁰⁴ Zheng, *Zhongguo huaxue quanshi*, 495: 「作花卉、竹石，天真爛漫，雄健古厚，青藤、雪个間，蓋得金石氣深也，近時學者風靡。」

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., Wu Changshi’s “Ink Bird” in the album, *Hanman yuexin ce* (1927); “National Art Museum of China,” accessed January 5, 2018, http://www.namoc.org/zsjs/gczp/cpjxs/201306/t20130609_252283.htm.