UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI - L'ORIENTALE
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI ASIATICI
ISTITUTO ITALIANO PER L'AFRICA E L'ORIENTE
INSTITUT NATIONAL DES LANGUES
ET CIVILISATIONS ORIENTALES
Series Minor
LXVII

EXPRESSIONS OF STATES OF MIND IN ASIA

Proceedings of the INALCO-UNO Workshop Held in Naples, 27th May 2000

Edited by
Paolo Santangelo

ESTRATTO

FOUR APPROACHES TO EMOTION IN JAPANESE VISUAL ARTS

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Philosophers who study emotion usually rely on either their own experience, linguistically formulated, or on the written accounts of others for their evidence. In this paper I would like to take a different approach, examining the visual arts (primarily painting) to see what we can learn from them about Japanese attitudes toward emotion.

As it turns out, we can read the full complexity of Japanese attitudes toward and beliefs about emotions in the visual arts, which encompass both the Continental influence of the Axial Age religious philosophies (Confucianism, Buddhism, and, to a much lesser extent, Taoism), and indigenous cultural forms. The arts have been at the service of the prevailing ideologies, handmaidens of religious and political institutions and of their belief systems and political programs, and they often express their beliefs and purposes seamlessly. At the same time, they have also expressed values that contest prevailing ideologies and beliefs. Symbolically if not always directly, they have been at the forefront of movements and attitudes that challenged these hegemonic systems.

The ways emotions manifest themselves in Japanese painting vary enormously depending on the school or style of painting.[2] The main approaches to emotion fall into four categories.

[1] I am indebted to the late Professor Cal French of the University of Michigan, my advisor on the original master's thesis on which much of this article is based, to Professors Steve Goldberg and Scott Robertson for their encouragement of new version, and to my mother Mary H. Miller and the University of Michigan's Center for Japanese Studies and Center for the Continuing Education of Women for their financial support of the original project.

ment, typically Buddhas and sages, are presented visually for viewers to emulate. In early works of this type (and conservative later ones), we find what amounts to an absence of emotion, per se; the focus is on the model's ability to transcend (most) emotion –although as theory and experience evolved historically, models of acceptable emotion expended, and a slightly wider range of emotion came to be seen as admirable.

A fourth approach, found in Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian as well as native arts, employs the arts as a means of cultivating emotion for spiritual and ethical goals. (One must remember, too, that since the Song Dynasty, 960-1279, Confucianism has been penetrated by Buddhism and Daoism, especially regarding arts, *shugyo* (spiritual and physical disciplines),and "states of mind." In these cases, the emotion that is evident in a work is not depicted in a (third-party) "subject," which in these works may not be a human figure at all, but a landscape, a plant, or calligraphy. Instead it reveals itself to the viewer as the spirit of the artist.

This paper will explore these four approaches to emotion as seen in Japanese visual arts.

Note that these by no means exhaust the relations to the emotions in Japanese art. We are ignoring what might be considered "direct expressions" of emotion in art, in favor of art that reveals either a self-conscious *attitude toward* emotion or an explicit *view of* emotion. Consequently important genres such as Shinto shrines are left out of our discussion. In addition, such phenomena as the use of gardens and architecture to foster and direct emotional and spiritual development, and the complex relations between aesthetic sensibility, emotion, and ethical awareness, are set aside here in favor of the attitudes toward emotion that are evident within the work itself – either in virtue of subject matter or "style."

Before we proceed to the main discussion, however, we will examine some Western presuppositions about emotion and some of the differences between them and Japanese assumptions.

Emotion in Japan

Attentive reading of Japanese literature and art suggests that not only are attitudes toward emotion significantly different from those assumed by viewers elsewhere, but that even the basic notions of what constitutes emotion may differ considerably in important respects. Japanese literature scholar Margaret H. Childs has stated succinctly the problem:

> While modern readers willingly acknowledge the virtues of informing themselves about the ways the cultural contexts of fiction of various times and places differ from their own and the ramifications this may have for interpretation, we tend to assume that the emotions depicted in the fiction of other cultures are essentially the same as those we find in our own hearts. Scholars of literature exert considerable effort to help readers understand such things as contemporary political systems, kinship structures, marriage practices, and norms of etiquette, but we have not wondered whether the smiles, tears, and frowns of characters of other times and places reflect the same feelings as our own. Love, hate, jealousy, anger, joy, and sadness are popularly taken to be universal human emotions. However, classroom experience teaching classical Japanese literature and close readings of texts have led me to the conclusion that there are subtle but significant differences between the nature of love as depicted in premodern Japanese literature and love as we expect to find it in American society today. [Childs 1059]

(We will return to the nature of love below (specifically the love of eighteenth-century literati artists) in the discussion of self-cultivation in the portraits of Ikeno Gyokuran.)

Emotion is not a category we can apply with impunity across the vast cultural divides that separate different cultures. As philosopher Robert C. Solomon has pointed out,

> In the context of a cross-cultural comparison, emotion is not an ultimately defensible category, or what Aristotle called a "natural kind." The word "emotion" shifts its meaning from age to age, culture to culture – even where the language remains ostensibly the same. The word "emotion" has been in common use [in English] (as opposed to the older term "passion") for only a few hundred years, and what counts as emotion also changes. To be sure, some emotions—anger and fear, for example – seem to be more or less regulars. But others, especially various desires and sentiments, and many of the virtues and vices such as generosity and kindness or lust and greed, wander in and out of the category, depending on larger social and ethical issues. [Solomon, 177]

The emotions that Solomon singles out as "more or less regulars" seem to be the ones studied by European and American biologists (and psychologists who rely on biology for their definitions of emotion). Paul Ekman, for example, has argued for a core of anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise; Panksepp for expectancy, fear, rage and panic; Carroll Izard for anger, contempt, disgust, distress, fear, guilt, interest, joy, shame, and surprise.

These basic, allegedly biological, emotions– not only fear and anger but also joy and sadness—play a major role in East Asian arts, especially in Buddhist arts deeply influenced by the Lotus Sutra,[3] and particularly within the admonitory approach (and, in a paradoxical way, within the emulatory and self-cultivation approaches, too).

But as Solomon argues,

> ...the important point is that biology does not entail the universality of emotions. If anything, biology would seem to establish the possibility of inborn temperamental differences between races, societies, inbreeding groups, families, and individuals. It could be true that all human beings except Clint Eastwood are hardwired to panic under certain terrifying circumstances, but very little of cross-cultural interest follows from this. We want to know: what circumstances? How much panic, and how does this differ from fear? To what extent can this inborn tendency be overcome through education, training, practice, or experience? Is panic acceptable in that society and those circumstances, or is the panic accompanied by shame or humiliation? Is the panic understood as a 'natural' reaction or as a weakness? Is it experienced as an involuntary seizure or as a voluntary, albeit spontaneous, act? [Solomon, 181][4]

Solomon has put his finger precisely on the problem addressed by the emulatory and self-cultivation approaches, namely, the "extent [to which an] inborn tendency [can] be overcome through education, training, practice, or experience. To a very significant degree, insofar as Japanese arts are about these inborn emotions, they are about the processes of overcoming them in one way or another. In his book about self-cultivation, *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, Japanese philosopher Yasuo Yuasa addresses the nature of emotion as well as its relation to meditation-as-self-cultivation:

> The problem of emotion is regarded as extremely important in the etiology of [disease in] Eastern medicine. Three etiological factors are traditionally considered major: the "internal cause," the "external cause," and the "cause which is neither internal nor external." The internal cause refers to the seven emotions: joy, anger, anxiety, longing, sorrow, fear, and surprise (in some cases it counts only five). These are usually thought to stagnate initially in the viscera, and subsequently to show their symptoms throughout the body. If we reinterpret the internal cause from a contemporary perspective, it clearly pertains to the function of emotion....
>
> When meditation is viewed from the standpoint of depth psychology, it means training to control the emotional complexes that spring forth from the unconscious, while the etiology of Eastern medicine...considers distortions in emotion to be extremely important....[109-110]
>
> ...as meditation deepens[,] emotional complexes, which take the form of wandering thoughts and delusions, gradually appear out of or against th[e] self-apprehending sensation of one's own body. To use the terminology of Gestalt psychology, meditation is a training method through which an emotional complex surfaces as a figure (image) against the background of the self-apprehending sensation of one's body....[Yuasa 111]

[3] Mara Miller, "Theory of Art and the Emotions in the Lotus Sutra," forthcoming.

[4] Solomon, however, goes on to caution that "my point here has simply been to cast some doubt on the idea that the universality of emotions is a thesis so obvious that it can simply be taken for granted, without for a moment suggesting that the opposite thesis, that different cultures necessarily have different emotions, is any more plausible" [182-3].

Contemporary Western views of emotion run into trouble in the attempt to understand Japanese emotion on five counts.

First, the list of "basic" emotions is somewhat different. In contrast to the lists mentioned above, Japanese philosopher Yasuo Yuasa lists the seven emotions of Eastern medicine as "joy, anger, anxiety, longing, sorrow, fear, and surprise ([although] in some cases it counts only five)" [Yuasa, 109]. (The fact that there is no complete agreement within either Eastern or Western camps suggests we are not on firm ground here!)

Beyond the "basic" "biological" emotions, some argue that particular emotions that are either specific to a culture or a unique refinement of a more generally held emotion may play distinctive roles in a given culture. Clinical psychologist Takeo Doi has analyzed what he sees as the complementary seeking and offering of nurturance between persons who are physical, emotional and social inferiors –typically children—and persons who are their superiors –typically parents –which goes by the name of *amae* in Japanese as a kind of emotional interaction that is all but invisible in the modern West but virtually definitive of the Japanese psyche and social relations [Doi]. Expanding on this, philosopher Thomas Kasulis sees Japanese culture as a whole as structured by intimacy and the high value it places upon intimacy [Kasulis, 2002].

Second, the value ascribed to *specific* emotions is often quite different. Doi argues that the helplessness of human infants is universal; what is specifically Japanese are the favorable interpretation of that helplessness, its enjoyment, and its adoption more broadly as a social dynamic that informs social relations of many different kinds. (Neither Doi nor I would argue that it is non-*existent* in the West, merely that we prefer not to acknowledge it and tend to find it a source of shame or humiliation in an adult or older child. I would suggest further that in the U.S it can be definitive of social and gender roles and rank. For instance within some situations and subcultures it is more acceptable in females than in males.) Similarly, Childs' argument that the possession and appreciation of vulnerability are essential to erotic love in Heian Japan shows another side of this same phenomenon (admittedly for the Japan of a thousand years ago).

Third, the value ascribed to emotion *in general*, as well as to specific emotions, may differ considerably, as may the ways in which it is understood to be valuable (useful and/or intrinsically enjoyable). Thus, while at least some variety of fear may be found in every culture, the ways Buddhism uses it and seeks to avoid it or deal with it are (in most cases) quite specific to Buddhism—and indeed vary with the particular schools of Buddhism.

Fourth, what we might consider the location of emotion is different. In the West, we have tended to think of emotion as inhering in the individual in some basic sense. My feelings just are mine. (This is one of the roots of our search for a biological basis for emotion.) The implications of this view go far beyond the biological, however; they inform our metaphysics and epistemology as well. The realm of feeling becomes, on this view, the realm of the individual and of the subjective; the subjective just is that which inheres within the individual. Solomon's summary of the generally held Western position is admirably clear:

> It would seem that any question about the nature and categories of emotion must come to terms with the fact that emotions are in some sense to be identified as "subjective" phenomena, "in the mind" of the subject, though, to be sure, this language of "mind" and "subject" is itself culture-specific and, even within a given culture, often viewed with suspicion." What this means, in one common formulation, is that while we can observe the emotional behavior of others and listen to their verbal expressions and reports of their emotions, we cannot observe the emotion itself. That we can do, in some equally odd and hard-to-analyze sense, only for ourselves, in "one's own case" [Solomon, 175].

Although Solomon seems to fall into this trap of viewing emotion as subjective, he also points out some of the pitfalls to which it leads:

> ...What this means, in one common formulation, is that while we can observe the emotional behavior of others and listen to their verbal expressions and reports of their emotions, we cannot observe the emotion itself. That we can do, in some equally odd and hard-to-analyze sense, only for ourselves, in "one's own case." With regard to our friends, family, and neighbors, this inaccessibility of others' emotions, contrasted with the immediate accessibility we have to our own emotions, presents something of a philosophical puzzle. In fact, of course, it sometimes seems that we recognize other people's emotions better than they do, and they ours, and this in itself casts serious doubt on facile claims about subjectivity and accessibility" [Solomon, 175].

This basic Western assumption, the notion of emotion as primarily and essentially subjective, does not apply to emotion in Japan, as Thomas Kasulis has argued. Instead, emotion is recognized as inhering in the context or situation, rather than the individual [Kasulis, 1998]. This means that emotion in Japan is not subjective, but a form of objectivity.[5] Kasulis traces out a number of different aetiologies and resonances. For example,

> The indigenous or proto-Shinto religion valued the sacred presence (kami) of any awe-inspiring object in the natural world--the sun, an especially striking mountain such as Fuji, an uncanny rock formation, an exotic tree. In the ancient myths recorded in Kojiki even the inanimate rocks and streams were capable of speech, and their constant bickering caused one off the deities to strike them dumb. In the earliest official collection of ancient poems and songs, *Manyoshu*, we find a resonance and interactive quality between the objects of the natural world and human emotions. For example, one poem by Yamanoue no Okura, "Elegy for a Dead Wife," depicts the fog of Mount Onu as rising in response to the grief felt by the bereaved husband. All this suggests not merely a respect for the natural

[5] It is, therefore, easily identifiable– knowable –by others. On this view, some of our most fundamental (Western) assumptions about the nature of the person and about relations between persons, disappear. And with them vanish many of our most cherished philosophical problems, such as the problem of inter-subjectivity. On the other hand, along with this we suddenly find ourselves in possession of some new solutions – such as how to understand the fiction of Japanese novelist Ryunosuke Akutagawa, for whom interpersonal knowledge seems sometimes to transpire on the most matter-of-fact level.

> world but a sense of continuity with it. There is no sharp bifurcation between the human and nonhuman, the "merely" animate [Kasulis 1988, 364].

Japanese Zen offers another route to the objectivity of emotion. As Zen "becomes a vehicle for strengthening the importance of the affective [emotional] component of creativity," it cultivates kinds of emotion that are independent of the ego, and therefore, of subjectivity ("the state of aesthetic sensitivity yields no emotion arising from the ego") [Kasulis 367]. If one's definition of the subjective is tied to the ego (as in Western philosophy it tends to be), then this version of emotion is not subjective.

Finally, it is crucial to bear in mind that, insofar as emotions do, or may under certain circumstances or within certain definitions, inhere within an individual, that very individual is understood completely differently than s/he would be within any of the Western traditions. This is because the Japanese understanding of body and mind (or body and emotion, or mind and emotion) is not dichotomous, but holistic or integrated [Yuasa]. Aside from the specificity of personhood per se, logically Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism take very different positions than do most Western religions and philosophies regarding both the principle of opposition or dichotomy and any number of individual examples of dichotomy [Graham 1989]. Most of modern Western science, for instance, has been premised upon a distinction between body and mind, which are understood as separate and in some sense even opposing functions.[6]

The Celebratory in Japanese Art

The celebratory in Japanese arts is not about the basic biological emotions (either their cultivation or their control), but about refinements of emotion such as the specifically Heian forms of love alluded to by Childs, the forms of dependence knowns as *amae*, the enjoyment of the transient-as-beautiful called *mono no aware*. It is about creating pools of feeling and understanding within which people can communicate, share their lives and experiences and insights, and create patterns of meaning.

[6] This traditional dichotomy has finally come under attack by major medical institutions in the U.S. to allow for the study and practice of "alternative" medicines, most typically those from East Asia.

We have little direct evidence of indigenous attitudes toward emotion prior to the importation of Chinese culture.[7] There was no indigenous writing system available for writing about or recording emotion, and most of what remains of pre-historic visual arts is either shrine architecture or ritual objects from burial mounds—expressive of emotion, perhaps, but not indicative of self-reflective attitudes toward emotion.[8]

Evidence of indigenous attitudes toward emotion subsequent to the importation of Chinese culture is less visual than literary. It comes largely from early poems and songs written down with the assistance of Chinese writing in imperially-commissioned anthologies such as the *Manyoshu*. In contrast to the prevailing suspicion of emotion in imported Buddhist and Confucianist arts (discussed below), these songs and poems trusted emotion—even negative and unpleasant ones such as loneliness, helplessness, sorrow, despair, sadness, loneliness—as inherently valuable and worth our attention and cultivation.

This Japanese tendency to trust emotion subsequently received permanent buttressing from a new development in literature, the infusion of women's voices into the classical literature.[9] Indeed, one of the areas where

[7] It is difficult, of course, to recapture any reliable sense of what the pre-historic indigenous values were like; efforts to do so, moreover, have often been marred either by an appeal to some semi-mystical Japanese "essence" or by their usefulness in various projects of rationalization of political programs (or both), and thus have come to seem suspect to scholars—and this suspicion sometimes discourages further legitimate scholarship.

[8] While we might assume that any visual evidence from such sites is evidence of emotion of a kind (religious in the first case, presumably something like awe in the presence of the numinous, or political grief in the second)) that would be an assumption with less evidence to back it up than in the rest of our study. In addition, there are at least two significant differences between the religious emotions embodied in a shrine and the representations of a collective grief, on the one hand, and the kinds of emotion this paper is exploring, on the other. The first would seem to have a more communal nature, be less private or personal, than the emotions to which we have so far referred. In addition, the emotions this paper is exploring are not merely felt and expressed, but reflected upon. Our artists and viewers take an attitude toward them; they are self-conscious about them, and feel this is appropriate and desirable.

[9] In a certain sense, of course, they seem always to have been there. Many of the poems in the *Manyoshu* are in women's voices, and the official late seventh century impe-

women's voices have had the strongest impact is in the perception, reception, and expression of emotion. The Japanese pattern of celebration of emotion would seem to be a function of the persistence within post-Chinese Japanese culture of pre-Chinese attitudes toward emotion – a persistence aided & abetted by women writers and artists. For several centuries, Chinese values and language dominated nearly every aspect of Japanese culture –with the exception of literature. Without the contributions of Sei Shonagon, Murasaki Shikibu, Michitsune no Haha, and a hundred other women to protect and continue the development of the indigenous culture, emotion in Japan might have been drowned by the more repressive, even hostile attitudes typical of Confucianism and Buddhism. (Taoism, in many ways a more emotionally liberating philosophy, had a far lesser impact on Japan.)

Certainly the women writers were influential, both during their heyday and subsequently.[10] They clearly recognized the disadvantages under which Chinese patriarchal systems (political, cultural) placed them, and they were openly critical of the power men enjoyed at their expense. At the same time, in certain respects they had less need than men to conform to the strict Confucianist codes, and they used the freedom they enjoyed in their writing to speak out against these codes. And they spoke out, too, in defense of free expression of emotions, even by men. (This is not, of course, to imply that they had anything like a modern feminist critique of patriarchy –a phenomenon that is very culture-specific.) The degree to which these women freely gave voice to their emotions and their lack of self-censorship often astonishes contemporary American students.

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rial chronicle the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*) was recited by a woman, Hieda no Are (fl. ?670-?690), for its official writing down by O no Yasumaro [Miner et al, 1985]. The facts that women were exempted from the exhaustive education in Chinese language, literature and philosophy that became common for male courtiers from the Nara period on, and that – possibly even *because* of this lack of Chinese education – women of the Heian period became influential, well-known, even canonical writers for the subsequent thousand years of Japanese history[Keene], mean that we have had some access to indigenous Japanese values that is less tainted by Chinese ideas than is the work by their male peers.

[10] But if it is true that Japanese women's voices have never been eclipsed or ignored as they have been in Europe and China, it is also true that the full impact of these voices, individually and collectively, is only now beginning to be explored theoretically.

For Murasaki Shikibu, author of *The Tale of Genji* (ca. 1000-1020), emotion can be dangerous, leading even to death, of oneself (as in Kashiwagi's wasting away from guilt or shame after fathering Genji's wife's child) or of others (as in Genji's mother's death from the ill-will of less favored court ladies). (The deaths, especially of women, as a result of others' feelings of hatred and jealousy give further support to Kasulis's idea of emotion understood as an objective force in the world, rather than a disposition within an individual, particularly given that the effectiveness of the emotion is quite clearly posited as independent of the jealous person's *intentions*.)

But it also reveals what is best in us –and sometimes what is best for us. It offers a guide, can reveal what we should do. And if proffers a kind of truth.

The celebration of emotion enters the visual arts through the illustration of secular stories like *The Tale of Genji* in handscrolls (*emaki-mono*); from there it spreads to many different schools. In classical Heian-period picture scrolls, in narrative paintings of the Tosa school, and in the Edo-period (1600-1868) genre paintings and prints called Ukiyo-e, the emotions of the persons depicted often constitute the subject of the painting. Although such images may depend upon a narrative, they are illustrations not of the actions, but of the emotions of characters– even (or especially) at points when virtually nothing is happening. (Interestingly, the categories of figure and narrative painting do not here completely overlap) To give just two examples, in the popular illustrations of the Heian classic *The Tales of Ise*, one of the favorite images is that of the "Yatsuhashi," or "Eight-Plank Bridge," in which there is little overt action. A nobleman who is traveling far from the capital stops to eat his lunch with his companions, at a place where eight bridges meet over a scattering of marsh irises. They weep from loneliness at leaving their friends and family behind, and he writes a poem about it. The resultant images, which can become deeply moving, may or may not include the courtiers; often the scene is evoked simply with an angular bridge and a few irises.) Similarly, in the famous twelfth-century picture scroll of the classic Heian novel *The Tale of Genji*, many of the most dramatic incidents seem not to have been chosen for illustration, while a number of the scenes that were selected show an inner moment of intense feeling and/or insight, such as Prince Genji's taking up in his arms his wife's new baby by another man, or an informal meeting between Genji and the Emperor who is supposed to be his half brother (by the same father) but is really his own son (by his fa-

ther's concubine). In such pictures, art historian Akiyama Terukazu has argued, emotion is shown not by expressions on the characters' faces or body posture, but by the colors and composition of the picture [Akiyama 1964; 1976].[11] This encourages viewers not only to identify with the characters and feel along with them, but to develop an emotional life of their own that is analogous. In both cases, emotion is shown visually by means of context – and there are deliberate "ambiguitions" (if I may coin a term by way of contrast with "disambiguation)" on two levels: between the context of the characters' situation and the context established by the picture, and between physical and emotional contexts of characters' situation and of picture.

The celebration has the effect of encouraging viewers to feel as the subject of the painting feels. This encouragement is effected partly through a kind of fusion between the subject of the painting (these paintings are often figural), the viewer, and the artist(s).

Thus it is no exaggeration to say that the history of emotion in Japan has been informed by women's unique contribution. In no other civilization worldwide have women's voices played as broad and profound a role.[12]

The Admonitory in Japanese Art: The Dangers of Emotion /The Continental Influence

These indigenous currents have for centuries struggled against Chinese beliefs and practices that interpret emotion quite differently. With the exception of works in the celebratory mode described above, Japanese painting and sculpture, as well as many visual aspects of the performing arts such as masks and costumes, typically show emotion both as intrinsically unpleasant and as threatening to one's ethical and spiritual development.

Buddhism and Confucianism share a view of emotion as dangerous, a threat to the individual (primarily) in the first case and to society (primarily) in the second. Both, for different reasons, with differing rationales, and by different means, idealize the person who has in some sense transcended the tyrannical voice of individual feeling and has achieved some considerable

[11] Akiyama presents his theories (translated into English) in a video on *The Tale of Genji* put out by Films for the Humanities. Miyeko Murase discusses them in her analysis of this scroll in *Emaki: Narrative Scrolls from Japan*, pp. 66-7.

[12] For some of the theoretical implications of this fact, see Mara Miller, 1993.

measure of emotional equanimity. Of course, the philosophical and theological as well as social histories of the two have interacted intimately and intricately throughout East Asia over the past two millennia or so, with the result that it does not always make sense to distinguish between the two, particularly in terms of given works of art, motifs, and even styles or schools. We will nonetheless consider the two separately here, since their textual histories are distinct, particularly in the early period.

Emotions are feared and/or contemned for the discomfort they bring, and for the fear brought on by even positive emotions like love when we contemplate losing the object of our positive emotions. Emotion is something that is unpleasant, they suggest, and we surely must want to eliminated it by whatever means we can. In addition, emotion distracts us from pursuing worthy goals like Enlightenment and our duty in the light of the Five Relationships. As a result, Buddhism and Confucianism tend to advocate a discipline of emotion, at times extreme to the point of eradication. The various schools recommend different methods for this elimination or control, from austere and all-consuming meditative practices through more casual meditation and "self-transformation" practices, to pure faith in an external power such as a Buddha or bodhisattva. In contrast to works in the celebratory mode, emotion in Buddhist and Confucianist works in what I'll call the "admonitory" mode is depicted in order to show the suffering it causes, and to motivate viewers to put more effort into practices designed to eliminate suffering and bring them to Nirvana. In medieval Buddhist hell scrolls, the feelings of terror and pain and abandonment evident on the faces of hell's inhabitants who are being tortured show that emotion itself is part of the punishment. Similarly, in the conflicts between duty (*giri*) and feeling (*ninjo*) depicted in woodblock prints of eighteenth-century kabuki plays, and in masks showing the hellish torments of souls condemned by their own excessive emotion of the fifteenth-century Noh theater, we see emotional entanglement punished in this world and the next. The *hannya*, a demonic female Noh mask, [plate 1] for instance, shows a woman with horns, face transfigured by a horrible grimace, eyes bulging, hair in wild disarray. The *hannya* represents the soul of a woman who has died without resolving the jealousy, anger, or resentment she felt in life—usually over a lover who betrayed her. Unable to reach the detachment and equilibrium recommended by Buddhism, she continues to involve herself in human affairs, trying to regain what she lost and could not forget.

Emulatory Art and the Ideals of Human Development

By far the most important of the Buddhist and, to a lesser extent, Confucianist, works are those that show the ideals of human development—not the torments of the emotional individual but the bliss of the person who has transcended emotion. Impassive images of Buddha idealize those who have freed themselves from the tyranny of emotion, like the one in the Bodhisattva Fugen [plate 2] or the Hokke Mandala at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Daigo-ji's Dainichi Nyorai, [Lee, colorplates 12 and 31].

While there is textual support for this attitude in both early Buddhism and early Confucianism, in terms of the history of art, Buddhism has been far more influential. Texts from the early Buddhist Pali canon, as well as the fourth-century Lotus Sutra, the foundational text of Japanese Buddhism (and of all Mahayana Buddhism, the form that predominates in East Asia), remind people of unpleasant emotions like fear and terror, and teach that there are ways to eliminate them from one's life. At the same time, even enjoyable emotions such as joy and love can bring fear, terror and worry if one is afraid to lose whatever one regards as their source. Full spiritual development, therefore, depends upon freeing oneself from the effects of emotion, both positive and negative. Similarly, in Confucianism, one cannot make mature ethical decisions and act ethically as long as one is in the grip of personal emotion.

In no form of Buddhism is emotion inherently valuable, something to be cultivated. Evidence of feeling, even family feeling, is interpreted as attachment to earthly objects and as lack of insight; it suggests, at the very least, incomplete enlightenment, as we see from the story from *The Tale of Genji* of the old priest whose great-granddaughter has given birth to her first child:

> The news [of the birth] reached Akashi, where an enlightened old man still had room in his heart for mundane joy. Now, he said to his disciples, he could withdraw from the world in complete peace and serenity. He turned his seaside house into a temple with fields nearby to support it, and appointed for his new retreat certain lands he had acquired deep in a mountainous part of the province, where no one was likely to disturb him. His seclusion would be complete. There would be no more letters [from family] and he would see no one. Various small concerns [such as the marriage of his granddaughter] had held him back, and now, with gods native and foreign to give him strength, he would make his way into the mountains.
>
> He had in recent years dispatched messengers to the city only on urgent business, and when a messenger came from his wife he would send back a very brief note. Now he got off a long letter to his daughter.
>
> "Though we live in the same world, you and I, it has been as if I had been reborn in another. I have sent and received letters only on very rare occasions. Personal messages in intimate Japanese [as opposed to the Buddhist Chinese of the sutras] are a waste of time, I have thought. They contribute nothing to and indeed distract from my devotions. I have been overjoyed all the same at news I have had of the girl's career at court. Now she is the mother of a little prince. It is not for me, an obscure mountain hermit, to claim credit or to seek glory at this late date, but I may say that you have been constantly on my mind, and in my prayers morning and night your affairs have taken precedence over my own trivial quest for a place in paradise." [Murasaki 572-3]

At one extreme, the feeling which is to be avoided includes physical feeling, sense perception and emotion. In the countless depictions of the death of the Buddha called *Parinirvana* (Skt) or *Nehanzu* or *Nehanga* (Jp), so popular in Japan [plate 3], the Buddha lies, in death as in life, in a position of perfect repose. The faces of the fully enlightened disciples (Skt., *arhat*, Jp. *lohan*), like him, are utterly impassive, while those of his not yet enlightened followers who loved him, and all the animals of the earth as well, are twisted by grief. A similar contrast is found between saintly monks and comically amazed villagers in narrative scrolls like The Flying Storehouse section of the twelfth-century *Shigisan Engi E-maki*, *The Life of Kobo-Daishi* [Lee, figure 441; Freer n.d. colorplate 12.], and Tosa Mitsunobu's *History of the Founding of the Geppoji Temple* of 1495 [plate 4].

Within this tradition, emotion per se is artistically useful in giving us easy means for identifying various problematic ways of being human and of distinguishing the enlightened from the unenlightened, the good from the bad, the virtuous from the corrupt, and high-born aristocrats from villagers and others of low social rank. Not only the as-yet-unenlightened (Buddha's grieving disciples and other attendants found in the *Nehanzu*), but also corrupt politicians and religious leaders are also shown *in* emotional *flagrante delicto*. Finally, commoners are typically shown with exaggerated emotional

expressions, although the delight that Kamakura-period artists, for example, take in painting them seems to undercut the disparagement to some degree.

Emotion is thus a sign of inferior spiritual development—and inferior social rank as well. To some extent this would have been an empirical reflection of reality—it takes leisure to cultivate the spirit to this extent.

At the same time, Buddhist artists are not averse to exploiting the emotions of the still-unenlightened in order to point out the advantages of devoting oneself to Buddhism. While the ultimate advantages are Enlightenment itself, or its more mundane correlate salvation in the Western Paradise, Buddhism was often "advertised" as a means of escaping even earthly physical dangers and the fear and terror that they brought with them. The Lotus Sutra, too, promises deliverance from earthly perils, although by different means, namely the intercession of the bodhisattva Kannon on behalf of the believer when he calls upon him. Paintings of the Kannon Sutra at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, show the fear of those who do not know enough to take refuge in the power of Kannon Bodhisattva (Ch., Kwan-yin; Skt. Avalokitesvara). Similarly, the terror of those in hell, depicted in various hell scrolls, warns the viewer of the terrible emotions he will face, as well as the physical pain, as an incitement to good behavior.

Finally, over the centuries Japanese Buddhism increasingly insisted on what might be called "interactive enlightenment"—the possibility of salvation through the compassionate intervention of Bodhisattvas. This is a new understanding of the meaning of enlightenment, and the Bodhisattvas' faces reflect their compassion in gentle benevolent smiles. And as the influence of Zen increased, with its emphasis on the realization of enlightenment *in this very lifetime*, the range of facial expressions again increased, to include a certain whimsicality, humor, or Daoist-inflected "madness" (in ink sketches of legendary masters) and even grief or existential angst (in formal portraits of certain abbots).

Confucianism

Confucianism is a second Continental ethical paradigm that shares with Buddhism a mistrust of emotion, although in this case the rationale and frame of reference are society as a whole and its meaningful social units such as the family, rather than the individual being rather than alleviation of suffering, and the suppression has been used by governments more explicitly in the interest of maintenance of regimes of rank and power. In Confucian-

ism as in Buddhism, we find strong models of human beings who do the right thing independent of their feelings; this autonomy is represented visually by an absence of emotional expression, positive or negative, on the faces of those with whom the viewer is encouraged to identify. The same ethic—and aesthetic—found on Buddhist faces is seen in portraits of secular leaders—emperors, and shoguns or military rulers such as Uesugi Shigefusa and Minamoto no Yoritomo (Lee, figures 438 and 439), although here it originates in imperial portraits of imperial China such as Yen Liben's handscroll of portraits of emperors in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where state Confucianism also mandates complete control over emotions on the part of anyone who is to be deemed worthy of ruling or holding power. Such equanimity is essential if viewers are to feel trust and confidence in such leaders. At the same time, figures with whom we are meant to identify—scholars, travelers, poets, and sages—must show the same equanimity. A person with whom we viewers enjoy empathizing can only be someone whose feelings are brought into harmony with his ethical situation and social position.

Yet this harmony does not occur by accident; it is the result of intense education, both through training as a child by others and later through "self-cultivation." Both in childhood education and in the adult's self-cultivation, some of the most rewarding routes to such harmony (it would be misleading to call it "mastery" of one's emotions or one's self) are the arts.

And in Confucianism as in Buddhism, negative emotions such as fear and shame may be used to motivate people to act rightly, though we see this in Chinese more than in Japanese art. (This is shown in the narratives depicted on the side of a Six Dynasties (sixth century) Chinese sarcophagus engraved with stories of filial piety at the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum in Kansas City [Lee figure 342]). Thus it would be wrong to conclude that Confucianism is unemotional, or that the absence of overt emotional facial expressions means that emotion is simply regarded as bad.

In Confucianist thinking emotion poses a danger because it causes conflicts with duty. This Confucian-inspired view of the opposition between ethical action and "human feeling" (*giri* versus *ninjo*) can be seen in a number of Japanese contexts, such as the literature of the kabuki and puppet (*joruri, bunraku*) theater.

Emulatory: Buddhist Art and the Presentation of Models of Ideal Human Development

The single most prevalent image in Japan over the past millennium and a half has undoubtedly been the image of the Buddha himself (whether the historical Buddha Sakyamuni or one of the later metaphysical manifestations such as Amida/Amitabha, or Dainichi/Vairocana). The Buddha is invariably shown in a position of meditation and with an expression of the deep detachment that indicates nirvana or Enlightenment. Detachment is a state in which desires no longer arise; one detaches both from the objects of desire and also from the feelings of desire or repulsion that the objects arouse. As one of the highest spiritual objectives in East Asia, the Buddhist ideal of detachment has had a widespread and profound effect on the visual arts of Japan.

The figure may be standing, but is most typically seated on a lotus-flower throne or on a chair, with the crossed legs of the lotus or half-lotus position, and arms and hands in one of the special positions conducive to meditation known as *mudra*. What is most distinctive about this meditation posture is the perfect balance. It gives the figure an unmovable stability—a stability epitomized in the Daruma (Skt, Bodhidharma) dolls, those rotund images of the founder of Zen, who according to legend devoted himself so completely to meditation that his arms fell off from atrophy. Armless, round-bottomed, and with a low center of gravity, the dolls invariably right themselves of their own accord when one tries to push them off balance, the perfect physical image of the ideal emotional state toward which even children are encouraged to aim.

The facial expression of a Buddha is also instantly recognizable: a slight smile, attention turned inward as indicated by half-closed eyes, a lack of wrinkles reflecting both the irrelevance of age and the absence of worry. It may be warmed by an intimation of joy or compassion, as in the "Amitabha [Buddha] and Bodhisattva[s] welcoming souls to Paradise" [plate 5].

The exact nature of detachment and of the logical and psychological relations between the person, the world and desire, as well as the practical implications for organization of one's life, are beyond the scope of this paper; they have been debated for centuries, and have given rise to debates and disagreements and to schisms and reinterpretations of all kinds. This controversy itself is reflected in art. Some forms of Zen, for example, believe it is possible to attain in this very life an Enlightenment that is so secure and unshakable that one no longer need remain in a monastery and meditate full-time, but can return to daily life and take part in it while carrying out everyday activities such as commerce. Such an image would simply never come up in most other forms of Buddhism.

What is common to virtually all forms of Buddhism, however, is an image of the Buddha in the meditation position and with an expression of Enlightenment on his face. Early forms of Buddhism seem to have regarded the fully enlightened being as transcending this world. But the Mahayana forms of Buddhism that reached Japan stressed from the beginning that such a state was possible in this very life and for actual human beings of all kinds (*Lotus Sutra*, especially chapter 12). Such enlightened human beings are of several kinds: the later legendary figures of Zen, like Kanzan and Jittoku [Addiss, pl. 78, 79], patriarchs like Ingen and Rinzai [Addiss, pl. 37, 75]; the earliest type, known as *rokan* (Skt, *arhat*), who wear the robes of a monk, and whose bodies bear the physical signs of monastic asceticism: shaven heads and emaciation; and the specifically Mahayana beings known as *bodhisattvas* (Jp., *bosatsu*), who have given up their enlightened state to return to earth and help other beings reach Enlightenment. Like the various Buddhas, the *arhats* and *bodhisattvas* are also depicted with an expression of detachment, which may range from a complete absence of emotion [plates 2, 3] to an expression of tranquil joy or compassion, as in plate 5. This consistency is what marks the fierce faces of Daruma in Zen paintings such a break in expectation —and so humorous [Addiss, pl. 19, 25, 26, 33, 42, etc.]

Self-Cultivation

This brings us to a fourth approach to emotion in the arts, in which emotion is not eradicated but utilized as a means of spiritual development, and arts themselves help teach Buddhist and Confucian processes of *shugyo*, or self-cultivation. Since the two characters *shu* and *gyo*, mean "to master" and "a practice," the meaning is to master a practice. As Shigenori Nagatomo and Monte S. Hull, the translators of philosopher Yasuo Yuasa's book *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, explain,

> As is clear in this literal rendition, the term "self" does not appear in the original phrase. The rendition of "self-cultivation" is adopted because of the individualistic orientation of Western society. Philosophically this rendition is felicitous for initial stages of "self-cultivation," but since its ultimate goal is to achieve the state of "no-mind" or "no-self," it does not

> do justice to the full meaning of the original phrase. As long as the reader is aware of the fact that a psychological, existential transformation occurs in the course of "self-cultivation," where the self of everyday experience is discarded and transformed, the rendition of "shugyo" as "self-cultivation" should not pose any difficulty [Yuasa, p. 196, Ch. 1, fn.1].

Although the translators' two objections, that there is no "self" in the Japanese term and that the underlying metaphysics and psychology both postulate non-existence of the self, are valid, there are, I believe two good reasons (beyond the necessity to accommodate Western preconceptions) for using the term in English. First, the concept and the practices of *shugyo* always presuppose an active agent, which in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition especially is often considered identical with the self. The intense personal effort involved, the almost Aristotelian mental clarity about the adoption of one's own higher goal in accordance with which one forms habits through repetition, and the vivid confrontations with one's own physical and emotional feelings throughout the process, make the use of the term "self" entirely appropriate, as long as we keep in mind the provisos mentioned above.

Secondly, the *shugyo* of the arts are a form of education, which is analogous to, if not identical with, Western educational practices and ideals, and share the ultimate goals of improving life for the student and making him or her the sort of person wanted by their society.

Finally, in the arts in which self-cultivation is paramount, it is the emotion of the artist that is precisely what is most interesting—to the viewer and to the artist him- or herself. The artist's emotion becomes in a sense the "subject" of the artwork, and the artist becomes in a certain sense its primary audience. While the celebratory, the admonitory, and the emulatory approaches all focus on the emotion of persons depicted (or, as in the case of the Yatsuhashi, implied) and on the participation in that emotion by the viewer, in self-cultivation artwork, it is the artist's feelings around which the work revolves. The work is not done primarily to please an audience, such as a patron, but out of the sheer joy of realization (theoretically, at least—although things often worked out differently in practice).

And it is a process of participation, rather than a more intellectual understanding. The emotion of the artist is irrelevant except insofar as it may be a means to the end of successful depiction.

On this deeper level, emotion turns out to be cultivated by the arts—not for its own sake, because "it is there," and inherently valuable, or enjoyable (as with the celebratory approach), but because it contributes to the development of the person into a fully mature and responsible ethical agent. Closer study shows that the arts play crucial roles in the emotional education of the person, the education that allows the individual to become a fully-functioning and flourishing adult and to assume their full ethical maturity within a social context.

It's hardly accurate to say that here it is the artist's emotion that is of greatest interest. Emotion as usually understood has been eliminated, and within Buddhism, where there is no self, the pursuit of self-expression becomes a joke. "State of mind" may be a better term. In Confucianism, the self, while equally problematic (from a Western point of view) epistemologically, metaphysically, and ethically, has a more solid foundation than in Buddhism and thus poses a greater threat ethically and socially. It is for this reason less amusing in Confucianist works than in Buddhist—there is no paradox to surprise us.

Yuasa's study of self-cultivation in the arts focuses primarily on performance arts such as tea ceremony and Noh drama. In the visual arts, it is calligraphy and those painting styles that are closely related to calligraphy that realize this goal. There are countless examples, from the Heian-style calligraphy (including calligraphic texts accompanying *emakimono*) and Zen Buddhist landscapes and figure drawings from several eras, from the abstract Muromachi (1336-1603) landscapes of Sesshu [plate 6] to the lighthearted sketches of Gibbon Sengai (1750-1837). Another school of this type is the new Chinese-influenced school of art school, called Bunjinga (literally scholar's, or literati, painting), or Nanga (Southern School Painting) that emerged at the beginning of the eighteenth century, to which we now turn our attention.

Self-Cultivation and Emotion in Nanga Painting of Ikeno Gyokuran

By the mid-Edo period (eighteenth century), Japanese painters who modeled themselves on Chinese scholar-officials began to adapt to their own purposes the recently imported Chinese painting style known as Nanga

("Southern School Painting")[13] or Bunjinga (Ch., *wen-ren hua*, or "Literati Painting" that is, painting by scholars).

The Bunjinga movement was a style—or more properly, as James Cahill suggests, a *set* of styles—that was based more on the personal qualities, character, learning and even intentions of its artists than on their skill and training, which they disdained. On the one hand, the brushwork of Southern School Painting relies upon the dexterity in calligraphy developed by literati over the decades of their education and required for their official work (when and if they worked as bureaucrats, as was the point of Chinese education). But this facility with the brush is a far cry from the technical skill of academic painters and craftsmen. The education required of a literatus was a full Confucian education in the Classics, an intellectual education, and at the same time a course in "self-cultivation."

While the Edo period was in many ways repressive—more, perhaps, in its legislation and its written theories and ideologies than in its actual practices—the arts flourished in ways they never had before. Bunjinga was one of a number of Edo movements that celebrated individuality and even eccentricity. Cloaking itself in the pretense of amateur awkwardness, energetic in its pursuit of Confucian ideals of spontaneity and self-cultivation, humility and retirement, it placed great emphasis on both feelings per se and the personality or character of the artist.

As painters, the literati rebelled against too-perfect a control, which could come to seem a sign of servitude, on the one hand, and of a craftsmanlike or artisanal mentality more appropriate to "academic" (professional) artists on the other. The literati painter's brushwork, therefore, should indicate a freedom from convention and from social and artistic expectation, and a spontaneity espoused by Zen Buddhism and Taoism (many of the Chinese literati painters were Buddhist or Taoist priests) and cultivated by the recluses who had retired from public life to live in the mountains in freedom.

To the inexperienced eye, literati painting can seem dry and objective, even impersonal. Chinese *wen-ren hua* can seem overly concerned with precedent and imitation, Japanese Bunjinga superficial and mechanical. Yet

[13] Named after the so-called "Southern School" described by the Ming-period Chinese theorist Dong Qiqan.

Japanese *bunjin* expressed complex emotion in their painting. The Bunjinga artist Ikeno Gyokuran exemplifies this with unusual clarity.

18th-Century Japanese Female Artist Ikeno Gyokuran[14]

Ikeno Gyokuran (1728-1784),[15] a poet and painter in the Nanga/Bunjinga school, was one of the most prominent artists of the Edo period, renowned (and even forged) during her lifetime for her paintings of bamboo, chrysanthemums, orchids and landscape.

Gyokuran's mother Yuri ran a tea shop, inherited from her adoptive mother Kaji, called the Matsuya in the Gion entertainment district near Gion Shrine (in southeast Kyoto). It was a lively spot attracting all sorts of people, including the samurai who became Gyokuran's father, the courtier-poet Reizei Tamemura who taught first Yuri and then Gyokuran the native poetry called *waka*, and the young calligrapher and painter Ikeno Taiga[16] (1723-76) who became Gyokuran's painting teacher and husband. Gyokuran, Yuri and Kaji were minor celebrities, known collectively as the Gion Sanjo, or Three Women of Gion. All were published poets, and their work was published together in a book called *Gion Sanjo*, and their faces and their work-places were known to a (later) public. (Yuri, in fact, was found so fascinating by

[14] Much of this section originally appeared in the author's master's thesis "Ikeno Gyokuran: Woman Artist of the Eighteenth Century" (University of Michigan, 1976) and in a separate article, 1978, pp. 55-70. My evaluations and interpretations, however, are much revised in the light of recent scholarship in the fields of art history, Japanese history, and feminist theory. Patricia Fister in particular has published significant new work on Gyokuran, her mother and grandmother; see Fister 1992.

[15] The name is also transliterated (and may be pronounced in Japanese) Ike ("ee" as in English; "me" "kay" as in the name "Kay") Gyokuran, the "no" being a generative-case particle used to connect two nouns in Japanese, but in the case of names optional as to whether it is written or not.

[16] The definitive work in English on Taiga is Melinda Takeuchi 1992.

the Confucian scholar Rai San'yo (1780-1832) that he wrote a brief biography.[17])

Portraits of Gyokuran

The importance of self-cultivation in Bunjinga is borne out by four extant portraits of Gyokuran. In one of these, Tomioka Tessai (1836-1924) 1924) shows the couple as two of "Some Japanese Eccentries and Recluses" [International Exhibitions Foundation, figure 1]. In two others, a woodblock by their contemporary Mikuma Katen from *Kinsei kijin den*, and an ink drawing by Tessai, both aptly called *Portrait of Taiga and Gyokuran*, the couple is shown in their studio [Takeuchi, 54 and 55].

Though Tessai was born decades after Taiga's and Gyokuran's deaths, the lack of opportunity to paint them from life would not have been an inhibition in the context of Japanese portraiture, which typically relies less on physical resemblance than on capturing character through physical indications (deportment, posture) of their self-cultivation, and evidence of aesthetic taste (dress, the objects with which a subject has surrounded her- or himself), and, where appropriate (as with poets), with quotations from their own words.[18]

Within this context, an overlapping context of self-transformation traditionally evidenced in literati and other art, and a third more specific context of increasing popular interest in artists (especially Taiga!) as eccentric and celebrity during mid- to late Edo [Takeuchi], Tessai and Katen cultivate an image of this couple not only as artists/writers/musicians, but also as temperamentally-suited companions--a love-match, if you will - this at a time when love and romantic passion were the stuff of popular kabuki theatre.

[17] Rai San'yo's biography (in *San'yoh ikoh*, vol. 3) has been translated by Burton Watson, in *Japanese Literature in Chinese* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975, vol. 2), pp. 165-167. The best account of Kaji and Yuri in English is Fister, pp. 71-74.

[18] Tessai may well have seen one of the portraits of Taiga by his successors Geppo (1760-1839) or Aoki Shukuya (?-ca. 1802) [Takeuchi, figs. 52, 53]. In the case of Gyokuran, Tessai might have seen Katen's picture, and could have supplemented it with written descriptions.

In these two double portraits the pair's relaxed postures, casual dress, and crammed studio speak volumes.[19] Taiga's half-open kimono suggests both the accessibility of a modern-day snapshot and Taiga's own utter relaxation doing what he loves with the woman with whom he shared so much. The studio is replete with the accoutrements of the scholarly artistic life: paintings finished and unfinished, musical instruments, scrolls, books, brushes and inksticks. Katen's shows both artists playing musical instruments, Gyokuran a long stringed instrument called a *koto*, Taiga a small version of the *biwa*. In Tessai's drawing, Taiga is again playing an instrument (what looks to be a round version of the usually-square banjo-like *samisen*) while Gyokuran applies her brush to a fan, her beloved *koto* leaning against a wall and a teakettle on the brazier. Katen may have been squeamish about presenting her as she chose to present herself: she was reported, for example, not to have shaved her eyebrows, and absolute necessity for female elegance at the time. This detail not shown in Katen's print but it speaks eloquently of her independence and lack of interest in presenting herself as a beauty. It also suggests she was probably aware of classical literature, which contains at least one precedent of an independent young lady refusing to shave her brows.[20]

Clearly the couple made a deep impression on Tessai. He studied with a painter in Taiga's lineage, but Gyokuran, too, seems to have captured his imagination, for he painted a second portrait of Gyokuran. This one, which I was privileged to see in person but have never seen in print, seems to come from his mature period, and is ablaze with the energetic, expressionistic brushwork for which he is famous. It shows Gyokuran sitting under pine trees on the grounds of Gion Shrine. She is making tea at an outdoor brazier, and her back is toward the viewer.[21] This, too, is a convention in Japanese

[19] The studio itself also came in for attention from several artists, among them Geppo Shinryo (1760-1839) and the artist of *Shui miyako meisho zue* (preface dated 1787) [Takeuchi fig. 56, 57].

[20] There is an ancient literary precedent for this move, in the eleventh-century tale "The Young Lady Who Loved Insects" translated by Umeyo Hirano, *A Collection of 11th-Century Short Stories of Japan* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1963).

[21] I saw this painting in a private collection in Kyoto about November of 1977 or 1978. Unfortunately I have lost track of it. I would be deeply grateful if anyone can provide information as to its whereabouts today.

portraiture, dating back to Kamakura portraits of famous poets. It is particularly frequent when showing women poets, although it is not rare for portraits of male poets, and film director Akira Kurosawa opens one of his samurai films, to great effect, with just such a shot of Toshiro Mifune as a *ronin* or masterless warrior. Such portraits are very revealing of character, for they show what the person has been able to make of herself, as opposed to what is clearly seen as the relatively uninteresting "givens" of biology. Tessai was not much interested in Gyokuran's physiognomy; this drawing is sketchier than Katen's as far as facial features, although it is eloquent as to the elegance of her brushwork. In the hands of an expressionist like Tessai, the personalities of the two artists, subject and painter, each emerge clearly, fully self-cultivated and worthy of our emulation.

Feeling in the Paintings by Gyokuran

Both the self-cultivation and the particular spirit of the artist should be evident in Bunjinga painting—in the themes they illustrate and in the style of execution.

Gyokuran followed unofficial *wen-ren hua* guidelines as to appropriate themes—primarily landscapes and the "Four Gentlemen," the plants beloved for their symbolic qualities that can be seen on a screen of her small paintings at the University of Michigan [plate 7].

But Gyokuran's paintings of the Four Gentlemen (plum, chrysanthemum, orchid and bamboo) are in many ways a synthesis of the literati with native Japanese styles. This freedom to experiment and to appropriate freely from any tradition tells much about her character. Born only twelve years after the death of Korin, the great painter after whom the Rimpa school of "decorative" art was named, Gyokuran was deeply fascinated by Rimpa. Living in the center of Kyoto, near Gion, she would have had ample opportunity to see it, for Korin's impact was ubiquitous. In addition to his painting, he designed for textiles and ceramics as well, and the wide dissemination of particularly effective design ideas throughout all levels of Kyoto society through copying in various media, as well as the vibrant streetlife around Gion meant that even as a young girl Gyokuran would have seen design of a quality she could not have commissioned or purchased herself.

Based on her own painting, she was clearly thoroughly familiar with the major Kyoto artistic schools of the period (one of the richest artistically in world history).

Despite her primary affiliation with the newly-emerging Bunjinga school, the Rimpa sensibility is very much in evidence in her work, giving it an exuberance, dynamism, and "flair" not always seen in literati art. She made use of such decorative techniques as flat patterns, linear drawing, elimination of textural strokes, bold design, and rich coloring.

This "Rimpa sensibility" in Gyokuran's work is most clear seen in her composition and brushwork for the Four Gentlemen paintings.

Chrysanthemums

Gyokuran's many chrysanthemum paintings bear a distinctive similarity. Except for occasional *tarashikomi*, or puddled-ink effects (a Rimpa technique), almost all are conceived entirely within literati definitions; their appeal is derived from a perfect coordination of blandness and awkwardness in conception with a richness of brushwork and confident execution.

A fan with chrysanthemums on the University of Michigan screen shows Gyokuran's work at its finest [plate 8]. Here a self-assured understatement foregoes drama in the interests of a calm balance. This balance of the fan itself is undermined by its placement on the screen, which of course was not its original mounting. The three fans on the screen are rakishly placed at different angles, as if to emulate a design of fans on a kimono; the unfortunate effect is to prevent the viewer from seeing them as they were meant to be seen, that is, with reference to the vertical axis of the human viewer.

Gyokuran was always deliberate in her placement of compositions on fans, and took full advantage of the fans' curves and angles. Unlike many painters who would give a landscape on a fan a flat horizon line, as if parallel to the bottom of a rectangular page, she often curved her horizon lines to echo the curves of the fan. Similarly the stem of the flowers here echoes the curve of the fan, while the rich wet leaves balance the five chrysanthemums which, if the lowest had not been cropped by the bottom edge of the fan, would have been precariously perched on the point of a compositional triangle. As it was meant to be seen (that is, with the fan balanced on its two lower corners, as it should have been, rather than being mounted on its right edge), the line of her signature is almost parallel to the viewer's own body,

rather than paralleling the rib on which it sits or the fan's outer edge – a more conventional choice. The bold scale, the brilliant inkwork, the variation in ink intensity, the contradictions within the composition, give it enormous energy in spite of the bland strokes of the petals and the evenness of the petals themselves. The sense of calm and of inevitability make a little more understandable the famous interpretations of her personality by her contemporaries in terms of retiring femininity and Confucian decorum.

These qualities are conveyed primarily by a strong ordering of aesthetic priorities, in which the large, bland and perfectly controlled strokes of the flowers themselves assume priority, the leaves buttress them like attendants in a Confucian portrait, and the deliberately awkward calligraphic line of the stem provides a delightful surprise almost as an afterthought.

The distinctively emotional and expressionistic character of Gyokuran's Four Gentlemen is evident by comparison with a chrysanthemum painting by another woman, Kiyohara Sesshin (or Yukinobu) (1643-1682), who painted in the Kano style [plate 9]. The daughter of Kano Tanyu's niece and Kasumi Morikage, and wife of Tanyu's pupil Kiyohara Hirano Morikiyo, Sesshin was trained in Kano painting which, like Bunjinga, is based on Chinese painting and relies heavily upon calligraphic brushwork. She is especially known for her female figures, both mythical, such as the angels known as *apsaras* [Fister, figure 5], and historical, such as Murasaki Shikibu [Fister, figure 7], although reproductions of her paintings in Fister's book also show highly skilled paintings of Taoist immortals and of Chinese legendary figures Hanrei (Ch., Fan Li) and his accomplice Seishi (Ch., Hsi Shih). Just as Gyokuran's style shows her interest in Rimpa, Shesshin's shows a strong influence from Tosa Mitsuoki (also known for a more decorative style than Kano and Bunjinga).

Both Gyokuran's and Sesshin's paintings are Tokugawa period; both are hanging scrolls of a single chrysanthemum plant with grasses. Sesshin's is accompanied by a third plant, bamboo, and Gyokuran's by a poem. Equally skilled, equally famous, they are separated by only about a century. But their moods could not be more different.

Where Sesshin's is restrained, superbly confident but delicate, Gyokuran's is exuberant, bold, dashing around the paper, off the paper, doubling back on itself. Sesshin's placement is absolutely confident, yet demure: its center of gravity below the middle of the painting, and the whole just slightly off center, yet bounded by several inches of "empty space" on either

side, granted more than enough breathing room, a space of its own in a world with more than enough resources for everyone. Gyokuran's, by contrast, pushes against the borders of the paper. Its grasses escape completely in two places; it cannot be contained – and this seems to be a world that might try to contain one, to hedge one in. For Gyokuran, it is necessary (here—if not always) to press outwards, to exert one's energies against the constraints that are all too close.

Sesshin's once vivid color has faded over the centuries. Yet it was never applied broadly. The delicacy of the original red is apparent from the repeated refined strokes of the petals. Gyokuran here has eschewed the color she uses elsewhere to such great effect; here, where the inkwork itself is so flamboyant, it would be unthinkable. The variations in the tones of black, the thicknesses of line, the angle and breadth of the brush, are far more colorful than pigments could be.

Orchids

Of the three flower paintings on the University of Michigan screen, the orchid [plate 10] is the most thoroughly Bunjinga in conception. This is unusual, for most of Gyokuran's orchids tend toward the effusive geometrical patterns of Rimpa. The complementary asymmetry of the curves, casual and confident, and her avoidance of framing the flowers within ovals of leaves, make this one of her greatest orchids. The line of the single branch is particularly noteworthy. In spite of deliberately jerky interpretation of *i tao pi pu tao* or "idea present, brush absent," where the flower stem is interrupted by the two leaves, and again where they cross each other, there is a rugged vitality of great power in this sketch. The vivid asymmetry of the blossoms themselves reiterates this vitality, with none of the romantic idealization of the orchid so often found in literati works. The exuberance and strength of the composition, which pushes against the edge of the paper on the right and seems about to unfurl at the left, shows the originality and experimental spirit contemporaries had learned to expect from Gyokuran.

Landscapes

Gyokuran's mastery of traditional Bunjinga under Taiga' tutelage is evident in two conservative compositions in ink with pale blue and red washes based closely upon compositions by Taiga on Chinese themes on the

University of Michigan screen. The first, "Mountains and Trees" [Plate 11] a study of Taiga's "Crossing a Bridge in the Rain" [private collection, Japan; reproduced in Suzuki et al., pl. 488], shows a lone traveler with a triangular straw hat crossing a bridge in a foreground of flattened hills and groves of trees, abutting three ranges of rectangular-low mountains. In both, the flat tops of the mountains, which seem compressed by the top of the painting; the lack of valleys providing vistas and of any deep-distance mountains, the repetition of densely-packed forms, give a sense of compression reinforced by the heavy inkplay, which is almost entirely "Mi" dots, especially in the "monoculture" trees. Yet Gyokuran's work is far from a simple copy. In adapting Taiga's fan to a long horizontal rectangle, she has made a number of changes to the composition that subtly alter the mood of the painting. In Taiga's fan, the landscape presses down upon the human being, almost imprisoning him within its compacted forms. Gyokuran has played with this compression, widening each group of mountains to eliminate the valleys or gorges between them in Taiga's, and enlarging them proportionally so their tops are closer to the upper edge of the paper. The overall effect is still one of compression, but its effect on human being, both the traveler and the huts, is different. While the natural forms are still densely clustered, trees to themselves, mountains to themselves, the traveler in Gyokuran's work has room to breathe. The mountain behind him is pushed back and the trees keep their distance. She has opened up space for human habitation, allowing ample room for the expanded compound of huts between two the groves in the middle and on the far right; she has straightened the bridge, which in Taiga's work descends into the trees at a perilous angle (in order to accentuate the bottom arc of the fan itself); and she has opened up the sky around him, increasing the distance between him and the trees on either side of him and the mountain just behind him as well. While nature is still compressed, the sense of claustrophobia has been relieved.

A second modification of a fan of Taiga's [private collection, Japan; reproduced in Suzuki et al., Ikeno Taiga Sakuhin Shu, pl. 527] to a rectangular format, again on the University of Michigan screen, shows a similar expansion of nature to make room for human being [plate 12]. Here again Gyokuran has opened up the internal spaces of the composition around her figures. Although this composition by Taiga could by no means be interpreted as suggestive of menace (as the other one was), and indeed the gently curving branches that reach down toward the boatman seems more caressing than

threatening, still the "empty" space around Gyokuran's boat seems unnervingly quiet and airless.

The composition, with two figures in a simple boat on flat water beneath a copse of trees jutting out from an overhanging cliff, is the conventional literati allusion to Su Shih's poem "The Red Cliff." This obvious allusion to a Chinese theme is rare for her; Gyokuran avoided Chinese poetry and calligraphy in her work, and seems never to have painted many of the Chinese historical or literary landscape themes that were most popular with Taiga and other bunjin, like the Road to Shu, the Lan-t'ing (Orchid) Pavilion, or the Peach Blossom Spring. (Two other exceptions to her general aversion are her "Lake His (West Lake) in the Yabumoto Collection, based roughly on a "Lake Hsi" by her teacher Yanagisawa Kien, and "Landscape with Human Figures" that alludes to a poem by Tu Mu [reproduced in *Kokka* 885].)

Works like these make it easy to overemphasize Taiga's influence on her. Their differences from Taiga's emerge only upon close--and emotionally sensitive--viewing. Clearly she learned from him, and she made literati brushwork and compositions her own. Nonetheless, as we've seen in the distinctive compositions, flat and decorative brushwork, and playfulness of her fan paintings of the Four Gentlemen, her expression was as strongly influenced by native styles and values as by Bunjinga.

But it is in her large hanging scroll landscapes, a number of which are in collections in the United States that Gyokuran's artistic independence and personal boldness comes through most clearly.

A large Chinese-style landscape at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco [plate 13], shows a fundamentally different approach from both Bunjinga and Rimpa, although it uses elements of both. Although this is one of her most widely reproduced works, it has not been given adequate stylistic analysis in spite of being an utterly unique work. It is one of her most original compositions, relying neither on Taiga's sketches nor on well-established Chinese compositional prototypes. (It is likely a work of her maturity.) Stylistically, too, it shows her at her most experimental, playfully unconcerned with the reality of her spatial relationships and at the same time exploring a style of art famous in Kyoto but completely unrelated to her (and Taiga's) usual interests.

The work is "monumental", not only in its sheer size (44 1/8" x 19 ¼", or 112.1 cm x 48.7 cm), but in the scale of the mountains, the deep distances

of the far views (in which immense far-away mountain ranges are drastically reduced in size and set beyond broad expanses of water), and in the way the mountain forms push beyond the edges of the picture. The subject matter, human habitation in the landscape (literally "mountains [and] water" in both Chinese and Japanese) is thoroughly Chinese, in the Southern School style derived from "monumental" landscape paintings of the Song period.

Inserted within these churning mountain spaces, in small clearings and plateaus, are the tiny houses, temple compounds, fishing villages and isolated scholar's huts so dear to Song and literati painting. The loosely sketched figures of travelers in the foreground, the tiny fisherman in the deep distance (two-thirds up the painting), and the scholars in the middle distance viewing the landscape in pensive solitude from rustic huts or entertaining friends within more established domains are thoroughly within the Song tradition, albeit reinterpreted through conventions of the late seventeenth-century Cinese painting manual known as *The Mustard Seed Garden* (well known to the Japanese Bunjin). The anonymity of the individuals and the sites, their vagueness, also hark back to the Song.

The deliberate awkwardness so prized by literati as a sign of their amateur status is much in evidence here, particularly in the pink-edged rice fields half-way down on the left.

As in Chinese and Japanese "Southern Painting" the brushwork is "calligraphic", that is, highly modulated and exploiting the various intensities of black ink. This can be seen in the fluid idiosyncratic outlines of the roiling rock formations lower right and the outlandish angles and curves of the diagonal cliffs at the lower left.

A number of the standard literati conventions of brushwork are used as well: texturing brushstrokes such as *cun* and *tian*, pale washes both of black ink and mineral colors, and the alternation of pale red and blue washes to indicate successive depths of mountain range. The motifs, too, are from *The Mustard Seed Garden*.

Like most of Gyokuran's landscapes, and many Song paintings, the theme of this one is vague, and both the locale and the events are anonymous. In Song painting, the vastness of the mountains and waters contrasts with the relatively miniscule human settlements tucked into them; the mountains advance upon the eye, while the human settlements are often all but hidden.

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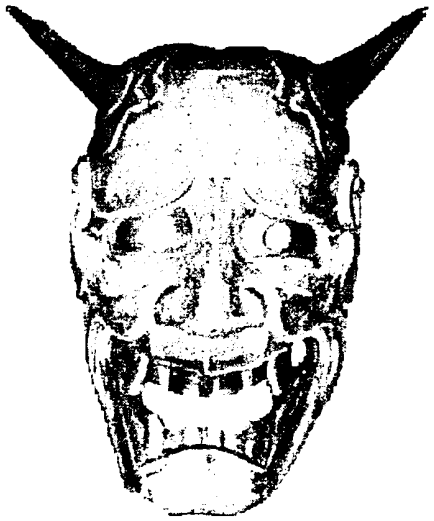

Plate 1. *Hannya* (demonic female) Noh mask. Japan. Wood. Yoshino Japanese Antiques, Pasadena, CA. Published by permission. *Hannya* masks reveal the tortured soul of women obsessed with jealousy, hatred or revenge.

Plate 2. Bodhisattva- Fugen (Fugen Bosatsu). Japanese, Heian period, 12th c. Hanging scroll; ink, color, gold, and silver on silk. Overall: 256.8 x 103.8 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase, F1963.6.

Plate 3. Death of the Buddha (Skt., *Parinirvana*; Jp., *Nehanzu*). Japanese, late Edo or Meiji period, late 19th-early 20th c. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. See also the *Kenpon Chakushoku Butsu Nehanzu* at Chohoji, Japan, Kamakura period, 1192-1333. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 233cm x 158.3cm. Chohoji Temple, Wakayama Prefecture. Online at http://www.chohoji.or.jp/dharma/butu2/hotoke_nehan.jpg

Plate 4. *History of the Founding of the Gyoppoji Temple (Tsukamine dera Gyoppoji konryu shugyo engi).* Detail. Tosa Mitsunobu, 1434-1525. Text by Kinnatsu. Dated 1495. Japan, Momoyama period. Handscroll; ink, color, and gold on paper. 34.5 x 1066 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, F1961.23 det.

Plate 5. Amitabha [Buddha] and Bodhisattva[s] welcoming souls to Paradise. Detail. Japan. Kamakura period, early 14th c. Hanging scroll; ink, gold, and color on silk. 159.3 x 162.5 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1913.47.5

Plate 6. Mountain Landscape. Sesshu Toyo, 1420-1506. Japan. Muromachi period. Six-fold screen; ink and color on paper. 161 x 351.2 cm. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Purchase, F1958.4.

Plate 7. Screen of Landscapes and Flower Studies. Ikeno Gyokuran, 1728-1784. Japan, Edo period. Standing screen; ink and light color on paper. 129 x 102.3 cm. The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI. No. 1958.1.90. A larger landscape by Ikeno Taiga, "A Mountain Landscape with a Waterfall," is *verso*. [Miller, 1978, fig. 2].

Plate 8. Fan with Chrysanthemums, from Screen of Landscapes and Flower Studies. Ikeno Gyokuran, 1728-1784. Japan. Edo period. Ink on paper; 18.9 x 51.9 cm. The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI. Acq. no. 1958.1.90.

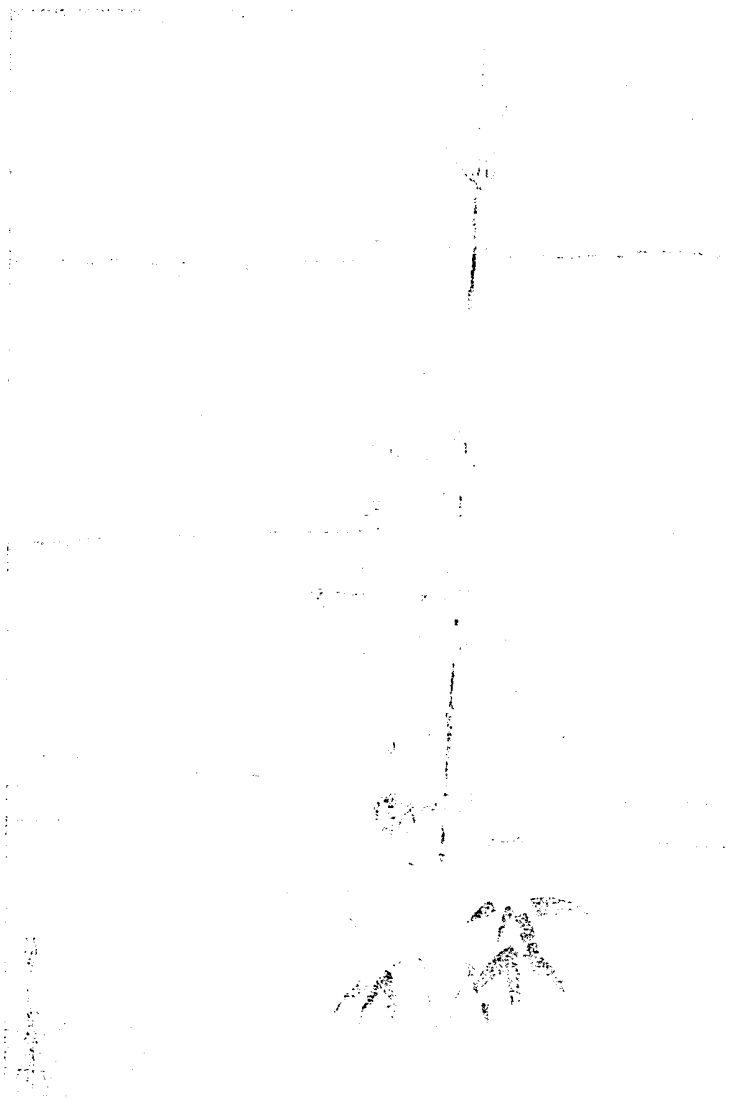

Plate 9. Chrysanthemum. Kiyohara Sesshin (or Yukinobu), 1643-1682, Japan, late Muromachi or Momoyama period. Hanging scroll; ink on paper. Private Collection, U.S.A.

Plate 10. Orchid, from Screen of Landscapes and Flower Studies. Ikeno Gyokuran, 1728-1784, Japan. Edo period. Ink and light color on paper; 23.2 x 40.6 cm. The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI. No. 1958.1.90.

Plate 11. Mountains and Trees, from Screen of Landscapes and Flower Studies. Ikeno Gyokuran, 1728-1784. Japan. Edo period. Ink and light color on paper; 16.7 x 37.5 cm. The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI. No. 1958.1.90. A study based on Taiga's "Crossing a Bridge in the Rain" [private collection, Japan; reproduced in Suzuki et al., *Ikeno Taiga Sakuhin Shu*, pl. 488].

Plate 12. Red Cliff, from Screen of Landscapes and Flower Studies. Ikeno Gyokuran, 1728-1784. Japan. Edo period. Ink and light color on paper; 52.5 x 16.8 cm. The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI. No. 1958.1.90. A study based on Taiga's "Red Cliff" from a private collection in Japan, reproduced in Suzuki et al., *Ikeno Taiga Sakuhin Shu*, pl. 527.

Plate 13. Landscape: Peach Blossom Idyll. Ikeno Gyokuran, 1728-1784. Japan. Edo period. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. 112.1 x 48.7 cm. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. B76 D3. Gift of Asian Art Museum Foundation of San Francisco.