

Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire, 1796-1911. By CLAUDIA BROWN and JU-HSI CHOU. Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1992. 368 pp. \$49.95.

Every field has its "black holes," but it is nonetheless embarrassing for Chinese painting studies in the West that among the blackest of its holes is a period very close to us in time, extending, arguably, a full century and a half from the beginning of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. There were possibly more painters active in this period than ever before in Chinese history; certainly, as one would expect, more paintings proportionally survive from it. One can only welcome with open arms, therefore, the publication of *Transcending Turmoil*, the catalogue of an exhibition organized by the Phoenix Art Museum in 1992 that subsequently traveled to Denver, Honolulu, and Hong Kong. This densely documented study provides a much-needed systematic scholarly overview of nineteenth-century painting. Future studies will begin from here.

The authors divide the material under five headings, each of which is afforded a chapter in which a brief introductory essay precedes entries on individual painters. Thirty artists are represented by a single work, and thirty by more than one, often several. The five-part classification is pragmatic and descriptive: painting in Beijing in the late Qing dynasty; painting in the lower Yangzi Valley before the Taiping Rebellion; painting in the lower Yangzi valley after the Taiping Rebellion; painting inspired by calligraphy, seal-carving, and epigraphy (effectively an appendix to the previous two sections given its geographical focus); and painting in Guangdong Province. The introductory essays to each chapter, based closely on traditional Chinese scholarship, are clear and informative, especially on regional groupings and lineages of artists. Drawing attention to the socioeconomic network of urban centers in chapter 3, Chou Ju-hsi makes an important contribution to the analysis of the Qing dynasty art world. A superb discussion of the fusion of pictorial, calligraphic, and seal-carving aesthetics introduces chapter 4. Although some of the entries on individual artists are more cursory, most use available biographical information to give some sense of the artist's character, explore his (and in a very few cases her) range and stylistic development, and often further illuminate the work through the use of contemporary commentaries. Unfortunately, only the 21 color illustrations are of satisfactory quality; the more than 140 black-and-white illustrations lack both definition and contrast.

As has often been pointed out, the later history of Chinese painting has been written with a bias toward painting by members of the literati elite, especially those paintings that advertise their social exclusivity. Painting of this kind was not at its strongest in the nineteenth century, surely one factor in the scholarly neglect of the period. Not only did painters of less privileged status become more prominent, but even the most educated painters often pursued a populist aesthetic, partly for commercial reasons. The authors' approach is admirably democratic, on the "let-a-hundred-flowers-bloom" model; the new information presented here is in itself enough to revise our picture of the past.

Underlying the discussion, however, are ideas that are all too familiar. Literati self-expression continues to get preferential treatment: emblematic of this is the contrast between Chou Ju-hsi's enthusiasm for Zhao Zhiqian and his detached treatment of Ren Yi and, in the selection of works, a rather unjustified prominence of the more backward-looking forms of literati painting. Non-literati modes of painting

tend to be reduced to functional qualities such as decoration, record, illustration, or performance (sympathetically described, it should be said). Consistent with this, the selection of contextualizing information in the book shows a relative disregard for the vast explosion of illustration, Sino-Western painting, and photography that characterized nineteenth-century visual culture. The historical frame of reference, meanwhile, is restricted to tradition, its survival and renewal; it is striking, to say the least, that the words "modern," "modernity," and "modernization" find no place in any of the introductory essays to the five chapters. This is not a study of nineteenth- (and early twentieth-) century painting that links up either with recent work on the social history of the period, or with the study of nineteenth-century painting elsewhere in a rapidly shrinking world. Instead, as seen from the catalogue's title, there is the suggestion of a head-in-the-sand escape into the aesthetic realm that, to this reviewer, might at best describe the most conservative literati and court painting.

These criticisms, however, should not be overstressed. By its erudite and careful documentation, its inclusiveness (how many historians of Chinese art can name sixty nineteenth-century painters?), and sympathetic treatment of the material, this pioneering study opens the way to the many others that are sure to follow.

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Schoolhouse Politicians: Locality and State During the Chinese Republic. By HELEN R. CHAUNCEY. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992. xi, 300 pp. \$38.00.

Helen Chauncey's analysis of local educational circles in central Jiangsu Province during the Republic argues that schools became instruments by which elites sought to assert control over social and material wealth through local taxation and investment. Beginning her study with an excellent detailed picture of the environmental context, Chauncey traces the role of the local school circles as they were involved in dialogue with warlord provincial regimes, the Guomindang, and the Communist Party. She finds that local (especially subcounty) educational elites were willing to invest in school projects when the state's role in the locality was slight; but these elites retreated in the face of intrusive and extractive regimes like the Guomindang. The Communists, who benefited from the alienation stirred by the Guomindang, understood the local power of these elites, but ultimately did not know how to deal with them, alternately courting and suppressing these circles. Chauncey's frequent contrasts between northern and southern Jiangsu keep the importance of context continually before the reader; and her analysis on the basis of impressive research does fine work in bringing to light the local educational scene, its relation to the state, and related trends in the Republican period.

Less successful in my opinion are the author's efforts to link her study to the model of state building. For the key indicator of state building, she focuses on what she sees as increased political legitimacy accruing to both state and local elites during this period of "postimperial redistribution of authority" (p. 121). What brought the state and the local elites legitimacy was "the steady flow of official communiques" and correspondence between them (p. 97). Local elites' willingness even to have a dialogue, she argues, increased the legitimacy of the state. If that is so, it must be