比较视野中的
传统与现代

Tradition and Modernity
Comparative Perspectives

孙康宜 孟华 主编
The Imagined Landscape
—Autonomy, Fiction, Modernity

Christopher S. Wood
(Yale University)

“Tradition” and “modernity” name two different approaches to the problem of origins, or the problem of the sources of cultural legitimacy. Landscape painting emerged in Europe in the sixteenth century as an arena where such competing models of cultural origins could be staged and contrasted. In China, landscape painting seems to have served a similar function: the relatively stable and limited elements of landscape provided a neutral ground upon which the tensions between custom and invention could be played out. A brief sketch of the emergent phase of European landscape painting might serve as a basis for a comparative perspective; perhaps something like a comparative poetics of the image.

Until 1500, every European painting told a story, represented a character from a story, or portrayed a real person. It was impossible to imagine that a painting might have no subject matter. If a painter was interested in painting landscape, he was obliged nevertheless to leave room for subject matter. From the sixteenth century on, the traditional Christian stories were often supplemented by stories about the pagan gods of Greco-Roman antiquity. One way or another, the subject matter of most paintings remained for a long time the lives of the gods.

Yet it is clear that many beholders—not all, but many—were beginning to attend more closely to the how of painting than to the what. All painters, more or less, were painting the same stories. And this sameness of subject revealed the difference between one painting manner and another, and made it easier to compare one painter with the next. Despite the persistence of the religious content, painting increasingly became a world unto itself, with its own
conventions, traditions, and laws relatively independent of the ritual and communal life of the Church.

Many of the Christian and pagan stories—the lives of the saints or the loves of the gods—are staged in outdoor settings. The first landscape paintings, in a sense, were tellings of such stories that placed a special emphasis on the setting, whether mountain or woodland. In some Italian and German representations of the hermit saints, for example—saints who lived in the wilderness, in conditions of extreme simplicity—the saints had to compete for attention with the landscape surroundings.

Painters in Venice around 1500 began to push the tension between setting and conventional subject matter to its limits. They developed a mode of painting best described as “pastoral,” a family of scenes that lacked narrative subjects and instead represented mysterious outdoor moments where nameless characters sleep or play or make music. Pastoral sets up a comparison between a utopian world and the real world. But pastoral also thematizes fictionality itself, the power of the imagination to make a world. The pastoral image becomes the double of the tranquil indoor setting, the real setting, where the image itself is inspected and enjoyed. Venetian painters, and their sophisticated beholders, were the first to explore the semantic spectrum of landscape setting.

Until the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, no one in Christian Europe imagined that the art of painting might compete with poetry; that painting might have a refinement of its own; that painting, though mute, might yet be capable of speaking for itself. In these years, painting began to clear out space for itself within European cultural life. The audience for the first private paintings was in the beginning exclusively wealthy and privileged, and usually urban. The “Renaissance” in Europe is often characterized as the moment of the emergence of the individual artist; the painter or sculptor as author, on the model of the poet. Yet in important sense there had always been individual artists, distinctive and highly-rewarded talents. What was really new in the Renaissance was the individual beholder: the beholder who contemplated pictorial works of art in private, and who discovered and developed his or her own private tastes. Painting on panel, and soon enough canvas as well, emerged out of its secondary status to become one of the most desired, and expensive, accoutrements of refined living, finding a privileged place in private living quarters and in the endowed chapels of
the churches.

An even more private medium, a kind of hyper-painting, was the drawing in pen, chalk, or colored washes. Such slight and fragile objects were the very opposite of the splendid, permanent artifacts treasured by the medieval beholder. But in the sixteenth century, a pen drawing by a renowned artist, perhaps even signed by that artist, was more highly valued than a large, elaborate painting by a lesser artist. Not everyone could acquire a drawing by the master. Some artists turned to the newly perfected techniques of mechanical replication of images to reproduce and disseminate their drawings. Like the drawing, the collectible woodcut or etching thematized through its medium the new conditions of psychological and spatial privacy presupposed by the experience of art.

The true emblem of art's new independence and eloquence, and one of the most radical experiments of the European Renaissance, was the pure or independent landscape, the landscape completely, or almost completely, emptied of human presence. Pure landscape was the invention of a handful of German artists—provincial and naive by comparison with the Venetians, but for that very reason, perhaps, more ready to experiment. A very few such paintings survive from the early sixteenth century; most of the examples are in the fragile medium of brush drawing, in color, or pen or chalk drawing on paper. There are also several landscape prints. In the work of Wolf Huber and Albrecht Altdorfer as well as Titian and Domenico Campagnola, landscape drawings and landscape prints, conceived as facsimiles of drawings, stood in a reciprocal relationship. The technology of replication itself completed the process of alienation from traditional contexts of reception, for it put the image directly in the hands of private, anonymous beholders, many of whom had never actually met the artist; or even lived many hundreds of miles away from the workshop where the image was created.

Later in the European tradition, between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries, the landscape painting assumed a prominent position within the system of the arts. But at this point it was a novelty and an exception.

The landscape image of the Renaissance is often explained by scholars as an expression of an animistic or pantheistic nature-philosophy; or as a proto-nationalist discovery of local topography. These explanations retain some power. But in fact landscape is best understood negatively, as an emptying out of the
traditional picture-field, a physical removal of subject matter that left only a setting and a memory of a narrative. That absence of story disengaged the landscape image from the main tradition of art-making in Christian Europe, the tradition of the cult image with its mythic links back to true stories and authentic, primordial images. The landscape was instead art starting all over again.

The landscape inverted the hierarchy of subject and setting. A tree, normally, cannot be the subject of a picture. But Albrecht Altdorfer, in his watercolor and gouache drawing in Berlin, *Tree with Woodcutter*, dating from the 1510s, takes the vertical format of the sacred image, for example, the image of an individual saint, or a standing Virgin Mary, and replaces the human focal point with a noble, anthropomorphic tree (fig. 1). The tree, an element of the environment, the pictorial foil for sacred content, has been promoted to the status of subject matter. The format is vertical, as with so many of Altdorfer’s pure landscapes—an apparent paradox, for later in the European tradition the landscape format *par excellence* will be horizontal, in analogy with the surface of the earth. But at its beginnings the landscape image had little to do with the horizon; it had more to do with other pictures, sacred pictures, which were mostly vertical in format.

The tree has been placed on stage, but has no story to tell. It can only writhe, and dominate the picture-field with its form. The tree’s *inability* to tell a story becomes the theme of the picture. The cult image abolished by this picture survives *in* the picture, but only as a miniature, a tiny emblem, as the cult shrine attached to the tree, its contents invisible to us. The shrine is a trophy, like a shrunken head, emblem of the landscape’s daring elevation of supplementarity to a pictorial principle. But the woodcutter seated at the base of the tree, forest
dwellers, wanderers, ignores the cult image, and is equally unable to see the tree as an object, unable to see the tree as the drawing pictures it.

The forest was a space to be traversed. It was never a destination, except for witches and wild men and other social marginals. The forest was a site for “extreme stories,” episodes of violence and despair on the edges of society. Altdorfer’s drawing in Berlin of around 1510, in pen and white heightening on a blue prepared ground, still represents a story, a story from Ovid: the suicide of Pyramus after he learns of the apparent suicide of his lover Thisbe (fig. 2). Pyramus has wandered out of society and into the wild forest, into the love-adventure, and he is destroyed. His corpse is already threatened by the coils of spidery, calligraphic vegetation. The forest advances on the remains of narrative. Pyramus is almost already gone, leaving an emptiness at the core of the picture. The supplemental zone, the parergal surroundings, are crowding in and claiming the picture-field. The body of the subject cannot defend its own frontiers against the encroachment of flowing line.

Later in the history of landscape, perhaps, the picture-field will be securely occupied by the themes of nature-religion, or topography as a patriotic lieu de mémoire. But at its historical point of origin, in Germany around 1500, landscape is better described simply as switching maneuver performed at the level of pictorial infrastructure.

The assault on subject-matter carried out by a drawing like the Dead Pyramus breaks the image down into its elemental components. The real origin of such a drawing is not the forest itself, but the religious paintings that had staged so many stories in forests: stories of the the hermit saints Jerome and Francis; of the martial saint George; the Rest of the Holy Family on the Flight to
Egypt. The pen drawing is a working backwards from the tonalities of the painting towards the forest itself. It starts with the upside-down structure of the paint, light on top of dark, characteristic of German painting, and then imposes that structure back on the drawing. The drawing breaks the painting down into its processual stages, staggering the painting process in time—in effect, spatializing the time of making. The drawing intercepts a moment in the process of making the painting, isolates it, and promotes it to the status of a work. The drawing is thus an intercepted fragment of an artwork exploded in time. For even a drawing like this, so informal and formless, was always already an artwork, already possessed value independent of its connection with any other more public work. If it had not been so valued, it would never have reached the age of twenty, let alone five hundred years.

The interception of the work-fragment, the drawing, as an artwork releases the artwork from any backwards search for its own origins. The blank sheet of paper is origin enough, just as the collector's cabinet is destination enough.

This dynamic quality, this quality of being a moment intercepted out of the work-process, accidentally rescued, is crucial to all the early landscape drawings. In one of his early watercolors of landscape motifs, Albrecht Dürer described the trunk of a tree in a long slash of wash, but ran out of time or light or patience, and left off describing the leaves (fig. 3). The meaning of any drawing was its experimental, provisional character. To draw was to model, project, test, monitor. Every drawing was a symbolic beginning. The fragile medium of paper, the ephemeral color of the ink, the provisionality of the chalk or wash mark were the sensitive instruments of this testing and probing. But paper, ink, chalk, wash were not only practical tools, they were also the
symbols of the permanently experimental, projective nature of poiesis, of creativity; symbols of the artwork’s quality as a bridge thrown out into into nothingness. The mark of pen or brush always gives the sense that it could be otherwise! that the drawing need not look just this way, but could have turned out another way. This watercolor only dramatizes that condition of open-endedness. Paper was the thinnest membrane separating the artist from the world; pen and chalk the most fragile weapons, as the artist set out under the open sky, momentarily escaping the practical cycles of the production of cult-images.

Dürer actually depicted this adventure beyond the walls of the workshop, in a watercolor now in Berlin, the Watermill with Draughtsman (fig. 4). Dürer has chosen a rocky hillside perch, perhaps for its panoramic view. He is accompanied by an apprentice, a red-haired boy in a white tunic and leggings sitting on a millstone and drawing absorbedly on his drawing tablet, head down. Perhaps the apprentice is a kind of autobiographical personage, a memory of Dürer’s own boyhood sketching trips. Art is symbolically placed in the hands of a child, art begins again on his tablet. This is another inversion, as the young teach the old.

The watercolor registers Dürer’s decision to turn his back on the invisible panorama, and instead draw the unprepossessing mill and the scrabbly terrain around it. He promotes the pebbly slope into a motif. This is pure terrain; even the apparent focal point of the page, the watermill itself, was literally constructed out of this terrain. The meaningless foreground rambles over more than half the sheet. Dürer’s brush has tackled a pile of debris, a superfluity of data; and yet his brush stays stuck to the gaze, moving about in fits and starts,
accounting for a field of vision in fragments. And the result is less a composition than a direct trace of the lawless encounter.

The boy, meanwhile, who is not studying the landscape, but looks only at his drawing tablet, is the emblem of the gap between witnessing and making, between seeing and drawing, eye and hand. The drawing hand is blind, it draws what the mind sees and what the body knows, but cannot draw what the eye sees. Dürer would remember this boy when he came to design his engraving *Melencolia I*, for there, too, a scribbling boy, allegorically standing for busy art-making, sits on a millstone, eyes downward.

Some early landscape drawings were completely fictional, that is, descriptions of places that did not exist. In a pen drawing by Wolf Huber of Passau, now in Budapest, dated 1512, the blindness of the draughtsman is not an issue (fig. 5). The point of origin of this drawing is not out in the natural world, but buried deep inside itself. The beholder is tempted to look for it. The pen stroke is tense and animated, it vibrates from one corner of the picture-field to the other, back and forth, without rest. Where did all this turbulent motion start? In fact, in this drawing there is a visible starting-point, a fixed point which can even give the drawing a title: the Crucifixion near the center, which, once identified, organizes the energies of the picture. Now all the graphology seems to radiate out from this pocket of subject matter. But is it a Crucifixion? The body is gone. The twin crosses of the thieves are replaced by three torture wheels that one might have found in modern Germany, but not in depictions of the Crucifixion. The ambiguity about the cross doubly thematizes the latency of subject matter within landscape.

![fig. 5 Wolf Huber, *Golgotha*, pen and ink, 1512, Budapest, Fine Arts Museum.](image-url)
This fictional drawing shares the category “landscape drawing” with very different drawings, like the view of the town of Urfahr on the Danube by Wolf Huber, in a fine seismographic pen line (fig. 6). The starting-point of the drawing was the ramparts of the castle of Linz, where Huber stood to draw the scene. But the starting-point on the page is completely hidden, it has been swallowed up in the making process. There is no dominant anthropomorphic or narrative-impllying motif, no body, that offers itself as a starting point, unless it is the blank featureless plane of the roof in the foreground, an ironic substitute for a subject. With such a drawing, you cannot tell where it all began. The minimal web of pen lines reads as the soft trace of the draughtman’s hand; the lines suggest the possibility of some sort of a reconstruction of the drawing process; and yet that reconstruction is impossible. The web of lines is uniform, non-hierarchical, it is evenly spread across the page, creating a homogeneous picture field and therefore the conceptual basis for the work’s new institutional privilege as an artwork.

In this respect there is no difference between the recorded and the invented landscape. In the Lake Landscape by Albrecht Altdorfer, just as in Huber’s View of Urfahr—and again this is the distinction from painting—there is no layering (fig. 7). The work is happening entirely in a thin horizontal plane. The whole process of making is transparent, it is all present before your eyes. The time of making is spatialized and visualized. And yet—you still don’t know where this
time-span began. Where was the first mark on the page? The true subject of the
drawing is “pure time,” without beginning or end, frustrating all quests for
origins.

The landscape drawing was the form that art theory took in Germany; and it
was, in its own way, also a written theory of art, written with lines, lines that
don’t always refer to anything in the world but signify all the same. Written
theory of art in this period was inadequate to the pace of artistic experiment.
Landscape, a mode of fiction-making that explicitly detached itself from public
and doctrinally-governed contexts of the image, was the private, flexible
accompaniment, the diagnostic supplement, to public art. In particular, as we
have seen, the landscape was in a position to address the fundamental question of
origins: what was an artwork and where did it come from?

The overlap between landscape drawing and the thematics of primitivism was
not accidental. In Altdorfer’s Wild Family in the Albertina, furious horizontal
linear vibrations mimic narrative and psychosexual energies (fig. 8). There has
been a murder. The Wild Men and their families were Germanic versions of the
pagan forest-tribes known from ancient Roman literature and modern Italian
prints, the satyrs, centaurs, and nymphs. These are forest-dwellers who have
escaped the bonds of civilization; they often fall into violent conflict with one
another. The wild men are put in implicit parallel with civilized men, and
compared to them, revealing the wild element in all human conduct. The wild life is a comic inversion of civilized life. The basic structure of the landscape drawing was *pastoral*. By that I mean that landscape was always circling around a thematics of return to the primitive state, to the rural or nomadic.

Pastoral in literature is the ironic comparison between a fictional enclave detached from the world, in fact a world that exists only within the poem; and the real social and political world that the reader inhabits. Pastoral brings the real world into the artwork by implicitly comparing it to its exact opposite, to an unworldly tribe of hermits, shepherds, or satyrs. The pastoral, ironic, comparative structure was already in place, in a sense, in the devotional paintings of the hermit saints Francis and Jerome. But the power of the model was activated in the visual arts, in Germany, only with the landscape drawing (in Italy the pastoral model was activated by the pastoral *poesie* of Giorgione and other Venetian artists.). In the landscape drawings, and in works like this where the thematics of wilderness are spelled out, the ironic or doubled structure of the fictional artwork is made explicit. Just as pastoral poetry functioned in Renaissance culture as a meta-text of all literary fiction—that is, an accompanying theoretical guide to the phenomenon of literature—so too can the landscape drawing be understood as the meta-text of the pictorial artwork in early 16th-century Germany. The landscape drawing theorized art in general.

In the landscape image, the human body is physically absent. But one body does reappear, and that is the artist’s body, in the form of the direct traces of the
artist's body, the sensitive pen lines. The early landscape drawing is very likely to be signed, as are many of the drawings and prints by Altdorfer. But even those works that do not bear Altdorfer's monogram are signed, in the sense that the entire work is a graphic signature. The artist's signature is also a myth of origins, the myth of an origin that is reduced to a point, an individual. This was a more manageable theory of origins than those associated with the Christian cult image.

The sacred body of the cult image also reappears in the landscape in other forms, sometimes almost unrecognizable forms. Strange bending trees like these stand in an ironic relationship to the remembered subject matter of the cult image. They are parodic surrogates for the banished saints, now twisted into bizarre, meaningless attitudes. The landscape drawing, physiologically agile and iconographically emancipated, plays a combinatorial game; rearranging a small array of elements in ever new dispositions on the small rectangular field, hybridizing and recombining, slipping in and out of meanings.

The real equivalent of the German landscape drawing in contemporary Italian art, therefore, was not the Venetian poesie, but rather the Roman grotteschi. Grotesque ornament, developed in the last decades of the fifteenth century and first of the sixteenth, plays the same endless combinatorial game, and likewise stands in a meta-textual, diagnostic relationship to the larger project of art.

Wolf Huber's drawing of a pair of trees is a virtual but unrealized narrative, taut with unresolved energy. As in the grotesque ornament, the same familiar elements are combined and recombined. Huber may even have known Altdorfer's drawing with the two trees. In such a drawing, the European artist stands on the threshold of a whole world of self-contained, self-referential artmaking. That is the endless intertextual game that the long tradition of Chinese landscape painting played. The Chinese made the landscape—and in effect the landscape drawing, since Chinese painting is never very far from drawing—into the most prestigious stage for art. For many centuries the Chinese artist tirelessly pursued the combinatorics of tree, mountain, and river; and the thematics of retreat and reflection. The German landscape drawing was, by contrast, a brief experiment. Europeans of the sixteenth century chose instead to abandon the paper landscape and leave it unexplored. The German forest was not a destination in its own right but a passage toward the conditions of self-referential artmaking.
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内容提要 (Summary):

想象的图景
——自治、虚构、现代性

吴克利
（耶鲁大学）

在历史上相当长的时间内，绘画艺术一直在欧洲文化中扮演着次要的角色。只有财富、显要、教堂、城镇等基督教社群都偏爱以光泽石料、织锦、彩釉、水晶、宝石，或精心金属制品为原料的立体雕塑做装饰。相比之下，墙面或木制镶板
上的绘画则是不得已的选择。直到 15 世纪，在基督教的欧洲没有人能想象绘画将成为与诗歌匹敌的艺术形式。绘画艺术有其自身的精妙，能以无言的方式在艺术世界里发出自己的声音。

在 15、16 世纪，绘画艺术开始在欧洲文化生活中开拓自己的位置。它将自己塑造为一种得天独厚的介质，用以展现虚构故事，激发观者的想象力……而这种想象力已经在诗歌的传统中得到培养。最初，这些私人绘画的观众通常都是城市中的权贵阶层。首先以及紧随其后的帆布绘画逐渐摆脱原来次等艺术的地位，开始成为最昂贵、最受推崇并标榜着优雅生活的艺术品。无论是在私人生活空间还是在教堂的祈祷室，绘画都逐渐成为新宠。

在很长的时间内，大多数绘画作品的主题仍然以神的故事为主。但是很显然，许多观者的关注点已经从“什么”转向了“如何”。既然每一位画家都以相同的主题做画，那么主题的相似必然凸显出绘画风格的不同，让观者更易于在画家之间进行比较。尽管在内容上仍然坚持以宗教为题材，绘画却越来越成为一个独立自在的世界，发展出一套自身的传统、套数和规则，相对来说独立于教会影响下的宗教生活和仪式。

几乎每一幅欧洲绘画作品都是以讲述一个故事，或者再现故事中的人物，或者描绘一个真实人物的形式出现。一幅没有主题内容的画作是难以想象的。实际上，至少在文艺复兴之前，这对于欧洲人来说都无法设想。即使到了 15、16 世纪，无主题的绘画，如静物和风景画，都非常少见。

很多基督教故事，如耶稣基督和诸圣人的生平，都是在户外情境内展开的。从某种意义上来说，最早的风景画的发生就是通过在对这些故事的展现中特别强调山峦或树林等周围场景，例如在某些关于爱的圣人题材的意大利绘画作品中，圣徒们居住在荒野，条件非常简陋，在这样的情况下，画中的圣徒常常需要和周围的风景争夺观者的注意力。

威尼斯画家发展出一种只能被归为“田园画”的绘画风格，这些作品缺乏一个叙事的主题，而是展现了一些无名的人物在户外中随意或嬉戏或演奏所经历的神秘时刻。在这组画中，画出或画上画面的画中，真正的主题乃是指看见性本身——一种想象力构建世界的能力。田园景象于是与观者审视欣赏画作时所在的室内的宁静形成了对照。

然而真正标志着绘画艺术的独立自在与高度表现力的，同时也是这一时期最大胆的实验之一，是完全独立存在，没有人物点缀其中的纯风景画。纯风景画是一群德国艺术家的发明。和威尼斯画家相比，他们显得幼稚粗野，但可能正是因为这样，他们更乐于实验。少数 16 世纪早期的这类作品得以保存下来，其中大部分是以毛笔画、水彩、铅笔或钢笔画等比较脆弱的形式存在。此外还有一些印制的
风景画。

在其后的欧洲传统中，从 17 世纪到 20 世纪早期，风景画在艺术世界中占据了显赫的位置。但在上述时期，它还是一种例外和新事物。

文艺复兴时期的风景画意象常常被学者解释为一种民主主义或泛神主义自然哲学的表达，或者早期民族主义对本地地貌的一种探索发现。这些阐释如今仍然具有影响。但实际上，从“否定”的角度才能最好的理解风景画：它是对传统画面的一次“清空”，将主题内容从物质上清除而只留下叙事的背景和叙事的些许痕迹。故事的缺席使风景画脱离了欧洲基督教艺术创作的主流传统。风景画减损了主题内容而彰显了画作之间的区别，因此也将欧洲艺术引入了一种自足自为、自我指涉的更高程度的艺术创作游戏。

本文将以德国画家阿尔特多尔夫（Albrecht Altdorfer）、胡伯（Wolf Huber）、丢勒（Albrecht Dürer）等人为例分析风景画这种新的艺术形式，探索这一现代美学新范式的理论内涵，或许能提供有用的比较视角。本文着重分析风景画颠覆主题与背景主次关系的种种方式，如将原来画面焦点中的人物换成拟人的山或树。同时本文将探讨其他的风景画中田园主题的展现，以及种种关于回归原始、乡村或游牧生活的神话。

本文认为，在这一时期，风景画成为了艺术将自身理论化的有效途径。文字的艺术理论无法赶上艺术实验的步伐，风景画作为一种虚构方式，明白地与公众间离，与意象的宗教语境相脱离，它以私人的、灵活的方式伴随和补充着公共艺术。尤其是风景画的存在本身指向了艺术的本源问题：什么是艺术作品，它从何而来？

（刘 灵 王雪迎 译）