



中国当代名家画集

晁海



人民美術出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

晁海 / 晁海绘. — 北京: 人民美术出版社, 2004.11

(中国当代名家画集)

ISBN 7-102-01249-7

I. 晁... II. 晁... III. 水墨画: 人物画—作品集—中国—现代 IV. J222.7

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2004) 第 109003 号

中国当代名家画集

晁 海

编辑出版发行 人民美术出版社

(100735 北京北总布胡同 32 号)

责任编辑 尹 然 赵小来

设 计 赵小来

摄 影 郭亚荣

肖像摄影 赵 龙

翻 译 王宏印 陆娓娓

责任印制 丁宝秀

制版印刷 北京雅昌彩色印刷有限公司

经 销 新华书店总店北京发行所

2005 年 5 月 第 1 版 第 1 次印刷

开本: 787 毫米 × 1092 毫米 1/8 印张: 27

ISBN 7-102-01249-7

定价: 300.00 元

版权所有 翻印必究



变雄浑为淡泊

——论晁海的画

刘骁纯

80年代的新潮美术风风火火席卷全国，陕西显得相对沉寂；新文人画又火了一阵，陕西依然显得相对沉寂。这沉寂其实是一种沉潜的状态，像地火和暗流，他们在沉默地寻找着。1997年秋，当看了在中国美术馆举办的《陕西当代中国画展》之后，我感到一股新的力量正在聚集和涌动，晁海是比较引人注目的一位。

直到这年，晁海才公开了他的十来幅探索性水墨画。此时他已愈不惑之年。

他说他已经闷头摸索了15年，一大批画都堆在画室里，还没什么人看过。

他的好友说：竟不知道这么多年来他画了这些画。

超验精神的象征

“大农民”是晁海绘画的基本母题。

他的画尺幅较大，画中有时只有一个人、一排人、一头牛、一截树，甚至并排几张重复一个人、一个头，形象顶天立地、撑满左右，甚至冲出画框，人物粗壮、结实、高大。他笔下的农民、牛马、树木，都像大山一样巍峨、雄浑。看他的画，立刻让我想到了张立柱的话：“父老兄妹们被重负压弯的腰、蹲圈的腿、变形的大骨节、苦累散架、满脸泥汗，但不怨天不怨地”，这种“顽强不屈的挣命相”，让人看到了“人类最美好的自强不息的精神”。

他的艺术虽然筑基于农村生活的直接经验，但意不在经验本身，而在借经验寄托超经验的宏大精神。寓超验于经验，必然会使经验发生变化，使经验带上经验人鲜明的主观印记、主体印记，但它又不同于艺术家个人心绪的自我表现，艺术家为客观事物所赋予的主观精神是某种超个人的宏大魂魄。

这种魂魄的第一层含义是大农民精神。他画乡土，但旨归却不在乡土而在农民；他画农民，但旨归却不在农民而在寻找最一般、最普通的农民身上的巨人品格。画家以崇敬甚至仰视的态度看待农民顽强的生命力和巨大的忍耐力，农民是晁海笔下的西部英雄。

这种魂魄的第二层含义是大华夏精神。祖祖辈辈在黄河、黄土地上繁衍生息的西部农民，在晁海笔下是寻根问祖的借口，是华夏之根的象征，农民的坚韧和顽强是民族的坚韧和顽强的象征。晁海说：“中国就是个大农村。”

这种魂魄的第三层含义是大生命精神。世代在西部极端恶劣、极端艰辛的环境中生存的人、畜、木，它们古老、永恒，坚韧、顽强，伟大、苍浑。在晁海笔下，他们是生命体验和生命追问的借口，是生命伟力的象征，是晁海对生命的敬畏和感叹。

这种魂魄的第四层含义是大宇宙精神。石鲁把山当作人来画，当作大人来画；晁海则把农民当作山岳、土塬、天地、大字来画。在他的画中，造型和笔墨组成大字苍茫般的画面结构，行笔则构成了苍宇中运动的精气，这精气是实有的，但终归又是虚无的，正是这种终极意义上的虚无观，使笔墨和整个画面趋向于苍凉淡泊。

超自我的表现性

晁海的艺术有极为强烈的人世情结，但他的人世情结与90年代的新现实主义却形成了鲜明的对照。新现实主义认为唯现实是真实的，强调现实关注而把终极关注视为虚妄，因此导致了混际于红尘的基本倾向，他们以无差别的态度看待崇高与卑下、严肃与泼皮，甚至进而陷入了玩世、无聊、无奈、卑琐。

晁海关注理想。

在晁海看来，农民的伟大并不在于起义造反、移山填海，而在几千年来最沉默无语的日常生活之中，甚至就在他们的形象当中——在粗糙的皮肤、深深的皱纹、粗大的骨骼、变形的肩膀、笨拙的形体当中。因此晁海不强调在剧烈的动势和惊人的事件中展现农民的品性，而是在最常见的站、蹲、躺、擦汗、喘息等简单动作中，去抓取关系农民内质的形。

农民的形象透着艰辛，而且正是在艰辛中才展示出他们的纯朴、坚韧、顽强。但我们的现实主义长期以来却粉饰了这种艰辛。因此晁海首先面对的问题是正视农民生存状态的真实性和找回现实主义真正本质。所以，晁海的艺术是从现实主义切入的。与此相应，他的造型是从写实造型切入而不是从意象造型切入的。

更具体地说，晁海是在写实水墨人物画基础上发展的，但他第一个叛逆对象就是这种水墨画的近期传统，反驳粉饰而直接找回了写实水墨人物画开山师祖蒋兆和的那碗“苦茶”。

蒋兆和的艺术是暴露性、实录性的批判现实主义艺术，它强调客观性，晁海却强调超大灵魂的英雄主义，强调主观性，因此晁海在找回蒋兆和的同时又在离开蒋兆和，在艺术中融入了强烈的表现性和象征性。

这是一种与西方表现主义不大一样的表现性，它是蒋兆和的实录性的顺向强化。蒋兆和实录苦难，晁海则咀嚼艰辛。这种咀嚼造成了对苦命苦相的过深体验，进而造成了苦命苦相的极度强化，当这种强化超过某个临界值时，造型发生了在写实基础上的意象性转化，并带上了丑怪粗拙的特征。在这个意象化过程中，画家心中的苦涩、压抑、不安、悲郁之情也越来越强化，当这种郁结的心绪借扭动挣扎的苦笔苦墨宣泄出来时，便形成了晁海艺术中的表现倾向。也就是说，晁海的表现性不是纯粹的自我表现，而是农民的苦命苦相激发起来的悲郁心绪的表现。

这种强烈的表现性，又被更强烈的象征性制约着。所谓象征性，指的是他笔下的农民不是一般的农民，而是超大灵魂的载体，是超大灵魂的象征符号。

他的表现性更多地与悲剧倾向有关，与苦涩、悲怆、苍凉、压抑有关，他的象征性更多地与崇高倾向有关，与宏伟、雄浑、粗壮、强悍有关。简言之，他的表现与象征，关联着他的悲与壮。

就造型而言，他的英雄是苦涩的英雄，他的苦涩是英雄的苦；他的壮是悲的，他的悲是壮的。

就笔墨而言，它既是苦涩心绪的宣泄，又是超大灵魂的表达；既是痛感的表现，又是正气的抒发。痛感表现需要粗犷、狂野、破坏性，正气的抒发需要秩序、控制、庄重感。晁海任何一极都不肯放弃，由此，形成了笔墨的两极同体性——控制中的狂乱和粗野中的庄重。

失根与寻根

出世，是晁海艺术精神的另一面。

在前述的超大魂魄的四层含义中，第四层最为重要，其中又以虚无观和淡泊意境最为重要，雄浑由此化为淡泊，雄浑与淡泊由此在尖锐的两极对抗中形成两极同体——这是晁海的大农民绘画的最重要的创造性之所在。

从内在逻辑来看，虚无观和淡泊意境实在是晁海对乡土题材进行现代思考的结果。

作为行业的农民没有特别的意义，当农民成为人类之“根”的象征时，他才获得了特别的意义。只有在农民是作为几千年积淀下来的总体时，那种顽强的生命力和巨大的忍耐力才变得伟大而又神圣。

晁海自幼生长在农村，农民的品性在他的精神深处打着很深的烙印，进入都市不仅没有使他鄙视农村，对都市物质文明的失望反倒使农民的许多品性越发的伟大起来。越是面对现代人的精神荒漠，农民便越是成为他精神上的西部英雄。他希望在农民最古老、最朴素、最本真的精神中去寻找现代人不断失落的精神家园。这是一种民本的理想主义和英雄主义。

但民本理想与现实存在着十分尖锐的矛盾。

大农民是现代忧患意识的代码，是对不断膨胀的物质至上、环境污染、人性异化的怀疑，是对现代怪圈的出走，是寻找精神家园的象征，但这一切必然要被急速发展的现代物质力量所冲破，这就决定了晁海的西部英雄是一种幻觉。这使英雄主义倍显苍凉，使寻根意识倍显尴尬。

晁海深感他所崇尚的农民品性是真实的，不仅从幼年到成年他曾在身边许许多多的农民身上实实在在地感觉到，甚至那种坚韧和顽强就活在自己的血脉中。然而一旦欲弘扬它时，存在又转化成了虚无，近在咫尺又变得远在天边。真真切切又化为无着无际，这大概是虚无缥缈的笔墨所产生的潜在心理因素。

逃遁而又无法逃遁，无法逃遁偏又逃遁——这是晁海艺术精神上的双重结构。

双重结构是我去年在《王炎林的艺术精神》一文中提出的一个观点，主要指西部艺术家的田园梦幻与失园困境、寻根与失根的两难冲突，其背后是理想与现实的矛盾。

面对寻根与失根、理想与现实、真与幻、色与空的永恒矛盾，却不断追求精神的超越，这就是追求精神的超越，这就是晁海的价值。

变雄浑为淡泊

虚无观和淡泊意识，体现了晁海对大农民精神、大华夏精神、大生命精神的最后超越，以及对现实主义、表现主义、象征主义的最后超越。

雄浑与淡泊的两极同体，入世与出世的两极同体——晁海的这种艺术精神可以称为大遁世精神或现代庄禅精神。这是中国现代艺术极为重要的精神取向之一。对于大遁世精神我曾有过这样的论述：

遁世，如果仅仅理解为与世无争、随遇而安、不染俗事、忘却人间烦恼之类，便不是大遁世。这种小遁世，处在形而下层面，其势多靡而其气多哀，被中国明清之际正统文化所容纳的遁世精神多属此类。所谓大遁，即王国维所谓的“非真遁世”。王国维此语出自《静庵文集续编》，他认为春秋前中国思想界有北、南二派，“前者入世派，后者遁世派；前者热性派，后者冷性派；前者国家派，后者个人派也。前者大成于孔子、墨子，后者大成于老子。”他对遁世派的解释颇为深刻：“非真遁世派，知其主义之终不能行于世而遁焉者也”，“老子、庄、列是已”。这是强势的、处在形而上层面的、行遁实进的精神。

老庄是深切关注人类命运而后进入自然之境的超越，“无为”是“无为而无所不为”的简称，实质是“道法自然”。伪道学则是深溺于红尘而又自标看破红尘对人类命运完全麻木的消极避世。

所谓大遁，乃进取之极后的大彻大悟，染尽红尘后的看破红尘，有为过切后而知其不可为，入世太深后的凡心弃尽，泣血成灰后的万念皆空，由此导致精神涅槃后的轮回再世，超渡为与自然精神的永恒化一。

在艺术上，它表现为包容万有的空无，含盖群动的大静，滚着热血的淡泊，以及柔韧中的巨大精神张力……

晁海不主张激烈地宣泄不平，而是强调“单纯、中正、平和、温润、松软、圆和、含蓄、恍惚”，他认为太刚是“自残”，“冰中含火”更有力量。

冰中含火、淡泊中见雄浑——这不是弱而是更具威力的内强，不是软而是更具韧性的内刚。我不赞成水墨画无法寻求张力的意见，现代水墨画如果不能在总气势和大结构上显出应有的精神震撼力和视觉冲击力，便不会有什么出路。关键是要摸索出水墨不同于油画、中国艺术不同于西方艺术的张力。“冰中含火”，即是要点。

晁海在造型上强调大块形体的雕塑感和结构感，在画面布局上强调基本框架的大块构造，这里积攒借鉴了西方艺术处理张力结构的经验，形成了英雄主题所需要的整体气势。

与他的虚无观相应，晁海把这一切都处理为淡漠，他由此给自己设置了一个最大的难题——如何处理淡墨。

笔墨即结构

现代水墨画是不是必须抛弃笔墨？这是当前很尖锐的争论。我是不赞成抛弃笔墨的，除非走到水墨画边缘或走出水墨画的领域。

如果离开笔墨的创造性和达到的品位，晁海其他方面追求的一切伟大和神秘都不在艺术批评的关注之列。笔墨是晁海15年闷头摸索取得的最重要突破，是晁海成败的关键，是使其他方面的探索生效的闸门。

晁海背离了文人画的笔墨规范，初步摸索出了个人的笔墨规范。这使“笔墨”作为一种品鉴用语时不再遵循文人画的笔墨的标准。现代写意的“笔墨”主要指在随机的绞转提按、皴擦点染、积叠蹭抹过程中艺术家精神投入的深度和文化积淀的厚度，以及对笔墨运动的控制能力。控制什么？控制运笔过程在画面留下的一切轨迹相互关系的结构。简单说，笔墨即结构。

他的笔墨的基本难点在于：本性柔润的淡墨如何能力透纸背，如何能使这种内力、内韧、内刚发挥到最大限度。

他的画是淡墨没骨人物画。但不是渲淡，而是一笔一笔地写出来，笔墨像云团、棉团一样，在反复地堆积叠加中形成笔墨清晰的走势。

他的笔墨，虽润但并不潇洒流畅，虽柔但并不轻松幽雅。淡墨大大缩小了色阶，在极有限的色阶中，笔墨又要与英雄主义所需要的厚重和雄浑相衔接，这迫使晁海强化了笔墨走势的绞转、提按、层层叠叠的厚积、烧土焦柴般的淡皱，创造了柔润中的枯拙苦涩，恍惚中的苍劲有力，淡墨中的丰富色阶。

这种在温润中含有艰辛与苦涩、平静下藏着不平 and 抗争的走笔，让我想到了郭全忠记录黄河观涛的日记：

“泥浆一样的黄河浪下，像有条巨龙在拼搏，（在）蠕动，在抗争，极力摆脱欲飞，忽高忽低，但（似有）一个强大的力量使它难以露形。虽怒吼、呻吟，虽浪涛汹涌，但终未（抛出）一点浪花，只留下那深沉、内在巨大、痛苦的运动，乃至最后无能为力。”

1998年3月1日于北京

CHAO HAI'S INK PAINTING: FROM MAGNIFICENCE TO SIMPLICITY

by Liu Xiaochun

1980s saw some new trends in china's fine arts. But shaanxi was silent. Later new literary painting came forth, but shaanxi was silent still. In this still silence, however, something had been surging and searching until the Fall of 1997 when I myself found something surging and searching within me while I was visiting the Modern Shaanxi Chinese Painting Exhibition. It was at that time that I found out Chao Hai.

Chao Hai, strange to say, had some ten of his wash paintings brought to the public only after his 15 years of surging and searching in his studio. And now, Chao Hai is over forty: he said that a large number of his works remain unseen in his studio.

So many years passed with so many works done, said his friends with some astonishment.

1. Symbol of Transcendence

Great peasantry is Chao Hai's theme of creation.

His paintings are great, great in size and in figure. A man, or an ox, or a tree trunk, or a human head or body, strong and powerful always, and sometimes several human figures or just heads in row-they are arranged so as to be great enough to break through the frame, and they are like great mountains, tall, solid and strong, no matter what they are; they are often peasants with cattle, they are reminders of my impression of the Chinese peasants, who are beasts of burden; they suffer much, but struggle more. They bent down to the ground, with faces up, sweating.

Chao Hai's artistic creation is based on his life experiences in the countryside, but his intention goes far beyond them to transfer his life experiences and to transcend himself, to be subjective in a way. To be subjective, but remain objective somehow, or to combine them in such a way as to find out something absolute, some spirit that is really great.

Here the first thing great is the Great Peasantry. It is true that he draws on country life, but his focus is on the peasants, not on any one particular peasant but peasant in general-their characteristics shaped into one Great Peasantry. And in this great figure of peasantry, one is likely to find many peasants outstanding with their great energy and endurance. Peasants are heroes in the West of China, and in the artist's mind.

The second thing great is his Great China, West peasants have been living along the Yellow River on the loess plateau generation after generation; from them Chao Hai traces to the very origin of the Chinese ancestry and the Chinese civilization. Peasantry, solid and strong, is the embodiment of the Chinese Nation and the root of it. He said, "China is nothing but a great country."

What makes the third thing great is the Great Life. Life is a continuum in its living environment; Man, cattle, and tree braved the extremely hard and difficult living condition in the Great West and survived, and this survival is an evidence for their vitality seen in the symbolic figure, great and stout, ever-growing and ever-lasting. Through it you experience life itself and search for the meaning of your own living, and often, you sigh for the greatness of life.

The forth and the last one which is really great is the Great Cosmos. In Shi Lu's paintings, mountains are humans and great humans. Yet in Chao Hai's paintings, peasants are mountains, not only mountains, but also heaven and earth and cosmos. In Chao Hai's plastic art, the shapes of great things form the greatness of the universe, and his brush moves to draw out the spirit which is infinitive, which is nothing but is there and everywhere. It is this ultimate nothingness which fills up the universe and his picture to make the former diverse and the latter simple.

2. Expression of Self-transcendence

Chao Hai's artistic creation is full of secular mood, which is not the same as that of the neo-realistic trend in 1990s. For neorealism regarded what is there as the real and reality is thus seen more real than the ideal, therefore, because a realist is "mixed" with the earthly world, he sees no difference between the noble and the mean, and the serious and the jest; he goes to the extremes of relativism and cynicism.

But Chao Hai has more concern for ideal.

In his mind, the greatness of peasantry does not lie in their rebellion or production, but in their everyday life, which has remained silent though the ages, and even in the image itself-rugh skin and large bone and broad shoulder and stout body. That is why his peasants are not expressed in their astonishing movement of thrilling event, but in their standing or lying or squatting position or though such simple actions as breathing or sweating, to show the very nature of the Chinese peasantry.

Peasant means hard life, and in this hard life he is made simple and strong, this is the real living condition of the Chinese peasants and this is their reality, from which Chao Hai started his plastic artistic creation, which, I believe, is real realism if realism means not to polish reality. Anyway, he never starts with an image.

To be exact, Chao Hai's realism is based on his figure wash painting, but he is first of all a rebel against the tradition or recent ink and wash painting by tracing all the way back to Jiang Zhaohe, the forerunner of Chinese figure wash painting. But Chao Hai surpassed Jiang's tradition of mere exposure and detailed recording. To be subjective rather than objective, he strove into the realm of expressionism and symbolism to show his great spirit and heroism.

His expressionism, unlike that in the west art, goes in the same direction as that of Jiang's; Jiang was recording suffering, but Chao Hai is chewing hardship. While he is doing this, he is overloaded with the experience of peasants' hardship to the extent of displacement and distortion in the image building, the hardship stored up in the artist himself to be lead off through the very twists and turns to his brush. That is to say, Chao Hai's expressionism is not the expression of his own personal sorrow only, but also, and more important, is the expression of the pain of the peasantry as a whole.

Chao Hai's expressionism is closely related with his symbolism, in which peasantry in the picture is no longer any one particular person, but a bearer of the symbol – an embodiment of the great spirit. In a sense, Chao Hai's expressionism is related to tragedy and symbolism to sublime, and so, in the combination of both, there is tragic sublime. So far as image is concerned, his hero is hard and bitter, and his hardship and bitterness is heroic. In this heroism, suggested by his unique ink tone, one often finds pain and justice; in pain, there is wild and destruction, and in justice, there is control and order – controlled wildness and destructive order, the two poles seemingly so far away are drawn together in such a harmony. This is Chao Hai's ink style.

3. Uprooted and Root Again

To renounce the world and to rise above the world constitute another Chao Hai.

Of the Great Cosmos, as mentioned above, the notion of nothingness and simplicity is the most important, that is to say, simplicity stems from magnificence but magnificence is still there – the two poles in sharp contrast are at the same time living peacefully in one continuum which embraces both. This is what Chao Hai has contributed most to the creation of Great Peasantry. In a deeper analysis, nothingness and simplicity in Chao Hai's painting reflect his deep concern for the great country from a modern artist's angle.

Peasantry becomes meaningful only when he is the symbol of root for humanity and embodiment of civilization through history. Only then at least to Chao Hai, can the great energy and endurance found in him become really great and sacred.

As a country boy, Chao Hai is deeply rooted in the local soil and greatly impressed by the peasant culture. City life does not deprive him of this early influence. Quite the contrary, as he despairs of the urban materialism, the characteristics found in peasants become really great, and as he finds modern life nothing but a desert, his peasants become heroes rising from the horizon of the Great West, where he is likely to find his home which could be otherwise lost for ever. This is idealism and heroism in him, and in his humanism.

But there is contradiction between his ideal of this kind and the reality that he faces.

Great Peasantry shows a deep concern for "modern" reality, which is characterized by materialism, pollution and alienation from human nature, and an escape from the strange circularity for a better home. Modernization, together with its materialism and material force, would wash away all the illusions even if they are very great in the artist's mind. But Chao Hai's heroes are this kind of heroic illusions, or his artistic illusions are heroic. Then, his heroism can not be anything but sad and sorrow, and in his process of seeking such a hero, we often find embarrassment.

But for Chao Hai, the peasantry is real, not only in the sense that peasants are still alive in his memory and experience, but because the artist himself is such a peasant all over. However, whenever he wants to draw on this figure to display something, it is gone into nothingness – seemingly near but far away, apparently real but mere illusive. This is the mechanism in which his innermost self is revealed through his dreamy ink and wash.

In his subconscious mind, perhaps, he means to escape but finds no escape, no escape but still escape; herein we find dualism in Chao Hai's artistic creation, by dualism I mean that the artist has a deep contradiction and sharp contrast between the pastoral image and lost paradise, and between what is uprooted and what is to root again, and something underlying these is the dualism of ideal vs reality.

As Chao Hai is always surging in himself and searching on his way.

4. From Magnificence to Simplicity

Nothingness-in-simplicity is Chao Hai's final Transcendence over his Great peasantry, Great China, and Great Life on the hand, and over his realism, expressionism and symbolism on the other.

This is a dualism-in-one, including magnificence and simplicity, and living this world and escaping this world; and it can be best called great escape or modern Zen, which is most often seen in modern arts, especially in modern Chinese fine arts, as an important value orientation.

There are two kinds of escape. One is to keep aloof from the worldly affairs or simply show no concern for this man's world, free of cares,

as we often say; and this is not real escape, but a kind of escapology seen at least once in the Ming and Qing period, practiced by some scholars ready to compromise with the orthodox culture. Wang Guowei called it "passive escape" for it lacks the metaphysical level of freedom. The other escape is active and to be found in PreQin period Chinese thought of various schools. It is active in the sense that the escapees delay their escape into the realm of freedom until they realize that their ideal is no longer applicable in this physical world, and even after that they remain cool individualists such as Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi in the South as against Confucius and Mo Zi in the North.

The real escape must be thorough and progressive.

Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi show great concern for the humanity to transcend into the realm of nature, but passive escapees, living in this world, claim that they see through this world because they see nothing could be done about it.

In art, Great Escapism means nothingness but including all, stillness but nurturing all, and simplicity but surging all-tenderness in great tension is the style.

To radically unbossom oneself is not Chao Hai's way, which to him means self-destruction. In his terms, we find simple and soft, mild and moderate, and implicit and implicative - and the best way is the mingle of all these qualities. He said that "burning ice" is the most powerful.

So is also my view on artistic creation, especially on ink and wash. Modern ink and wash ought to have magnificence and simplicity in terms of grand structure and great momentum, for striking visual image and shocking psychological effect. This is, perhaps, the only way out. But the key point is to find, through search and research, the right expression of ink and wash which is unlike oil painting in the West and which is typical Chinese. And I believe, "burning ice" is the point herein.

His great plate structure, however, helps to build up a great sculpture of his heroes, and here in composition, he obviously draws on the artistic tension from the West oil painting to make his heroism more powerful.

Yet his ink is washed light, to express that dreamy nothingness. How could he do it?

5. Brush and Ink

Should modern wash painting discard brush and ink? I think not, unless the artist goes so far to the margin or even out of the picture.

Without the innovation of brush and ink or without the high quality of his painting skill, other qualities such as greatness and mystery of Chao Hai's painting, in my eyes, would all be out of the question. He has worked for 15 years for the innovation in his brush and ink to breakthrough traditional painting skills, and he did it with great achievements and remarkable effects.

The traditional way of literary painting is no longer a norm for Chao Hai, for he has found for himself a new way and a new style of painting and thus established a new standard by which a critic would possibly judge and criticize. For him, modern brush and ink is meaningful and tasteful just as much as the artist puts into it all his personality and his cultural resources. Modern art is not only the use of skills, even of best skills; it also means proper control over the use of brush and ink, that is to say, over the whole pattern of the traces left by the proper operation of brush and ink to make them meaningful and tasteful. Pattern grows out of brush and ink.

Chao Hai's brush and ink invites people to consider: How can the brush and ink, which is so soft and wet, become so powerful and effective as to reach its maximum?

We know that his painting is boneless, or without outline, but with light ink, which is light, but not light in the usual sense; his ink is light as clouds or cotton, overlapping sometimes but repeated always with variations until you see the clear arrangements pointing towards somewhere.

His ink style is wet rather than fluent, soft rather than elegant. He uses light ink, which allows for little colour shades, to create a heavy effect on the paper, for his taste of heroism is thick and grand. This drives him to use his brush through twists and turns, heaps and leaps, to bring about an effect, heavy but soft, burning but wet, dim but powerful-like dry twigs, deep wrinkles, and

His stylistic brush stroke, or strokeless brush, or washed ink, or wash painting is like dry tears, quiet but rebellious, like this man with this brush, observing his brush and ink and wash painting. I could not help thinking of a diary written by Guo Quanzhong recording his observation of the tide on the Yellow River:

"The Great River rolls along with all its yellow waves like a huge dragon, twisting and struggling, flying and diving all the way, so grace and powerful. The river dragon is roaring his way or moaning along, but no foam. It's a great movement of something deep and profound pain, faint, and vain."

A painful painting....

March, 1st, 1998, Beijing

我们活着的本质和佛性

——观晁海大水墨

王鲁湘

一

1996年，晁海画了一幅很大的画，一个男人仰面朝天，直挺挺地卧息着。透视效果很强烈，但还不是完全遵循科学的透视学原理，因为男人的躯干和头颅并没有按照透视的要求画得很小，显然这是受到古代摩崖佛像造型智慧的启发。看到这幅作品，我直觉的印象浮现，就是乾陵——西安郊区那座埋葬唐高宗李治和武则天的巨大陵墓。那是一个妇人仰卧在秦川大地之上的宏伟形象。

晁海为他的作品取名《涅槃》。

涅槃的不是佛，而是一个农民。在晁海心中，农民是佛，是至尊。农民生于土地，耕于土地，食于土地，最后息于土地。因此，对于土地而言，农民是永恒的，永生的，永在的。

晁海给中央美院的学生讲过这样一个故事：

他家乡一个男人死了。他应苦主之请，给这个男人画张遗像。死者未入殓，晁海只能跨在棺材上俯身画他。这本是一张他打小就十分熟悉的脸，永远是威严、沉毅的神情，令村里的孩子敬畏，而今却静静地睡在冰冷的棺材里。晁海发现岁月竟是这样无情，把一张男子畏怖的脸雕刻成了苦难的象征。他逼视这张已无生气的脸，仔细地阅读每一道皱纹，就像读一本厚厚的史书，读故乡沟壑纵横的土地，读一个涅槃了的农民的全部神性和佛性。他感动得热泪盈眶，因为他从这张脸上读到了他自己、他的父兄、他的祖先甚至人类的命运。

我因此而明白了他为什么要画这样一幅《涅槃》，为什么要让那个静静安息着的农民的形象看上去就像一尊佛，为什么要让他死去的躯体发出万道光芒……

晁海喜欢用八尺整纸来画一个农民的头颅。这个尺寸大概同彬县石窟那尊据说以李世民为模特的大佛的头颅相近。你可以把他们看成大佛头，也可以把他们看成无字碑，还可以把他们看成半壁土崖，甚至看作一块土疙瘩——这都是晁海希望达到的阅读效果。他总是把画幅弄得很大，无非是想要每一个观者都跟他那样，对中国农民的佛性有所感悟，有所震栗，有所悲悯。

佛说：“我不下地狱，谁下地狱？”他背起了整个世界的苦难。

中国农民背起了全部中国历史的苦难。农民最苦，故农民是佛。

有哪个画家像晁海这样浓墨展现农民的佛性？

这是理解晁海作品的关键。晁海的作品有一种大悲悯的情怀，大苦难的意象，还有一种我们在中国世俗画家那里很少感到，却可以从唐代以前尤其是北朝佛教雕刻和壁画上感觉到，也可以从西方有宗教精神的画作中感受到的大感激的心情。大苦难、大悲悯、大感激，晁海的画让我们洞见劳苦者的佛性，心灵得到净化。

二

晁海作品有许多是无标题的，只是标上“作品·某年系列之几”。但这并不表示他的作品无立意。

从他的创作年表看，90年代以前，他的作品基本是有标题的，许多获奖作品也是有标题的。大约从1988年开始，他把一些不那么容易明白点出画意，却又有明确情景的作品归入《梦回故里》系列，这一系列的作品延续至今。进入90年代，他大量创作

的是以公元纪年为题的作品系列。

画题上的这种演变，揭示了晁海从师承的现实主义向表现主义逐渐过渡的轨迹。

晁海受业于西安美术学院国画系，接受的是较为系统严格的写实训练。他所在的西安，又是乡土写实主义绘画的重镇。且都以刻画农民著称。晁海成长于这样的环境，从写实主义入手是理所当然的。

但不可忽略西安画坛的精神领袖石鲁。早在1973年，18岁的晁海在家乡务农期间自学绘画，曾于西安“批黑画”展上，首次见到石鲁原作，为之震动，自叙影响甚深。石鲁是在一个封闭保守见称的黄土地上。但衡之于中国其他区域的先锋思潮，有人或许仍要讥笑这种以农民为对象的乡土表现主义是封闭保守的当下形态呢！但是，对于陕西画家来说，从写实主义到表现主义，却意味着体验方式和体验层次的巨大跨越。

如果说写实主义是以生活自相的感性呈现为描写对象，那么表现主义则以生命体验的感悟作为表现的内容。这就决定了表现主义必然更多的偏重于主体的生命意识，而体验层次也必然从生活进入生命，艺术家个体对生命的敏感，对存在的独照，将会突破生活的感性呈现。这一切，当然必须以艺术家生命意识的苏醒为前提。

西北乡土表现主义之所以在20世纪90年代崛起，正是西北画家生命意识苏醒的结果。这一姗姗来迟的苏醒与80年代以来中国人文主义思潮的启蒙不无关联，却又还没来得及受到最时髦的具有消解性的学说的影响。我认为他们处在一个相当合适的人文背景之下，一方面，先有以石鲁为先驱的强烈表现主义倾向的水墨画家，后有李世南承其精神。李世南南下后，晁海又脱颖而出。三人在西安维系了中国当代水墨表现主义的发展。但三人个性资质又有所不同，石鲁颠狂怪戾，巴蜀才情溢于笔墨；李世南落拓不羁，山阴文气沛然纸上；晁海却是地道的关中人，狂怪不失敦厚，落拓却显苍茫。“民，吾同胞；物，吾与也。”关学大儒张载《西铭》中的名句，似可作为晁海绘画的注脚。

从写实主义到表现主义，似乎并非晁海一个人的变化。在1997年10月于北京中国美术馆举办的“陕西当代中国画展·中青年风格探索展”上，15位中青年画家中的几位人物画家，晁海、郭全忠、王炎林、张立柱、邢庆仁，几乎各以自己的探索风格表示了从写实主义向表现主义的转变，以至于引起北京评论界的强烈关注，谓之为西北乡土表现主义的一次集体亮相。

这是一个耐人寻味的现象，尤其是这一现象以群落形态发生于中华文明的腹地，且素以避免80年代启蒙思潮那种“哀其不幸，怒其不争”的超人意识，也避免了以新视旧的猎奇心理，更重要的是，避免了绝望狂躁下油然而生的戾气。在西北乡土表现主义几位画家的作品中，我们普遍看到了宅心仁厚的同情，宽容通达的理解。画家们的生命体验并没有一味指向人性的负面和生命的非理性，也没有一意孤行地宣泄纯属个人阴暗心理的垃圾感受。但是，他们对黄土地上生灵的生命意识，显然要比前辈画家自觉多了，因而他们的作品已不满足于描绘一个具有文学性的情景，他们的人物刻画也不再满足于人类学意义上的那些区域特征，他们要站在更宏大的思想文化背景下来透视黄土地上人的存在与生命意识的根由。

晁海具有这个画家群落的全部共性，但他对于人的存在的体认，似乎比其他画家更单纯，更了当，因而他的生命意识更为苍凉悲苦。他对苦难的敏感和对苦难的庄严表现，使他的画具有了撼人心魄的感染力。

人生有诸般苦难。生老病死，佛谓之四谛。而生为农民的苦难，恐怕是永无休止的劳累。晁海绘画的主题，似乎就集中在一个累字上。我真的还没有看到哪个画家倾注如此巨大的心血来表现生命中累的沉重。他作品中的人物，或者颓坐于地，双腿伸直，双手平摊向前；或者双腿叉立，双手自然下垂，仰面朝天；或者撩衣擦拭流入眼中的汗水；或者张开大嘴沉重喘息……都是累乏之极才有的种种姿态。他笔下的男女麦客，是这个尘世上劳累之命的象征。那几个站在一起就依偎着睡死了的女麦客，令人过目难忘；而画于1990年的《水墨作品之四》中那张女人的脸，只有累得灵魂出了窍的人才会有这样的表情。相比之下，躺着就是对累的一种解脱，而永久地躺着，就是永久的解脱。所以，晁海对躺着这一姿势给予了最隆重也最富诗意的描绘。他画过两幅大致相同的作品，一幅是《作品·一九九一·一》，一幅是《作品·一九九二·四》。前幅画了两个并肩躺着的人，旁边是或卧或立的几头牛；后幅同样画了两个并肩躺着的人，旁边是一群白色的小鬼魂。前幅的情境，两人是睡着了，与牛共眠；后幅的情境，两人是安息了，小鬼魂提着长命灯来带路。睡着也好，安息也好，都是对劳累的解脱。还有一幅叫《搁置》的作品，画了四个躺着的老人，从脸上的表情看，是十分满足和惬意这样一个“搁置”的姿势的。因此，死并不可怕，只要真能安息，怕的是在劳累的宿命轮回。作于1996年的《轮回》，那两个疲惫至极的影子，让人感觉到了这样的恐惧。《作品·一九九〇·一》中那个在打盹的庄稼汉，梦见自己和骡子都卸去了劳务的沉重羁累，腾云而去。望着他酣睡的背影，怎能不让人顿生悲悯之心呢？

晁海画的都是劳动者，包括动物，也都是牛、驴、马之类的苦畜。他在这些苦畜和人的命运间寻思。什么是《大地之魂》？什么立于《天地之间》？晁海的思索浩茫而沉重，一种大悲悯的情怀笼罩着他的全部作品。晁海超越了他的前辈所取的那种简单歌颂劳动和劳动者的态度；也不是像批判现实主义作家那样，拭去揭示劳动者命运的社会学内容。不，他没有这些形而下的目的，他

的思索是形而上的，他认为这就是我们这个世界的本质，劳苦是我们这个世界必须接受的宿命。凡是默默承担起这一宿命的生灵，无论是人，是马，是牛，是驴，晁海对之都充满神圣的敬畏。

晁海的生命体验中，对劳累一定有过刻骨铭心的记忆。为了表达这样的体验，他必然从写实主义转向表现主义，非如此，不能表达生命意识中这份沉重。

他的笔墨语言，也因此不得不跟着凝滞沉重。

三

晁海观物取象的方式是游离于写实与表现之间的。一方面，他画面上的人物绝对来自真实的生活，许多场景和情境就是生活中的一个片断；另一方面，这些来自真实生活的人物又无不按照他的形而上思索变形而夸张，产生一种“陌生化”的视觉冲击。

晁海的写实功底，在他对人物的变形夸张中显现无遗。他的人物不管如何变形夸张，都没有解剖学上的错误——我想这是他的作品尽管“陌生”却仍然近情近理，让观众能够接受的一个原因。晁海笔下的人物，姿态、神情是写实的，甚至每一块肌肉和每一根筋脉也是写实的，但晁海同时又能做到让他们都充满表现力。那些特有的人物姿态和神情，有深厚的生活基础，却又打上了浓重的晁海印记，是在晁海生命意识的朗照下才能获得艺术表现力的。至于那些符合解剖学的肌肉筋脉，分明让人感觉到了累乏至极时不受神经控制的颤抖和无力。

我注意到晁海绘画中良好的雕塑感。我想，除了学院的正规教育，古老的三秦大地上那些伟大的文化遗存，对于晁海的艺术感觉，一定有更为深刻、持久的潜移默化。秦始皇陵兵马俑，汉、唐陵墓石刻，唐代摩崖造像，那种浑厚天成、大巧不琢的沉雄气韵和元气苞孕的整体感，也是晁海通过水墨造型所要表达的。他在某种意义上可以说是用水墨塑型，塑造出一尊尊劳动者的“佛像”，立于天地之间。他们让我们想起古代的罗汉塑像。如果我们忽略那些眉眼手脚，画面上就是一块块浑朴未凿的顽石和一墩墩土堆子。

因此，我不太同意人们用棉花这种感觉来比况他的笔墨，尽管由此可以引申出“以柔克刚”、“柔弱胜刚强”之类的哲理。在我看来，棉花远不如泥土这种感觉更贴切。晁海的墨里掺杂了大量的赭石，当这种含石粉颗粒的墨沉积在宣纸上时，会洇出一层一层肌理，犹如泥土。我曾经说过，晁海是将古人的“墨戏”进行了转化，其中一个重要的物理因素，是古人“墨戏”之墨，极为细腻，在宣纸上随着水量的多寡如烟云荡漾，极为流动飘逸，所以非常适合表现道禅三昧；而晁海的墨相当粗涩，就像黄土高原沉积万年的黄土。

驾驭这类粗涩的墨，必须极善用水。晁海肯定在这上头下过无数功夫，经历过许多次失败。他现在达到的境界虽不能说已臻自由自在，但在缥缈、如梦如幻和沉实如泥如石两个极致之间，他都能随心所欲积、渍、破、染，画出自己想要的各种干湿浓淡的水墨效果，已实属不易。毫无疑问，他在中国水墨人物画上，探索性地拓展了大水墨的表现力。

我们说晁海的素描感和雕塑感都非常好，甚至说他是用水墨在塑型，但这并不意味着他真的是把素描或雕塑通过水墨“翻译”到宣纸上。不是的，晁海还是在画中国画，是大写意的中国画，所以他必然要注重“骨法用笔”，必然要用笔法来统率墨法和水法，必然要用笔法的提按顿挫来表现虚实。一句话，他是以“骨法用笔”来一笔一笔结结实实写出他的人物形象的。由于他主要是以积墨法来创作，每一遍笔痕都清晰地保留着，使我们能够更加清楚地看出他行笔的疾徐轻重，体味他笔法的感情内涵。在晁海画展研讨会上，有人说晁海走出了“笔墨中心论”，有人说他取消了线，是“大没骨”。我觉得这些说法都有可能产生对晁海绘画语言的误读。说实在的，晁海对笔墨实在是太讲究了，晁海每一笔都是“骨”——在“风骨”这一古代美学概念中，“骨”有“理”的意味，在绘画中可引申为结构上的正确。“骨法用笔”在晁海画中意义是双重的，既有人物结构，解剖上的正确性，又有笔法意义上的书写性。正因为如此，晁海下笔至为慎重，熟悉他的人说，晁海有时几个小时方下一笔。

最后，我想指出晁海笔墨同赵望云、石鲁、方济众等长安画派山水画家之间的关系。在笔墨师承上，他可能更多出于对这些山水画家的私淑。成功地将长安画派的山水笔墨转化到人物画中并有所发展，这是晁海作品文化气息不离本土，具有浓郁的关中味、黄土味的重要原因，在语言上，他让我们找到了一种地域的共同性。

人活天地间，人最苦，所以人才有佛，有耶稣。晁海视苦人为佛，带着大感激、大悲悯、大敬畏画出了人世间的这些现世佛。看完晁海的画，至少我会更加默然地迎受命运——因为劳累是我们活着的本质。

1999年2月于北京

Our Living Nature and Buddhistic Personality: About Chao Hai's Large Ink Paintings

by Wang Luxiang

1

In 1996, Chao Hai painted a very large painting, a man stiffly lying on his back. The perspective effect is very strong, however, it still does not strictly comply with scientific principles of perspective, as the man's body and head are not reduced to be smaller according to the requirement of perspective; apparently this is inspired by the intelligence of Buddha mold in ancient precipices. When appreciating this painting, I had my intuitive impression of Qian Ling, the huge mausoleum in the suburbs of Xi'an with Li Zhi and Wu Zetian, an emperor and an empress of the Tang Dynasty, buried inside. That is a magnificent image of a woman lying on her back on the land of Qinchuan.

Chao Hai named his painting Nirvana.

Nirvana is not about the Buddha, but a peasant. In Chao Hai's heart, the peasant is a Buddha, the most respectable. A peasant is born in the land, tills the land, eats on the land, and finally rests in the land. Therefore, for the land, the peasant is eternal, perpetual, and everlasting.

Chao Hai has told a story to the student in Central Academy of Fine Arts.

A man in his home town died. He was invited by his family to paint a portrait of the deceased. The deceased had been encoffined, so Chao Hai could only straddle the coffin and bend to portray him. This used to be a very familiar face since his childhood, always wearing the solemn and calm expression, inspiring awes of the children in the village, but now he silently lied in the cold coffin. Chao Hai found out that time was so ruthless, turning an awe-inspiring face into the symbol of misery. He watched intently this lifeless face, carefully reading every wrinkle, like reading a thick book of history, reading the land lined with ravines in his home town, and reading all the divinity and Buddhistic personality of a deceased peasant. He was moved to tears, as he read the fates of himself, his father and brothers, his ancestors, even all the human beings in this face.

Thus, I understand why he paints Nirvana, why he makes the silently resting peasant's image look like a Buddha, why he lets the deceased body radiating rays of light ...

Chao Hai likes to paint the head of a peasant on a piece of paper at the length of 8.75 feet. This size is probably close to the size of the large Buddha's head with Li Shimin as the model in the rock cave in Bin County. You may regard them as large Buddha's head, or the stile without any words, or a half earth cliff, even an earth lump, which are all the reading effects expected by Chao Hai. He always creates large paintings, simply wishing every audience would, like himself, perceive some of the Buddhistic personality in Chinese peasants, be somewhat shaken and sympathize.

Buddha says, "If I don't go to the Hell, who would go to the Hell?" He carries on all the misery in the world.

Chinese peasants carry on the misery of the entire Chinese history. Peasants suffer the most, therefore, they are the Buddhas.

Which artist has ever presented the Buddhistic personality of peasant in such bold brushstrokes?

This is the crucial point to understand Chao Hai's works. His works have the feelings of great compassion, the imagery of great disaster, and the mood of great gratitude which could be scarcely perceived in secular Chinese painters, but could be perceived from Buddhistic sculptures and frescos before the Tang Dynasty especially before the Northern Dynasties, and also could be perceived from the paintings of religious spirits in western countries. With great disaster, great compassion, great gratitude, Chao Hai's paintings enable us to see the Buddhistic personality of laboring people to purify our hearts.

2

Many of Chao Hai's works are nameless, just labeled "Work - No. X of the Series in the Year of X". However, this does not necessarily mean that his works do not have any theme.

Viewing his chronological table of creation, we may find that, before 1990s, most of his works did have titles, and many awarded works also had titles. Approximately from 1988, he allocated some works, which had ambiguous significance but with definite scenes, into the series of Returning Home in

Dream lasting up till now. Entering 1990s, most of his works have been titled according to the year of creation.

The evolution of painting's title reveals Chao Hai's track of gradual transformation from Realism to Expressionism through following different teachers.

Chao Hai was educated in the traditional Chinese painting department of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, receiving the relatively systematic and strict training in Realism. Xi'an, where he lives, is also the place of strategic importance in local realistic paintings. Some masters among national realistic ink figure painters, such as Liu Wenxi, Wang Youzheng, Guo Quanzhong, etc, all live in Xi'an, and also are famous for depicting peasants. As Chao Hai grew up in such an environment, it is both natural and right for him to start from Realism.

However, we could not neglect Shi Lu, the spiritual leader in the painting circle in Xi'an. As early as 1973 when Chao Hai was 18 years old, he taught himself painting while getting engaged in agriculture at home, then he saw Shi Lu's original work in the Exhibition of Criticizing and Denouncing Black Paintings in Xi'an, and he was shocked, and self-narrated that this was quite influential to him. Shi Lu was on the loess plateau famous for its seclusion and conservation.

However, compared with other avant-garde ideologies in other areas in China, someone may tease this sort of local Expressionism with peasant as the subject to be the present form of seclusion and conservation. Whereas, for the painters in Shaanxi Province, turning from Realism to Expressionism means the enormous transformation in experiencing methods and experiencing levels.

If Realism depicts the sensibility about life itself, then Expressionism presents the perception of living experiences. This decides that Expressionism would inevitably put more emphasis on the subject, and experiencing level would also enter into life from living. Individual artist's sensitivity for life and unique perception of existence would break through the sensible presentation of live. Certainly, all these depend on the awakening of artist's awareness of life.

The fact that local Realism in Northwest China arose in 1990s is just the result of northwestern painters' awakening of life awareness. This tardy arrival of awakening is somewhat related with the initiation of ideological trend of Chinese Humanism, but not timely enough to be influenced by the most modern and dissolving theories. I believe that they stood in a quite appropriate humanistic background, and there were ink painters with strong trend in Expressionism with Shi Lu as the forefather, then Li Shinan carried on the spirit. After Li Shinan went to the South, Chao Hai became eminent. The three of them have maintained the development of contemporary Chinese ink art's Expressionism. However the individualities and talents are all different from each other, Shi Lu is weird and wanton, with overwhelming talents showing unintentionally in his brushstrokes; Li Shinan is unconventional and carefree with academic nature full of the paper; and Chao Hai is native and original in the central Shaanxi plain, eccentric but still honest and sincere, unconventional but ambiguous. "All people are my fellowmen; all things on earth are my companions." The famous sentence in Ximing written by Zhang Zai, a famous scholar in Guan Philosophy, seems to make a perfect remark for Chao Hai's paintings.

The alteration from Realism to Expressionism does not seem to be a change happening only to Chao Hai. In October of 1999, in Shanxi Contemporary Chinese Painting Exhibition - Exploration Exhibition of Middle-aged and Young Artists' Styles held in China National Museum of Fine Arts in Beijing, some figure painters among those 15 middle-aged and young artist, including Chao Hai, Guo Quanzhong, Wang Yanlin, Zhang Lizhu, Xing Qingren, almost all achieved the transformation from Realism to Expressionism through their own exploring styles, which eventually caused intensive attention in the critic circle in Beijing and was called a group debut of local Expressionism in Northwest China.

This is a significant phenomenon, which especially happened in the hinterland of Chinese civilization in the form of a group, then fortunately avoided the superhuman consciousness of pitying one's misery and being angry with one's inability in the initiative ideological trend in 1980s, also avoided the curious psychology for the new art form to watch the old one, what's more important, it avoided the hostile atmosphere arising consequently from desperate agitation. In those painter's works of local Expressionism in Northwest China, we generally see the gracious compassion and considerate understanding. Painter's living experiences went for beyond pointing at the negative side of humanity or the irrationality of life, and going their own ways to let off the trash feelings of their personal psychology. Whereas, their life awareness of all the lives on this yellow land is obviously more conscious than the painters of the elder generation, hence their works are not satisfied to depict a cultural scene, and their portrait of figures is not satisfied with those regional characteristics in an anthropological sense either. They expect to see through the origin of people's awareness of existence and life on the yellow land in the more macroscopical background of ideology and culture.

Chao Hai possesses all the common traits of this painters' group, yet his perception and recognition of human existence seem to be simpler and more straightforward than other painters, therefore his life awareness is more desolate and bitter. His sensitivity of misery and the solemn presentation of misery endow moving inspiration to his paintings.

Life has all kinds of miseries. Birth, aging, disease and death are called four essentials in Buddhism. And the misery of being a peasant is probably the endless laboring. The themes of Chao Hai's paintings seem to focus on one word, fatigue. I have never seen another artist devoting so much painstaking effort to express the heaviness of fatigue in life. Among all the figures in his works, some dispiritedly sits on the ground, stretching the legs, laying both hands forward; someone's legs separate, both hands drooping down naturally, his head looking up into the sky; someone wipes the tears in eyes with clothes;

someone widely opens the mouth to breathe heavily ... These are various poses when people are really exhausted. The male and female wheat cutters under his paintbrush are the symbol of the laboring lives in this world. Those female wheat cutters who stand together to lean on each other and fall asleep are unforgettable. And as for the woman's face in No. 4 of Ink Works created in 1990, only a really fatigued person would have this kind of expression. Comparatively speaking, lying is a relief of fatigue, and eternal lying is an eternal relief. Thus, Chao Hai gives the pose of lying the grandest and most poetic depiction. He has painted two similar paintings, one is Work - No. 1 of 1991 Series, and the other is Work - No. 4 of 1992 Series. In the former painting, there are two people lying shoulder to shoulder, with several cattle standing or lying beside them; in the latter painting, there are still two people lying shoulder to shoulder, with a group of white small specters beside them. The situation of the former painting is that those two people are asleep with cattle; the situation of the latter painting is that those two people are resting in peace, and small specters carrying the lamp of longevity are leading the way. No matter they are asleep or resting in peace, both are a relief to fatigue. There is also a painting named Laid Aside, presenting 4 old men lying. Judging from the expressions on their faces, they are very contented and satisfied with the position of being laid aside. Therefore, death is not terrible, if only one could really rest in peace, what is dreaded is to be reincarnated in the eternal cycle of birth and death. In Reincarnation created in 1996, those two extremely exhausted shadows really causes this kind of fear in people. In Work - No. 1 of 1990 Series, the napping peasant dreams that both he and the mule get rid of the heavy harness of laboring and fly over the clouds. Watching the back of his figure who is soundly sleeping, how could we not help being sympathetic?

Chao Hai always portrays laborers, including animals which are all laboring, such as cattle, donkey, horse, and etc. He contemplates among the fates of these laboring animals and people. What is The Soul of The Land? What stands Between Sky and Earth? Chao Hai's contemplation is extensive and heavy, an atmosphere of great sympathy shrouds all of his works. Chao Hai exceeds his forerunner's attitude of simply eulogizing labor and laborers, nor like some critical realistic writers does he try to reveal the sociological contents of laborer's fate. He doesn't have those non-metaphysical purposes, his contemplation is metaphysical, he thinks this is the nature of our world, and labor is the predestination our world has to accept. All the living things silently undertaking this predestination, no matter human, horse, cattle, donkey, Chao Hai is full of sacred awe for them.

In Chao Hai's living experiences, he must have deeply impressed memories of fatigue. To express this kind of experience, he would surely transform from Realism to Expressionism, otherwise, he couldn't express the heaviness in life awareness.

Therefore, the language of his brushstrokes has to be sluggish and heavy.

3

Chao Hai's ways of watching and viewing are drifting between Realism and Expressionism. On the one hand, the figures in his paintings absolutely come from real life, many scenes and situations are a snatch from life; on the other hand, all those figures from real life become deformed and exaggerated according to his metaphysical contemplation to produce a visual impact of alienation.

Chao Hai's realistic achievement completely comes to light in the deformation and exaggeration of his figures. No matter how deformed or exaggerated his figures are, there is no anatomical mistake, and I believe this is the reason why the audience could accept his paintings though they look "unfamiliar" but still reasonable. Under Chao Hai's paintbrush, the figures, poses and expressions are realistic, even every muscle and every tendon are realistic, meanwhile Chao Hai makes them all expressive. Those unique poses and expressions with profound living basis and branded with Chao Hai's strong sign only obtain artistic expression through enlightenment of Chao Hai's life awareness. Those muscles and tendons complying with anatomy evidently make people feel the shivering and impotence out of mental control when extremely exhausted.

I noticed the good sense of sculpture in Chao Hai's paintings. I assume, besides the orthodox academic education, those magnificent cultural relics in the ancient land of central Shaanxi plain would surely have exerted a more profound, long-standing and imperceptible influence on Chao Hai's sense of art. Terracotta warriors and horses in Qinshihuang's mausoleum, stone inscriptions in mausoleums of the Han and Tang Dynasties, statues on the cliff in the Tang Dynasty, those ingenious and natural flavors and integrity are what Chao Hai wants to express through ink molds. In some sense, he molds in ink, molding many Buddha statues of laborers standing between the sky and the earth. They remind me of ancient Arhat statues. If we neglect those faces and limbs, there are only many simple, intact and insensate stones and soil heaps.

Thereby, I do not quite agree with others to compare his brushstroke with the cotton like feeling, though we could deduce the philosophies of overcoming hard things with soft things from this. In my point of view, the feeling of soil is far more appropriate than that of cotton. Chao Hai's ink is mixed with lots of ochre, when this kind of ink containing particles of stone powder accumulates on *Xuan* paper, texture would appear one layer upon another like soil formations. I have said, Chao Hai transforms ancient people's "ink game", and one important physical element is that the ink of "ink game" is very refined and smooth, would float fluently like cloud and smoke according to the quantity of water on *Xuan* paper, thus it is very suitable to express the purity and calm arising from correct realization in Tao and Zen, and Chao Hai's ink is quite coarse and unsmooth, like yellow soil accumulated on Loess Plateau for tens of thousands of years.

To utilize this kind of coarse and unsmooth ink, one must be very good at using water. Chao Hai surely has devoted much energy on this, having experienced countless failures. By now, he hasn't arrived in the realm of complete freedom, but between the two extremes of dreamy illusion and earthy

solidity, he could create all kinds of ink effects, dry or wet, thick or thin, all at his pleasure, which is already quite difficult. Doubtlessly, in Chinese ink figure painting, he exploringly expands the expression of large ink painting.

We say that Chao Hai's sense of sketch and sculpture are both very good, even say that he is molding in ink, but this doesn't mean he really "translates" sketch or sculpture onto *Xuan* paper in ink. No, Chao Hai is still painting Chinese painting of large freehand brushwork, therefore he would inevitably pay attention to deft brushwork, inevitably used brush method to command ink method and water method, inevitably express emptiness and solidity through different brush methods. In one word, he uses deft brushwork to write out the images of his figures one brushstroke after another. As he mainly creates in the accumulate-ink method, every layer of ink is kept clear, enabling us to see more distinctively the speed and strength of his brushstrokes, and to taste the emotional connotation of his brushwork. In the symposium of Chao Hai's Painting Exhibition, someone said that he walked out of the brushwork-centered theory, others said that he canceled lines to make them large boneless paintings. I think all those opinions may have misunderstood Chao Hai's painting language. Frankly speaking, Chao Hai is too meticulous about brushwork, or Chao Hai's every brushstroke has its own "bone". In the ancient aesthetic conception of "wind and bone", bone has the implication of physics; in painting it could be deduced as validity in structure. "Deft brushwork" is doubly significant in Chao Hai's paintings, both the validity of anatomy in figures and the writing element in significance of brushstroke. Just because of this, Chao Hai is extremely conscientious to put down any brushstroke. According to his familiar acquaintances, sometimes Chao Hai would only paint one brushstroke in several hours.

Finally, I want to point out the relationship between Chao Hai's brushwork with those landscape painters of Chang'an school including Zhao Wangyun, Shi Lu and Fang Jizhong. On the inheritance of brushwork, he may have studied personally under those masters, and successfully transforms the landscape brushwork of Chang'an school into figure painting and makes some progress. That is an important reason why the cultural atmosphere of Chao Hai's works is always indigenous, with rich flavors of the central Shaanxi plain and loess plateau. We have found a regional commonness in his artistic language.

Living between the sky and the earth, man is most miserable, and therefore he has Buddha and Jesus Christ. Chao Hai regards the miserable as Buddha, and portrays those living Buddhas in the world with great gratitude, great sympathy and great awe. After appreciating Chao Hai's paintings, at least I could welcome the fate more composedly, as labor is the nature of our lives.

Written in Beijing, 1999