

entries, and between the well-provenanced paintings and excavated artefacts and the larger bulk of 'history-less' objects of porcelain, lacquer and jade. The difference is not a small one between saying, 'This is a painting made in these verified circumstances by this person, whose biography we know, for this other person, whose biography we also know', and saying 'This is the sort of object which "must have delighted" the literati', where the literati are left as an undifferentiated body. One objection would be to say there is ample evidence (much of it contained in the essays), that in the highly developed market of late Ming China there existed no insuperable barriers to luxury consumption other than those of wealth. Thus a given ceramic vase, though of a type described as 'elegant' in a number of the published guides to taste of the period, cannot be guaranteed not to have itself belonged to the rich and 'vulgar'.

The implications of subsuming the entirety of Ming artistic life under the eaves of the 'scholar's studio' are themselves under suspicion for a number of reasons. First, we cannot 'recreate the taste of the Ming dynasty' since, as Pierre Bourdieu has surely demonstrated, taste involves distinction, it involves rejection of specific alternatives, and the full range of choices proffered by the Ming cultural market is no longer available to us. All museum displays and exhibitions are by their nature positivist, in a way which can be limiting if not made explicit. Ming gold and silver, for example, hardly survives, but existed at the time as the standard tableware of the wealthy, and was perfectly 'acceptable' to the fastidious. It is likely that the scholars here enshrined used it regularly, but it is an absence from our current view of them, never to be mentioned. It does not fit into 'our' Ming dynasty.

Secondly, the more satisfyingly accurate a reconstruction of the past seems, the more authentic, the more it speaks of now, since authenticity is a value only to be grasped in contemporary terms. The temptation is too great to imagine 'how things must have been', and to fill out the gaps in the record with the best available surmises. This leads to the inclusion of objects whose relevance to the main theme is dubious (a vase showing an enthroned Taoist deity becomes a scene of 'gentlemen in a garden'), or which expand the temporal scope of the exhibition forward as far in one case as the early eighteenth century. It can lead as well to problems like that posed by a painting by Chen Jiru (1558-1639), a scholar to whom many deferred in his life and subsequently as an arbiter of taste. The catalogue does not draw attention to the fact that its long, thin format makes it a *dantiao*, 'single strip', a fashion of painting expressly condemned as vulgar by Wen Zhenheng (1585-1626), equally scholarly, with an even more distinguished pedigree, and equally respected as a man of discrimination. Wen would also have abhorred at least one other piece, a bronze censor. This is not a question of just capping quotations from late Ming authors, and it seems best here, rather than arguing about which scholar is 'right', to dissolve the comforting certainties of scholar hegemony with a bit of scepticism, to look at some of the pronouncements of the time as strategies aimed at establishing and maintaining

cultural dominance in a turbulent age of social climbing and aesthetic unease. This too may be a Ming dynasty for the present day, but it at least has the advantage of accepting some of the messiness of the period, rather than seeking to smooth it away.

CRAIG CLUNAS

THOMAS CLEARY (tr.): *The Taoist I Ching* [vi], 336 pp. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1986.

The average academic, on picking up a book with a title as redolent of popular occultism as this, might understandably be tempted to hurl it with an oath into the rubbish bin. The average academic should at least pause, since this volume is precisely what it claims to be: a translation of the *I Ching* and of commentary upon it by a late eighteenth-century Taoist, Liu I-ming—a Taoist, moreover, whose thought has recently attracted the attention of *bona fide* academic researchers in China into the history of religion, whose preliminary observations may be found in *Shih-chieh tsung-chiao* 1984, issue 3. Cleary's translation would appear to be taken from the edition of Liu's writings on the *I Ching* included in the *Tao-tsang ching-hua* of Hsiao T'ien-shih under the title *I-tao hsing-fa chen-chuan* (Taipei, 1962); his introduction also quotes other works from Hsiao's compilation, though throughout all titles are rendered into English with no indications of the Chinese. Summarizing his own thoughts on Liu's work, Cleary states (p. 2) 'Liu employs the terminology of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, of psychology, sociology, and alchemy, of history, myth, and religion.'

Some of the latter categories would seem to speak more of Cleary's translation than of Liu's original, but it must be granted that the translator has done a fine job of rendering Liu's highly syncretistic and ambivalent language into a fluent and readable West Coast prose. Of course this is only achieved at the expense of obliterating any hint of the allusiveness of the original, an approach already evident in one of the passages cited in the introduction (from the *Chung-ho chi*, p. 6 in Hsiao's edition), where Cleary's 'The mind of Tao is subtle and hard to see; the human mind is unstable and uneasy' (p. 17) obscures the fact that this is actually a famous Neo-Confucian slogan from the *Shang-shu* to which Liu has added his own glosses. Similarly, in the first portion of the translation of the text itself (p. 40), 'It is tranquil and unstirring, yet sensitive and effective' is in no way marked as a quotation from elsewhere in the *I Ching* (Wilhelm/Baynes, p. 315: '... they are quiescent and do not move. But if they are stimulated, they penetrate ...'), nor is 'The essential intimacy of heaven and humanity then becomes estranged by habit' marked as a reference to the *Analecets* (Waley, p. 209: 'By nature, near together; by practice far apart'); further analogous examples may be found on later pages. So while the average academic should perhaps save this volume from destruction—translations of Chinese text with commentary, especially of this type of material, are few enough as it is—one fears that it will be seldom found to be worth consulting. As for the

rather different readership to whom the work is directed, let us hope that they derive some benefit from it, though maybe they will have Cleary rather than Liu to thank if they do.

T. H. BARRETT

VERITY WILSON: *Chinese dress*. (Far Eastern Series.) 135 pp. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986.

The Victoria and Albert Museum has an excellent collection of Chinese costume and other textiles, and the lack of proper publication of these items has long been felt. It is therefore especially pleasing to see such a handsome volume devoted to the Chinese dress in the Museum's collection, and particularly to see so many of the items illustrated in colour. Verity Wilson's approach to the subject is also decidedly refreshing after some of the fanciful generalizations that have appeared in more than one volume by other authors in the last thirty years.

As the author points out in her introduction, the book is written around the Museum's collection, and therefore does not attempt to be a complete history of Chinese dress. For that reason it concentrates mainly on dress during the Qing period. Happily, thanks to archaeological excavations carried out in China in recent years, art historians in that country are now able to formulate a more comprehensive picture of Chinese dress in the earlier periods, and are beginning to publish the results of their researches in volumes with excellent illustrations. Verity Wilson has included recent research done in the People's Republic of China in her discussions, and in many cases this is the first time this information has been made available to those who do not read Chinese. She has also included much interesting information gleaned from the writings of Europeans who visited China at the end of the last century or the beginning of this one.

Verity Wilson's discussion of the official and court dress of both men and women, includes an interesting section on the Europeans who wore these robes. She avoids, however, dogmatic statements, made by too many other authors, regarding some aspects of the so-called dragon robes, and instead gives technical details, and information about accessories. Indeed this latter topic is of such interest, that it would perhaps have been worthwhile to allow it a little more space in the publication to enable a fuller discussion of the wide range of items included within it to be incorporated. On the other hand it is good to see discussion not only of official robes but also of some aspects of dress not usually covered by other publications. Two sections in particular, that on children's dress and that dealing with undergarments and seasonal variations address topics that have rarely been considered by previous authors. The treatment of buttons and methods of closure also provides interesting information on, for instance, the metals used for these small costume details.

The discussion of embroidery is especially valuable since the author's expertise in her subject is evident, and she is able to give clear, informed explanations of what she describes.

Indeed, it is this knowledge of the technical aspects of her subject that allows her to add interesting pieces of information about the garments under discussion that could easily otherwise have been missed. As this publication is apparently part of a 'Victoria and Albert Museum—Far Eastern Series', may we hope for a publication on other aspects of the Museum's Chinese textile collection in the future?

ROSEMARY E. SCOTT

STEPHEN OWEN: *Remembrances: the experience of the past in classical Chinese literature*. 147 pp. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1986.

This is a book that one would like to review because it is so interesting, yet which resists review because its contents lend themselves to neither summary nor criticism. It is a work informed by scholarship but not of scholarship: no footnotes contaminate the clean page, no references beyond the sources of the passages quoted are given. Here and there one begins to feel uneasy over an interpretation, or the trend of an argument, but then an entirely convincing observation or a particularly wise thought expunges one's doubts, not on account of their invalidity, but of their triviality and insipidity. For *Remembrances* is deeply meditated and beautifully expressed. Its author deliberately does not set out to write 'an orderly history of the experience of the past in the Chinese literary tradition', because that would be 'to construct an illusion' (p. 7); instead we see him on his pensive couch spooling out his yarn of intuition as he passes under review a succession of 'sites' where the past 'breaks into the present'. Out of its element this language may seem pretentious, but something special is needed to handle the Chinese writer's preoccupation with the past, whose motivation lies in the sentiment, as Owen puts it, 'as I remember, so may I hope to be remembered'; its vocabulary has been developed to enable Owen in his turn to remember the authors of some outstanding pieces of verse and prose as they have not been remembered before—and not always as they might have hoped to be remembered, for he delves into strata that the native connoisseur has left undisturbed, because he has lacked either the urge to resolve inconsistencies or the measure of other civilizations to lend a comparative perspective.

There is of course an established class of poetry in China known as *huai-ku* 'dwelling on the past', and a category of prose that records the construction or reconstruction of edifices on sites that are historic or thereby become historic (it is perhaps a mark of the Chinese consciousness that scarcely any spot is seen naked, but clothed in historical or literary associations), apart from the inevitable biographies and autobiographies. All these come within Owen's scope, but he considers also the relationship between the living and the dead, the passion for collecting and harbouring antiquities, the aesthetics of the fragment, and the compulsion to repeat. Those who broke the ground that Owen