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Beyond the Classroom: The *Naoxue* Theme in Late-Ming and Qing Paintings, Illustrations, and Prints

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Abstract

From the late Ming dynasty, the common practice of portraying well-mannered children began to decline, and depictions of naughty and unruly school kids entered the repertoire of Chinese artists. The renowned Ming painting master Qiu Ying 仇英 (1494-1552) had once painted an album leaf depicting mischievous children in class (Fig. 1). Here, a schoolmaster on the left side is nodding off at his table, while some students are disturbing their sleeping teacher, and some are playing games. This painting offers an example of what mischievous children would look like in a classroom. By removing the master's hat, drawing a sketch of their sleeping teacher, dressing up like a literary figure, and playing other impish games, these children stand as a peculiar type of figural subject. This painting is known as part of an album that purports to copy Song dynasty paintings, but it is doubtful that a precise Song model existed for the behavior depicted here. Rather, it is through the effort of Ming painting masters like Qiu Ying that paintings of mischievously-behaved children in a local school came to form an established pictorial theme called *naoxue tu* (鬧學図, *Picture of Naughty Students*). The popularity of *naoxue tu* lasted from the 1600s to the 1800s. By the end of the Qing dynasty, painters no longer took an interest in *naoxue* as a narrative theme, and it survived only as a pictorial iconography with auspicious meanings.

Why was the theme of *naoxue tu* popular only during a certain time period? Past scholarship on mischievous children in the

Fig. 1

classroom has not asked this question. Scholars have instead discussed *naoxue tu* within the larger context of the long tradition of paintings depicting children, and have not gone beyond thematic explanations of the iconography of children. To explore why the theme of *naoxue tu* was attractive to artists and patrons at a specific period of time, this study will take a different approach by switching the theme's focus from children to disruption – the unusual manner applied to pictorial figures who are supposed to behave properly. The traditional aspiration of having an intellectual son encouraged families to view children as necessary to the wealth and success of the family, ideally through the son becoming a scholar-bureaucrat in the future.(1) I start from the hypothesis that the disruptive behavior of naughty students reflects a shift away from the traditional hope of success in officialdom. Moreover, I shall argue that although the action of disruption is performed by the mischievous children, it is the sleeping master who sets the mood and is thus the agent of disruption. The painting of *naoxue tu* thus is not just about children; it depicts a phenomenon in which adults were implicated as well, which was associated with a world of boisterous entertainment during the Ming and Qing dynasties. At that time, the enjoyment of novels accompanied with wood-block illustrations became a fashionable leisure activity. From the late Ming on, illustrations and fictional accounts of disruptive activities, including in novels such as *Shuihuzhuan* (水滸伝), were favored by all classes. Did paintings on the *naoxue tu* participate in such trend? By contextualizing the production of *naoxue tu* socially and historically, this thesis aims to explain how the pictorial theme of mischievous schoolchildren met the needs of a particular period as well as to show how it evolved over time.

The discussion is divided into three sections. The first, centered on a handscroll by the late Ming painter Zhang Hong, will provide a detailed visual analysis of paintings on the *naoxue tu* theme and contextualize these paintings in relation to the social image of children attending local schools from the Ming on. This section further examines the toys and games associated with such schoolchildren, including role-playing and acrobatics. Although they had precedents in earlier paintings of children, these pictorial motifs no longer served their classical function, but instead came to refer to the popular culture of urban commoners. The second section concentrates on the representation of schoolmasters and their social roles during the late Ming and Qing periods. Schoolmasters who educated young students, so-called *mengshi* (蒙師), belonged to a group of lower-class literati. Due to their low social status and lack of sophisti-

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(1) Ann Barrott Wicks and Ellen B. Avril, "Introduction: Children in Chinese Art," in *Children in Chinese Art* (Honolulu, HI. University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 19-20.

cated knowledge of classical literature, these village schoolmasters were frequently mocked by well-established poets, novelists and playwrights. The disturbing of the schoolmaster's sleep by his students can thus be interpreted as articulating the painter's attitude toward the teacher. The last section explores the shift of focus in *naoxue* pictorial representations during the nineteenth century. This change is associated with large-scale urban painting and woodblock-print workshops that catered to the group of commercial audience.

I – *Naoxue Tu*: A Mixture of Art and Reality

Although Qiu Ying's album leaf was possibly the earliest extant example of *naoxue tu* painting, his later Ming contemporary, Zhang Hong 張宏 (1577 – after 1652), played a more significant role in defining a pictorial model for the theme that was frequently adopted by later artists. Compared with the album leaf by Qiu Ying, Zhang Hong's painting has a simpler composition. In 1638, Zhang Hong painted a long monochrome handscroll, *Zaji youxi tu* (雑技遊戯図), featuring the daily life of people in his hometown, Suzhou. Using thin and concise brushstrokes, Zhang Hong gives a vivid view of everyday life in the Ming dynasty with detailed depictions of facial and body features. Among depictions of various leisure and labor activities, a small section depicts a classroom scene (Fig. 2-1), where several students are behaving mischievously towards their sleeping schoolmaster.(2) Zhang Hong divides his figures into three groups, placing the naughty students and schoolmaster at the left, two students at the lower center, and one student sitting on a stool at the upper right. In this manner, Zhang Hong demonstrates one key element that defines a *naoxue tu*, which is the juxtaposition of naughty students and a good student. Regarding the former, three students gather around the sleeping teacher with one attempting to draw on his face, one taking off the

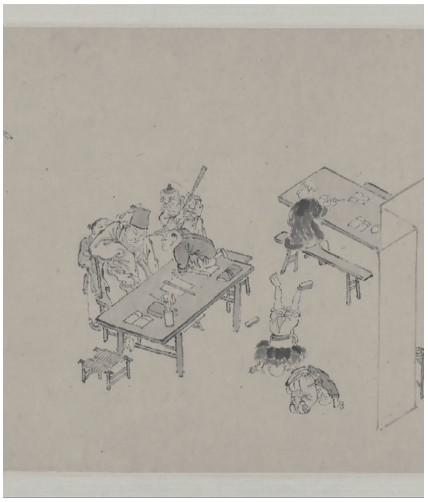

Fig. 2-1

(2) Scenes of activities includes quack doctors travelling (走方郎中), monk begging for alms (和尚化緣), polishing the mirror (磨鏡), selling rodenticide (賣鼠藥), watching the monkey show (耍猴戲), selling fish and turtle (賣魚鱉), the blind man playing music (瞎子彈唱), Setting the *Dojo* (道場), practicing physiognomy and adding moles (相面點痣), pasturing cattle (牧牛), goat fighting (斗羊), playing cards (玩紙牌), and rope walking (走繩索). Wang Qi, "Tan Suzhou huajia Yuan Shangtong he Zhang Hong," *Gugong Bowuyuan Yuankan* no.3 (1991): 33.

master's hat, and the last one wearing a grotesque mask. The naughty children at the center are playing on the ground. Compared with those mischievously behaved children, the student on the upper right corner is sitting properly and practicing his handwriting, yet he seems to be distracted by what is happening in the classroom as he looks back at the teacher and the naughty students. In a *naoxue tu*, the contrast between bad and good behaviors creates a dramatic effect; even the good student is also being attracted by the mischievous behaviors of the other, naughty children.

As a professional painter based in Suzhou, Zhang Hong is more famous today for his landscape paintings. Despite the large numbers of depictions of human subjects he produced, little is known about Zhang Hong as a figure painter. While his landscape paintings make accommodations to literati taste, Zhang Hong seems to have preferred to represent commoners when he came to paint figures. To find out why Zhang Hong made such unusual choices, it is necessary first to take a look at the role that figure painting played in the late Ming dynasty. From the late Ming dynasty on, pictures of figures and portraits undertaken by artists like Zhang Hong often look back to paintings of the distant past.(3) Old pictorial tropes, including those from Song decorative paintings, were continuously copied and reinterpreted as late as the sixteenth century, and thus were fully part of Ming common-culture painting.

The use of inherited motifs is especially evident in the behaviors of mischievous children in *naoxue tu*, which resemble games children play in another popular pictorial genre – *yingxi tu* (嬰戲図, *Pictures of Children at Play*). The games represented in *naoxue tu* are not random choices, but a deliberate selection by the artists to articulate the personality of these naughty children in the specific pictorial setting of classrooms. Depicting a few boys playing in an open space, usually a garden, *yingxi tu* images appear frequently in paintings and the decorative arts during the Ming and Qing periods.(4) The toys and games these children played with are significant motifs in defining the role children serve in the whole composition. To find out the meaning of these motifs, one cannot ignore their origins in *yingxi tu*, since the lively and varied scenes of children at play that were standard themes for art in the Ming and Qing dynasties had their roots in the Song era.(5) Depicting scenes of children playing games, *yingxi tu* served as a type of auspicious painting in the Song dynasty. *Yingxi* paintings by or attributed to Song

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(3) Ibid, 106.

(4) Terese Tse Bartholomew, "One Hundred Children: From Boys at Play to Icons of Good Fortune," in *Children in Chinese Art* (Honoluu, HI: Univeristy of Hawaii Press, 2002), 57.

(5) Ibid, 58.

painters like Su Hanchen and Li Song include games and toys which remained constant in later periods. According to Terese Tse Bartholomew, Song *yingnxi* paintings illustrated children playing board games and music instruments, doing sports, playing with birds, and impersonating characters.(6) Taking Zhang Hong's *naoxue tu* as an example, the major activities borrowed from *yingxi tu* are acrobatics and role playing – games that become the standard behaviors of naughty students in paintings of later periods. Because the *yingxi* theme was bound up with the desire to have a noble son (*guizi*, 貴子), children are depicted as well-dressed, a group of noble offspring in the gardens of the upper class. In contrast, the children in Zhang Hong's *naoxue* painting are most likely from the class of people living in the city, aspiring in some cases only to elementary literacy. Considering the differences in setting, the meaning of each object or action of play in *naoxue tu* may not have the same meaning as in the traditional *yingxi tu* context.

Games like acrobatics that require movement in large open spaces create a strong contrast between bad students and the well-situated good student. In Zhang Hong's painting, two children at the foreground are placed together, with one doing a handstand and the other one ready to follow. Qiu Ying, too, had painted children doing acrobatics; at the back of his album leaf painting, a child is lying on the desk, lifting a stool with his feet. We would see more paintings of *naoxue* during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries featuring the same quality of physical exercise as these acrobats in the *naoxue* paintings by Zhang Hong and Qiu Ying. The historian, Zhou Yuwen, regards Song dynasty children's games involving certain physical movements as having been martial-arts exercises requiring interaction between multiple figures.(7) Since *naoxue* tu compositions consist of multiple figures in distinctive actions, the depicted acrobatics may have had martial-arts connotations.

Another well-observed game in *naoxue* paintings is role-playing, recognizable from the wearing of a mask or theatrical costume. In the naoxue section of Zhang Hong's *Zaji youxi tu*, a boy wears a monstrous mask while holding a ruler-like object in his hand. As his two companions are interacting with their schoolmaster by removing his hat and drawing on his face, it is likely that the boy with the mask is planning to do something funny to the teacher as well. The

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(6) *Yingxi* paintings depict children kicking balls, spinning tops, rattling the *bolanggu* (a drum-like device on a stick with two beaters attached by strings), pumping swings, flying kites, blowing paper windmills, and playing with toy carts. children also play percussion instruments such as the drum, cymbals, wooden clappers, and gong, and they accompanied puppet show and lion dances with music. Ibid, 58.

(7) Zhou Yuwen, *Songdai ertong de shenghuo yu jiaoyu* (Taipei: Shida shuyuan youxian gongsi, 1996), 81.

depiction of a child wearing a grotesque mask shares the same idea of imaginative play that we see in *yingxi* depictions. Bartholomew mentions that Song paintings of children playing with masks generally present a scene where a child is dressing up as a mythical character such as Kuixing (魁星), the God of Literature.(8) A child pretending to be the demon-like Kuixing would wear a monster mask, hold a brush in his hands, and have his leg raised to indicate that he was kicking at the dipper constellation.(9) The boy in a red robe in a late-Ming painting, *Children at Play*, attributed to the Song artist Su Hanchen best exemplifies this description of Kuixing (Fig. 3). A very similar depiction of a child with a red mask holding a ruler-like object up high and lifting his left leg up appears in an eighteenth-century painting by Hua Yan, which I will examine in the next section. The depiction of children wearing costume also references their interest in the world of adults. Imitating the activities of grownups is a common game among children. Several types of children's imitation such as children giving bath to each other, playing an official on horseback and dressing up like a schoolmaster are frequently represented in Ming art.(10) In Qiu Ying's album leaf, a boy in the foreground painted with a mustache and dressed in formal attire made of scrolls of calligraphy pretends to be an adult. Because of the long bamboo stick he is holding in both hands, which seems to be meant to represent a *hu* ritual baton, he is probably playing the role of a scholar-official.

Fig. 3

Out of the numerous games depicted in *yingxi* paintings, why did *naoxue tu* painters like Zhang Hong and Qiu Ying choose acrobatics and role playing for their depiction of naughty children? To answer this question, it is crucial to first look at the social context of the children education system in pre-modern China, since the representation of mischievous children at

(8) Bartholomew, "One Hundred Children," 58.

(9) Ibid, 58.

(10) Because bathing infant sons was an important task of imperial mothers, it was not common to see children giving bath to each other. Ibid, 65.

school scenes cannot be separated from their identity as students. *Mengxue* (蒙学, elementary education) was first emphasized in the Song dynasty and continued to be promoted during the Ming and Qing periods. In this system, children who were not from families of high social status could only receive education in three ways: from their family relatives, mostly parents; hiring private family tutors; or attending private schools run by local teachers.(11) Young students were required to learn characters, read elementary-level books, practice calligraphy, and compose poems.(12) Because students of different ages all had to be in the same class, the curriculum and expectations varied among individuals.(13) The coexistence of children of varied ages can be seen in Zhang Hong's *Cunshu tu* (村塾図, *Village Schoolroom*, Fig. 4), where children approaching the age of adolescence and infants are placed together. Here, Zhang Hong depicts a moment when the village schoolmaster is tutoring one of his students while others of varied ages are studying on their own. Whereas students who received family education were generally diligent, those taught by schoolmasters had varied attitudes and aspirations towards education.(14) Many students attending school for elementary education did not aim to take the provincial civil service examination, nor did they wish to become knowledgeable scholars. Students approaching the age of adolescence would have had the strength to act naughty when they were reluctant to study hard. In painting, the games of acrobatics and role-playing provided a playful way of showing how badly-behaved those students could be.

Fig. 4

The theme of naughty schoolchildren contradicts the traditional family aspiration for boys to become intellectual men. As the bond between a classical education and a prosperous family grew strong in the Ming period, more and more pictures of children at the time were related

(11) The names of private school vary from Sishu (私塾), Shuguan (塾館), Xiangxiao (鄉校), Cunxiao (村校), Dongxue (冬學), and etc. Zhou Yuwen and Xu Zonglin, *Jiaoyu Shi* (Taipei: Wu nan, 1997), 98.

(12) Ibid, 98.

(13) Ibid, 98.

(14) It was caused by both student's own purpose of learning and the teaching quality of schoolmasters. Ibid, 98.

to passing the civil service exam. One of the main pictorial types in Ming art is children's imitation of adults such as being the official on horseback and dressing up like a schoolmaster. On the other hand, the depiction of adults acting in unusual manner, such as villagers fighting, was common in painting and writing practices in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Since depictions of well-mannered children had indirectly invoked adult success, it should not be odd to regard children who were not acting as good students in class as being related to images of adult disruption. This view is especially convincing in the case of Zhang Hong, since most of his figure paintings depict commoners, in one case including a fight between farmers. In his fan painting *Nongfu dajia tu* (農夫打架図, Fig. 5), two farmers are quarreling with each other while others try to stop them from fighting. Their short-sleeved outfits and even naked bodies suggest it is a summer scene. Fighting has been depicted in many late Ming paintings of city life. The Ming version of *Qingming shanghe tu* (清明上河図) attributed to Qiu Ying (Fig. 6-1 & 6-2) includes several incidents of martial interaction between commoners. In *Zaji youxi tu*, Zhang Hong also includes a scene of two elders, possibly housewives, arguing on the street (Fig. 2-2) along with the scene of naughty children. The two scenes evoke an aspect of urban life quite different from the scholarly ideal. Although *naoxue* paintings do not depict actual fighting, the motif of children doing acrobatics shares the physicality of fighting scenes. As a result, the depiction of children's games, which had once referred to the elegant activities of noble sons in palace and garden, came to be associated with the disruptive activities of urban commoner children instead.

Moreover, role-playing reflects another aspect of urban life. Since the Song dynasty, watching theatrical performances had become one of the main entertainments enjoyed by urban

Fig. 5

Fig. 6-1

Fig. 6-2

Fig. 2-2

citizens. Removing the need to read a written manuscript, watching traditional performance in theater was an accessible entertainment for uneducated commoners. Although the practice of wearing a monster mask can sometimes refer to the ancient tradition of exorcist performances in village streets, it is more likely that the masking in *naoxue tu* is connected to local opera. If viewers saw children dressed up like actors, they would immediately recall the acting, plays and theatrical entertainment they had experienced. In this sense, the depicted children are being used by the artists to reference the adult observers' own experience. The theme of children in the classroom had been used in plays since the Song dynasty. In *Wulin jiushi* (武林旧事) by the Song playwright Zhou Mi, he notes the name of *Qiao xuetang* (喬学堂, *Imitating the Classroom Scene*) as an auspicious play performed at certain festivals and ceremonies.(15) As early as the Yuan dynasty, plays had focused on the representation of schoolchildren being naughty, as shown by the zaju (雑劇) title of *Nao xuetang* (鬧学堂, *Children Being Naughty at Class*) recorded in a book by the late Yuan scholar Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (1329-1410).(16) *Zaju* is a type of Chinese theatrical drama play which often included comedic effects. The art historian Huang Xiaofeng has argued that the three-group construction of one sleeping schoolmaster, naughty children, and one good student in Zhang Hong's *naoxue tu* is full of unreasonable humor and dramatic effects, which originated from *zaju*.(17) Further, the open space at the foreground of *naoxue* painting creates the sense of a theatrical stage. Painters of *naoxue tu* in later periods even placed the student with a mask at the center, which again emphasized the reference to theatrical play. These *naoxue tu* present an eccentric school scene that may reference comedic zaju play. By the late Ming, the students were no longer subordinate figures needing protection from adults. Instead, they turned against the adults. In the scene *Chun Xiang Naoxue* (春香鬧学, *Maid Chun Xiang Making a Scene at School*) in the Kun opera (Kun Qu, 昆曲), *The Peony Pavilion* (牡丹亭, *Mudanting*) by Tang Xianzu 湯顕祖 (1550-1616), the maid Chun Xiang often criticizes the stubborn teacher of her lady and interrupts the boring class.(18) Here, the image of Chun Xiang is not a reference to village life but a symbol of rebellion.

The link to theatrical plays may help us to interpret the dynamics of *naoxue* paintings. In

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(15) Zhou Mi, *Wulin jiushi*, vol.2 (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1966).

(16) The titles of "Nao xuetang (鬧学堂 Children Being Naughty at Class)" and "Jiao xue'er (教学兒 Teaching Young Children)" are included in the chapter of "Zhuza daxiao juben 諸雜大小院本 (Various Zaju Plays)." Tao Zongyi, *Nancun chuogeng lu*, vol.25 (Huhehaote: Yuanfang chubanshe, 2011).

(17) Huang Xiaofeng, "Kongfuzi de xiangxia mensheng: Jiedu cuntong naoxue tu," *Chinese Heritage* 9 (2010): 154-55.

(18) Tang Xianzu, *The Peony Pavilion*, trans. Cyril Birch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 25.

the paintings of farmers fighting or arguing mentioned previously, the space is formed by not only the fighters but also the beholders. Surrounded by the large group of beholders, the two fighters at the center are the actors of a disruptive play that is meant to please the audience. But who is the depicted audience in *naoxue tu*? One might think the teacher ought normally to be the beholder who watches the action of his students, but in these paintings he is sleeping. It is more plausible to consider the good student watching the others being naughty as the audience, and the sleeping teacher as an actor who participates in the performance with the naughty students. But what is the purpose of such an arrangement? Are painters of *naoxue tu* praising the unruly heroes and criticizing the banal teacher like the writer of *The Peony Pavilion*, Tang Xianzu?(19) The answer to these questions may lie with the sleeping schoolmaster.

II – Teacher in the Disruptive World

In the history of painting, at any moment, some things can be depicted and some things cannot. The late Ming was a time of very rapid expansion of what was representable. Literary evidence reveals that a schoolmaster falling asleep during class could be a subject for writers since the Song dynasty.(20) Yet, there is no existing evidence supporting that such figure had been depicted in painting before the late Ming dynasty. The pictorial subject of a sleeping teacher might have previously been below the threshold of representability. The depiction of a schoolmaster sleeping in late Ming *naoxue tu* paintings suggests a shift in tolerance, due to new possibilities of empathy towards not only schoolmasters but also artists. In late Ming society, both schoolmasters and painters, particularly those who sold paintings on the open market, lived in the same world of common townspeople depicted in plays. Despite their different occupations, they shared the same bad situation of struggling for survival. Does this mean that the image of the sleeping schoolmaster partly represents the artists themselves? Schoolmasters later came to be a popular subject for Ming and Qing writers as well, because of their internal

(19) Since Kun opera became extremely popular during the Ming and Qing, it would not be stunning to see that painters of *naoxue tu* had been inspired by the play of *The Peony Pavilion*. Li Chu-tsing, "Introduction of Patronage in Suchou," in *Artists and Patrons: Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting* (Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1989), 90.

(20) See the Song poet Lu You's poem *Eight Poems on Autumn Moods*: "儿童冬学闹比邻，据案愚儒却自珍。授罢村书闭门睡，终年不著面看人。" (Children at the neighbor during the winter school season, but the foolish village school teacher continues his teaching. After the class he closes the door and go back to sleep, one can never see him throughout the year.)

struggle facing their miserable life and students.[21] Could paintings depicting *naoxue* scenes be a result of following such a literary trend? Through the lenses of social reception and literary representation of schoolmasters in the late-Ming and Qing periods, this section aims to understand the significance of the sleeping teacher in *naoxue tu*.

If children can be perceived as a younger version of the urban working-class and middle-class adults in Zhang Hong's painting, what function does the sleeping school master serve? Unlike the mischievous students, the sleeping teacher is not disruptive. Taking the action of falling into sleep, the schoolmaster chooses to ignore the mischievous children, allowing the existence of unruly behavior – in other words, disruption. Does the sleeping teacher stand for a man unaware of the outside world? Or does he try to distance himself from disruption by pretending to fall into sleep? The understanding of the sleeping teacher in *naoxue tu* lies in the role of schoolmaster in its social context. In earlier periods, the image of a *mengshi* (schoolmaster educating young children) had mostly been associated with the theme of village life.[22] As early as the Song period, the notions of countryside, uneducated village-people, wildness, and rejoicing were connected in pictorial practice.[23] By adding a schoolmaster to a rural scene along with villagers, whether presented with good or bad manners, painting of this type was not about judging the behavior of the schoolmaster in village, but a way of showing rural life to urban audience. In the Ming dynasty, however, the subject of schoolmaster entered the realm of the urban landscape. In the urban panorama of the *Qingming shanghe tu* attributed to Qiu Ying (Fig. 6-3), a small classroom with a *mengshi* and young students is included. It is interesting that the school is placed near a brothel, as implied by the title (Qinglou, 青樓) on the wooden plaque. Both school and brothel are isolated from the street, suggesting a sense of pri-

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(21) Liu Lin, "MingQing jiaoshi jieceng yu xiaoshuo de renwu suzao" (Master's thesis, Southwest University, 2011), 35.

(22) The Northern Song scholar-official Cao Zu 曹組 once saw a painting of a comic scene of a schoolmaster teaching his students title *Cunxue Tu* (Ch. 村學圖, *Village School*) by Chen Tan 陳坦. Cao's writing on this painting mocks the silly schoolmaster, who taught phrases from *Lun Yu* (*The Analects of Confucius*) in a wrong way (曹組元寵《題村學堂圖》云：『此老方捫虱，眾雛爭附火，想當訓誨時，都都平丈我。』語雖調笑，而曲盡村俗之狀。). The Song poet Guo Xiangzheng 郭祥正 also detailed his viewing of two paintings of children in class and children in a village by Gao Keming 高克明 in his poem The Painting of Village School by Gao Keming from the Family Collection of Xia Gongyou (Ch. 夏公酉家藏老高邨田乐教学图). In his writing of the classroom scene, Guo indicates that the painting divides students into two groups of bad and good students. According to Guo Xiangzheng, the schoolmaster in Gao's painting is severely reprimanding his students. Juxtaposing the painting of children at class is another painting of village, which depicts a drunken old man, musicians, dogs, and a boy riding on a donkey.

(23) Huang Xiaofeng, "Kongfuzi," 155.

Fig. 6-3

vacy required for both places. During the Ming and Qing periods, the majority of the population were located in cities. Following the establishment of a city-centered society was the development of amenities for urban citizens, including schools of all kinds. The school type in *Qingming shanghe tu* is named as neighborhood school, because it was sponsored by parents who lived in the same urban neighborhood. Belonged to the working or middle class, these parents expected children to receive elementary education but could not afford the cost of a private tutor. As a result, they hired one schoolmaster together. The schoolmaster in *Qingming shanghe tu*, as well as in the *naoxue tu* scene of Zhang Hong's painting, was a specific type of teacher who educated young students in cities during the Ming and Qing dynasties – the neighborhood-school master.

Similar to their Song counterparts, neighborhood-school masters for young children in Ming and Qing society were mainly formed by the group of literati who failed passing the imperial examination and could not achieve their ultimate goal of being a court official. One career path left for them was to become a schoolmaster.(24) Yet, the social esteem of *mengshi* that was once recognized in the Song dynasty no longer existed.(25) To many schoolmasters, being a teacher was not a voluntary choice but merely a way to support his family. The negative attitude of schoolmasters regarding their career is evident in Ming and Qing textual sources. Poems and biographies written by these schoolmasters themselves in the Ming and

(24) Xu Zi, "Chuantong xueshu zhong shushi de xinsuan kutong," *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 04 (2004): 64.

Qing periods complain about the unfairness of the society, their failure in the official examinations, and the unwillingness of becoming a teacher for children.[26] According to *Suffering of a Schoolmaster* (*Shushi siku*, 塾師四苦) by the Qing novelist Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715), the reason why literati were reluctant to be schoolmasters could be attributed to four factors: the loneliness of being away from their own family, the quality of meals, the living conditions, and the poor environment of schools.[27] Hired by students' parents, a schoolmaster generally chose to live near the school or stay in a residence offered by the parents. That is, the life of schoolmaster depended on the parents. Yet, the schoolmaster and parents did not always get along very well. Stories in Ming and Qing anthologies of jokes satirize the poor attitude of the parents, which had severe repercussions for the schoolmaster, including lack of respect, the high psychic cost of self-regulation, and low salary.[28] Living a life they struggled with, neighborhood-school masters in the Ming and Qing periods were both outsiders to and prisoners of the city.

Such internal conflict made the neighborhood-school master an ideal subject for the exploration of disruption, especially in the late Ming period when chaos and prosperity grew together in cities. Long before the invasion by the Manchus in 1640s, the collapse of Ming imperial rule had already begun in the late sixteenth century.[29] Because of the "bitter political factionalism at court, ineffectual emperors, and rapacious eunuchs preventing government

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(25) During the Song dynasty, the attitude towards being a *mengshi* was rather positive. The education of *Mengxue* holds significant position in the Song society, as the Song scholar Ouyang Xiu once stated that "the essence of teaching begins with children." In this period when the literati class possessed dominative power, the social demand of high-quality school masters and teacher's own expectation of the success of students led a strict attitude towards the education of children. In his anecdote notes *Qingbozazhi* 清波雜誌, the Southern Song scholar Zhou Hui 周煇 also suggested that the quality of school master has decisive influence to young students. Zhang Jiandong, "Yige bei hulue de jiaoyu qunti" (PhD diss., Central China Normal University, 2013), 98-100.

(26) In his anecdote collection *Qixiuleigao* 七修類稿 (vol.26), the Ming writer Lang Ying records one poem by Qin Hui, a chancellor of the Southern Song dynasty, in which he writes: "if I owned three acres of farming land, I would not be the king of monkeys." Because of their mischievous behavior, naughty children were mocked as *Husun* 猢猻 (Eng: monkeys) in many Chinese writings. In this poem recalling his experience of being a local schoolmaster, Qin Hui called himself *Husunwang* 猢猻王 (Eng: king of monkeys). The word of Husunwang then became a common yet satiric title for school master who teaches young students. Lang Ying, *Qixiuleigao* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2001), 281.

(27) Xu Zi, "Chuangtong xueshu," 66.

(28) Ibid, 64-66.

(29) James Cahill, "Chang Hung and the Limits of Representation," in *The Compelling Image: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982): 1.

careers," society in the late Ming period was far from at peace.(30) At the same time, the rapid development of urban culture enriched the daily life of urban citizens through entertainment. Following the development of wood-block printing techniques, novels became one essential part of urban entertainment.(31) The late-Ming novel was a nonclassical literary form that could be accessed and enjoyed by the educated groups of urban community, including wealthy merchants and scholar-officials. Novelists of this time, including Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644), were mostly lower-class literati who could not succeed in becoming a scholar-official.(32) Having failed to pass the official examinations, many of them also had the experience of being a neighborhood-school master. As a result, the miserable life of neighborhood-school masters turned to be one popular theme for late Ming novelists. Emphasizing the injustice of society and its sporadic violence, late Ming novelists reaffirmed the need for social order through stories of neighborhood-school masters. Moreover, novels published during the time from late Ming to early Qing were sometimes accompanied with woodblock-printed illustrations to increase the commercial and artistic value of novels.(33) Painters who saw the woodblock image of a neighborhood-school master might also put it into painting, since illustration could attract more potential customers. Along with the commercialism gradually dominating the urban society, painters living in the city could also use the visual image of a schoolmaster as a way of expressing their own ideas.

Painters in the Qing dynasty continued to interpret the sleeping neighborhood school master through an urban lens. Hua Yan 華喦 (1682-1756) is another distinctive painter of *naoxue tu*. After the death of his father, Hua Yan left his home in Fujian at the age of 22 and went to Hangzhou, where he made friends with literati outside the court. Influenced by his knowledgeable friends, while earning a living by selling his paintings in Hangzhou, Hua also dedicated himself to passing the examinations with the ambition of serving his country.(34) Around the year 1707, Hua Yan married his wife Jiang Yan and had a son who, unfortunately, died afterwards. Eight years later, Jiang Yan passed away from illness. Not long after his wife's death, Hua Yan went to Beijing with his friends in order to seek a government position. However,

(30) Ibid, 1.

(31) More than forty book publishers and several hundred book-producing artisans were located in the city during the Ming period. Li Chu-tsing, "Introduction," 90.

(32) Before he was assigned as an official at the age of fifty-five, Ling Mengchu had failed in passing the court examination for several times.

(33) Song Lihua, "Chatu yu Ming Qing xiaoshuo de yuedu ji chuanbo," *Wenxue yichan* 4 (2000): 117.

(34) Shan Guolin, *Huayan shuhua ji* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), 8-9.

having been given merely trivial tasks, Hua Yan soon left the capital and began his journey of practicing painting in the north for nearly three years. He returned to Hangzhou before 1719. Reaching the age of 40, Hua Yan decided to treat painting as his lifelong career. In 1724, Hua Yan left his family and went to Yangzhou, where the local art market was growing in prosperity.(35) With the rapid development of the economy, merchants in Yangzhou dominated this city and became the main patrons for painting and calligraphy.(36) While commissions from the merchant class offered Hua Yan a great opportunity to expand his painting career, he came to Yangzhou also out of the motivation to improve his painting style and reach a broader audience. For nearly thirty years, Hua Yan had met poets, collectors, and painters from different schools, including those independent artists associated with Yangzhou who are sometimes called the Eight Eccentrics. Although Hua Yan sold paintings for living until the end of his life, he was not considered a *huagong* (畫工, artisan or professional painter). Insisting on keeping his individuality and a degree of personal eccentricity, Hua Yan lived in a way that makes him a well-learned literati painter. Through the experience of failing in the career of being a scholar-official and becoming a professional painter in a city away from home, Hua Yan's life recalls a similar pattern to that of a neighborhood-school master.

Hua Yan painted two *naoxue tu* paintings at a late stage of his painting career. Both paintings follow the fundamental structure of a three-group divided composition set by Zhang Hong. The composition of *Cuntong naoxue tu* (村童鬧学図, Fig. 7) is an elaborated version of Zhang Hong's painting; it expands the classroom space and increases the number of students. While Zhang Hong's handscroll depicts a scene inside the classroom, *Cuntong Naoxue Tu* leaves more space to the group of children playing in the courtyard, seemingly turning the foreground into a theatrical stage. Hua is known for his delicate compositional arrangements and the use of fluid ink lines in his figural paintings.(37) Here, the depiction of evergreen paulownia trees and the loose clothing of figures indicate that this school scene is taking place in summer. Moreover, with a small cottage on one side, it seems that this painting presents a moment in the life of a village school. Given that Hua Yan himself was working in the city and selling his paintings to people who lived in the city and towns, it may be the case that even though he showed a village school setting, his audience would have understood an indirect reference to

(35) In Hangzhou, Hua Yan married his second wife Jiang Yuan – sister of his first wife Jiang Yan – and had two sons. Ibid, 10.

(36) Ibid,10.

(37) Ibid, 24.

Fig. 7

neighborhood schools. In other words, the village school here may be a metaphor of the neighborhood school, emphasizing the idea of quietness and privacy that we saw earlier in the *Qingming shanghe tu* school scene.

The idea of role-playing is displayed by the group of children playing at the center. A boy who wears a white mask and carries a long stick is rushing into a group of three young children. Here, the boy is pretending to be a warrior-like figure (*wufu*, 武夫), and is fighting with two other children who also hold sticks as their weapons. The little child who is kneeling on the ground may be a hostage. The left side of the painting shows a small classroom where two young students are studying on their own while the other two students are trying to escape from the room in order to join the group of naughty children in the foreground. The school setting of two classrooms under trees had already been used in one of the twelve album leaves of *Children at Play* by Hua Yan in 1737 (Fig. 8). In this school scene, the students are sitting properly inside the two classrooms, concentrating on tasks such as reading and writing. One young child in an orange robe is standing in front of the desk, but he is not

Fig. 8

interrupting these hard-working students. Since this album leaf does not include the presence of a teacher, it is more likely to be an example of the *yingxi* rather than the *naoxue* subgenre.

According to Shan Guolin, Hua Yan's figural paintings depicting common people combined the reflection of reality with his own emotion.[38] In the case of paintings of children, both *Cuntong naoxue tu* and the *Children at Play* album exemplify Hua Yan's affinity for children in his old age.[39] In his poem collection *Ligou Ji* (離垢集), Hua Yan clearly acknowledged his love of children motifs by saying, "laughing at myself, an old man who still loves the play of children(自笑白头人，还爱儿童戏。)."[40] At the very end of his career, Hua Yan had experienced the death of his second wife and beloved friends.[41] Hua Yan may have found mischievous children an ideal subject to heal his pain and loneness. By inhabiting the pictorial space full of naughty children imaginatively, it seems that Hua Yan tried to take refuge in the realm of art from a world in which he had no secure place.

Fig. 9

When it comes to the second *naoxue* painting by Hua Yan (桐屋鬧学図, *Tongwu naoxue tu*, Fig. 9), however, the focus is more on the schoolmaster. Although the date when Hua Yan painted this painting is unclear, the inscription suggests it was painted at place called Jiangsheng Shushe (講聲書舍) — Hua Yan's study room in Hangzhou. Since Hua Yan's paintings with the inscription of "painted at Jiangsheng Shushe" were mostly produced in the age around 70s, it is possible that *Tongwu naoxue tu* was also painted during that time, later than the *Cuntong naoxue tu*.[42] The structure of *Tongwu*

(38) Ibid, 10.

(39) The date when he painted *Cuntong Naoxue Tu* is written on the upper left corner of the painting: "Written by Hua Yan in 1749" (己巳秋八月新羅山人寫.)

(40) From Hua Yan, *Xinluo Shanren Ligouji 新羅山人離垢集*. Shan Guolin, *Hua Yan shuhua ji*, 11-12.

(41) His close friend Yuan Guotang 員果堂, a literati in Yangzhou, died in 1743; and his second wife Jiang Yuan passed away in 1747. Ibid, 11-12.

(42) Ibid, 12.

naoxue tu is much simplified, compared to that of the *Cuntong naoxue Tu*. Keeping the same three-group divided composition and spatial setting, this painting reduces the number of students surrounding the sleeping master to one. Consequently, the sense of disruption is also diminished, which makes this painting a more suitable work for Hua Yan to add his own thoughts beyond the thematic presence of *naoxue*. In *Tongwu naoxue tu*, Hua Yan's attitude towards the sleeping schoolmaster is clearly stated in the inscription. At the left corner, he writes: "[The teacher] sleeps deeply upon his table during the day, the mischievous children dare to play in front of him. When Bian Shao (邊韶, the inscription refers to him as Xiaoxian 孝先) is sleeping, he keeps thinking, even today we will still have followers like him."(43) Hua Yan references a classical Chinese story about Bian Shao, an early medieval Chinese scholar who slept in his class. When students mocked him with acerbic words, Bian Shao would reply back immediately. The arrangement of placing Bian Shao's story next to the image that depicts a student playing with his sleeping master by putting a flower on top of his head implies that the teacher in the painting is also thinking during his sleep. This painting was meant to be seen by well-educated viewers who would know the story of Bian Shao. Since Hua Yan was closely associated with literati, he would be accustomed to the practice of referring to the past and modeling ideas and actions on it. By connecting the classical story of an early scholar with the contemporary iconography of a neighborhood-school master, Hua Yan applied a more sophisticated way of representing present-day urban life as well as conveyed his view of the neighborhood school master as an eccentric teacher full of wisdom.

One of Hua's later followers Wang Su 王素 (1794-1877) from Yangzhou also painted a scene of naughty students at class. In his *Xuetang xixi tu* (學堂嬉戲図, *Playing at Class*, Fig. 10), Wang Su adopts the simple composition from Hua Yan's *Tongwu naoxue tu*, except that two children interrupt the sleeping schoolmaster instead of one. The setting of a school under paulownia trees and the depiction of the loose clothing of figures also suggest Hua Yan's influence. On Wang Su's painting the artist inscribed a poem about the sleeping schoolmaster and naughty children: "After he finishes the class the schoolmaster falls asleep, the time of the day is so long that a tired person always wants to sleep. Please do not reprimand these children for being naughty, they simply have not revealed their wisdom yet."(44) Zhang Yancong has pointed out in relation to this painting that after class, schoolmasters sometimes would take a break and

(43) "隐几酣然正昼眠, 顽童游戏擅当前. 孝先便腹思经事, 继起于今有后贤."
(44) "課罷余閑入睡鄉, 困人時節晝初長. 莫嫌童子皮頑甚, 別有聰明未可量."

Fig. 10

sleep, during which time students were only allowed to study.(45) The inscription thus provides a kind explanation of why the schoolmaster and children are behaving in unusual manner in this painting.

As the indispensable motif that distinguishes *naoxue tu* from other pictorial themes involving children, the sleeping teacher signifies the changing representability of the teacher who educates young children over time. The sleeping schoolmaster in *naoxue Tu* visualizes a social instability, stimulated by the rise of urban culture and the corruption of social system during a specific time period. Literary parallels of neighborhood school masters in popular novel provided countless examples of their miserable life in cities. The idea of suffering in a world of entertainment is what made the subject of a neighborhood school master so attractive to many painters. At the same time, artists like Hua Yan who shared a similar life in the urban environment with these school masters also expressed their own feelings through this theme. While Hua Yan and his follower Wang Su hold a positive view of the sleeping school master, this attitude is not visible in other *naoxue* paintings painted in the middle-and-late Qing periods. One of the main reasons for the absence of empathy was the trend of criticizing the literati class in novels. Targeting lower-class urban citizens, the late Qing novel converted into a form of urban entertainment detested by the literati mainstream, which returned to classical literature.(46)

(45) Zhang Yancong, "Cuntong naoxue tu: Yige pushuomili de changjing" (Master's thesis, East China Normal University, 2012), 38-40.

(46) Song Lihua, "Chatu yu MingQing xiaoshuo de yuedu ji chuanbo," 119.

The reception of novels featuring themes on common culture prevailed largely among the general public, which resulted in a change of attitude towards characters with literati identity, such as schoolmasters. The description of a teacher figure was much more acerbic in the late Qing dynasty. It seems that when coming to present an impressive school master, novelists preferred to characterize him as an antagonist.(47) Because the negative aspects of school masters appeared to be pleasant to the urban consumers, painters also adjusted the pictorial visualization to please the contemporary art market. Consequently, by the time of the late Qing dynasty when the theme of disruption became less appealing, the reading of the sleeping teacher and the meaning of *naoxue* tu itself changed completely.

III – In A World of Entertainment

The Qing dynasty was overwhelmed by the fast development of new technology and urban entertainment. The rise of the entertainment culture of theater, ballad-singing, story-telling and popular novels led to a decline of disruptive imagery and a resilience of harmony.(48) People in the late Qing dynasty no longer interpreted the theme of *naoxue tu* as disruption. Rather, it was a design that could serve multiple purposes. On the one hand, the pictorial tropes of neighborhood school master and naughty students could still be painted by professional painters as a commissioned work of art. On the other hand, the theme of *naoxue tu* was also used in woodblock prints as part of the commercialized art market for a broader audience. In both cases, depictions of *naoxue tu* were a product of urbanized industry, which brought artists from different places together. Meanwhile, there are some examples that preserve the sense of disruption from *naoxue* theme among works by Japanese painters at that time. Contextualizing painting and print production associated with Chinese and Japanese artists, this last section will focus on how the theme of *naoxue tu* reached to its two directions — separation and inheritance from disruption — during the nineteenth century.

Figure painting flourished in the art market during the late Qing period. The Shanghai painter Qian Hui'an 錢慧安 (1833-1911) is one representative figure painter of the time. Having achieved a reputation as a skilled portrait painter, Qian concentrated on figure painting after

(47) Examples of school master as antagonists include Zhoujin 周進 from *Rulinwaishi* 儒林外史, Jia Dairu 賈代儒 from Hongloumeng 紅樓夢, and Zou jinsu 鄒繼蘇 from *Lüyexianzong* 綠野仙蹤. Li, Lixia. "Mingqing baihua xiaoshuo shushi xingxiang yanjiu" (Master's thesis, Capital Normal University, 2005), 5-11.

(48) Jonathan Hay, "Painting and the Built Environment in Late-Nineteeth-Century Shanghai," in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, edited by Maxwell Hearn and Judith Smith (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001): 81.

the age of 40.[49] Qian Hui'an led a huge workshop in Shanghai, where many late Qing painters apprenticed. In terms of subject choices, Qian did not attempt to please the scholar-officials, nor had he any personal preference for literati themes.[50] As a professional painter, Qian covered a variety of subjects, including one painting featuring the *naoxue* theme. The album leaf *Cuntong naoxue tu* (村童鬧学図, Fig. 11) presents the scene in the standard three-group divided composition of a sleeping school master, naughty children, and one good student. In terms of the games presented in *naoxue* paintings, Qian added the game of hide-and-seek. The reason for adding the game of hide-and-seek is not clear, yet, given that we see more paintings of *naoxue tu* depicting this game in the late Qing dynasty, it is plausible that the meaning of games for naughty children has been diminished and has changed to simply a visual implication of playfulness. What is more unique about Qian's painting is that he eliminates the presence of outside space. Figures are all depicted inside the classroom. What connects the teacher and the group of students with the outside world is the open window, where one can see the body of an evergreen tree. While the child who is going to jump into the classroom from the window suggests that the classroom is on the ground level, the thick brush strokes of the tree body imply that it is a tall tree, meaning that the classroom should be located on the upper story of a building. Since the urban construction in Shanghai during the late Qing was known for its innovative multi-story buildings, this painting by Qian Hui'an is very likely to present a *naoxue* scene in the setting of a neighborhood school in Shanghai.

Fig. 11

The theme of *naoxue* was painted by several Qian school painters after the Qing dynasty, including Qian's son and nephews. In the two fan paintings by Qian's second son Qian Luxin 錢祿新 (Fig. 12 & Fig. 13), he kept the compositional elements of big open window and the game

(49) He Yanzhe, *Qian Hui'an huaji*, edited by Liu Jianping and Xing Lihong (Tianjin: Tianjin Renming Meishu Chubanshe, 1997), 1.

(50) Ibid, 2.

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

of hide-and-seek from his father's painting. He also made changes in the basic composition, such as the inclusion of an open door and the elaboration of an outside courtyard. The repetitive versions of *naoxue tu* with subtle modification produced by artists of the same workshop exemplifies what Cahill suggests about painting since the late nineteenth century: "[The painting was] repeating a simple compositional formula, varying it more in design than in subject, as if the elements of a single unsituated scene were being endlessly rearranged..."[(51)] In this sense, the pictorial trope of *naoxue tu* seems to be a pattern that can be adopted and modified by dif-

(51) James Cahill, "Chang Hung and the Limits of Representation," 6.

ferent painters, rather than the social disruption reflected in Zhang Hong's painting or self-empathy as Hua Yan did.

As the *naoxue* theme entered the realm of pictorial mediums other than painting, the transfer to pictorial pattern was even more obvious. Largely influenced by the highly-developed printing industry, lithographic and woodblock prints became one of the major artistic products in the urban art market. Along with their normal production of painting, more and more urban-based painters were involved in providing designs for illustrated books as well as decorative prints. As one of the pictorial themes in print design, *naoxue tu* was given different meanings depending on the circumstances of use. One of the most common use of *naoxue tu* is presented in the New Year's print (*nianhua* 年畫). It is a type of decorative art that is made for conveying auspicious meaning and does not require any kind of readership. The Chinese character of "Nao" in English refers to an action causing violence and disruption. Yet, it can also be interpreted with auspicious meaning since from the Song dynasty the gathering of people has been corresponded with the idea of festival celebration.(52) Presenting energetic children playing games in a classroom and tricking their teacher, *naoxue tu* in New Year's prints returned to the Song tradition of combining disruption and auspiciousness.

Among the major workshops specializing in New Year's prints, Taohuawu 桃花塢 in Suzhou and Yangliuqing 楊柳青 in Tianjing were the two that had the closest relationship with artists in Shanghai. Around 1887 to 1891, Qian Hui'an went to Yangliuiqing, where he provided pictorial designs for *nianhua*.(53) Wu Youru 吳友如 (?-1893), the famous woodblock illustrator based in Shanghai, worked with both Yangliuqing and Taohuawu New Year's print workshops. A catalogue of Taohuawu New Year's prints includes one woodblock print with the seal of Wu Youru (Fig. 14). Compared to his lithographic illustration, the composition is much simpler, recalling

Fig. 14

(52) As I mentioned in the first section, popular theatrical plays titled with the character "*nao*" were auspicious plays in the Song dynasty.

(53) Feng Jicai, ed. *Zhongguo Muban Nianhua Jicheng*, vol.2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 557.

Zhang Hong's *naoxue* depiction. Wu also gave this print a title– *Cundu tu* (村讀図, *Village School Scene*). At this moment, the identification of the sleeping teacher and students is not important anymore. *Nianhua* is a particular part of the folk culture of ordinary commoners. As an art enjoyed by lower-class citizens, in both cities and the countryside, its scenes are not necessarily specific to one or the other living environment. The departure from the urban identity of the pictorial theme is further testified by two Yangliuqing New Year's prints (Fig. 15 & Fig. 16). One depicts the teacher awake and the other shows the school master peeking at his naughty students from a side door. As long as the visual presentation focused on the idea of

Fig. 15

Fig. 16

"Nao," artists had the freedom to design the scene according to their own inclinations. What's more important is that as the combination of mischievous students and schoolmaster became an auspicious symbol, the theme of *naoxue tu* no longer has sense of disruption since the action of being naughty is now a spontaneous action of these children. The focus of *naoxue tu* thus rests upon the boisterous classroom in general, rather than the interaction between students and the sleeping schoolmaster.

Nevertheless, the reading of *naoxue tu* in the nineteenth century was not yet confined to the positive way. There are still few examples that persisted certain acerbic aspect from early *naoxue tu* paintings. As one important figure in the print design industry in the late nineteenth century, Wu was hired as the main illustrator of the periodical magazine *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (點石齋畫報) that recorded the Chinese urban culture in the late nineteenth century.(54) Unlike the auspicious *nianhua* prints, Wu's lithographic illustrations mainly criticized certain social phenomena in contemporary life.Wu included one lithographic *naoxue tu* illustration entitled *Xuejiu Danyin* (Fig. 17, 学究耽吟, *Master Reluctant to Teach*). In this illustration, the school master is sleeping on the left side of the classroom, while scenes of students behaving mischievously occupy the rest of the space. In addition to the sleeping teacher, the group of naughty children, and a good student, Wu also includes three adult figures, two presented in the right-side window who are possibly the school master's wife and servant, and a man at the right entrance with his horse. At the far right, the giant tree trunks isolate the sleeping schoolmaster and two students trying to disturb him from the rest of students who are playing games and other adult figures. By doing so, Wu seems to make a clear separation of different pictorial themes. This illustration is accompanied by a long inscription which tells an ironic story about a banal school master:

Fig. 17

"A man whose last name is Yao lives beneath a mountain called Tiger Hill

(54) *Wu Youru shinv tu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1988), 1.

in Suzhou. Since he was a child, he began to study classical articles. He took the pre-civil service examination several times, but never passed the exam even at the age of 30. There are many children of farmers in the place where he lives, only a few had learned to write characters. Yao agreed to a request to be the school master of these children. He is lazy in teaching, yet still considers himself a true scholar. One day in the last month he wrote: 'The master is now reaching to an old age (*Jin ri xian sheng tian he suan*).' Yet, after he wrote the seven characters, he felt that his inspiration was gone; thinking about this for a while, he turned to take a nap. Students then left their seats and played, they were so naughty, and someone even knocked over the ink bottle and used the ink to paint. A visitor came in to have a rest and saw the sentence written by Yao. Unable to stop himself from laughing, he completed the poem by writing: 'The master is now reaching to an old age, last night the master's wife must acted like a wolf, if it is not so, how could the master still be sleeping at this late?'"(55)

The inscription indicates that this schoolmaster teaches young students in the suburbs of Suzhou. The tradition of representing the urban environment indirectly in late Ming and early Qing dynasties also affected Shanghai artists in the late nineteenth-century.(56) Since Wu's illustration was made for readers living in big city, putting the *naoxue* theme in a semi-rural setting is a way of reconciling urban readers with their loss of pleasure of small town and rural life.

Moreover, the inscription reveals the common attitudes towards prosaic schoolmasters in art and literature during the Ming and Qing periods. Indeed, the idea of disruption is visible in this illustration. However, comparing to Hua Yan's painting which gives a more sophisticated story by juxtaposing the sleeping schoolmaster with the sage Bian Shao, Wu's illustration depicts a typical image of bad schoolmaster in the setting of *naoxue tu*. Nonetheless, this work should not be categorized as merely a caricature for commoners. Since *Dianshizhai Pictorial* was published for presenting the everyday life of living beings in the Qing dynasty, the illustrations by Wu share the similar idea with Zhang Hong's *Zaji youxi tu*. That is, both are meant to be viewed not as playthings, but as works that are connected to the good and evil aspects of

(55) "苏人姚姓者，村学究也，家在虎丘山下。自幼习贴括，屡应童子试，年三十未售。是处多农家子，识字者寥寥无几。童蒙求我猢狲王，遂优为之。性疏懒，耽吟咏，以风雅自矜。前月某日值，初度良辰，到館后，诗兴勃发，振笔而书曰："今日先生添鹤算"，七字初成，便觉江郎才尽，吟哦良久，倦而假寐。诸弟子离座憨嬉，其顽劣之状，有甚于翻墨涂鸦者。适有游客入此小憩，瞥睹吟笔，不禁捧腹，遂代为续成曰：今日先生添鹤算，昨宵师母太狼形，不然十点多钟矣，怎尚贪眠搅不醒？"

(56) Jonathan Hay, "Painting and the Built Environment in Late-Nineteenth-Century Shanghai," 81.

sentient beings such as custom, morality, and hobby. Both Zhang Hong and Wu Youru lived in a time when the living of people were affected by urban culture and political chaos. The actions of naughty students and sleeping schoolmaster in both works reflect part of the unstable society in which painters once lived. In such sense, Wu's illustration could also be marked as disruptive, as students no longer behave properly and the schoolmaster stopped paying attention to the education of his students.

Indeed, the connection between disruption and social inconsistency became a less concerned matter among Chinese painters of *naoxue tu* in the nineteenth century. Yet, it is surprising to see how Japanese artists at that time reacted to the theme of naughty students almost in the exact way as Zhang Hong and Wu's lithographic illustration did. Watanabe Kazan (1793-1842)'s book album (Fig. 18, 一掃百態, *Issō hyakutai*, *One Hundred Kinds of Sentient Beings Swept Away*) includes one scene of *naoxue tu* happened in a Japanese temple school (寺子屋, *terako-ya*). Featuring a variety of themes from Noh opera to the public bath, this book album presents a comprehensive picture of the urban society of Edo.(57) In the temple school scene, Kazan presents the tri-group composition of *naoxue tu*. Three good students gathered in front of the seemingly sleeping teacher, and the rest of the students are acting mischievously.

Fig. 18

(57) This book album is divided into two parts. The first ten pages are copy drawings of early genre paintings from Kamakura period to Edo period. The rest of the forty-one pages are scenes of everyday life in the contemporary society observed by Kazan himself. Kurahara Korehito, *Watanabe Kazan Issō hyakutai*, (Iwazaki Bijyutsusha 1986), 1.

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

While the teacher closed his eyelids, it is still uncertain whether he is sleeping or pretending to be asleep like Bian Shao did. Meanwhile, these mischievous students are divided into two groups: one group of fighting and playing, and the other group of watching. Such arrangement recalls the fighting scene in Qiu Ying's *Qingming shanghe tu* which also involved the fighters and their audience. The *Kinsei shokunin-zukushi e kotoba* (近世職人尽絵詞, *Craftsmen at Their Work*) handscroll produced in the nineteen century also shows a section of mischievous students and teacher in *naoxue tu* style (Fig. 19). Although the teacher is not sleeping but casting a sword, he is not concerned about the large group of naughty students. While it is unclear when and where Edo painters had the access to *naoxue tu* by Chinese artists, the interest in Chinese genre painting in Japan was evident. For example, the *Qingming shanghe tu* scroll (清明上河図) now in the Tokyo National Museum was brought to Japan as a valuable work of art, according to the Edo scholar Ito Tougai 伊藤東涯 (1670-1736)'s postscript. Although the postscript suggests that this scroll is modeled after the work of Northern Song style, it resembles the Ming version of Qiu Ying's work, including the fighting scene (Fig. 20). In the Edo period, the importing of Chinese artworks produced in the Ming and Qing periods provided numerous study materials of painting as well as the insights into the life of common people during that time. It

is plausible that at the process of studying, Japanese painters had adopted certain ways of presenting the life of sentient beings, such as the disruptive action of *naoxue tu*.

Conclusion

In the history of Chinese art, the theme of *naoxue* was more than just an aspect of the representation of children. The combination of a sleeping school master and naughty students was a pictorial trope that underwent a long process of evolution from the beginning of the Chinese education system for children to the rapid development of urban culture in the Ming and Qing dynasties and beyond. The emergence of paintings featuring *naoxue* in the early seventeenth century as a visual presentation of disruption was a result of the conflict between urban prosperity and social turmoil. Being part of a society where the ideal of social harmony was being called into question, artists were forced to face a new situation of social instability, as they entered a period which, in James Cahill's words, was "an age of inconsistencies and antitheses, of extreme positions in thought and art."(58) Juxtaposing naughty children as disruption and the schoolmaster in passive action as the victim, the *naoxue* theme was one of many that city-based painters turned to in order to articulate their feelings and views about their circumstances. Because the painters involved put themselves in the position of professional painters working for a commercialized art market, the function of *naoxue tu* depended entirely on their audience. The twin motifs of naughty children at class and sleeping teacher are thus moving away from the meaning of disruption set by early examples. Yet, whereas artists of the Qing period changed the thematic interpretation of *naoxue tu*, there are still few works remains the idea of disruption. Further, the adoption of disruptive themes in Edo Japan marks another direction of the thematic development of *naoxue tu*. The study of imageries of students and schoolmaster as well as applying the definition of disruption to genre themes other than *naoxue tu* shall be two major directions for future research.

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