Toni Onley's
"Diary of China Painting Trip
20 February – 21 March 1988"
An Annotated Edition

by

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Date April 23, 2001
Abstract

The China Diary, Canadian watercolour landscape painter Toni Onley's account of his travel experiences in China from February 20 -- March 21, 1988, is one of the many fascinating documents within the Toni Onley fonds at the Special Collections Division of the University of British Columbia Library. In creating an annotated edition of the China Diary, photographs of Onley's fifteen diary illustrations have been included. Also included are references in the extensive annotations and appendices to various items in the collection and their location for further investigation. This edition of the diary can serve as an introductory guide to the UBC Toni Onley fonds as well as a document to further one's knowledge about the artist's life and art. Onley's China Diary contains information about how the artist understands his painting process and how Asian art, culture, and spirituality have influenced his technique and style as a landscape painter. The diary is also valuable for understanding cultural interaction and cultural identity formation, because in the diary, Onley describes his heightened awareness of his Canadian identity and culture as he encounters various aspects of Asian culture.

The introduction gives biographical information on Toni Onley, discusses the general development of his artwork, presents some of the criticism Onley has received for his work, contextualizes the diary within Onley's life, and within Canadian culture more generally. A discussion of the value of Onley's collection in the field of Canadian literature is also included in the introduction for the collection contains documents in which Toni Onley readily writes himself into some of the received Canadian narratives of the rugged wilderness adventurer.
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Editorial Notes

Textual Emendations:

Major changes to the manuscript version, classified as syntactic or semantic alteration, are footnoted in this edition. Minor changes, which include replacing missing or misused words, fixing tense and spelling errors, and emending punctuation errors, which do not alter semantics, are made without any notation to keep the reading flow as uninterrupted as possible. Some errors such as sentence fragments that do not detract from the flow of ideas are retained to preserve Onley's colloquial expressiveness.

Romanization of Chinese words and names:

The spelling of Chinese terms and names in the diary typescript generally appear in the form as Toni Onley writes them in the manuscript. When necessary, I provide correction or alternate spellings in the footnotes, using either the Pinyin romanization system and/or the older Wade-Giles system. Toni Onley uses the two systems of romanization interchangeably throughout the diary. Some of the spellings of the Chinese terms and names are an amalgamation of both systems, and, therefore, do not belong to either system. When I must choose one version of a name or a word when more than one version is used, as is the case for Mao Tse-Tung / Mao Zedong, I tend to select the one that is more commonly used today. A conversion table for the Pinyin and Wade-Giles romanization systems is included in Appendix H.

Citation of sources in the Toni Onley collection:

Throughout the introduction and the annotations to the China Diary, materials from the University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections and
University Archives Division, Toni Onley fonds will be referred to by its box number, file number, and page number. For example, a reference to page 24 of the China Diary, which is found in Box 1, File 7, will be cited as (1.7.24). Where the file numbers are not clear, I used terms like “black binder,” “red duotang,” or “hand-painted menu” for clarification. When referring to a specific file such as File 1.7, ‘1’ is the box number and ‘7’ is the file within the box.

Gloria Onley's edition:

Toni Onley gave me a copy of Gloria Onley’s unpublished, 1994 edition of his China Diary after I had completed my typescript of the diary for this thesis project. I referred to Gloria Onley’s edition when I encountered illegible words or missing sentences that had been cut off the page when the manuscript was photocopied for UBC’s collection. I have indicated in the footnotes where I retrieved lost words in the manuscript with the aid of Gloria Onley’s edition. Toni Onley added a copy of Gloria Onley’s edition to his collection at UBC on March 5, 2001. It can be found in Box 28, File 1.

Footnotes:

Some of the footnotes do not appear on the correct page and other footnotes are divided so that they run across the bottom of more than one page. I have been unable to find a way in Microsoft Word 97 to correct these problems and I apologize for the inconvenience these footnotes may cause.
Acknowledgements

My sincerest thanks to Toni Onley for supplying me with generous amounts of information about his life, for his willingness to answer my numerous questions, and for the photographs of his China Diary artwork. I also thank Gloria Onley for sharing her edition of the China Diary with me.
I have completed over 40 watercolours in China, so I can't complain. The trip has been 100% successful. If life is an education, mine is a little more complete. China is no longer that white area of the map waiting for me to colour.

Toni Onley, (China Diary 1.7.57)

[. . .] it's hard to find out who anyone else is until you have found out who you are [. . .].

Margaret Atwood, Survival

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

Proverbs 1:7

In the spring of 1912, when the Titanic was moored at Queenstown, Ireland, the last stop prior to the Trans-Atlantic trip, a little boy excitedly followed his grandfather, Captain James Tobin, on board the grand ship that even 'God Himself cannot sink,' to be given an unforgettable tour. Had that child stayed on the ship when it set sail, the iceberg that sunk the Titanic would have robbed Canadians of a unique artist who would sail into the Arctic on a Canadian icebreaker and fly into the Far North in his own plane to paint icebergs. The little boy from whom Canadian landscape painter Toni Onley descended is James Anthony Onley, Toni Onley's father (27.Red duotang [rd].2).

Toni Onley, born in 1928 on the Isle of Man off the coast of Britain, was the first child of James Anthony Onley and Florence Lord. His parents named him Norman Anthony Onley. Toni Onley was educated in a strict Catholic school and his Catholic upbringing had a lasting effect on him. As a teenager, he took painting lessons from Manx landscape artist, John Hobbs Nicholson and articled.

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1 For more information on the notation of sources in the Toni Onley collection, see editorial notes.

2 Margaret Atwood, Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972)
as a draftsman for an architect in Douglas. In 1948, James Onley decided that he and his family needed to emigrate to Canada to escape the effects of war in Britain and to establish a home in a more stable country (27.rd.6).

The Onleys arrived in Halifax in mid-June of 1948 and settled in Galt, Ontario, now known as Cambridge, where Toni Onley found a job as a land surveyor (27.rd.6). On weekends, he would visit art exhibitions in Toronto and examine how Canadian painters, especially the Group of Seven and watercolour painters, David Milne and Carl Schaeffer, painted the landscape. In 1949, Toni Onley married Mary Burrows, an artist he met at an art school, and they had two children, Jennifer and Lynn (Boulet and Onley 20, 27.rd.6). In the spring of 1955, after his wife's death, his parents invited him and his two young children to join them in Penticton, British Columbia. In the two years he spent in the Okanagan Valley, he found the time to paint and pondered a career in art. "At 27 in 1957, the time had come to decide whether my future was to be in art or architecture," writes Onley in his introduction to his book, A Silent Thunder. "The decision was made for me. Like a message from heaven I received a letter from Mexico to say I had won a scholarship from the Instituto Allende in San Miguel de Allende [. . .]. I packed my art supplies and my two daughters into my little MG TD sports car and headed for Mexico" (Boulet and Onley 8).

In Mexico Onley experienced an artistic epiphany. "I had as much difficulty coming to terms with the Mexican landscape as I had when I arrived in Ontario nearly 10 years earlier," says Onley. "I responded to this landscape like

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3 Roger Boulet and Toni Onley, Toni Onley: A Silent Thunder (N.p.: Cerebrus and Prentice Hall, 1981) 20. Subsequent references will be marked as (Boulet and Onley page #).
a chameleon, and did some of my most uncharacteristic watercolours. Many of these works were later torn up and destroyed, to become the material for my first collages” (Boulet and Onley 8). When Onley tore up his artwork and let the pieces drop to the floor, he noticed how the fragments created new, spontaneous patterns. With new insight, Onley worked on the idea of creating designs without preconception and the collages he made with the fragments helped him understand spatial relationships (Boulet and Onley 20). The collages kept him preoccupied in his studio during his time of artistic exploration in Mexico (Boulet and Onley 9).

Onley left Mexico for Vancouver with his daughters in 1960. In the following year, he married Gloria Knight, an English professor he met when he taught in the Fine Arts Department at the University of British Columbia (21 rd.7; Toni Onley, telephone interview, 28 December 2000). Their son, James, born in 1966, has since become an adventurous globetrotter like his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.4

A 1963 Canada Arts Council grant allowed Onley to spend a year in London to study the art of engraving. “It was not until my year in London (1963-64) that I again started looking at watercolours,” recalls Onley. “I visited the Prints and Drawings room at the British Museum one day every week and rediscovered my roots. Here were the great Nineteenth century watercolour painters of England that I had so fervently tried to emulate as a boy [. . .]. Little watercolours[. . .]. I held them in my hands: [Joseph Mallord William] Turner’s,

4 Toni Onley, telephone interview, 12 November 2000.
exploding with light, John Sell Cotman's solidly built compositions, building wash upon wash, and the loaded brush of David Cox. All my patron saints. I had come home to my source” (Boulet and Onley 9). Viewing the nineteenth century landscape paintings helped turn Onley back to landscape painting. After Onley returned to Vancouver in 1964, his artwork slowly evolved from abstract expressionism to landscape.

The next adventure in Onley's life was his first painting trip to the Arctic in 1974 on board the C.C.G.S. Louis St. Laurent. He made his second trip the following summer, flying solo in his airplane. On the third trip in 1986, Onley obtained special permission from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to sail to the Arctic on board a Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker, the N.G.C.C. Des Groseilliers, together with Québécois poet, Claude Peloquin. Onley's Arctic, which was published in 1989, is an edited compilation of Onley's paintings and diary records of his Arctic experiences.\(^5\)

In between his second and third trips to the Arctic, Onley's second marriage ended and he married Yukiko Kageyama, a Japanese artist who had emigrated to Canada in the 1970's. Onley went on his first trip to Japan in the spring of 1978 and, on a planned excursion to Taiwan, held an exhibition in Taipei, which was his first art exhibition in Asia.

The turning point in Onley's career as an artist came in 1980 when a businessman, whom the media dubbed "The Fraser Valley Phantom," bought

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\(^5\) Toni Onley, Onley's Arctic: Diaries and Paintings of the High Arctic (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1989).
800 of Onley's works for close to a million dollars. Aided by extensive media coverage of the 'Phantom's' purchase of his artwork, Onley's fame spread quickly around the world and his book, *A Silent Thunder*, published in 1981, enjoyed highly successful sales. With his newly found wealth, Onley purchased his Polish Wilga '80 ski-plane, which he lost in a crash on a glacier near Whistler, British Columbia in September, 1983.

Onley's rise to fame and the income flowing from it did not escape the notice of Revenue Canada. In 1982, Revenue Canada chose Toni Onley as a test subject to try out a proposed tax law treating artists as if they were manufacturers of goods. Onley fought hard and petitioned the federal government to overturn the new tax law. He even threatened to burn his artwork on Vancouver's Wreck Beach to protest the law that would allow the Canadian government to tax unsold works of art. After five years of battling legislation for artists, Onley settled with the Canadian government's decision not to treat artists like manufacturers and its refusal to treat artists as businesspeople. In spite of the argument with Revenue Canada, Onley was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in the fall of 1998 to recognize his contributions to Canadian culture.

During Onley's tax fight with Revenue Canada, he went on a painting trip to India with George and Inge Woodcock in the winter of 1982 – 83. The trip was

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7 (File 15.1): Toni Onley, “Tax Battle lost; back to painting” *The Vancouver Sun* 2 June 1987.

8 Toni Onley, personal interview, 4 December 2000.
the basis of *The Walls of India*, a book written by Woodcock and illustrated with Onley's watercolours in order to raise funds to help the poor in India.\(^9\)

Onley's next major trip to Asia took place in 1988 when he visited China where he learned about Chinese culture as well as his Canadian culture. The illustrated diary record of his experiences in China is edited and annotated in this edition. A year after his visit to China, the Tienanmen Massacre threw China into chaos. Onley became unwillingly drawn into the politics surrounding the horrendous event when he chose to have an art exhibition of his works in Vancouver's Sun Yat Sen Garden.

In 1991, Onley was again involved in politics when he chose to resign from his position as an art acquisitions committee member for the Vancouver Art Gallery over his deep disagreement with the gallery's acquisition policies. In his resignation letter, Onley stated that, "Much of my own unhappiness with the way the curatorial staff think and the committee responds came to the fore with the purchase of the two cibachromes by the American artist Andres Serrano – *Piss Pope I & II*. It was obvious to me that the works were highly offensive to Catholics, not to mention non-Catholics like myself [. . .]. My fellow committee members appeared to be so brain-washed by notions of artistic (or possibly curatorial) freedom as to be unable to make any stand on grounds of decency or anything else."\(^{10}\) Although Onley no longer works for the Vancouver Art Gallery,


\(^{10}\) Toni Onley, resignation letter to Chris Dikeakos, 1 October 1991, 3.
he continues to support the gallery financially. Onley's artwork remains on permanent display in the 'British Columbian Artists' section in the Vancouver Art Gallery. Indeed, Onley is rightly recognized as a British Columbian artist. In 1999, Onley published Toni Onley's British Columbia: A Tribute to celebrate the beauty of British Columbia's landscape, which he has called home for the past forty years.

When Toni Onley decided to place his papers into an archive, he could have chosen the National Archives in Ottawa whose collections include Pierre Trudeau's papers; however, after much consideration, he chose to deposit his papers closer to his home at the University of British Columbia's Special Collections. His decision to place his papers in the University of British Columbia was based on his desire to give something back to the university where he taught during the 1960's and 1970's and to keep his papers within reach for himself and his biographer, Ted Lindberg.

The events in Toni Onley's personal history are all documented in various books, diaries, letters, manuscripts, photographs, and scrapbooks in the Toni Onley collection at UBC's Special Collections. I have chosen to edit and annotate Onley's 1988 China Diary because I wanted to create a document that would serve as an introductory guide or key to help scholars who are interested in the life and art of Toni Onley get a glimpse of what is available in UBC's Onley collection. Throughout my annotations of the China Diary, I have indicated

11 Toni Onley, Personal interview, 4 December 2000.

where one can find the documents in UBC's Onley collection for further investigation. I have also included copious notes and supplementary information in the appendices to help the reader learn more about the artist and his art while understanding where the China Diary is situated in the context of Onley's life and the culture of his times. My edition of the China Diary is extensively annotated because I wanted to ensure that I provide sufficient background information for a broad readership to understand the political, historical, cultural, spiritual, and mythological context of the people, events, and places mentioned in the diary. In a telephone conversation Onley exclaimed, "Everything in China is political!" In the detailed annotations I have sought to convey the politically charged and historically rich atmosphere that Onley encountered in China. The annotations also document some of the historical knowledge that Onley had brought with him when he went to China, and simulate the inundation of information that Onley experienced as he painted and travelled in China. For example, at the end of the February 23 entry where Onley mentions the French and British presence in China and in his recounting of Kunming's World War II history in the March 1 entry demonstrate his historical knowledge. In the February 23 entry, Onley's knowledge of history is shown by immediately connecting the colonial British and French buildings on Shamian Island with the infamous notice, "NO CHINESE OR DOGS ALLOWED" from the

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13 (1.12) Toni Onley, letter to Anne Goddard, 15 October 1987.

14 All of the books that Onley has written and/or illustrated are either a part of the Special Collections or found in UBC's circulating materials collection.

time of the Boxer Rebellion. Although Onley mentions these historical connections in passing, my long footnotes on these few sentences on pages 44-45 show the background knowledge one must have in order to make such historical connections. The Dujiang Dam tour in the March 6 entry, the Needle and Well visit in the March 8 entry, and the history of Luoyang in the March 16 entry reveal what Onley learns about Chinese history and culture. The large amount of space that Onley uses to re-tell the story of the Needle and the Well reveals Onley's newly acquired knowledge of the origin of Taoism.

I also chose to edit and annotate the China Diary because it helped me learn more about Onley's experience as a Canadian immigrant and about his contribution to Canadian culture. Compared to his other unpublished diaries in UBC's Onley Collection, the China Diary contains the most comments on the artist's feelings about being Canadian.

The China Diary in UBC's Onley collection is a photocopied manuscript. Onley decided to keep the original manuscript because he wanted to ensure that the illustrated diary would be available should collectors of his artwork be interested in purchasing it. The beautifully hand-written diary and its fifteen sketches and watercolour landscape paintings, which Onley has photographed for this edition, make the manuscript a small work of art. Although diaries are generally meant to be private, Onley's inclusion of artwork in his diary suggests that he created his diary with the intention of showing it to other people. In fact, Gloria Onley edited the China Diary for Onley in 1994-95 and both Gloria and

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16 Toni Onley, personal interview, 4 December 2000.
Toni intended to publish it.\textsuperscript{17} The book was never published, but Toni Onley gave a copy of the edited China Diary to UBC’s Special Collections in March 2001, and it can be found in Box 28, File 1.

Onley’s main purpose for visiting China was to paint. As he wrote about and painted his travelling experiences in China, Onley used the rhetoric of art in describing his experiences in China in his diary. Throughout the diary, he uses the names of paint colours like ‘burnt sienna,’ ‘yellow ochre,’ and ‘cobalt violet,’ to describe animals and scenery in China.\textsuperscript{18} In the diary, Onley also made references to major artists like Bruegel and Turner when describing Chinese scenery or artwork. On page 32 of the manuscript, Onley added a comment about Turner after the diary entry was written as if he anticipated that such a comment would help his readers better understand his analysis of a work of art.

The China diary is a valuable source of information on Onley as an artist: it contains descriptions of his creative process, his painting techniques, and his opinions on art. Although critics have said much about the artist and his art, the diary, which preserves Onley’s views, thoughts, and voice, is an obviously useful resource that provides the reader with insight into Onley’s perspectives. For example, critics have often grouped Toni Onley with Gordon Smith and the late Jack Shadbolt, and labelled them the three major contemporary British Columbian artists.\textsuperscript{19} The China Diary and other writings in the UBC Onley Collection show that Onley is more interested in speaking about his art in relation

\textsuperscript{17} Gloria Onley, telephone interview, 15 December 2000.

\textsuperscript{18} For example: Burnt sienna: p24, 39, 47. Yellow Ochre: 24. Cobalt Violet: 8.
to nineteenth century British artists, such as Turner, than comparing himself to his British Columbian contemporaries.

Some critics have drawn unflattering, but amusing comparisons between Onley and Turner. When Turner painted his famous images of the burning British Houses of Parliament, people criticized him for painting the tragedy instead of assisting in the attempts to put out the fire. Some nineteenth century art critics joked that Turner might have even planned the fire in order to paint the spectacular sight. When Mt. St. Helens erupted in 1980:

...one particularly cynical story was that Onley himself had dropped a bomb into the crater of Mt. St. Helens and had hovered [in his plane] close by to record in watercolour the resulting eruption thus being almost as quick on the art market with the still-wet paintings as the lucky photographer within shooting distance of the volcano who delivered his pictures to the presses of the astounded world. (Wood 19)

Onley’s apparently sudden rise to fame after the Fraser Valley Phantom’s purchase of his works and his success in the art market has prompted both curious critics and jealous artists to search for his “secret.” “Toni Onley is a uniquely difficult artist,” writes one art critic, “since he does sell and is appreciated by the general public. And he creates a sense of unease, even dislike, amongst fellow artists and critics in his region. One wonders why this is so and whether he is, really, any good at all” (Wood 18). Onley is not only a successful artist, but a sharp, risk-taking businessman who delivers his art efficiently. However, his efficiency has prompted criticism that he is more a manufacturer of art than an artist:
He paints fast, he works small and usually of a uniform size. All of his frames are mass produced, pre-made in bulk, the components (glass, mattes etc.) all identically cut, easily assembled, just waiting for their art piece. There is a network of galleries across Canada who handle Onley's work. Their uniform size makes the works easy to ship.... Much of his output is prints and again he has a rigid production schedule and a well-oiled and efficient distribution organization. (Wood 18)

Some critics have commented that Onley's paintings are formulaic and they consider his methods of marketing his art "to be a bit pushy, very brash and rather vulgar. Not at all 'West Coast' in spirit" (Wood 19).

According to Onley's China Diary and other papers in the archives, Onley is not consciously following a formula or hiding the secrets of his art. In response to those who are interested in learning about the 'magic' behind Onley's art, Onley ironically states, "I am constantly striving to maintain a beneficial state of ignorance, knowing that if I ever realize fully with my conscious mind exactly how an effect is produced, I am doomed to the making of replicas" (T.O.'s BC 16). When Onley paints, the brush becomes a part of him and the process of creating the art is more important to Onley than the artwork itself. Onley describes his creative process in his Japan Diary:

With [. . .] big, floppy brushes, the artist can create a dialogue between himself and his work as it unfolds before him. Life and death, success and failure, the work demanding his total attention. The brush disappearing into an extension of his will. He 'becomes' his painting, chaos is controlled with a cobweb-thin rein that extends from his mind, keeping it all together for a moment longer until finally, the painting says, 'I'm finished, you can relax! My life is my own from now on. I am born!'

(1.5.26-27)

Onley thus appears to be cleverly avoiding any revelations of the "tricks of the trade." Yet Onley does not avoid speaking about his artistic process. Although he states that he does not understand how he paints, he often talks about his manner of painting, and he openly discusses his techniques in his diaries and in his books, *A Silent Thunder* and *Toni Onley's British Columbia*. In a statement from his Arctic Diaries about how he paints, Onley says:

> I paint directly in response to what is in front of me. I do not outline or draw in pencil beforehand, that for me would be to paint by numbers; the finished painting decided long before completion. I prefer to leave all my options open and not know what the finished work will look like.... To keep the whole work moving and speaking to me until I arrive at that point when the watercolour says to me – 'I am finished.' (27. black binder. 11)

For Onley, spontaneity is important. "Painting is discovery," writes Onley, "arriving at a point at which I surprise myself, creating a painting I could not have possibly imagined at the beginning" (*T.O.'s BC*, 4).

Onley seems sincere in his admission that he does not understand how he paints. His explanation, "The good paintings fall off the brush, the less successful take longer" (*T.O.'s BC* viii) shows that he does not understand the creative process behind his work. When he paints in the wilderness, Onley describes the spontaneous moment of creativity as a universal "primitive unconscious," which "wells up of its own accord, as we are overwhelmed and our inner balance is restored" (*T.O.'s BC* viii). As he tries to find the words to describe how he paints, he uses spiritual terms like 'Zen,' 'Tao,' and 'Ch'i,' in an attempt to express the unknown with spirituality. Onley uses the phrase "Zen-like
oneness of Nature, hand and brush" (T.O.'s BC 16) to explain the creative moment in which the landscape he sees in reality becomes transformed into art.

"In Asian art there is the Zen concept of the 'beginner's mind,' a sort of emptiness which allows the landscape to be painted, not by the artist, but through the artist," Onley explains in his book, *Toni Onley's British Columbia* (34). Onley's understanding of the Buddhist concept of Zen is influenced by the concept of Tao, which he learned about on his trip to China. In the China Diary, Onley uses Taoist principles to describe his creative process. According to Zen Buddhism, the blank state of the mind is the meditative silence required for the attainment of enlightenment. The idea that the artist is a mere conduit through which art manifests itself is a Taoist principle. The Tao Te Ching, which Taoists revere as scripture, defines Tao, or Way, as the perennial creative life force that moves through everything in the universe:

Way gave birth to one,
and one gave birth to two.
Two gave birth to three,
and three gave birth to the ten thousand things.
Then the ten thousand things shouldered *yin* and embraced *yang*,
blending *ch’i* to establish harmony.  

In the China Diary, Onley mentions the concept of Ch’i (or Qi) in his description of how he prepares his mind before he paints:

As I set out my watercolour palette, paper and board, I tried to attune myself with Qi—the great cosmic “breath,” that force of nature that animates and energizes all things. I tried to

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concentrate on the physical world before embarking on the imaginary one of the spirit. (1.7.43)

The "imaginary world of the spirit" in which Onley creates his art is a place where East meets West, where art is the portal to timelessness, where the language is art. Critics have commented on the "otherworldliness" of Onley's paintings:

Beyond mirages, under the appearances, lives another world, an unknown magic and spellbound world. This artist's reality is of a soothing simplicity. His art, of a profound inwardness, allows the discerning of a world of sensations otherwise neglected. A timeless universe, freed from the everyday, closed upon itself.21

The timeless element is what Onley strives to capture in his paintings because he wants his work to speak to people through the generations. Onley seems to have successfully conveyed timelessness in his art, for another critic notes that "[t]here is a sense of permanence that the viewer feels in his transformation of the landscape, a sense of timelessness and durability."22 Onley expresses his desire to see his art endure beyond cutting-edge art trends:

The best [paintings] do have a sort of spiritual presence, I guess. A simplicity. I think something else needs to come through the painting—a timeless element. Not like merely capturing the here and now. I want to capture a timelessness, something that lasts through time, a way of deconstructing history, I guess you could say.... The artist does work which does not die with him or her. When people look at the artwork, you live again in that work. I want to be in my paintings one


hundred years from now, hanging in a museum. I want my work to live on.²³

Onley’s watercolours are cross-cultural: they fuse his Western or British landscape training with the spirituality and brushes of the East. The brushes that Onley uses for his watercolours are Chinese goat hair brushes which he praises for being soft, pliable, versatile, and able to “produce surprising, spontaneous effects” (T.O.’s BC, 53). In China, when he was asked to paint in public, Onley had no difficulty producing paintings with Chinese brushes, ink and paper. In fact, he felt that he was breaking through the language barriers to communicate with the Chinese through his paintings.

I took off my coat, rolled up my sleeves, gripped Liu’s largest brush in my hand and studied the paper; mentally composing a landscape of rocks and ragged mountains. When I had the rough disposition of my shapes fixed in my mind, I looked up and the already filled gallery had filled even more. The silence and expectant look on the sea of faces was one I could only imagine reserved for the second coming.... I was interrupted in my train of thought by one of the monks exclaiming ‘xieyi’.... ‘Xieyi’ means to write or paint with meaning, to be able to describe those parts of a painting not touched by the brush—that is xieyi. I finished by dragging in three mountains with a half dry brush. It was as if everyone had been holding their collective breaths. For as I lay the brush gently down on its rest, the audience in unison exhaled a great sigh and when totally expelled, burst into thunderous applause. (1.7.35-36)

Onley understands xieyi as a way of looking at art as a language or a manner of painting that breaks through language barriers. In Taipei, where Onley unwittingly became a Canadian ambassador, he told the Chinese, “We might not speak the same language, but I would like to feel we speak through our paintings.” (1.5.28) On his trips to China and Taiwan, Onley learned that

²³ Toni Onley, telephone interview, 12 November 2000.
“painting and poetry in China are indistinguishable” (1.7.1) and that “art is as familiar as writing, in fact writing is art.” (1.5.29) When Onley read the Nobel lecture of exiled Chinese writer, Gao Xingjian, who won the 2000 Nobel prize for literature, Onley sympathized with the writer’s desire for the freedom to express himself.24 After reading the lecture Onley exclaimed, “For literature, read ART!”25

If Onley’s paintings can be read as literature, can Onley’s China Diary, which is a work of art, also be considered literature? When I asked him if he would consider his diary a work of Canadian literature, Onley replied:

Well...I think of Milton and Shakespeare as literature.... [incredulous laughter] [...] I mean, it's a diary. A diary isn't what you would call literature, would you? It would definitely need much more polishing and work before anyone would consider that to be literature. And even then, I would have to be dead for many years and people would still have to consider it valuable before it would even be called literature. No, I don't think I would call this literature. I'm sure Margaret Atwood would say the same thing about her writing. She'd say, "I'm a novelist. I don't write things with the intention of turning it into literature." 26

Although Onley’s diary may not be literary in the strictest sense of the word, the China Diary is still culturally valuable. In his Nobel lecture, Gao Xingjian says, “Literature is simply man focusing his gaze on his self, and while he does a thread of consciousness that sheds light on this self begins to grow” (Xingjian B8). Onley focusses “his gaze on his self” in his China Diary.


When Onley wrote his China Diary, he was writing to an audience of artists; however, his intended audience also included Canadian university students. At the time of his 1988 spring trip to China, Onley was aware of the likelihood that his China Diary would be read by others for he had agreed to give his papers to UBC’s Special Collections in the autumn of the previous year. With the assumption that he would be giving the diary to the archives, where mostly Canadian university students and academics would have access to it, he recorded people and events related to Canada in his diary and added his thoughts on being Canadian. In the March 3 and 13, 1988 entries of the manuscript, the comments on being Canadian, written in small hand-writing in packed lines, appear to have been inserted after the entry was originally written, as if Onley sought to increase the Canadian content of his diary. There are also other entries in which Onley demonstrates his awareness of his Canadian identity: the March 11 incident when Onley was questioned about the Canadian doctor, Norman Bethune; the March 12 description of how he and Yukiko became representatives of Canada in the Dr. Tillson Lever Harrison celebrations; and the February 29 record of reaction when his translator, Pei Lin, asked him about the status of artists in Canada. All of these entries and Onley’s musings about how Canada can help China in the field of aviation and telecommunications show that Onley is conscious of and proud of his Canadian identity.


Onley's China Diary, which is a first-person narrative about a Canadian artist's understanding of himself and his responsibility of representing Canadians in China, is a work of life writing. In writing the diary, Onley records specific events of a short period of his life that best illustrate how he has come to understand his identity in relation to the world. Life writing, according to Susanna Egan, the author of *Mirror Talk*, is a way in which people write about their lives in order to contain, distil, analyze, and understand their identities:

Just as the autobiographer creates a self as narrator / protagonist, so it is also customary to create a narrative out of what are otherwise merely events in his life. By selection and omission, by sequence and emphasis, narrative gives meaning to events. For autobiography, of course, it gives furthermore, the author's own understanding of the meaning of his own life. Even where the autobiography covers only a small part of a life or a particular crisis, its object is understanding and its medium is narrative.  

As an artist, Onley produces art which 'holds a mirror to nature,' but the reader can consider his diary to be a mirror as well. The China Diary is a mirror for the artist himself to see who he is, and it is also a mirror in which readers can see themselves reflected in Onley's character or in his descriptions of Canadians, Americans, Chinese and British people. Perhaps Onley's "mirror" does not reflect reality at all but simplifies reality into an abstract painting in which reality has been reduced to basic forms. Regardless of what reality is, the China Diary is Onley's portrayal of himself and the world. In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood

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muses on the state of "reflective" Canadian literature and how it helps or hinders Canadians from defining who they are:

A piece of art, as well as being a creation to be enjoyed, can also be [. . .] a mirror. The reader looks at the mirror and sees not the writer but himself; and behind his own image in the foreground, a reflection of the world he lives in. If a country or a culture lacks such mirrors it has no way of knowing what it looks like; it must travel blind. If...the viewer is given a mirror that reflects not him but someone else, and told at the same time that the reflection he sees is himself, he will get a very distorted idea of what he is really like. He will also get a distorted idea of what other people are like: it's hard to find out who anyone else is until you have found out who you are.\(^{31}\)

When Onley wrote the China Diary, he was not writing to search for his identity, but to consolidate what he knew about his identity and to describe what he has learned about the others he met on his trip to China. By learning more about China and the Chinese, his newly acquired knowledge become part of his identity: at the end of the trip, Onley writes, "The trip has been 100% successful. If life is an education, mine is a little more complete. China is no longer that white area of the map waiting for me to colour" (139).

Onley's diary reveals much about his identity. First, Onley makes it clear in the title, *Toni Onley Diary of China Painting Trip*, that he went to China to paint. At the end of the trip, he felt that the trip was "100 % successful" primarily because he had "painted over 40 watercolours" (139). Although the Chinese do not separate Onley's identity as an artist from his identity as a Canadian or a foreigner (as demonstrated by the VIP treatment on board the train described in the February 29 entry) Onley differentiates his Canadian identity from his identity
as an artist. "The wonderful thing about being an artist is that artists are universal beings," Onley enthused in a telephone interview, "They are stateless, classless, and they enjoy the mobility to go among any class, any state, any group of people, and still be at home." When he wrote about his public painting experiences in China, he spoke as if the artist and audience were united in the universal appreciation of art. Thinking back to the public painting incident he recorded in the March 5 entry, Onley remarked, "[T]he song of the brush lives as evident [. . .] when I painted for a rapt audience. For this crowd, art is as old as stone and as new as breath."

The China Diary provides the reader with glimpses of Onley's British upbringing. Onley's British background occasionally surfaces when he mentions his Western art training or his childhood. An example of the underlying British component of his identity is apparent in a comment in the March 5 entry: "It is odd how the mighty yearn to be artists [. . .]. We only have Prince Albert and Churchill to show for it" (90). The "we" in this comment is Onley's reference to himself as British, as both of the leaders Onley mentions are British.

Nevertheless, Onley considers himself more Canadian than British. In an interview, Onley described how he had difficulty forming friendships with the English when he went back to Britain after immigrating to Canada. The


33 Toni Onley, memo to author, 18 December 2000.

The phrase 'old as stone and new as breath' is a reference to the opening lines of Michael Scott's Vancouver Sun article on Chang Dai-chien's art exhibition in Vancouver. [Michael Scott, "An ancient modern" The Vancouver Sun 14 Dec. 2000: C8.]
friendships he ended up forming in Britain were with ex-patriate British people who had immigrated to Canada and returned to Britain for a visit like Onley. During another interview, Onley facetiously mused that he knows he is a Canadian because the government did not hesitate to test out new tax laws on him, and then awarded him the Order of Canada after he fought the laws.

In two entries he describes who he is by saying what he abhors, or what he does not want to be. The March 19 entry includes a description of a group of “noisy, foul-mouthed ghetto kids from New York City” whose female members “looked like they had seen and done it all” (137). In describing these American youths, Onley distances himself from them and quietly defines himself as not American. The Suzhou Garden incident (March 20 incident) shows Onley distancing himself from a crass American couple who disturbed his work. In the statement, “Curious Chinese I can handle; American tourists are quite another thing” (139), Onley clearly shows that he does not want to be confused with an American tourist.

Many comments in the China Diary provide information about how Onley deals with his Canadian identity. The diary also reveals how the Chinese perceive him as a Canadian. For example, the reverence and high esteem the Chinese express for the two Canadian doctors, Norman Bethune and Tillson Lever Harrison, opens the way for Onley to be warmly accepted and respected simply because he is Canadian. Although Onley states that he does not see

35 Toni Onley, personal interview, 4 December 2000.
himself as anybody other than an artist when he travels abroad, he does not refrain from expressing his pleasure in his diary when the Chinese associated him with the heroic and helpful Canadians, Bethune and Harrison.

In the China Diary, Onley is happy to identify himself as a Canadian and the Chinese generally welcome him as a Canadian. But what does it mean to call Toni Onley a Canadian? Onley presents himself as the adventurous travelling artist who explores Canada in his plane like Tom Thomson did with his canoe. He also markets himself as the rough and rugged Canadian in his Opus paint box advertisement (included in Appendix D,) in his introductory notes to the September 1984 art exhibition (also included in this edition in Appendix J,) and in his preamble to his Borscht recipe that he was asked to submit to a fundraising celebrity cookbook.\textsuperscript{36} In his preface to \textit{Toni Onley's British Columbia: A Tribute}, he writes about environmentalism, which he has embraced, as a Canadian activity:

\begin{quote}
British Columbia is a land with soul. There is no other place in North America where you will find among its inhabitants such an instinct to protect Nature and such a determination to set an example of conservation for other countries [. . .]. It is here that the roots of the strongest ecology movement in the world began. It is no accident that International Greenpeace got its start here. (vii)
\end{quote}

Onley says he became an environmental activist in 1970 when he brought news cameramen to Ahous Point, B.C., to raise awareness about the destruction of West Coast forests (T.O.'s BC 8). He has also participated in various wilderness protection activities such as writing letters to the provincial government to plead

\textsuperscript{36} Borscht recipe photocopy and MS are in File 1.15.
for the protection of the Tashenshini River, and organizing fund raising projects
to protect the Stein River Valley. On his trips to the Arctic, Onley became
keenly aware of his Canadian identity as he learned more about the fragility of
the Arctic ecosystem and realized that Canada's claim on the Arctic is tenuous.

“For the Canadian, the Arctic is a zone of the mind, and a large part of our
consciousness,” said Onley, on his second trip to the Arctic. “It is our identity,
without it we would be in crisis” (27.1.112).

According to Onley’s China Diary, his trip to China helped him fill another
zone of his mind. At the end of the trip, Onley’s remark that “China is no longer
that white area of the map waiting for me to colour” (139) declares that he has
learned more about China, but it can also suggest that his trip to China has
taught him more about how he defines himself as a Canadian artist. Being a
foreigner in China heightened Onley’s awareness of his Canadian identity and
helped him reflect on what it means to be Canadian. The China Diary is Onley’s
record of how he grappled with his understanding of the Canadian identity. In his
process of identity definition, Canada became a place of the mind and, like
Margaret Atwood, he began to perceive “[. . .] Canada as a state of mind, as the
space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head” (Atwood 18).

Canadian philosopher, John Ralston-Saul also sees Canadian identity as
something that needs to be anchored in the mind. His analysis of the Canadian
identity situation has led him to conclude that

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37 Tatshenshini River: (T.O.’s BC 20) Stein River: (T.O.’s BC 32)
The greatest challenge is the frontier of the imagination. The more our imagination is bordered, the more we fit the classic description of 'a people.' This is because in the frontiers of our imagination are lodged our doubts about identity. The classic nation-state seeks to eliminate these in the name of unity or loyalty.

Charles Taylor, another prominent Canadian philosopher, also sees the imagination as the point where the borders of identity are established. According to Taylor, the work of artists illustrates how people discover their identities:

I want to note the close relation between our ordinary ideas of self-discovery and the work of the creative artist. Self-discovery involves the imagination, like art. We think of people who have achieved originality in their lives as 'creative.' And that we describe the lives of non-artists in artistic terms as somehow paradigm achievers of self-definition.

If artists can be considered 'paradigm achievers of self definition,' perhaps reading Onley's China Diary can help us learn more about how we define ourselves and his diary would become what Atwood would call, "a map, a geography of the mind." (Atwood, 18-19)

The problem that Onley faced when defining his Canadian identity in China was discerning "typically Canadian" traits that unite Canadians and differentiate them from the rest of the world. Onley seemed to have no difficulty in identifying himself as Canadian in China and that could indicate that Canadians have a clear definition of what it means to be Canadian. However,

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Canadian poet Robert Kroetsch does not think that Canadians know who they are: "We live a life of shifting edges, around an unspoken or unspeakable question [. . .]. [. . .] [I]n asking who we are, we are who we are." According to Kroetsch, "Canadian literature, at its most radical, is the autobiography of a culture that tells its story by telling us repeatedly that it has no story to tell" (Kroetsch 193). Onley's writings do not conform to what Kroetsch considers the typical Canadian (non-)story, for his China Diary and other writings about his life demonstrate that, not only does Onley have many stories that are worth telling, he is also willing to share them with others. Perhaps what Kroetsch means is not that Canadians do not have stories to tell, but that Canadians lack a national meta-narrative to unite their stories. "[A]ll is periphery and margin, against the hole in the middle," says Kroetsch, "We are held together by that absence. There is no centre. This disunity is our unity" (Kroetsch 31).

In the China Diary, Onley does not seem to think that disunity unifies Canadians, for he embraces the narrative of the Canadian hero as a unifying identity model for Canadians. In the March 13 entry, Onley writes:

> We Canadians are very well loved in China, thanks to Dr. Harrison and Dr. Bethune. We in Canada seem to produce men and women like Dr. Harrison, out of all proportion to the size of our population. Where there is a spot on earth where people have been dealt a rotten hand, you will find a Canadian. They are usually doctors or nurses, administering to the sick or feeding the starving. In these places Canadians have an identity. (123)

Despite the overly idealistic tone, Onley is not saying that all Canadians are heroes like Dr. Bethune and Dr. Harrison. Through the process of writing, Onley
is attempting to understand how Canadians are perceived abroad and how those perceptions affect his act of identifying himself as a Canadian. In the last part of the March 2 entry, Onley muses about how Canada, being a world leader in communications technology, can help China improve the efficiency of its telecommunications system (77). At the beginning of the following entry, Onley describes how a security woman wearing a maple leaf pin in the lapel of her uniform smiled when she saw Onley's Canadian passport. Both of these remarks demonstrate Onley's conclusion that Canadians are well received because of their ability and willingness to assist others.

Another model that Onley can use to understand how Canadians define their national identity is the multicultural mosaic in which Canadian citizens are presented as fragments that come together in a harmonious collaboration to create a whole. However, the problem with the mosaic model is that it supports Kroetsch's idea that Canadians are united in disunity. Not only does the model present Canadians as disconnected fragments, it also fails to indicate what the common, unifying picture should be. The cultural mosaic analogy does not unite Canadians, but the model illustrates how the nation has become so fragmented. "A fragmented society is one whose members find it harder and harder to identify with their political society as a community," writes Charles Taylor, in his book, *The Ethics of Authenticity*. "This lack of identification [. . .] helps to entrench atomism, because the absence of effective common action throws people back on themselves" (Taylor 117). Perhaps a better model to unite Canadians would be a tapestry, as Pierre Trudeau suggests:

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Canada has often been called a mosaic, but I prefer the image of a tapestry, with its many threads and colours, its beautiful shapes, its intricate subtlety. If you go behind a tapestry, all you see is a mass of complicated knots. We have tied ourselves in knots, you might say. Too many Canadians only look at the tapestry of Canada that way. But if they would see it as others do, they would see what a beautiful, harmonious thing it really is.\footnote{Pierre Trudeau, \textit{The Essential Trudeau}, Ed. Ron Grahame. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998) 177.}

Trudeau's tapestry metaphor offers a more positive outlook than the mosaic model in that it presents the lives of Canadians as interconnected and inseparable. Despite the knotted relationships on one side, the tapestry model reveals a harmonious unity on the other side.

According to Edward Said, "nations are narratives"\footnote{Edward Said, \textit{Culture and Imperialism} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) Xiii.} and if Canadian stories form the nation, then the metaphor of the tapestry is more fitting in describing how Canadians make sense of their identities by spinning the yarn of their life-stories and weaving them with those of other Canadians. Using the analogy of the tapestry, Onley's life-story would be a strand interwoven and linked with other strands like Trudeau's and George Woodcock's in the Canadian tapestry and his China Diary would be a segment of his life-story strand. "Our identity requires recognition by others," says Charles Taylor, and so Onley's identity becomes meaningful because it is linked with the identities of others and recognized by others (Taylor 45).

When travelling in China, Onley does not specifically use the multicultural mosaic or the tapestry model to define his identity as a Canadian artist, but he
uses a multicultural Canadian perspective to learn more about the Chinese. The China Diary provides a good demonstration of how Onley simultaneously compartmentalizes and embraces multiple identities when he deals with religion and spirituality. For example, in the Muslim Mosque visit, as described in the February 24 entry, Onley “invoked Allah to look kindly on [his] painting efforts in China” and countered his translator’s remark that ‘religion is the opium of the people’ with the suggestion that a government cannot take away people’s spiritual beliefs. Later on, in the March 8 entry when he paints in a Taoist temple, Onley attempts to attune himself to ‘Qi’ for inspiration. When he sees a group of Tibetan monks visiting a temple, Onley marvels at their strength of character to visit the land of the people who had occupied their nation and he sympathizes with them in their loss of their spiritual leader and the desecration of their sacred places by the Communist Chinese government.

Onley’s tolerance of various beliefs can be considered a reflection of his Canadian multicultural identity, but it also shows the spiritual component of his identity and his understanding of spirituality’s role in Canadian identity formation. In the March 11 entry of the China Diary (114), Onley records that a Chinese man asked him if Canadians consider Norman Bethune to be a hero. Onley’s response that Canadians “are a very religious people and it is considered bad form in Canada to put any one person above God” reveals that he views Canadians as united by a common set of Christian standards. According to Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby, in 1990, only 29% of Canadians claimed to

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44 The first of the Biblical Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:3)
be affiliated with organized religion. However, in the Canada of the 1950's when Onley first came to Canada from the Isle of Man, over 80% of the Canadian population was affiliated with organized religion.\textsuperscript{45}

The standards of the 1950's was based on the Confederation Fathers' old order and vision of the Dominion of Canada. The highly idealistic confederation dream of a land that is united by the steel tracks of a national railway extending from sea to sea, and a self-sufficient people working together for a prosperous future was what held the Canadians of the past together. The old order of Canadian society declared Canada to be God's Dominion, and established the nation's foundation upon "the supremacy of God and the rule of law," as indicated in the first line of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.\textsuperscript{46}

Canadians are moving away from incorporating God or ideas of the sacred, which their forefathers once thought were vital, into the foundation of the country. The rejection of God in Canada is best illustrated in 1999, when some Canadians were so offended by the mentioning of "Canada being founded upon the supremacy of God" in the preamble of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that they sent a petition to the federal government to have the reference to God removed.

One of the main reasons why I chose to edit and annotate the China Diary is because of Onley's many references in the diary to his personal spirituality and


\textsuperscript{46} The Canadian motto is "A mare usque ad mare", translated "From sea to sea." The motto is a segment of Psalm 72:8: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of
how he incorporates spirituality into his understanding of his Canadian identity. As a Canadian and a Christian, I find the China Diary interesting because it shows a Canadian embracing the sacred as a part of his personal identity. Although Onley has stated in various interviews that he is an agnostic and he expresses his dislike of the dogmatism of organized religion, he is very tolerant of the spiritual beliefs of others, as shown in the China Diary. 47

When I first began my thesis project, I did not think that spirituality was crucial or relevant to the Canadian identity because many Canadians skirt around religion for they perceive it to be an increasingly contentious and divisive issue. However, the more I tried to avoid the topic of Canadian spirituality, the more the topic surfaced as I did further research on Canadian literature and Canadian history. Still, I did not want to venture into such a problematic and enormous topic for my M.A. thesis.

One day as I was praying, I had a vision. In the vision, I saw a single conical beam of bright white light illuminating a large, fragmented flag in an empty and dark auditorium. When I asked the Lord God what the vision meant, He said, “Canada is a broken and fragmented country because she has turned the earth.” [The Holy Bible. King James version.] The name, the Dominion of Canada, comes from this verse because the Confederation Fathers felt that the verse aptly describes Canada’s geography.

47 E.g. “[...] religion seems to start wars. That’s why I don’t like organized religion because I feel that it can bring out the worst in you. Organized religion is so dogmatic, all about having on truth. I don’t believe in only one truth: I believe that truth is wherever I can find it.” (Toni Onley, telephone interview, 12 March 2000.)

“So many problems in this world, wars, and all that, are caused by religion. [...] I mean I understand that having beliefs and the freedom to believe in what you want is important, but I also think that blind faith can also cause problems. I personally do not believe in any Supreme God.” (Toni Onley, telephone interview, 5 March 2001.)
away from Me and has forgotten that I am part of her foundation. Canadians 
may think that they have everything, but only I can make people whole.”

“Why are You telling me this?” I asked. “What do You want me to do about 
it?”

He replied, “I want you to write about Me in your thesis. I want you to write 
the message I have given you.”

Writing about God in my thesis the way I have been instructed to in the 
vision seemed extremely risky at best and ludicrous at worst. I was not about to 
throw myself joyfully into a dubious task. I did not think I could find a way of 
talking about God and Canadian identity in my thesis. The message is 
controversial and the topic seemed non-academic to me. Yet, the vision showed 
me that I could not dismiss my spirituality and the reality of God in my life. My 
research showed me that I could not deny the importance of spirituality in 
Canadian identity formation, either. After much soul searching and spiritual 
struggling, I accepted the task and proceeded to find a way of producing my 
thesis. The academic hurdles I faced were a great challenge and many times I 
wanted to give up on the task. Eventually, I decided that Onley’s China Diary 
with its many references to Canadian identity and spirituality would be a suitable 
work to examine and would provide me with the space to introduce the message 
God had given me. In this way, the editing, annotating, and introduction of 
Onley’s China Diary became a personal spiritual journey as well as an academic 
project.
The Onley China Diary project has taught me that the search for a Canadian identity can be a spiritual as well as a physical journey. Northrop Frye's oft-quoted passage from his book on Canadian literature, the Bush Garden, deals with the question of Canadian identity by throwing in another question:

> It seems to me that the Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts the identity. It is less perplexed by the question of "Who am I?" than by some such riddle as "Where is here?"  

Frye's alternative riddle, "Where is here?" is a circular question that does not provide illumination on the issue of Canadian identity nor does it answer the first riddle of "Who am I?". ‘Here’ is a personal concept that can only be defined meaningfully and named by the individual, but the individual cannot define or name the immediate surrounding space as 'here' unless the individual is aware that s/he is here to name and define. Defining 'here' needs to be preceded by defining self. One cannot define the self by merely looking at the world without a context and without points of reference that are externally available but internally grasped. ‘Here’ and one's identity both need a spiritual and physical context to be defined. To define our identity is to state who we are, but we also need to know where we have come from, and even where we are going.

The 'here' of Frye's riddle is like the unfixed, ever-moving, frameless Taoist concept of the 'Way,' to which Onley refers in his China Diary when describing his artistic processes. According to the Taoists, to follow the universal

Way is to live a life of harmony; however, the Way is a route that does not promise to lead to any destination. For Onley, the Taoist concept of Way is applicable to his life for he does not want to know how he paints or where his inspiration and art will lead him. Onley likes to keep the unknown unknown. "There is an Unknown, and I believe that Unknown sustains us. It spoils things when you know everything."  

The Taoist Way encourages its followers to travel a spiritual path without ceasing. Onley appears to have applied this concept to his life for he is constantly travelling around the world to paint and to exhibit. Although Onley travels often, he does not usually write about his travels. This means that the China Diary record of his travel experiences is valuable because it is one of only a few travel writing documents in the Onley collection. The experiences Onley records in the diary can provide insight into Canadian travel writing. Carol Martin, in _Canadian Nomads: Travel Writing in the 20th Century_, says:

> Artists, whether novelists, poets, or visual artists, have had a special role in bringing travel experiences back home, impressions that may be filtered or recreated in a distinctly personal way. Some observers of travel writing believe that fiction and travel writing are drawing closer together, and that in many cases there is little to distinguish between travel fiction and the travel essay.

Onley's China Diary demonstrates the difficulty in discerning factual and fictive writing. The diary approaches fiction in some parts where he carefully words his entries. For example, at the end of the February 24 entry, where Onley writes


about his reaction to Chinese food, the description may appear to be light-hearted and honest. However, his choice of words and creative descriptions seem to indicate that the passage verges on fiction. Elsewhere in the diary, Onley lists historical facts about China, like in his description of Nanjing in the March 18 entry, but the telling of history like a story blurs the distinction between factual history and fictive storytelling.

In travel writing, there are many kinds of narratives. The type of narrative that describes Onley's travel writing the best is the one that sets the travel writer as Odysseus ever returning home—a heroic figure, who travels around the world, but knows that he has a home that he can constantly return to. The trip to China is an adventure for Onley, but the trip also served to help him define his identity. Onley's narrative of his travel experiences in China can be read as his way of defining the "here" of his Canadian home by being elsewhere. According to Eric Leed, in The Mind of the Traveller, "In departure, the traveller is separated from those recognitions that confer social specificity—indeed, the self itself—for there is no self without an other." By contrasting his identity with the "other," the Chinese, Onley can more easily understand what makes his identity different and what makes him Canadian. Leaving Canada and looking back at Canada from China enabled Onley to see a clearer, more cohesive picture of what it means to be Canadian. As Leed says, "Through


being removed, one may come to see one's native culture—which once provided the lenses and meanings through which one looked out upon the world—as an object, a thing, a unified describable phenomenon." (45)

The China Diary is more than Onley's account of what he experienced in China: it is also a tool for Onley to mark the boundaries of his home. The China Diary is also a thread within Onley's life-story strand, which is interwoven in the tapestry of stories that define what it means to be Canadian. Perhaps the meta-narrative that unites multicultural Canadians is the universal search for Home in life-storytelling. As Canadians define their identity, they look for a place where they belong to provide the context for determining meaning for their lives.

Rosemary George's book, The Politics of Home, defines home as "a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference."53 Certainly the concept of home is an individual's attempt to differentiate one's own identity from others, but the search for home is also the story that unites humanity. Home can be defined as the place where a person comes from, where a person is, and where a person is going. For Onley, Home is defined with a Taoist perspective: "I never feel like a foreigner abroad. I always feel at home wherever I go. I would be just as comfortable tippling saké with artists in Japan as I would be talking to a publisher in a Burmese garden. Home is where you are, where you hang up your hat."54 Despite Onley's carefree attitude and globetrotting way of life, he calls Vancouver, B.C., Canada his home in his

China Diary, Japan Diary, Arctic Diaries, A Silent Thunder, and Toni Onley's British Columbia. His desire to protect the Arctic and British Columbian environment shows that he considers Canada his home and his concern about Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic indicates that he cares about the safety and security of his home country. Although Onley is often travelling abroad some part of the world to paint, he consistently returns to the land which he has explored by airplane from sea to sea, to the St. Lawrence River, and to the ends of the earth in the Arctic.

In 1984, when he wrote a Saturday Night Magazine article about his airplane crash and how he miraculously survived it, Onley mused, "I'm not a religious person in the sense that I do not belong to an organized group, but I believe there's a power at work. There are things that I can't put words to but am always thinking about. Was I saved for some reason? Is there a divine plan? Do I have unfinished work?" Onley may not know the answers to these questions, but the China Diary is one of the stories Onley is able to tell because he was saved from the plane crash.

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54 Toni Onley, telephone interview, 5 March 2001.

20/21 FEBRUARY 1988

Yukiko¹ and I flew C.A. [Canadian Airlines] 007 DC 10 to Hong Kong. Spent the night in Hong Kong Airport Hotel after a 14 hour flight.

22 FEBRUARY 1988

Took China Air 727 to Guangzhou.² We were met by our guide for the next month, Yang Pei-Lin, from the Bureau of External Cultural Relations, Ministry of Culture. He was accompanied by Miss Pang Lei of the Guangdong Cultural Bureau.³ They got us settled into the new White Swan Hotel overlooking the Pearl River and all its comings and goings.⁴

After lunch, a gleaming black stretched Mercedes Benz with uniformed driver is put at our disposal while in town for the two days. We used it to drive up to the Zhenhei Tower and Guangdong Historical Museum in the afternoon.

¹ Yukiko: Toni Onley's third wife whom he married in 1978. They divorced in 1991 after sixteen years of marriage. Yukiko Kageyama was born in 1949. She left Osaka, Japan to live in Canada in the early 1970's. According to Onley in his Japan diary (File 1.5. 11-13), Yukiko had to leave Japan because female artists faced persecution and were branded as women of low morality in Japan. In The Walls of India, George Woodcock describes her as "a very elegant lady" who is "[. . .] a tough and adaptable traveller" and a talented "watercolour painter with a very clear sense of tone" (George Woodcock and Toni Onley, The Walls of India [Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1985] 38.). See 24 February 1988 entry for more on Onley and George Woodcock's trip to India. See also 4 March 1988 entry. A copy of the book is in Box 27.

² Guangzhou: capital city of Guangdong province. A map of the provinces and cities that Onley mentions in this diary is included in Appendix A.

³ Guangdong is also known as Canton. It is located on the southern coast of China. The best-known city in this province is Hong Kong.

⁴ Pearl River: major river in southern China. See page 46 for Onley's painting of a morning scene on the Pearl River.
We were invited to dinner by the Guangdong Cultural Bureau’s Deputy Chief, Lin Bang He and his director Yi Zhun. The Deputy Chief asked if it would be possible for me to provide a show of watercolours at Guangzhou’s Cultural Palace, saying that the Chinese people would be very interested in how I interpret China.

Tonight being the seventh day after the Chinese New Year is cause for celebration. By sunset all the fireworks had expired and we could sleep with thoughts on the very busy day. Thoughts like Mr. He’s comment that painting and poetry are indistinguishable and my comment that in the West they are distinguishable, and our arrival at Guangzhou airport festooned with Red flags. The security men all dressed like the doorman at the Ritz, in uniforms that seem to fit no one, and appear to come in only one size. And NO guns! For each form that had to be filled out there was a uniformed functionary in charge. One man fast asleep was in sole charge of the passport Red stamp. We declared all our worldly goods, money carried, and that we did not have AIDS. Our bags were not searched. After the last formality we were ushered to our awaiting hosts and waiting limo. Mr. He remarked during his 20 course banquet that China has changed so much, that 10 years ago, he could not have imagined it. For

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5 The seventh day after the Chinese New Year is People’s Day, or “Everyone’s Birthday,” a day on which the Chinese celebrate their life in the New Year.

6 “Thoughts like...Red flags.” I added the words “Thoughts like” and I combined sentence fragments to make it clearer that the seemingly non-sequitur ideas that follow are a collection of memories that Onley wrote in his diary at the end of the day.

I have included the original passage in Appendix G.

The Chinese concept of writing and painting being indistinguishable is called guohua. In guohua art, images are painted with the same brushstrokes and technique used in writing calligraphic Chinese characters.
example, his city is to have a new cultural centre at the cost of 80 000 000 yuan / $35 000 000 Canadian. And this Hotel, world class by any standard, built only a year ago as a joint venture between Hong Kong and China, was completed in time for the visit of Queen Elizabeth. And the elevated highway winding above the old grey city, built for Queen Elizabeth to drive on. They must miss their last Emperor!

Mr. He tried to explain China with the legend of the golden ball and the iron rod. We both missed the point. Then he described the prawns we were eating as coming from a very special place where fresh water meets the ocean. As I look at the sunset reflecting golden into the Pearl River, I cannot imagine where this magic place might be in China. The Pearl River looks as if one could walk on it!

23 FEBRUARY 1988

Yukiko and I with our guides spent the morning as guests of the Guangdong Academy of Fine Arts and its secretary general, Mr. Wang Li. A cold concrete building of the 50’s on The People’s Road North. But Mr. Wang Li

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7 I have been unable to find any legend about a golden ball and an iron rod. Perhaps a communication or translation error caused confusion. I found two legends that describe special golden and metallic objects related to China’s mythical history: the legend of Golden Chisel and the Stone Ram and a Yunnan tale about shooting the sun and the moon with the golden bow and silver arrows of the dragon king (Guo Xu, Lucien Miller, and Xu Kun, trans. South of the Clouds: Tales from Yunnan. Ed. Lucien [Seattle: U of Washington P, 1994] 80-82.). In the former legend, a man named Golden Chisel finds a special block of stone and carves a ram out of it. The ram comes alive and thanks Golden Chisel for freeing it from stone and offers to repay him for his kindness. Being a man of noble character, Golden Chisel requests that the ram help supply his village with sweet, pure water. The ram agrees and after many adventures, the Stone Ram provides the village with water and Golden Chisel is hailed as a hero (John Minford, trans. Favourite Folktales of China [Beijing: New World Press, 1983] 17-26.).

8 Wang Li, who was born in 1925, is a Gongbi painter who received his training at the Lingnan school in Guangdong (Michael Sullivan, Art and Artists of 20th Century China. [Berkeley: U of California P, 1996] 251, 315.).
and two of the painters in residence were very friendly. After tea and looking over the collection of traditional paintings of waterfalls and temples popping out of the mist, we all went down to one of the artists’ studios to see his paintings and then onto Mr. Wang Li’s studio where I was pressed into doing a large vertical Sumi painting. \(^9\) I chose to paint the lake and park from the window and inscribed it, “My first painting done in China, dedicated to the Guangdong Art Gallery. February 23 1988.” They plan on mounting it for the gallery, I was told. I was later shown a vast empty gallery space with pale blue walls in which a hundred paintings could hang. Mr. Wang Li, in an expansive gesture, said, “This is all yours for an exhibition any time you say.” It was all a little overwhelming. I could not imagine how I could put together such a show, let alone get it to China and back. The logistic problems did not seem to enter Mr. Wang Li’s head. It seems to be the Chinese way to focus only on the end result with not a thought of how. It is the secret to the incredible strides made in the past 10 years! Our hosts all painted a joint Sumi painting, inscribed it to me, set three seals to it before we left.

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\(^9\) Sumi: a Japanese term for water and ink paintings.
We spent the afternoon visiting the cultural park with its reconstructed Han Fort with attendants in traditional costume. There is a large open-air theatre for the staging of Revolutionary plays, but today, we stopped to watch a Guangdong traditional opera. The park was overflowing with parents all with their one allowable child.

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10 During the Cultural Revolution, the Communists used the arts solely as a propaganda tool. Mao Zedong's third wife, Jiang Qing, was a former movie actress who took control over the arts in China and decreed that all art forms must serve the Cultural Revolution, thereby promoting the production of propaganda and squelching the freedom to exercise one's creativity. Jiang Qing, decreed that traditional Chinese opera be banished and replaced with 'model operas.' The 'model operas' were musical dramas that were packed with propaganda and accompanied by Western orchestral accompaniment instead of traditional Chinese music (Don Lawson, The Long March: Red China Under Chairman Mao [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1983] 8.).

11 China's One-Child Policy: (See also 16 March 1988 entry, page 131 on propaganda posters for this policy, and 2 March 1988 entry, page 76, footnote 71 for population statistics.) In 1978, the Chinese government drew up the One-Child Policy among other specific guidelines to control the population
We later drove down to the Free Market, the area where private enterprise is sanctioned under license. Stalls are cheek to jowl down long narrow alleyways, each alley specializing in its own wares. The first one was herbal remedies. The next one was the meat market with live snakes in round wire cages. Cats stuffed into cages with little room to move are sold, Pang Lei tells me, for the making of health-giving soup when a snake is stirred in. It probably began with the Chinese legend about the snake and the tiger. \(^{12}\) Yukiko could not look, thinking only of her own two cats, Sumi and Balthus, living on gourmet cat food back in Vancouver. \(^{13}\) There were buckets of live turtles all graded into sizes and variety and tubs of live fish climbing over each other. Live ducks hung by ropes tied to their wing roots, waiting for some housewife to come soon and put growth so that it would be synchronized with socio-economic and ecological developments in China. With a population that makes up almost a quarter of the world’s population, the Chinese government’s greatest task was to keep the population under control. Although most people are permitted to have only one child, some of the minority people in China, such as the Yi people, and people who reside in rural areas and require extra help on their farms, may obtain permission from the government to have a second child. In addition to the One-Child Policy, the government set the legal marriage age later: from age 20 to 22 for men and from 18 to 20 for women. The government promoted later marriages, later child-birth, and strict birth control. The government also awards single-child families with economic incentives and offers contraceptives and education on birth control. Although the population growth rate in China has slowed and the majority of the families in China have only one child, the problem facing China in the twenty-first century is the lack of young people to care for the large ageing population. (People’s Republic of China. The Guangming Daily, Welcome to Our China. Profile China Series. [N.p.: Bittai Holdings Pty, 1988] 92-97.) (Note: From this point on, any citations for this book will be shown as [PRC ##].)

\(^{12}\) I have not come across any legend about snakes and tigers, but snakes are often used to represent the serpentine Chinese dragon and cats often stand in for the larger species of their family, the tiger. According to feng shui teachings, the white tiger represents yin and the green dragon represents the opposite force of yang (Annette Juliano, Treasures of China [London: Allen Lane-Penguin, 1981] 149.). The basic principle of feng shui is to find the harmonious balance between yin and yang, and some Chinese people have tried to apply this principle to physical health as well. After asking various Chinese people about the consuming of snakes and cats, I have concluded that there is no relationship between these animals and yin and yang; however, I learned that some Chinese people consider the flesh of cats and snakes to be a fortifying health food. The Chinese believe that physical health is often linked to how well one’s diet is balanced between ‘hot’ or ‘fortifying’ foods such as beef and ginseng, and ‘cooling’ foods like watermelon and chrysanthemum tea.

\(^{13}\) Onley has called Vancouver, B.C. his home since 1960 (27.1[red duotang]).7).
them out of their misery. The next alley sold porcelain, jade, and chops. A very frightened man tugged my sleeve and opened a pink plastic bag for my inspection. I immediately thought it might be a snake, but, no, it was a beautiful pale green Song Dynasty bowl; its surface delicately patterned and tapered to an exquisitely slender rim. He gently put it into my hands. It was as light as a feather. He was trembling when he said, “100 yuan.” Yukiko said, “50.” So, he said, “70.” And it was ours. I asked Pei Lin later why the vendor appeared so agitated. He explained it was against the law to trade Chinese objects over one hundred years old. He was taking a big chance approaching us when he did not know who Pei Lin or Pang Lei were. He disappeared into the crowd fast with his 70 yuan once the transaction was completed.

Our hotel is on Shamian Island, known also as the Island of Former Concessions. Once the enclave of British and French, it was guarded by gates posted with the infamous notice, “NO CHINESE OR DOGS ALLOWED.”

14 Chops: carved seals, personalized autograph stamps.

15 Song Dynasty: for more information on the Chinese dynasties and historical periods, see Appendix B.

16 In the nineteenth century, China’s imperial system was collapsing and foreign pressure from Western countries such as Britain, France, and the U.S., to expand trade relations with China was steadily increasing. China, historically an economically self-sufficient empire, was not interested in diplomatic trade relations with the West and was more concerned with putting an end to the opium trade which was undermining the empire’s fiscal and moral well-being. As the imperial governing system disintegrated and corrupt officials allowed the empire to decline, some British merchants were able to make great profits with the opium trade in China. In the early nineteenth century, the Chinese market for opium developed at such a fast pace that the vast amount of silver pouring out of China to pay for the drug caused the rate of exchange between copper and silver coinage to decline, thereby undermining the Chinese monetary system. (Conrad Schirokauer, Modern China and Japan: A Brief History [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanivich, 1982] 86.)

The signs, “No Chinese or dogs allowed,” were placed by Westerners in foreign government legations and parks in China in reaction against the Boxer Rebellion. The Boxer Rebellion sprang from the Chinese people’s resentment of foreign intrusion in their country. Thousands of Chinese joined the “Society of the Righteous Fists” whose aim was to extricate China from the influence and control of foreigners. One of the Boxers’ beliefs was that their martial arts skills would make them invulnerable to
streets are lined with elegant Victorian and French style buildings. Laundry now hangs from the fine French windows and the walls are covered with political slogans. It was on this spot that the commissioner Lin Zexu\(^{17}\) destroyed 20 000 chests of opium, starting the first of the opium wars of 1839-42.\(^{18}\)

**24 FEBRUARY 1988**

The sun rises over the Pearl River, pale yellow and cobalt violet. I opened the glass door and stepped out onto our 22\(^{nd}\) floor balcony and inhaled a lungful of carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, and nitric gas. The combination of high

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\(^{17}\) Lin Zexu: (Lin Tse-hsü) In December of 1838, he was sent by Emperor Daoguang to Guangzhou as the imperial commissioner to ban the trafficking of opium. Lin Zexu seized thousands of chests of opium from the British and American merchants and destroyed the seized drugs in 23 days. In response to Lin Zexu's actions, the British sent its naval forces to attack the coastal areas of Guangdong, starting what we call the Opium War. (PRC 32-33) After the British retaliated in response to Lin Zexu's harsh campaign against the opium trade, the emperor dismissed and exiled Lin to central Asia (Schirokauer 88).

\(^{18}\) The Opium War: The Chinese attempted to negotiate with the British, but the British were unhappy with negotiations and they resorted to military action. In January 1841, the British were able to force Ch'i-shan, the Manchurian prince who replaced Lin Zexu, to sign away Hong Kong to the British and to open up Canton for free trade under the Convention of Ch'uan-pi. The Chinese were understandably unhappy with the outcome, and the British government felt that they had not received enough; hence, fighting was renewed and the British besieged Canton/Guangdong in February, 1841. In August, 1841, the gun-toting British moved north and occupied Amoy, Tinh-hai, and threatened other cities until August 29, 1842, when the Chinese, in defeat, signed a peace treaty with Britain and ended the war. By signing the Treaty of Nanking, the Chinese agreed to pay for the cost of the Opium War, repaid the British for the opium Lin Zexu destroyed, gave Hong Kong Island to the British, and allowed the British to set tariffs. (Schirokauer 88-89, 90)
humidity and industrial fumes has turned this city into a witch's cauldron. But Turner would approve of the morning light that bathes the river Pearl.

The morning was spent visiting one of the oldest mosques in China, the Huaisheng Mosque built during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) by the Arab missionary, Abu Waggas. The minaret stands on a rakish angle like the

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Joseph Mallord William Turner was a nineteenth century master landscape artist. From 1810 – 1820, Turner used various watercolour techniques to study clouds, sunsets, and storms. Turner's influence on Onley is evident in the translucent colour washes and almost abstract landscape forms that are characteristic of Onley's work. Turner's "skies" sketchbook, from his 1818 Italian painting trip, contain paintings that look very much like Onley's landscapes (Diane Perkins, Turner: The Third Decade: Watercolours 1810-1820 [London: Tate Gallery, 1989] 47.). Turner is one of Onley’s favourite artists and he claims him as one of his patron saints (1.12: Toni Onley, letter to the Editor of The Vancouver Sun, 27 September 1982.).

Huaisheng Mosque – Also known as Guanga Monastery. According to the legend of Abu Waggas’ missionary work in China, this 36 metre, circular pagoda was the first mosque to be built in China during the Tang Dynasty, in the first year of Zhen Guan (AD 627) (PRC 127).

Abu Waggas – (also spelled as Abi Waqqas) Chinese legend states that Abu Waggas, the maternal cousin of the Prophet Mohammad, visited China on a missionary trip sometime in the seventh
leaning Tower of Pisa. Once it served as a beacon to fishermen on the Pearl River, but today, the River is a mile or so away. After the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, the mosque, along with Waggas’ tomb, were listed as Cultural Relics and closed to Muslims for worship. But today, workmen and women are busy restoring it and once again the devout are being called to prayer five times daily. We took a quick run out to the founder’s tomb being cared for by two old Muslim men in their white caps. They told us that the young do not come here anymore, and that the garden and buildings will probably crumble with them when they are gone. It is the most peaceful place in the city. I chanted under the onion dome of the tomb and it brought back the god-like echoes I heard in the Taj Mahal\textsuperscript{22} and Akbar’s Tomb\textsuperscript{23} in India.\textsuperscript{24} I was asked to sign the guest-book

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\textsuperscript{22} Taj Mahal – Known as a symbol of eternal love as well as great grief, the Taj Mahal in India is one of the great man-made wonders of the world. This mausoleum was commissioned by the Mogul emperor, Shah Jahan for his beloved wife of nineteen years, Mumtaz Mahal, who died giving birth to their fourteenth child. The foundation of this architectural wonder was laid out in 1632 and the complex was completed twenty-two years later in 1654. ("Taj Mahal," The Great Wonders of the World, Volume 1, CD-ROM [Hong Kong, San Francisco: InterOptica, 1992].)

\textsuperscript{23} Akbar is the doting grandfather of Shah Jahan. Although Babur, Akbar’s grandfather, is the founder of the Indian Mogul Empire, historians consider Akbar the true founder of the empire for he set up the empire’s infrastructure. He was a well-loved ruler, and, although he was Muslim, his Hindu subjects were loyal to him. Akbar encouraged religious harmony and religious tolerance. He even tried to introduce a religion called Din Ilahi which combined the religious elements of Islam and Hinduism; however, his new religion was not well-received. In 1605, Akbar died while his tomb was still under construction. His son, Jahangir, Shah Jahan’s father, completed his tomb in 1613. Akbar’s tomb was the finest example of Mogul architecture before the construction of the Taj Mahal. ("Taj Mahal," The Great Wonders of the World, Volume 1, CD-ROM [Hong Kong, San Francisco: InterOptica, 1992].)
and have my card pasted into it. In my inscription, I invoked Allah to look kindly on my painting efforts in China.\(^{25}\) Pei Lin reminded me that Karl Marx had once said that “Religion is the opium of the people.”\(^{26}\) Don’t underestimate, I said, Muslims from around the Islamic world had signed the guest book and left gifts. I

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\(^{24}\) Toni and Yukiko Onley joined George and Inge Woodcock on a special fundraising painting and travel writing trip to India in the winter of 1982-83. For the Woodcocks, who first visited India in the 1960’s, this was their fifth trip, but for the Onleys this was their first.

In 1981, the Woodcocks and some of their friends founded the Canadian Indian Village Aid (CIVA) to raise the quality of life in Indian villages by educating the villagers on issues such as family planning and hygiene. The Woodcocks often participated in charities and they worked hard to organize fundraisers, even participating in non-traditional manual service. When Toni Onley saw how much work George and Inge Woodcock had done in the past to raise more money for good causes, Onley said to George, “It seems to me you’re piddling away your energies to raise a few dollars. George, why don’t you and I go to India together? I’ll paint, you can write, we’ll make a book together, and sell the paintings into the bargain” (George Woodcock and Toni Onley, The Walls of India [Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1985] 8.). They agreed. The result is the publication called The Walls of India (see previous citation) from which the royalties go directly to the CIVA fund. The 50 watercolours that Onley painted on their trip to India were sold at the CIVA fundraising gala dinner in Vancouver on Sept. 29, 1988. For Onley’s hand-painted menu for the CIVA dinner, see Box 27. Onley mentions his CIVA activities in a letter to Brian Anthony, the National Director of the Canadian Conference of the Arts in 1984, found in Box 1, File 12 (Toni Onley, letter to Brian Anthony, 19 Sept. 1984.).

For more on The Walls of India and the CIVA project, see File 10.9 and Box 27.

See March 4\(^{\text{th}}\) entry also for more on India trip.

See Feb. 29\(^{\text{th}}\) and March 8\(^{\text{th}}\) for more on George Woodcock.

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\(^{25}\) Allah – the one and only God of the Muslims. To Onley, Allah is but one of the many gods of his informally pantheistic beliefs. Although Onley tells me that he is an agnostic, he enjoys joking about his openness to pantheism. For example, after his airplane crash in 1983, he drolly remarked to his friends that his crash coincided with Pope John Paul II’s visit to Canada, and that he might have been saved because of the convoluted spiritual relationship between his Polish ski plane and the Polish pope. (14.3) In a telephone conversation I had with Onley, he gleefully remarked, “I believe that it must have been a Japanese god—one of the 1000, that saved me! You’ve probably heard that the Japanese have a thousand of them. When you pray to them at their shrines, you’d go and offer 1000 paper cranes, one for each god, and the cranes would fly up to each god with your message, your prayer. I felt that those flying cranes somehow connected me with the Japanese gods and perhaps they decided to protect me when I was flying my aircraft. Yes, it must have been one of those Japanese gods and the flying connection!” (Toni Onley, telephone interview, 12 November 2000.) In a more serious tone, Onley also mentions to his friends how he experienced extra-sensory perception during the harrowing ordeal. In 14.1, in a copy of Onley’s letter to fellow artist, Jack Wise, he tells his friend, “I lay there with my broken leg, cut and bleeding, practicing the ancient art of mental telepathy. I knew Yukiko would be with the Woodcocks at 10:00 p.m. so I thought of them all and got Inge. She jumped up at 10:00 p.m. and said, ‘He is alright.’ At the time it was small comfort to Yukiko, but later when Yukiko told me the time of Inge’s explanation, it sent shivers up my spine” (14.1, Toni Onley, letter to Jack Wise, 14 September 1984.).

For more on Onley’s plane crash, see 11 March 1988 entry, page 113, footnote 139.

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\(^{26}\) “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’, trans. Joseph O’Malley and Annette Jolin, [London: Cambridge U P, 1970] 131.).
feel sure it was pressure from the Arab world that persuaded China to reopen

Huaisheng Mosque as an active place of worship.²⁷

We arrived at Guangzhou Airport to find our flight had been cancelled. Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) stands for “Always Cancelled!”

Inordinate delays are the norm due to lack of good weather information. An hour’s delay and by 1:30 pm, we are on our way to Quilin and hopefully to start my first painting.²⁸ I talked Pei Lin into passing up Nanning²⁹ so as to spend that

²⁷ China’s trade of silk and spice with Arabia opened the way for Islam to be spread in China. Islam became popular among the minority peoples like the Ugyur, Hui, Dongxiang, Tajik, Tartar, and Bao’an. Most of the Chinese Muslims reside in north-west China. In 1988, there were 10 million Muslims in China. (PRC 127)

²⁸ Quilin, also spelled as Guilin, is famous for its unique and irregular geography: ancient, eroded, and vegetation-cloaked hills rise up from the meandering Lijiang River in fantastic shapes and numerous caves are hidden within these contorted limestone hills.
time in the mountains of Quilin. We now stay here until 29 February, after receiving official blessing from Beijing.  

The landscape is somewhat overwhelming. We suddenly come upon it after descending from the clouds and see these strange rocks all rising from the flat valley. Each mountain is dependent on its neighbour and each shape varying enough to animate a landscape that completely surrounds us as we step from our airplane. I don’t know how I can paint it without appearing sweet or cute. The landscape is so perfect that a painter can hardly improve on it. Chinese artists have been inspired by this landscape for centuries. And now it is my turn.

29 Nanning – The capital city of the Autonomous Region of Guangxi Zhuan, which is located in Southern China.

30 Beijing (Peking) is the capital of China. In the Yuan dynasty, when the minorities of China ruled, Beijing was called Dadu (PRC 25-26).
Just as the spirits of the fishermen who drowned in the Li River guide the river boats today through the rapids, I hope the spirits of the Ming painters will help me see this landscape anew. It will be a tough act to follow.

We were met on our arrival by Miss Xu Xinge of Quilin Cultural Bureau and her superior who vanished after formally welcoming us. Miss Xinge will be our local guide. I was greatly surprised when she told me in perfect Spanish that she did not speak English and hoped I spoke Spanish. I certainly do not speak it as well as her (she had had a very good teacher from Columbia) but I do speak, although I haven't done so for nearly 30 years, I told her. With Miss Xinge comes a car and driver. Then off to the Banyan Lake Hotel --a compound of small residences reserved for visiting heads of state. I'm told Richard Nixon stayed here. Its faded red plush and overstuffed furniture, a sort of 50's look that

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31 Li River -- Also known as the Lijiang and the Lishui. The story of the river spirits is not restricted to the Li River. In Chinese folklore, water spirits are usually malevolent bogeymen who can be found in any body of water. Parents usually tell water spirit tales in order to frighten young children away from dangerous bodies of water.

32 In 1957, two years after the death of his first wife, Mary Burrows, Onley won a scholarship to the Instituto Allende in San Miguel, Mexico. He took with him his two young daughters, Jennifer, aged 6, and Lynn, aged 3, and they stayed in Mexico for three years (27.1.7). It was in Mexico that Onley had his artistic breakthrough when he produced a set of abstract artwork called the “Polar Series.” His “Polar Series” have nothing to do with the Arctic; they are works of art created by strategically placing torn fragments of previous paintings on a sheet of paper to explore spatial relationships and the paradoxical concept of spontaneous patterns. (Roger Boulet and Toni Onley, Toni Onley: A Silent Thunder [N.p.: Cerebrus; Prentice Hall, 1981] 20.) Photographs of some of his Polar Series work is in Box 11 and correspondence during his time at the Art Institute of San Miguel de Allende is located in Files 1.8 and 1.9.

33 Richard M. Nixon -- The 37th president of the United States (1969-1974) is best-known for his Watergate scandal, which forced him to resign from office in 1974. However, the greatest achievement of his career was recognizing Communist China and breaking down the barrier between USA and China in spite of his strong beliefs against communism. As he tried to end the war against the communists in Vietnam in the 1960s, Nixon attempted to work with Communist China to develop a more understanding and open relationship between the U.S.A. and China. He was able to establish a trade connection with China. In 1972, Nixon demonstrated the U.S.A.’s recognition of Communist China by withdrawing U.S. forces from Taiwan. (Taiwan was founded by the Kuomintang which was the party that the Communists fought against during China’s civil war after the collapse of the last dynasty, the Ching or Manchu dynasty. Taiwan is not officially a part of China.) For Onley’s experiences in Taiwan, see Appendix C.
I have seen in older Japanese hotels. It takes a while to discover how everything works. For example, the lights are not turned on by a switch, but with the room key!

FOOD — Does not bear describing, but I will try. It’s on the fringes of Cantonese. Supper started with dry rice prepared in a cooker in which someone had left a bar of carbolic soap. Soup: lumps of pork fat and oyster mushrooms floating in a watery stock with pools of grease floating on the surface. We passed on both items. Then a plate of fried chicken skins (maybe cat skins) and a dish of tripe (the stomach of a cud-chewing animal) which would not have been too bad if it was not for the axle grease it was floating in. Then a dish of stir-fried celery and beef, at last, something we could eat! Then deep-fried fish, not bad!

All washed down with jasmine tea. I’m going to lose weight in China.

Figure 5: Yang Shou on the Li River. 34

34 The photocopy version of Onley’s China Diary in File 1.7 shows a cropped image of one of two Quilin, China works he painted on February 26, 1988 which was exhibited along with other paintings at the
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8:30 am. Off to take the mandatory boat trip 83 km down the Li River to Yangshou where our driver will be waiting for us.\textsuperscript{35} It is not only the greatest scenery China has to offer, but most likely one of the great scenic wonders of the world. I took along my paint box of watercolours,\textsuperscript{36} but I knew I would be wasting my time if I thought I could do a painting on the river boat. Not only does it move along at a good pace being towed by a powerful tug, it was also shared with a group of overseas Chinese from England, Singapore, and two from Vancouver also -- an English Colonel Blimp complete with moustache and crested blazer along with Mrs. Blimp, in sensible shoes. The passengers possess a great variety of cameras. We all compare them and talk F stops and focal lengths. I managed to shoot off 2 X 36 rolls and do one drawing, the one on the previous page.\textsuperscript{37} At Yangshou, I did one watercolour before driving back to Quilin. The drive in many ways is quite as spectacular as the journey down the River Li, like Monument Valley,\textsuperscript{38} the great phallic rocks grow out of rice fields, barren land

\textsuperscript{35} Yangshou : Also known as Yangzhou and Yangchow. In the past, Yangshou was a place where wealthy people, like salt merchants, would choose to live. The beautiful scenery inspired many artists, poets, and calligraphers, and the residents had the wealth for acquiring works of art; hence, Yangshou became a place where art flourished and art connoisseurs gathered. (Schirokauer 21, 23)

\textsuperscript{36} Onley constructed and designed his own paint-box which he marketed through Opus, an art supplies company. A draft of Onley’s advertisement for his Opus paint-box is in File 1.15. See Appendix D.

\textsuperscript{37} ‘Previous page’ refers to the pencil sketch of the Quilin Hills as seen in the photograph on page 13.

\textsuperscript{38} Monument Valley, a favourite movie location, is located in Arizona, U.S.A.
and forests of small scrub pine. The area cannot support much except tourism, and that has only existed for the past ten years. Before that, few people outside of China visited, or indeed would have been allowed in. Fortunately, no joint venture Holiday Inn mars these pristine vistas, to date, except one in Quilin.

Supper was decidedly better or maybe it was that we were hungry.

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Just as every mountain has its own personality and gesture, each mountain of Quilin has its own cave. Most can be seen high on the mountain face and are quite inaccessible. We entered one early today, called the Reed Flute Cave, through a narrow crack in the rock. The deeper we penetrated the

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39 Reed Flute Cave – The name comes from the local custom of making flutes out of the profusion of reeds that grow on the hillsides near the cave. According to a Chinese legend, Reed Flute Cave is
mountain, the larger the cave became, until we arrived at a vast chamber.

Grotesque formations of every size, texture, and shape hung from the ceiling and grew from the floor, all gleaming white. Quartz sparkled as it caught our lights.

In the far end of the great hall there was what looked like a range of ragged mountains reflected into a still pool. It was warm after entering from a cold and rainy morning. We took in Elephant Mountain on our way back. It is the one mountain chosen to symbolize Quilin and naturally has its own legend. A long story, I will not go into here.

actually a part of a grand palace that was created by a mythical architect named Ah Bing who wanted to follow in the footsteps of the mother goddess, Nü Wa, and create something for humankind. Ah Bing’s palace was a peerless work of art intended for blessing human beings with the pleasure of beauty. Although Nü Wa, the creator of humankind, was pleased with Ah Bing’s work, she felt that the work could not be appreciated by the hungry and oppressed people on earth for the evil and strong rule over them. Nü Wa believed that the palace would only serve as a reminder to the suffering people of how unattainable goodness, beauty, and happiness are. Ah Bing was optimistic and believed that the world would become a better place in the future, so he decided to dismantle his work and hide the sections in various places until the time when the world would improve and people would be able to appreciate his work. According to this legend, Reed Flute Cave is the most spectacular hidden segment of Ah Bing’s masterpiece. (Yi Qiong and Xu Junhui, Elephant Trunk Hill: Tales from Scenic Guilin. Trans. Mark A. Bender and Shi Kun. [Beijing: Foreign Language P, 1984] 97-103.)

Onley’s note at the side of the manuscript’s page: “During WW II, the people of Quilin used the caves to escape the Japanese bombing.”

Elephant Mountain: more commonly known as Elephant Trunk Hill. Legend has it that this geographical landmark was once a real beast who served the Heavenly Emperor as a carrier of his royal possessions during his tour of inspection. At Quilin, this particular elephant became ill and could not proceed. Seeing that the beast could no longer serve him, the Emperor left the elephant at the roadside to die. A kind, old peasant couple took pity on the beast and took care of it until it recovered. When the elephant became healthy enough, it begged the couple to allow it to repay their kindness by serving them. The elephant realized that the passage of the Emperor and his entourage through the countryside has packed down the earth so solidly that crops can no longer grow. In its gratitude and out of the kindness of its heart, the elephant ploughed all of the fields for the old couple and for the villagers of the countryside. One day, the Emperor heard of the elephant’s recovery and was furious that it would serve lowly villagers instead of him. The Emperor sent one of his men to bring the elephant back to him, but the elephant refused to go back and lose its freedom. Enraged that his elephant would disobey him and demand freedom, the Emperor came in with his troops to battle the elephant into submission. The elephant fought long and hard and almost won, but the Emperor tricked the beast into letting its guard down. While the elephant bent down to drink from the Lijiang River, the Emperor thrust his sword deep into the beast and killed it. Eventually, the corpse of the beast turned into the famous Quilin rock formation. (Yi Qiong and Xu Junhui 30-39)
Pei Lin practices his English on me and reads aloud from a book titled *Advanced English*. It is full of words from Dr. Johnson’s dictionary, no longer in current use.\(^{42}\) I explain that English is a changing language just as Japanese after the war, reduced its Chinese characters to a workable few.\(^{43}\) (China is doing the same as many of the young people cannot read the older language, just as Yukiko cannot read Japanese written before WW II.) I explained it is considered bad form and condescending to use English words not in regular use or for writers to pepper their work with foreign language.

We passed an inscription on a rock, which translated, reads, “Quilin possesses the most beautiful landscape in the world. Only painters can improve on it.” I will have my chance in the afternoon.

\(^{42}\) Dr. Johnson: Samuel Johnson (1709 - 1784) was an English writer who wrote his greatest works during the eight years it took him to complete his famous dictionary (1747-1755).

\(^{43}\) Perhaps Onley meant “Japanese characters” as opposed to “Chinese characters.” However, the Japanese do use many Chinese characters in their writing system. The Chinese characters that the Japanese borrowed are called *kunji*, which may mean ‘words of the Han people.’ The Japanese may have been introduced to the Chinese writing system sometime during the Han dynasty (B.C. 206 – 220 A.D.). A Chinese legend about China’s first emperor, Qin Shihuangdi of the Ch’in (Qin) dynasty, describes how some of the Japanese might be descendants of 500 young Chinese men and 500 young Chinese women who were sent off to a distant island to find a miracle herb of longevity for Qin Shihuangdi. When the young women and men realized that they cannot find the rare plant, they chose to stay on the island instead of returning empty-handed to China and face the wrath of the emperor for failing in their task.

The Japanese also use two other writing systems which are also based on Chinese characters: *hiragana*, which uses simplified forms of Chinese characters, and *kata-kana*, which uses parts of Chinese characters. Both systems’ symbols are for representing the phonetic sounds of the spoken Japanese language.

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong encouraged peasants, uneducated people, and people of limited education to be the leaders in their communities. In order to make the written language more accessible for the less educated people, the Chinese decided to simplify their characters. The people in Mainland China are more familiar with this informal, simplified form of Chinese; however, the Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan prefer to use the older, classical form of Chinese. Classical Chinese characters are used in formal situations and for art and literature.
In the afternoon, the wind picked up and rain showers came and went. Well-padded with down vest and rain shell, I climbed the side of a grave-studded hill to get a magnificent view of the rain-soaked valley. Black clouds raced across the leaning peaks and reflected like oil in the flooded rice fields below. I had forgotten water to paint with in my haste to climb the mountain and get started. Pei Lin offered to descend to the river to get water while I get set up on an ancient grave mound. A fine mist sprinkled my first watercolour before it could dry, covering the surface with white spots, giving the appearance of snow. The five watercolours I painted were all splashed with rain-drops of various sizes. I do not mind it. The rain and wind force me to work very simply with broad shapes. If need be, I can complete the ones that need it back in the

44 See 27 February 1988 entry, footnote 47 for more on rain-splashed paintings.
warmth of our hotel room. The last painting was almost washed away as I painted. Pei Lin came to the rescue and held an umbrella over my paper, but it too blew away in the wind. I think it is time to call it a day.

Back at the hotel, I painted a few postcards to send to friends. The local postcards of the hills are mostly cluttered with 50's concrete architecture the Quilinese are so proud of. Who, I wonder, would come here and buy a postcard of a Disneyland mushroom-shaped pavilion jutting out into beautiful Fir Lake, visually polluting it, or concrete lotus pavilions complete with concrete lily pads?

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We are warm and cozy in our room, but the dining room door is broken and open to driving cold wind that gusts across Banyan Lake. Breakfast is two fried eggs, fried SPAM, leftover from World War II, on frozen plates and is cold long before we can eat it. Coffee is made from stewed grounds filtered through an old sock. Being foreigners, we do not qualify for the hearty Chinese breakfast with jasmine tea. I must admit the eggs remind me of my childhood: they are obviously from free ranging hens, have dark orange yolks and are very tasty, even cold.

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46 Onley was born in 1928 on the Isle of Man in Great Britain and he spent his childhood there. Some of Onley’s fondest memories are of the summers he spent at his paternal grandparents’ rustic home in the town of Ramsey on the northern part of the island (Boulet and Onley 7).
The drive from Quilin to Yang Shou is not touted in the guide books like the sail down the Li River to the same destination. It could be argued that this trip is equally spectacular. On our return trip along this road yesterday I made a mental note of places to paint. We set out this morning in our Toyota minibus, escorted by my Spanish-Chinese hostess, Miss Xu Xinge, Pei Lin, and our driver who will stop on a dime if I as much as admire the view. It is cold and wet. The kitchen has prepared a box lunch of hard-boiled eggs, (feathers and barnyard dirt still attached), dry bread, rubber chicken and a case of beer. Again my watercolours are sprinkled with rain as I lay down each wash. Our driver parks at the side of the road when I tap his shoulder and I sit in the side door, legs dangling and watercolour box spread out. Between 9 a.m. and noon, I have...
completed four watercolours. Yukiko, who has been very silent is becoming increasingly colder and is having a change of personality. Every sign indicated that we should leave for the warmth of our hotel to eat our questionable lunch in more comfort.

I let our guides surprise me with a suitable place to paint in the afternoon. They took me to a lovely little park with a lake—Pagoda Hill reflecting into it. It was raining a fine sprinkling all the while. I did three watercolours. They are all spotted with rain. It adds, in a way, to the saturated feel of the watercolours and gives them a kind of immediacy they would not otherwise have. There is no getting away with the fact that they were painted in plein air, on the spot.47

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47 An example of his rain-splashed paintings can be found on page 29 of Toni Onley’s British Columbia: A Tribute, titled, “Second Beach, Stanley Park, Vancouver, 23 June 1997.” (Toni Onley, Toni Onley’s British Columbia: A Tribute [Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1999].) In both the 27 February diary entry and in his description of his “Second Beach” painting, Onley describes how the raindrops help him capture the dimension of time in his painting.

To give some background information about the “Second Beach” painting, Onley writes, “I was asked by a school teacher friend if I would take her special class of attention-deficit, hyperactive, dyslectic children on a painting trip […] On this occasion, there was no attention deficit. The rain was ignored as they watched me produce a rain-splashed watercolour […] For them, it was a ‘spot in time’ to be always remembered, I could tell.” (T.O.’s BC 28) In this description, Onley shifts from the capturing of a “spot in time” in a painting to meeting a “spot in time” that has the potential to change one’s life in the process of painting. In a telephone interview, Onley explains his idea of ‘spots in time.’ “It’s like that when I take a child up flying with me in my plane on a painting trip. I may forget about the incident, but the child who flew with me, alone, never will. He’d come up to me when he becomes an adult and he’d tell me how much that trip changed him, but it would be an individual’s experience […] That person will be changed. That person will always remember. It’s always a personal point in life when that happens. It’s also like that in teaching. Everyone has a certain point in their lives when they have a moment of epiphany, a moment in which they must make a decision, a decision that will change their lives. Once they meet up with this moment, they will never be the same again […] When I was teaching at UBC, I can see some of my students reach that point. I recognize it when they do. Sometimes, they’re not ready, they haven’t reached that point yet, and nothing can be done until they reach that point. So I wait. When that time comes, I see it and I step in to make a suggestion, or give them a book I know they should read. Anytime before that moment, nothing I do will change anything. It is at that point a life can be changed. It’s a decision point for the individual at the right time and right place.” (Toni Onley, Telephone interview, 28 Dec. 2000.)

In File 10.4 there is a record of some of the students that Onley taught during his tenure at UBC as a Fine Arts professor from 1967 to 1976.
Yukiko, who was born to shop, wanted to see some stores. We headed to Quilin’s largest department store where I found some fine brushes. I bought three large ones, a wolf hair, a bear hair, and a sheep’s hair which, is what I usually use. Bear hair is preferred by some Chinese painters; however, I have never used one. When I can get brushed like these in Canada, they run up to $75 each. These cost me $3.00 to $4.00 each.48 There was nothing that met Yukiko’s high standards. But there are ample goods on the shelves and enough variety to meet the basic needs of everyone. There is an abundance of consumer goods and all very inexpensive. The quality and fashion, I would call on a par with a sale at an Eskimo co-op. There are only three standard sizes in all clothes, hence very few people are wearing clothes that appear to fit. The army is a perfect example: the soldiers all look as if their quartermaster had a cruel sense of humour.

Here on the Dongnan Plateau the clay is a rich burnt sienna. Brick making must have been a family business in the past, as the countryside is dotted with the crumbling remains of old brick kilns. There must be a stratum of yellow clay as I see whole villages of houses made from a beautiful yellow ochre brick, down towards Yang Shou. The clay sticks to the soles of my boots like gumbo, until eventually I am striding ten feet tall across the fields.

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48 Onley tends to use Oriental brushes for his watercolours and his current collection of brushes are mostly Oriental. He first came across Oriental brushes in the 1960’s when he purchased a large goat-hair brush and some Sumi ink in Vancouver’s Chinatown. Artist Chin Chek Lam gave Onley some Chinese paper for experimentation, and Onley began to develop the fluid brushstroke evident in his landscape paintings. (Boulet and Onley 21) For a detailed description of the brushes he uses, see page 25 of Toni Onley: A Silent Thunder. See the Japan Diary excerpts (1.5.26-27) in Appendix C for more on Onley’s use of Oriental brushes.
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I asked Pei Lin about a compound of anti-aircraft guns we have just passed and he said, "That is the army's canon college." Quilin is an army centre and probably contributes greatly to the economy. Everywhere, we see men in ill-fitting uniforms. Army trucks and jeeps abound.

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A Japanese group at the next table was complaining over cold breakfast, that the Chinese girls never smile! I have noticed this myself. I get no indication what they are thinking behind that blank expression. It may be that it is considered bad manners to smile at strangers. They could have picked this bad habit during the British occupation.49 It gives the impression that everyone is harbouring a big secret, known only to the Chinese.

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49 British occupation —See footnote 18 on page 45.
About a 40 minutes drive from Quilin back along the road to Yang Shou, we made a left turn onto a narrow country road. We stopped at a spot just beyond where I finished painting early the day before. I spotted a cave about 100 meters up the face of a mountain from the road. I decided to climb up. Yukiko, Xu Xinge, and the driver stayed behind as Pei Lin and I made the climb. The last half of the climb was steep and over wet slippery rocks, and for a short time, quite dangerous. With a few scrapes and bruises, we both made it into the dry cave.

The effort was well worth the climb, because before us lay a magnificent view of the valley and the little farmhouses like islands in the flooded rice fields. The whole valley was ringed with the most magnificent mountains I had seen to
date. Before starting to paint, Pei Lin and I explored the cave. It contained an ancient fire pit, shards of Ch’ing pottery. The roof was blackened with centuries of fires and in the stone walls were embedded seashells, indicating that this place was once the sea bed. Near the entrance, a section of the rock face had been smoothed and an inscription had been carved into the rock. It was a description of the estate below, once owned by a landlord in the Ch’ing Dynasty, (1644-1911). A map was also carved, each square or rectangle had carved into it, the name of the tenant farmer along with the price he was required to pay the landowner in baskets of produce per year. A perfect little alcove seat had been carved out of the rock face below the inscription. It commanded the best view of the valley and no doubt was made for the landowner; so as to keep an eye on his kingdom and his workers toiling in the fields below. It was an ideal place for me to paint from, with my drawing board on my knee and my mixing palette and colours on the floor of the cave.

While I painted under the shelter of overhanging rock, Pei Lin practiced his Tai-Chi.⁵⁰ I felt transported into another time. The landscape moved, thunder clapped, and driving rain occasionally obscured the mountains, and then, moments later, would reveal them in brilliant sunshine. The landlord knew what he was doing when he had this little seat carved. I was perfectly protected from the wind and rain, and was able to complete three watercolours in relative

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⁵⁰Tai-Chi is a martial art form that involves slow, controlled movements, regulated breathing, and the calming of the mind to promote a sense of harmony between, body, mind, and surroundings. See 8 March 1988 entry, footnote 128, p 102 for more on Tai-Chi.
comfort. We lit a little fire in the old pit to dry each successive watercolour wash without having to wait for them to dry.

I could have stayed all day, but I was worried that Yukiko might be cold below. I found her not a bit impatient after three hours. She was engrossed in a Japanese book on the history of the Ming Dynasty. It was time for lunch, anyway. While I had been painting in the cave, I remembered that Pei Lin had been reading a second inscription, much more elaborate than the first, but harder to see, because it was deeper into the cave. He explained that it was description of the re-building of a temple in the valley in the 16th century, containing all the names of the devout who had contributed to its building.

Later in the afternoon, we headed for a spot 15 minutes beyond the enchanted valley, where the valley widened into a low peat bog type of landscape. A little stream meandered across the moor, edged with indigo black rocks from a Ming painting. I did two watercolours of the black rocks, the pale green silken stream and the surrounding mountains, striking their odd poses. But after an hour my hands became so cold I could not hold my brush. We headed back to the warmth of our hotel. We have to pack to catch the 12 midnight train for Kunming.51

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51 Kunming—the capital city of Yunnan Province, which is the Southern Chinese province that shares international borders with Burma, Laos, and Vietnam.
Figure 11: Untitled Painting #6

28 x 39 cm
11x15" size on 140 lb T.H. Sanders paper

10. Rain Shower on the Western Banks of the Li River Valley, China. 27 February 1988.
13. Li Valley Painted from the Shelter of a Mountain Cave, China. 28 February 1988.
17. Li River Valley, From a Cave on the Road to Yang Shou, China. 28 February 1988.

Small watercolour on Japanese paper 18.5X26 cm (pages from this book)

Small watercolours on hot pressed 300 lb arches paper 9.5x14cm.
2. Li River at Quilin, China. 27 February 1988.

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52 George Woodcock (1912-1995) was a prolific Canadian writer, a philanthropist, and an English professor at the University of British Columbia. Woodcock was born in Winnipeg, but spent his early years in England and began his career as a writer in London. After marrying artist Ingeborg Linzen, he returned to Canada in 1949 and flourished as a poet, author, biographer, and literary critic. Woodcock became friends with many writers and artists such as George Orwell, Jack Shadbolt, Margaret Laurence, Al Purdy, and Margaret Atwood. In 1959, Woodcock founded Canadian Literature, a journal, which is still being published at the University of British Columbia, and was the journal's editor for eighteen years. Woodcock was not only active in the literary field, he participated in various Canadian cultural and political activities. Perhaps his most memorable contribution to Canadian politics and culture was the founding of the Canadian anarchist movement. His book, Anarchism and Morality, which he wrote in the 1945, is now considered one of the movement's principal texts.

In 1994, Mayor, Phillip Owen declared that May 7th, 1994 ‘George Woodcock Day’ in Vancouver in order to honour him for his social, cultural, political, and literary contributions to Vancouver, Canada, and the world. Woodcock died in Vancouver on January 8, 1995.

Information gleaned from a permanent UBC display at Main Library (Brenda Petersen et al, Permanent display: “George Woodcock (1912-1955)” [Vancouver: University of British Columbia, Main Library, 1997]) and the following web-sites:


In an interview with Onley on 12 November 2001, he recounted how Woodcock mused about having a Catholic requiem for his funeral:

One of my good friends, George Woodcock, when he was near death, he told me that he wanted a full Catholic requiem for his funeral. I thought, ‘What? Why do you want that?’ Because George was an anarchist! And George said, “But, boy, wouldn’t that be a great send off? What a send off!”

For more on George Woodcock, see 8 March 1988 entry.

53 Robert Murray is a Canadian-born landscape artist and sculptor who shares Onley's passion for flying. Onley and Murray met in San Miguel de Allende in 1958. Murray was born in Vancouver in 1936 and started his career as an artist in Canada; however, he moved to New York in 1960 and continues to
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The midnight train arrives late from Shanghai. At 1:30 am we boarded and got bedded down. We are sharing a sleeper with an army general. He was sitting up in full uniform when we entered. Later that night, we were subjected to an ancient Chinese torture. The general sleeping on his back woke us all with a deep, loud baritone snore. I urged Pei Lin to nudge him as they both occupied the lower bunks. It took some persuading, but, finally, Pei Lin got him turned over.

This train is no Orient Express. The coaches were built in the 50's and maybe that was the last time it was clean. We are told it replaces a much newer train that once plied the route between Shanghai and Kunming. It went off the rails during Chinese New Year, killing 88 people and confirming the Chinese belief that the Year of the Dragon would bring with it death.

We awoke in the morning to the sound of a Chinese wooden flute being played in the next compartment. A perfect accompaniment to the wonderful mountain landscape passing the window. It was a Chinese painting of leaning rock towers, hanging rocks, and mountains eroded into strange and bizarre

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maintain an art studio there. Murray and Onley's love of flying to remote, northern landscapes to paint has led art critics to see them as heroic, wandering artists, following in the tradition of the Canadian Group of Seven. Both Onley and Murray have jokingly drawn parallels between their amphibious airplanes and Group of Seven artist, Tom Thomson and his canoe—“hero-vehicles that take hero-painters to the heroic landscape” (Ruth Fine Lehrer, Watercolours by Robert Murray and Toni Onley. [Philadelphia: Olympia Galleries, 1976] n.p.). Murray owns a summer family home on Lookout Island, Ontario, Canada. Every summer since the 1970’s, Onley would visit Murray at Lookout Island. They would fly out to the various islands of Georgian Bay in their airplanes to paint the landscape (Boulet and Onley 9).

File 1.13 contains correspondence between Onley, Murray and others regarding their November 21 to December 31, 1976 watercolour exhibition at Olympia Galleries in Philadelphia.

54 In 1988, Shanghai, located on the east coast of China, was the largest municipality in China with a population of over 12 million (PRC 217). Shanghai was once the Communist party’s headquarters in the 1930s (Schirokauer 228).
shapes. We passed over still jade green rivers and through little yellow brick villages. The landscape completely dispelled my feeling of the night before, of being aboard a prison train and being transported into exile. Yukiko surprised me with her comment that this train journey is an experience she would not liked to have missed. I agree.

Figure 12: The floors of many valleys are covered with lamp black rocks, eroded into intricate shapes. It is plain to see where the Chinese garden comes from.

The train is crowded with people sleeping in the corridors and between seats, buying food from vendors, through the train windows whenever we stop. We are lucky to have a scruffy, but comfortable compartment and a dining car equally scruffy. Pei Lin has told the dining car steward that I am a very important painter from Canada. Immediately, the dining car was emptied and we had it completely to ourselves. The cook knocked himself out to provide some of the
best meals we have enjoyed in China. Pei Lin explained to me that the highest status in China is reserved for the artist. It is said that “The Chairman looks up to the artist, but the artist looks down on the Chairman.” People will gather outside a restaurant if they think an artist is dining inside, just to get a glimpse of him as he leaves. Pei Lin asked, “Is this true also in Canada?” Yukiko and I laughed for a long time at our surprised guide. I said, “No, artists do not enjoy such status is Canada, only hockey players. I explained to him that I am more famous in Canada for fighting the government to get recognition for all Canadian artists. The appreciation of art and familiarization with artists among the general population has not happened in Canada, like it exists today in China. Artists are not cultural heroes in my country. My government does not recognize artists as they will farmers and fishermen. We are taxed as common manufacturers.

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55 In September 1983, Onley was selected by Revenue Canada as a guinea pig for testing out a new way of taxing artists as manufacturers of goods to be sold in the general market. According to the tax ruling, any unsold works of art would be assessed for tax purposes and the artist would have to pay a tax based on the estimated production costs of the unsold artwork. In Onley’s letter to Member of Parliament Francis Fox, he wrote, “[. . .] often, only a small proportion of what an artist produces he regards as saleable, though often he keeps everything he has done for reference purposes. Such unsold works become his research material, but they do not in any way enter the market, and it is therefore grossly unfair to tax them” (File 15.2, Toni Onley, letter to Francis Fox, 20 Sept. 1983). The ruling also stipulates that the expenses of an artist’s painting trips can only be deducted after all the artwork created as a result of the trip are sold, and after that, the artist must promise in a written letter that s/he will not create any more artwork relating to that painting trip. Onley found the tax ruling alarmingly unfair, a violation of his rights to privacy, and a sure-fire way of crippling Canadian art. In Onley’s letter to Pierre Trudeau, he emphasized how violated he feels to have tax assessors invade his art storage, look through his personal possessions and take notes of his belongings. “They look at and handle my work as if I had produced so many rat traps with a unit cost instead of contributing to the quality of life we experience on the West Coast” (15.2, Toni Onley, letter to Pierre Trudeau, 19 Sept. 1983). In protest to the tax ruling, Onley threatened to burn his unsold artwork on Vancouver’s Wreck Beach rather than pay the taxes. Eventually, the Canadian government decided to revoke the tax ruling on artists and recognized that artists are not simply manufacturers. However, Revenue Canada would not recognize the term “professional artist” under the Income Tax Act which means that artists cannot deduct business expenses and losses as business people can.

For more information on the tax fight, Onley’s protest, and the final outcome of the tax ruling on artists, see Boxes 7, 13, and 15.

56 In an interview with the Ottawa Citizen newspaper reporter Nancy Baele, Onley says, “Canada is perhaps the last country in the world to realize that artists are valuable because they establish a cultural identity” (12.2, Nancy Baele, “Bluff Onley contrasts with his delicate art,” Ottawa Citizen 21 Dec. 1985, C2.).
I asked Pei Lin to ask the general what was his job in the People’s Army.\footnote{The People’s Liberation Army is Communist China’s military force which originated from the Long March as an organization called the Fourth Red Army under Mao and a general named Zhu De (Lawson 46-47). For more on the Long March, see 3 March 1988 entry.} He said he was the chief surgeon in Beijing’s military hospital, specializing in brain and nerve surgery. I showed him a cut on the small finger of my right hand: I had cut it a few days earlier but had not noticed it until it became infected. The general produced a band-aid from his little black bag and dressed it, saying I should clean it and apply antibiotic to it at the first opportunity. Thoughts of Norman Bethune went through my mind.\footnote{For more on Norman Bethune, see 11 March 1988 entry.} The general was going to Kunming on leave. He looked about 65 or so and said he was rather old for the army, but could not be replaced in his field.

![Left hand page: March 2 / Addendum about how Onley had his chop carved for him, an imprint of his chop, and a map their train journey from Quilin to Kunming. Right hand page: A rough sketch of Figure 12.]

\texttt{Figure 13}
1 MARCH 1988

We arrived at Kunming Station at 10 am after being shaken from our berths at 7am by the attendant lady. It is still dark outside, the sky is clear and filled with stars. All of China is on Beijing time, so that the people of Yunnan province have to get up in the dark and retire in daylight. The sun rises at 8am revealing a landscape that is not unlike the Alberta foothills. The air is clean, clear, and warm. For the first time since leaving Guangzhou we are warm again. The corridor windows have all been thrown open to let in the warm air, and for the first time we can climb out from under our covers.

As the train empties a sea of humanity is funnelled through a single gate where we forfeit our tickets. I had lost Pei Lin and Yukiko, when I heard a voice calling, "Mr. Onglee, welcome to Kunming the city of eternal spring." It was our host, Mr. Liu Shirong, Chief Officer of Yunnan Provincial Culture Department. He was accompanied by his officer, Mr. Gu Qun who will be our local guide along with his driver. Finally, we are all together and off to our Green Lake Hotel. After two nights and one day sleeping in our clothes, we can think nothing else but to soak in a bathtub for an hour. We arrive to find the water in the whole city had been turned off for the building of a new tunnel to carry water to the city. After 6pm, it should be turned on again?

Kunming is bursting at the seams with a new city core, new apartments, and hotels. It could be any large western city except it has clear, clean air, 6200 feet up in the centre of the Yunnan plateau. It is subtropical with beautiful weather year round. Kunming has expanded well beyond the old walled city of
not so many years ago. The population is near 2 million. The city is served by the “Burma Road” of W.W. II fame and its airport is a legacy to U.S. military forces. During W.W. II, the “Flying Tigers” were based in Kunming. Up until 1949, many of Beijing’s political ‘undesirables’ were banished here. Those responsible for banishing had obviously never been here. It would be like being banished to paradise, Alberta foothills, bathed in eternal spring.

In the afternoon, we climbed the Western Hills known as the “Sleeping Beauties.” The Hills’ shape resembles a sleeping woman. As far as I could tell, we ended up on the left breast, ending our climb in a complex of temples, pagodas, and pavilions—many accessible only by following a path carved from the living rock face, 2000 feet up a sheer cliff overlooking Dianchi Lake. Along the way, we came across demons, Buddhas, and dragons carved into the mountain rock, then gilded and painted. The work was begun in 1781 and took 72 years to complete. On the way down we visited the Huating Temple, a large

59 Burma Road is an 1125 km long highway in south-east Asia that begins in Lashio, Myanmar (formerly called Burma) and ends in Kunming, China. It was built in 1937 as a military supply route for the Chinese and was used by the Allies in World War II until the Japanese captured Lashio and gained control of the road in April, 1942. Although the U.S. was supposed to be neutral in its affairs with China, it supplied China with much-needed food rations and weapons through the Burma Road and fought against the Japanese to keep the road open. The U.S. struggled to keep China in World War II because the Americans wanted to maintain a military land base in China for the time when they would have to fight the Japanese. The road has not been used since World War II. (Lawson 117-118)

60 Flying Tigers – In August 1941, a group of American volunteer pilots, commanded by General Claire L. Chennault, came to Kunming to assist the Chinese against the Japanese. The Flying Tigers eventually became a part of the Fourteenth U.S. Air Force (Schirokauer 232). In 1941, Chennault convinced President Roosevelt and the U.S. state department to grant him permission to recruit more volunteer pilots to protect the Burma Road. The pilots painted tiger sharks’ teeth on the noses of their old P-40 fighter planes and were paid a salary of $600 - $750 a month, plus a bonus of $500 from the Chinese government for every Japanese plane they gunned down. With fewer than a dozen losses, the Flying Tigers earned officially destroyed 299 Japanese planes and unofficially shot down 1500 Japanese airmen. (Lawson 117-118)

61 Dianchi Lake, also known as Diannanze or Kunming Lake, is a popular tourist location, southwest of Kunming city, at the centre of the Yunnan plateau between the Jinma and Biji hills.
Buddhist complex. The temple itself contains 800 wall carvings of monks. I was told if I started from the left and counted the monks until I reached the number of my age, I would see myself. I decided to pass.

We were guests at a banquet held by Mr. Gao Delin, Deputy Director of the Cultural Department of Yunnan Province. He invited another painter, Mr. Yao Zhong Hua who is also vice-president of Yunnan Painting Institute, the local art gallery. Mr. Gu and Mr. Liu of the Yunnan Cultural Department also joined us. Mr. Gao pulled out all the stops and provided us with all the delicacies of Yunnan Province, including a soup containing caterpillars. Mr. Gao hunted in the serving dish to find more caterpillars for me. Then a dish of what looked like dried grasshoppers. We toasted a marvellous brandy which I was told won second prize in all of China last year. We ended the evening in our room where I showed them all the watercolours I had completed in Quilin.

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62 Huating Temple is also known as the Monastery of the Lotus Summit. It was built on the site of the Temple for the Encouragement of Goodness, which was founded by a monk named Te-shao in 936. (Richard E. Strassberg, Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China [Berkley: U of California P, 1994] 504.)

63 The photocopied manuscript in File 1.7 includes a photocopy of a painting titled "Pavilions in the Garden of the Foolish Politician, Suzhou, China, 19 March 1988." This painting was exhibited in Onley's June 11-26, 1988 watercolour exhibition at Vancouver's Chinese Cultural Centre and is not a part of the original diary manuscript (Toni Onley, telephone interview, 28 Dec. 2000). The photocopied manuscript numbers this painting as page 30, yet the page following the painting is also numbered 30.

64 In 1981, Yao Zhonghua, a south-western Chinese oil-painter, gained national recognition when he was granted permission to exhibit his work at the China Art Gallery. He was most active during the 1970's and the 1980's. (Sullivan 232, 320)

65 For the list of his watercolours that he completed in Quilin, see pages 66-67.
2 MARCH 1988

The Stone Forest is one of the great natural splendours of China.\textsuperscript{66} Located a 126 km bone-jarring, three hour drive Southeast of Kunming, but it is worth it, to see the Yi and Sanyi minority people who live in Lunan County, and sport some the most beautiful and colourful costumes I have ever seen.\textsuperscript{67} As we drove through the village of Wulouke\textsuperscript{68} on the way, the main street was jammed with the Sanyi people in their blue and black hats and elaborately embroidered tunics, all on their way to a wrestling match. The hills around this area are of a burnt sienna dense clay which the Sanyi people cut into building blocks to create a very distinctive architecture. Wooden entranceways are painted with colourful good luck motifs. The ones who can afford it plaster the adobe and whitewash it. The government is so concerned with preserving the distinctive culture of these minority people that they pour millions of yuan into study and preservation of everything that is unique about them. Their dancers are said to be particularly special, and we were sorry not to have witnessed this. They are the only people in China permitted to have more than one child.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{66} Stone Forest: The Petrified Stone Forest is also known as Shilin. Tourists flock to this place to see the unusually shaped, eroded, 20-40 metre-high rocks.

\textsuperscript{67} Yi and Sanyi minority people: China has 56 different ethnic groups and the people of the Han nationality make up over 90% of China’s population. The Yi and Sanyi people are among the 55 ethnic minority groups, which make up approximately 6.7% of China’s population. Although the government of China promotes the distinctiveness of minority cultures like the Yi and Sanyi people to encourage tourism, the government considers most minority cultures primitive and in need of the government’s assistance for socio-economic progress. The Yi and Sanyi people have their own language and writing system. They reside in Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guanxi. (PRC 104-113)

\textsuperscript{68} Wulouke Village: The only Sani/Sanyi minority ethnic village in the Kunming area. Chinese tour guidebooks encourage people to go into the villages to experience Sani culture.

\textsuperscript{69} One-Child Policy: See footnote 11 on page 42.
On our way to the Stone Forest Mr. Gu told me of a master seal carver living in the area of the Stone Forest. I had intended to have a chop made of my name in Chinese, so we looked him up. Pei Lin translated my name for him. I like the way ON-LEY came out to mean “deep profit.” I selected a Han Dynasty calligraphic style with the help of Yukiko and while I was away painting three watercolours, he completed my little chop with the dragon’s handle.70

I perched myself on a high hill overlooking the Stone Forest of strange and wonderful shapes, and did three watercolours in the short time allotted. Yukiko headed off into the dense forest for two hours while I worked.

On the long drive, Pei Lin and I discuss things Chinese and things Western. As he sees it, “One of the main differences is that Westerners use sex for pleasure while in China, we only have sexual relations to create children.” God only knows what the population in China would be if they enjoyed sex!71

Pei Lin said, “We have much to learn from the West, such as the two day weekend.” The telephone is an ornament. It is easier for me to phone Canada than it is for Pei Lin to phone his office in Beijing. He has been trying for a week and has now given up. This is something Canada could do for China, we are the world leaders in communications technology.72

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70 This entire paragraph is Onley’s addendum found on page 26 of the File 1.7 manuscript. I have moved it here where the paragraph chronologically flows with the rest of the 2 March 1988 entry. Figure 13 on page 71 shows an image of Onley’s chop signature and the addendum as it appears on the manuscript.

71 In 1987, the estimated population of China (excluding Taiwan) was 1,069,410,000, about 22% of the world’s population which was approximately 4,975,000,000 (Rand McNally Universal World Atlas: New Revised Edition. [Chicago: Rand McNally, 1987] 229.). See One Child Policy, footnote 11 on page 135.

72 Canada—‘world leader in communications technology.’ Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922), who immigrated to Canada from Scotland in 1870, conceived of the idea of the telephone in Brantford,
Watercolours completed in Kunming, March 2, 1988. 28 X 39 cm.

1. The Stone Forest, Yunnan Province, China. 2 March 1988.

3 MARCH 1988

The security lady who checked our passports at the airport was wearing a little maple leaf flag in the lapel of her police uniform. She smiled when she saw my passport. 73

9 am we left Kunming. I was happy to be aboard a new Boeing 737. The first approach into Chengdu 74 was below I.F.R minimums, we were on the numbers before we broke cloud. Our passengers were mostly army and airforce

Ontario in 1874 (Ralph Nader, Nadia Millerton, and Duff Conacher, Canada firsts [Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992] 48-49.). On November 9, 1972, Canada established the world’s first domestic communications satellite system with the launch of the Anik-1, a prototype of a geostationary domestic communications satellite. After the satellite’s launch, the Telesat Canada network was able to provide homes and office throughout Canada with various telecommunications services such as radio, television, telephone, and data transmission. Telesat Canada also serves the global community, and its services are in demand in countries that are developing their own satellite systems. (Nader 53-54)

Canada, with its large landmass, was first united by railway, then by telecommunications. However, Onley also believes that aviation plays an important role in opening and connecting the country. On Onley’s first trip to Japan in 1978, he met a wealthy Japanese man named Isao who dreamed of flying his own airplane. He had built his own sea-plane, but the Japanese government would not allow him to fly it. Just as Onley was prompted to think about how Canada’s technological advances when he saw Pei Lin’s frustration with an inefficient telephone system, Isao’s unfulfilled dream of flying led Onley to speak of Canadian aviation:

When I told Isao of my own flying experiences in Canada, how the country was opened up by aircraft, and even today 90% of it is only accessible by air, his eyes glazed over with that far off look of a man longing with a dream that may never be realized. I told him that, as an artist, my vision had been changed by the experience of flying just as Leonardo’s had by the very thought of it. (1.5.44-45)

73 In the manuscript, this line appears to have been inserted after he had completed a portion, if not all, of the diary entry.

74 Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan province.
officers. We were met by Mr. Su from the Sichuan Cultural Department and driven to the Jin Jiang Hotel; a great Russian edifice recently refurbished. Mr. Du tells us he had great difficulty getting us passes to enter the Wudlong Natural Reserve area, home of the endangered panda bear, but did prevail. It has been raining here for the past week and the temperature is down to 2 degrees Celsius. A big difference from the 20 degrees Celsius I was painting in yesterday. The Chinese Nationalists holed up here during W.W. II. The province of Sichuan is

75 Sichuan province (also spelled Sezuan, Szechuan, or Szechwan), located in the mountainous region of Central China, is China’s second largest province.

76 The People’s Republic of China, under Mao Zedong’s leadership, made a brief alliance with the Soviet Union in December 1949 in order to obtain financial assistance for rebuilding China. Mao also signed a Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union. Under this Treaty, the Chinese sent armies to aid the Soviet Union in the Korean War, while the Russians sent engineers, technicians, industrial and agricultural equipment to aid the Chinese in rebuilding their economy. However, the relationship between the Soviet Union and China was not strong. When the Soviet Union, under Stalin’s successor, Nikita Khrushchev, denounced Stalin, announced a new policy that strove for a peaceful coexistence with the West and strongly criticized Communist China in 1960 for being peasant-based instead of being industrially based, Mao severed the Sino-Soviet relationship. (Lawson 147-150)

Other diary entries in which Onley mentions the Russian presence in China: March 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17.

77 The Chinese Nationalist Party, which was founded by Sun Yat Sen, is also known as the Kuomintang. It is in opposition to the Communist Party. See March 13 entry for more on Dr. Sun Yat Sen. When Sun Yat Sen passed away in 1925, Chiang Kai Shek (1887 – 1975) became the leader of the Kuomintang Party. In 1949, when the Communists defeated the Nationalists, ended the civil war, and gained control over China, Chiang Kai Shek and his Nationalist followers fled to Taiwan with an enormous hoard of gold and established the Republic of China. On March 1, 1950, Chiang Kai Shek declared himself the President of the Republic of China, and to this day, supporters of the Chinese Nationalists claim that Taiwan is the true and free China.

Historians have speculated that if the U.S. had chosen to support the Chinese Communist Party, or at least chose to stay neutral in its relationship with the Communist and Nationalist parties of China, the U.S. would have had better trade relations with China and would not have been involved with the Korean and Vietnam wars. Anti-Communist U.S.’s unfortunate mistake of supporting the Nationalists made perfect sense at first: why support the atheist Communist Party when the ‘Christian’ and freedom-seeking Nationalist Party needed support? After all, the founder of the party, Dr. Sun Yat Sen, was educated in the United States converted into Christianity (Schirokauer 157), and the party’s leader, Chiang Kai Shek, was also converted to Christianity by his wife who was a devout Christian from a Christian family, and was educated in the U.S.A. (Lawson 101-102). However, the U.S. did not realize that much of the monetary aid it sent to the Nationalists was pocketed by corrupt members of the party.

Onley experienced the political tension and strain in international relations between Taiwan and the West when he exhibited his art in Taipei. See Appendix C for the Taipei excerpt from his Japan Diary.
a veritable fortress of mountains that the Japanese failed to penetrate. The Chinese say, “It is easier to ascend into heaven than scale the mountains of Sichuan.” Sichuan was one the three ancient kingdoms of China. (220-65). Today the province contains 100 million people and Chengdu city contains a population of nearly 4 million people.

In the afternoon, we were guests of the Chengdu Art Academy where we met Zhang You Ju. His magnum opus is a scroll of the landscape through which the “Long March” passed. It is magnificent work of a true painting master. He has completed only the section of the ‘March’ from the north of Sichuan Province to the South which was hung around three walls of the main

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78 Onley is referring to the Japanese invasion in the 1930’s and 1940’s. See March 18 entry, footnote 173, page 98.

79 (220-65): These numbers refer to the time period of the Three Kingdoms. For more information on the Chinese dynasties, see Appendix B.

80 In a telephone conversation on November 22, 2000, Onley recalled how, on viewing Zhang You Ju’s large, unpopulated landscape painting, which survived the Cultural Revolution, he wondered how the Communist government would allow Zhang to paint a work of art for purely aesthetic reasons. During the Cultural Revolution, the Communists used artwork solely as a propaganda tool and the Red Guards destroyed artwork which they felt were symbols of the oppressive imperial past. Mao Zedong’s third wife, Jiang Qing and her Communist followers saw artists, literati, and wealthy people as a part of the old system that they were trying to free China from and the Red Guards persecuted and even executed many of these people. In a note that Onley wrote on a photocopied article he sent me on December 18, 2000, Onley describes how Zhang brilliantly changed the title of his work to “The Long March” during the Cultural Revolution “to avoid possible death, even though there is not a single marching figure in this work. Other artists were not so lucky. During this time a writer could not put his or her thoughts to paper and this is true to this day. Painters have more freedom but often misuse it with copies of Western styles.” (Toni Onley, note to author, 18 December 2000). As Onley mentions in his 18 March 1988 entry, the Chinese government gave artists more freedom to paint in 1976 by allowing art to be produced for aesthetic reasons or for artistic exploration, provided that no anti-Communist or anti-Chinese government messages are being expressed in the artwork.

81 The Long March was a 6000 mile trek undertaken by Mao Zedong, the Red Army, and Communist civilians to move their Communist base to a more strategic location. The march began on October 16, 1934 from the Jianxi base in South-Eastern China with 100 000 people and ended on October 20, 1935 at the Shaanxi base in Central China with only 15 000 survivors. The marchers had to endure starvation, freezing temperatures, numerous attacks from the Kuomintang (Nationalist) army, swampy grounds, mountainous terrain, and rampaging warlords. The epic journey strengthened the morale and political purpose of the Communist Party and most Chinese people deemed the survivors of the Long March heroic and worthy to be trusted to lead the country.
hall of the Jing Dynasty guest house, which serves as his studio. This completed section, 80 meters long, has taken him seven years to paint. The rest of the "Long March" will take him another twenty years to complete. He had not so much painted the landscape as he had painted the light, like Turner.\(^82\) You Ju is a smiling little man in thick purple glasses and wearing a hearing aid. He wanted to do a painting for me. I said, "Only if I can do one for you." He rolled out a sheet of paper as soft as fine silk and painted a flower in black shumo and vermilion, dedicating it to Yukiko and me in a masterful calligraphic hand. I painted one for him of the mountains of Quilin and signed it, "For Zhang You Ju on the occasion of our meeting 3 March 1988." As we left, he gave me a roll of the paper had painted on: it is made in Sichuan province. The Art Academy supports twenty artists providing then with studio space and a living. Samples of all their work hangs in another part of the complex. It ranged from good to sentimental kitsch. Our hostess at the Academy is its president, Miss Zhu Peijun.\(^83\) She is famous in China for her meticulous paintings of flowers and carp, Gongbi style.\(^84\) She was born here in Chengdu in 1920. A bright little woman, very much the mama san\(^85\) of the Academy. Leaving the Academy, we

\(^{82}\) The line "He had not so much...like Turner." was inserted at a later time.

\(^{83}\) Miss Zhu Peijun was a self-taught guohua artist from the Sichuan province. She was a friend of Jiang Qing (Madame Mao) and she actively participate in Sichuan art politics. (Sullivan 252, 325)

\(^{84}\) Gongbi, (or Kung Pi,) is one of two basic techniques in Chinese painting. The Gongbi manner of painting is stylized while the Hsieh-I, or Xieyi, technique is free and bold. See footnote 98, page 51-52, for more on the Xieyi technique. To paint in the Gongbi style, an artist must work slowly, and carefully, capturing minute detail with multiple, tiny brushstrokes.

\(^{85}\) Mama san: Onley is attempting to use Japanese to describe Zhu Peijun's role as mother at the academy. Onley often amalgamates Japanese and Chinese cultures and languages when attempting to describe Asian culture. Onley dedicated A Silent Thunder, to his wife Yukiko, "who was [his] first
drove to Du Fu cottage, home of the great Tange poet (712-70d).86 A shrine was built in the Jing Dynasty to mark the spot where he built a small thatched roof cottage on a stream that still runs today. It is situated in the west end of Chengdu, in a sprawling park dotted with pavilions, lakes, and trees. I told the director it was my intention, if at all possible, to return to paint here. It was so cold and damp. All we could do was take in the stark classical beauty of the architecture and gardens, have a cup of hot tea and run. It is said that Du Fu's poetry is so graphic that Chinese painters have been able to recreate his landscapes from the reading of his poems. An exhibition of some of these works hangs in one of the pavilions.

meeting with the Orient” (6), which means that Japanese culture is Onley’s first experience with Asian culture. By 1988, Onley had visited Japan several times with his wife, Yukiko, and he had been accustomed to hearing Yukiko explain Asian culture to him from a Japanese point of view. Since this is his first trip to China (if one excludes his trip to Taipei, as described in his 1978 Japan diary in File 1.5), Onley often draws from his knowledge of Japanese language and culture to understand China and the Chinese. See Appendix C for an excerpt of the Taipei entry in Onley’s Japan diary.

86 Du Fu (or Tu Fu) was a Confucian poet whose poetry demonstrated his scholarship and was highly developed in technique; however, the uniqueness of his poetry lies in his compassionate descriptions of the reality of social conditions. For example, he wrote poetry about the cruelty of conscription and the devastation caused by civil wars. Du Fu can be considered China’s greatest poet. (Bradley Smith and Wan-go Weng. China: A History in Art [N.p.: Gemini Smith, 1979] 139.) (712-70d) means that the Tang poet was born in 712 and died in 770 A.D.
4 MARCH 1988

Today we were to leave for the Wudlong Natural Reserve area, but Yukiko took ill in the night with fever and stomach ache. It continued through the morning with frequent vomiting. No doctor was to be had before 2:30 pm. During the morning, she fell into a deep sleep. There seemed to little to do but wait it out. Pei Lin was suffering the same yesterday, but did not let on. He looked awful at the Du Fu garden. When I asked him if he was OK he said his head hurt, his stomach ached and he felt weak in the knees. I suggested we cut it short, but he insisted in soldiering on with an unflinching translation of Du Fu’s landscape poems, which hang in one of the pavilions. Today he is well, and has agreed we should set off tomorrow for the home of the panda. Yukiko almost
never gets sick. She braved it with me for two months in India without faltering one day. I was the one to fall by the wayside. Fortunately, that was for only one day of Delhi belly. In The Walls of India, George Woodcock marvelled at Onley’s toughness: “Downed the day after our arrival by troubled intestines, Toni staggered out in the sun’s setting brilliance – astonishing me, not for the last time, by the toughness of his dedication to painting – to sketch in the gardens of Rambagh Palace [. . .]” (19). Later on in their trip, Woodcock remarked that “[. . .] Toni showed an endurance in the cause of art that I found astonishing and impossible to imitate” for he would wake up at the crack of dawn, make his way up the cold mountain tops in a rugged jeep, and paint in the freezing air while the rest of the travel party eats breakfast in the warm streets of India. (115)

In fact, I never leave home without my Greek fisherman’s hat.

87 In The Walls of India, George Woodcock marvelled at Onley’s toughness: “Downed the day after our arrival by troubled intestines, Toni staggered out in the sun’s setting brilliance – astonishing me, not for the last time, by the toughness of his dedication to painting – to sketch in the gardens of Rambagh Palace [. . .]” (19). Later on in their trip, Woodcock remarked that “[. . .] Toni showed an endurance in the cause of art that I found astonishing and impossible to imitate” for he would wake up at the crack of dawn, make his way up the cold mountain tops in a rugged jeep, and paint in the freezing air while the rest of the travel party eats breakfast in the warm streets of India. (115)

88 Onley’s father: James Anthony Onley was born in 1903 in Sennen Cove in Cornwall. At age 14, he left school and worked as an apprentice and a carpenter at a construction company. When he was 18, he started his acting career and worked at various theatre companies in Britain. In 1928, he married Florence Lord and had three children by her. During World War II, James was involved as an internment camp director, a member of the army and then a member of the airforce. He moved his family to Galt (now called Cambridge), Ontario in 1948 in search of a less war-torn home for his family. In Canada, he continued to act in theatres and for CBC radio. He also started a travelling theatre group called The New World Theatre to bring Shakespeare to children in Canadian towns. In 1955, the Onley family moved to Penticton, B.C. where he founded the CKOK FM radio station and where he eventually retired. (27.1 [red duotang].6-7)
I had a rough and ready six-penny haircut and beard trim from a man who learnt his trade on the "Long March." It is short enough to last me the duration.

5 MARCH 1988

Yukiko is well enough to journey forth, but not well enough to tackle a five hour drive to Wudlong Natural Reserve. Chengdu has a small zoo with a dozen or so pandas. We arrived at feeding time. They sat on their behinds, like human, eating cakes made of cereal, vitamins, and bamboo leaves. They use their front paws like hands in which they can hold what they eat. The lesser panda is an animal I have never heard of. They are gentle creatures resembling a large racoon with rich burnt sienna fur and yellow ochre ears. The Chinese tiger was in a kingly slumber. He is the largest of the tiger family. The markings on his forehead are the calligraphic symbol for ‘king’: 亙. There was the Chinese Horse Bear from Northwest China and a Brown Bear that looked more like a short-legged, overweight German Shepherd. We saw a large monkey, now endangered from the Sichuan mountains. It was like visiting another planet because these were all animals neither of us had seen before.

On our way to the Zen Monastery of Precious Light, we stopped for lunch in a small country town called Shindu. Sichuan cuisine is considered the

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89 Onley’s grandfather: Thomas Onley (1870 - 1947) served in Britain’s Royal Navy from 1886 to the early 1920’s, and he retired in the 1920’s when he obtained the rank of Commander. After he established a life-boat station on the Isle of Man, he settled down on the Isle in the town of Ramsey.

90 Zen: A sect within Buddhism that stresses on reaching enlightenment through meditation. According to Zen Buddhism, in order to meditate properly, one must empty the mind until one attains a blank state, a state in which everything becomes nothing, and the mind can be freed from the things of the world. Onley likes to use the concept of Zen when describing his creative processes. “I live for those moments when I experience a Zen-like oneness of Nature, hand and brush,” says Onley in his latest book,
best in China and up to now, we had only experienced a hint of how good it could be. All food heavily laced with garlic and hot spices, even in fresh, crisp vegetables. We started with a smoked duck that you tasted in your nose as much as the mouth. There was a thin, thin egg noodle sprinkled with ginger and something spicy and hot. Fish cooked in a heavenly sauce. And thinly sliced, spiced chicken like no chicken I have ever tasted. It went on and on until I am sure none of us will be thinking of food for two days.

The Zen Buddhist Monastery of Precious Light is a temple of massive proportions. Its origins lay in the late Han Dynasty (circa 2nd century A.D.) and is located north of Chengdu maybe 25 kilometers. It houses 500 statues of monks, and again I was invited to count the monks from the entrance to the number of my age. The monk I arrived at would be me. I counted to 59 and Yukiko followed to make sure I did not miscount. When I arrived at myself, Yukiko said, “It’s uncanny!” He was the only monk wearing a beard, his face was round and a little stern. As I moved from side to side to get a better look, his eyes followed me. It was me alright, maybe a little younger and a little thinner me. But it was me!

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Toni Onley's British Columbia (16). In a note about his watercolours, Onley explains how, when painting, he prefers to launch his creative processes from a blank, Zen-like state:

I paint directly in response to what is in front of me. I do not outline or draw in pencil beforehand, that for me would be to paint by numbers; the finished painting decided long before completion. I prefer to leave all my options open and not know what the finished work will look like [...] to keep the whole work moving and speaking to me until I arrive at the point when the watercolour says to me – ‘I am finished.’

(27.black binder.11)

91 The first time, Onley passed on the opportunity to find himself among the monk figures. See 1 March entry, page 74.
We saw many Tibetans at the monastery. A number are also staying at our hotel. I wonder how they can bear coming to this country or ever forgive the Chinese: for ravaging their sacred artwork; the wholesale destruction of many of their thousand-year-old monasteries by Red Guards, sometimes using artillery; the thousands of monks and lay Buddhists that were sent to labour camps; and, the biggest loss of all, the Dalai Lama, their spiritual head, forced to flee to northern India. One would have to be a saint to forgive such sacrilege.

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92 Red Guards (not to be confused with the ‘Red Army,’) were created by Mao Zedong in the Cultural Revolution. Mao encouraged young students to become Red Guards and urged them to form bands to attack those in authority, including their own parents, who were against the Cultural Revolution. As the Red Guards rebelled against all forms of authority, they burnt books, destroyed works of art, desecrated temples, and terrorized school and government officials. (Lawson 7) In December, 2000, Onley sent me a photocopied excerpt from the Nobel lecture of exiled Chinese writer Gao Xinjian, whose writing is banned in China. Gao Xinjian, the 2000 Nobel prize winner in literature, describes how his writing has been limited by his country’s cultural and political framework, and he calls for the creation of ‘cold literature,’ which is “literature that will flee in order to survive,...literature that refuses to be strangled by society in its quest for spiritual salvation.” (Full text of Gao Xinjian’s Nobel lecture can be found online at www.svenskaakademien.se. Onley’s photocopied excerpt of the lecture is from Gao Xingjian, “A call for ‘cold literature,’ ” The National Post. 16 December 2000. B8.) On the photocopy, Onley notes, “What Xingjian is speaking of here is what I found in 1988 –the Cultural Revolution had passed, but a network of spies still existed. Grandmothers were still turning in their grandchildren for thoughts not consistent with Communist doctrine” (Toni Onley, note to author, 18 December 2000).

93 I have altered the punctuation of this paragraph in order to string together a series of sentence fragments. Originally, there were no semicolons or colons to separate the sentence fragments; only periods. See Appendix G for the original version.

94 Tibet lost its identity as a nation-state and became a part of China when the Communist Chinese government forced a Tibetan delegation to sign the Seventeen Point Agreement in April, 1951. In September of that year, Communist Chinese troops occupied Tibet in order to ‘unite’ it to the ‘motherland’ with the ‘good intentions’ of liberating and modernizing Tibet. (John F. Avedon. In Exile From the Land of Snows: The Dalai Lama and Tibet since the Chinese Conquest [New York: Harper Perrenial, 1994] 35-37.) As the Communist Chinese government attempted to develop Tibet and impose Communist ideas upon the Tibetans, the Chinese troops were ordered to ransack the temples and remove or destroy Tibetan artwork and sacred items, which the Chinese government viewed as medieval nuisances that hindered progress. Religion is vital to the Tibetans, but the Communist Chinese government perceived religion as a barrier that prevents full control over Tibet. When the Communist government’s intentions to take full control of Tibet became clear to the Dalai Lama, the rightful political and spiritual head of Tibet, he was forced into exile in India. (Avedon 34-61)

Pei Lin told me that the army was sent to this monastery to protect it from destruction by the Red Guard. Otherwise, it, and all its priceless art collection would have gone up in flames. The excesses of the Cultural Revolution are still being felt in China today. The mindless slaughter of one whole intellectual stratum of society will take generations to make up for. It is a total embarrassment to Pei Lin and everyone else we speak to in China. But I am digressing.

The Monastery of Precious Light was holding an exhibition of contemporary calligraphy, much of it so-so. Two mounted scrolls stood out. I asked Pei Lin to find out if they would be for sale. He disappeared, then reappeared with a delegation of monks, lay Buddhists, and the simply curious. Among them was Liu Shu Liang, the calligrapher I had so admired. Pei Lin had obviously exaggerated my importance; as some kind of Canadian national treasure. As Mr. Liu insisted I have the two scrolls at a knock-down price of 300 yuan for both ($100 Canadian). Liu Shu Liang is one of the leading calligraphers of these parts. He insisted on painting, or should I say, writing a work dedicated to both Yukiko and me. He rolled out a 2 meter sheet of paper on the felt covered table in the gallery. By now, the word had gone out that the Sensei

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95 The Great Cultural Revolution was Mao Zedong's attempt to spark continuous revolution in China. Mao began the radical program in 1966 with the hope that China would become the primitive, revolutionary society it once was and that the Chinese would understand his view that an elite class system, which he believed was a result of people seeking middle-class economic security, weakens the country. To carry out his Great Cultural Revolution, Mao closed down schools and universities, encouraged the Red Guards in their destructive anarchism, and tried to recreate the revolutionary spirit of the Long March. Unfortunately, the Cultural Revolution was a complete failure for it threw China into chaos and damaged the society Mao had worked so hard to build.

96 Sensei - A Japanese term for ‘teacher’ or ‘master.’ Again, Onley uses a Japanese term since he is more familiar with Japanese culture than Chinese culture.
was at work, for the little temple gallery was now packed with monks, passers-by, and Yak-smelling Tibetan herdsmen and their womenfolk. To the respectful ooohs and ahhhs Liu Shi Liang with his Shumo loaded goat hair brush, laid down each character with full knowledge of its precise relationship to the next character and the scale of the sheet of paper. It read, "Sino-Canadian friendship exists forever." Now, it was my turn. I took off my coat, rolled up my sleeves, gripped Liu's largest brush in my hand and studied the paper; mentally composing a landscape of rocks and ragged mountains. When I had the rough disposition of my shapes fixed in my mind, I looked up and the already filled gallery had filled even more. The silence and expectant look on the sea of faces was one I could only imagine reserved for the second coming.

I laid down a great black rock smack in the centre of my sheet, then dribbled and dragged a rugged river bank across the sheet behind it, reflected pale as it does in the jade coloured rivers of Quilin. I was interrupted in my train of thought by one of the monks exclaiming, "\textit{xieyi}," the 'i' trailing like a stone dropped into a deep well and never reaching the bottom.\textsuperscript{97} 'Xieyi' means to write or paint with meaning, to be able to describe those parts of a painting not touched by the brush—that is xieyi.\textsuperscript{98} I finished by dragging in three mountains

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\textsuperscript{97} All the Chinese characters in this entry were originally written by Onley in his manuscript.
\textsuperscript{98} Xieyi, or Hsieh-i, is one of two basic techniques in Chinese painting with which an artist is able to paint boldly and freely, without having to worry about details. The artist who uses this technique must know the subject well and have a clear idea of what the final image will look like before beginning the painting. Onley uses the Xieyi technique in his work for he freely interprets the landscapes without focussing on the portrayal of details: all of Onley's art capture the essential elements of the subject.

"those parts of the painting not touched by the brush" — This is one of Onley's favourite phrases when describing his art.

Painting around blank spaces to describe patches of white, light, ice, cloud, or snow is a technique that Onley uses often. The best example of this technique is found in Toni Onley and Claude Peloquin's
with a half dry brush. It was as if everyone had been holding their collective breaths. For as I lay the brush gently down on its rest, the audience in unison exhaled a great sigh and when totally expelled, burst into thunderous applause.\textsuperscript{99}

The end of a perfect day. But it was not to be the end. Liu Shu Liang took us into the inner sanctum of the temple to show us its painting treasures, not often seen by the outside world. They prize a work by 張大千 Zhang Dagian, China’s most famous 20\textsuperscript{th} century painter who worked in the detailed Gongbi 工筆 Style.\textsuperscript{100} But I was drawn to two other works by Ming Dynasty artists, also in the Gongbi style, although one of a giraffe with a turbaned attendant looked

\textsuperscript{99} On the trip to India, George Woodcock observed how appreciative the Indians were of Onley’s paintings. Onley was pleased with the Indians’ appreciation of his artwork and remarked to Woodcock, “I’d much sooner have them as an audience than the Canadian art critics. They look at my work; the critics talk about nothing but the money I make” (Woodcock and Onley 75).

\textsuperscript{100} Zhang Dagian: (other spellings: Zhang Daqian, Chang Dai-Chien) 1899 – 1983. He was actually very versatile in painting styles, ranging from the classical, detailed, Gongbi style to abstract expressionism. He is also a master of art forgery and imitation, as well as a connoisseur and collector of genuine art. (Sullivan 19-21, 322.) From December 2000 until January 28, 2001, the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibited his work and claimed that their show was the first exhibition of Chang Dai-chien’s paintings in Canada (Gabriel Yiu, “Vancouver Art Gallery highlights masterpieces by Chinese ink painter.” The Vancouver Sun. 11 Dec 2000: A13.). Zhang Dagian’s work has been well-received internationally and continues to be admired.
decidedly Persian of Mogal. The other, badly faded, of a group of horses. Xu Beihong, another of China's three most famous 20th-century painters was represented by the biggest horse he had ever painted. The third in the trio of 20th-century masters, Qi Baishi, famous for his fish, is not represented. I was impressed a little by a painting in the Gongbi style by the Emperor Song Huizhong. He was not a very good emperor; in the end he was overthrown, but he loved art. The Song Dynasty (960-1279) was the Renaissance of Chinese art. The Emperor's delicate flower painting would certainly make him unfit for battle. It is odd how the mighty yearn to be artists, calligraphers or poets. It runs through Chinese history. We only have Prince Albert and Churchill to show for it.

Liu Shu Liang followed us, along with a bevy of the curious, to our awaiting car. I told him I have a place reserved on my wall for his two scrolls.

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101 Xu Beihong: 1895-1953. Although he is a guohua painter, he favours Western techniques of painting and he developed painting techniques that incorporate both Chinese and Western methods of painting. He was a globe-trotting artist; yet, he was active in Chinese political activities. He is internationally known for his spirited paintings of horses. (Sullivan 68-72, 319)

102 Qi Baishi: (Also known as Qi Huang) 1863-1957. He is a guohua painter, a calligrapher, and a seal-engraver. Qi Baishi is not only well-known for his paintings of fish, he is also a master at painting figures, birds, insects, and flowers. In 1953, the Ministry of Culture named him the Outstanding Artist of the Chinese people and in 1955, the World Peace Council awarded him the International Peace Prize. (Sullivan 312)

103 Emperor Song Huizhong made careful studies of birds and his paintings are meticulously detailed and realistic. He was also an avid collector of bronze vessels from the Shang and Zhou dynasties that were used in ancestral worship. Song Huizhong was interested in studying the inscriptions on these bronze vessels for he considered them to be direct messages from his ancestors. (Time-Life Books, Lost Civilizations: China's Buried Kingdoms [Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life, 1993] 12.) Subsequent references to this book will be (TL #).

104 Both Prince Albert and Churchill are British. Prince Albert (1819-1861) was the dearly beloved husband of Queen Victoria. He was a trusted advisor to Queen Victoria and a patron of the arts and sciences in Great Britain. Winston Churchill (1874 - 1965) is one of Britain's best-known and admired 20th-century statesperson. After serving 10 years as Britain's Prime Minister (1940 - 1945, 1951 - 1955), Churchill resigned and spent the rest of his life painting and writing.
The one of the square, compact character, LUCK or FORTUNE, and the other in classical script; a poem by the Han Dynasty poet of these parts, Du Fu. I felt I had been Emperor for a day, as we drove away through the admiring throng.

They do not look after their art treasures. I discussed this with Pei Lin on our way back. The works we saw were unprotected. Some master works simply thumb-tacked to the wall, all exposed to heat, damp, and sun. Scrolls that have survived for hundred of years because they had been rolled and out of sunlight now hang exposed to the elements. Pei Lin agreed and said, "Many emperors' tombs are being left unopened because, at present, China does not have the means of protecting and preserving the priceless objects that now lay undisturbed." Even contemporary artists and gallery directors and curators have no idea how to display today's artwork. Gallery visitors poke at the exposed works on paper, leaving them with rips and finger prints. I would not dream of showing in China, as much as I would like to. My work would be returned to me in rags, if it ever made it back to me.\(^{105}\)

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Dujiang Dam is about 40 km Northwest of Chengdu through the lush Chengdu valley farmland that has been providing us with such fresh, crisp vegetables and tomatoes the size of apples, that really taste like a tomato. The little farmhouses and barns all clustered together and protected with a big stand

\(^{105}\) See 10 March 1988 entry for more on the poor protection of artwork.
of bamboo is very distinctive of this region. The buildings are half timbered, the panels filled with bamboo slats and plastered, the roof is rice stalk thatching. They look warm and comfortable and remind me of a scene from a Bruegel painting.\textsuperscript{106} On the drive Mr. Du told us that very near where we had our great lunch yesterday in Shindu, a tomb has recently been excavated that is 4000 years old. The experts do not know who the occupant is, but the surprising find was a life size bronze figure. The tomb also contained the bones of an elephant, raising speculation that they were used in Sichuan at that time. The area is closed to the public. Mr. Du said all the Sino-Canadian friendship in the world could get me in.\textsuperscript{107}

We were met at the Dujiang Dam by its director who escorted us on a personal tour. The dam, conceived and engineered by Li Bing\textsuperscript{108} in 250 BC is one of the great marvels of the ancient world, surpassing even the Great Pyramids. It is a water distribution and irrigation project used to this day. It controls flooding and supplies water to 1.3 million hectares of land. Part of the project was a trunk canal cut through a mountain that even by today's technical abilities would require international co-operation to complete. The silt control side of the project is a marvel in itself and is something even today's engineers

\textsuperscript{106} Peiter Bruegel the Elder (1525 – 1569) was a Flemish painter who was famous for his landscape paintings and his images of peasant folk-life.

\textsuperscript{107} Perhaps a “not” is missing, but I have reproduced what Onley wrote in the manuscript.

\textsuperscript{108} Li Bing: A hydraulic engineer who was appointed as governor of the Qin military province in the Shu state in 250 B.C. He built his irrigation network by cutting through 130 feet of solid rock to create a gorge into which he diverts the Min River. By diverting the flow of the Min River, he made it possible to control the waterflow with a system of dams, locks, and canals, thereby making agricultural industry in the Chengdu region much more prosperous. The Dujiang Dam is only one segment of Li Bing's engineering project. (TL 60)
could learn from. In the 70’s, the Russians built another dam to expand on Li Bing’s efforts, but this proved to be a failure and has been abandoned in favour of Li Bing’s original design. You don’t mess around with success!

We descended to the river bed at a point on the River Min that is crossed by a swaying cable foot bridge. I did two watercolours before the clouds obscured the snow-capped mountains and it started to rain. We headed off to a nearby village for some more of that great Sichuan cooking.

You have to watch where you step in China. The men have the disgusting habit of spitting at every opportunity, even on the red carpets of our hotel. I broached the subject with Pei Lin (who does not spit) and he told me that China is divided into two classes, those who spit and those who think it is a disgusting habit. At his university in Beijing, a student that is seen spitting would be immediately ostracised by the other students as one who is uncivilized. It could affect his whole future. There is a government campaign underway to stop spitting in public. The offender, when caught, has to wipe his offending gob from the pavement and pay a fine. There was a sign on the Manx trains when I was a boy which read, "Passengers are requested to refrain from the objectionable and dangerous habit of spitting." It hung next to the one about not picking flowers when the train was in motion.

When we were leaving Precious Light Monastery yesterday, Mr. Liu handed me his address and asked me to keep in touch. I saw that his address was the Xindu Political Consultative Committee. I asked Pei Lin about this committee and it appears to be a most enlightened one. The Political Committee
is made up of artists, intellectuals, poets, educators, and men and women of letters, from every country and state. Once a year, the government invites them all to Beijing to discuss current affairs and to offer advice to the government, which is acted upon. I think of Canada with its Canada Conference of the Arts funded by the government to be a lobby group whose suggestions are almost never heeded. The practice of government consulting artists goes back a long way in China. The great Tang poet Du Fu was chief advisor to his Emperor Xuan Zong under whose rule, naturally, painting and poetry flourished.

Watercolours completed today, 28 x 39 cm

1. The Pavilion of Li Bing on the Min River, Sichuan Province, China. 6 March 1988.

2. Bridge on the River Min, Sichuan Province, China. 6 March 1988.

* I gave this watercolour to Pei Lin at the end of our journey. I inscribed it “To Pei Lin whom we will always remember.”

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109 The Canada Conference of the Arts, established in 1945 by a group of prominent artists, is a non-partisan, independent organization that lobbies the government, monitors political and legislative developments that may affect Canadian art and artists, and attends legislative and budget hearings. The organization also generates public awareness of artists’ and cultural workers’ issues by informing the media through constant communication and regular press releases. (Canada Conference of the Arts. Home Page. 20 Dec. 2000. 17 Jan. 2001 <http://www.culturenet.ca/cca/indexen.htm>.)

The CCA became involved in Onley’s tax fight against Revenue Canada’s decision to tax his unsold paintings in the 1980’s. Items on the CCA’s role in relation to Onley’s tax fight can be found in Box 13, files 1-3. For more on Onley and his tax fight, please see 29 February 1988 entry, footnote 55, page 33.

110 Emperor Xuan Zong: Also known as Li Longli, a Tang Emperor who ruled for over forty years. In the early part of his reign, the economy flourished as he levied light taxes to ease the burden of his people and as he carefully selected the best officials to manage the affairs of local government and the military while weeding out the unqualified officials. When the economy flourished, so did the arts and handicraft industry. Unfortunately, during the latter part of his reign, he made the mistake of appointing officials who managed the affairs of the state poorly and threw the country in chaos. (PRC 19)
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As a child, I was able to recite the chronology of Chinese dynasties from Xia to Manchu.\textsuperscript{111} But like the multiplication table, it becomes lost with the use of the calculator. But seeing breathes life into those old numbers. The only thing new is the history we do not know! Being here makes it possible to take it all apart and study its styles in isolation and see the incongruity of putting Ch’in Dynasty (221-296 BC) statue of Li Bing standing in a Ch’ing Dynasty (1644-1911) pavilion alongside of a Ming Dynasty (1568-1644) bronze dragon urn. History tends to telescope Chinese historical objects into one amorphous glob of what we perceive as Chinese art.

Pei Lin and I headed off into back alleys jammed with vendors, bicycle riders, and a crush of humanity. We were looking for longjohns to keep our bones warm in this cold, damp climate. We found what we were looking for ¥1.50 yuan a pair (50¢ Canadian). Good quality! I saw a box of cigars at one vendor’s stall. I imagined they might be something like those strong weeds, universally smoked in Burma. I bought only three to try. I lit up on the street and was surprised to find a mild, sweet smelling smoke, not unlike a Brazilian cigar. I doubled back and bought a 25 box of Great Wall Of China\textsuperscript{112} cigars at ¥6.20 yuan (about $2.00 Canadian).

\textsuperscript{111} See Appendix B for more on the chronology of the Chinese dynasties.

\textsuperscript{112} Although the Great Wall of China is the most visited attraction in China, Onley does not visit it on his trip. The myth that hails the Great Wall as a continuous structure that unifies the people of China is untrue. The Wall runs through five provinces and two autonomous regions; however, the Wall is made up of a series of walls built in various dynasties in order to set up and protect borders \textit{within} China. The
Later, well-dressed against the weather, we were received by the deputy
director of Chengdu City Museum. He was equally padded against the cold with
wool hat, scarf, and top coat. He and his young, attractive female curator gave
us a tour of the museum's archaeological exhibits, after the ritual 'drinking of tea
and getting to know you session.' The exhibition is all of finds in this area around
Chengdu from Stone Age to the Ch'ing Dynasty. It included the contents of a
Ming tomb, which among other things like terracotta treasure chests, a standing
army of a hundred soldiers and retainer all standing about 30 cm in height.
Another pavilion of the Ch'ing Dynasty temple that serves as the museum
contained a terracotta frieze from the tomb of a Han Dynasty official. Each panel
of the frieze depicted scenes from everyday life of his period. A reconstruction of
the actual tomb has been constructed in the gallery. As we were about to leave,
the director handed us a long square scroll box containing a rubbing of one of the
terracotta panels. It was of a horse and carriage.¹¹³ Yukiko was particularly
pleased, being a horse woman.¹¹⁴

It was my turn to do a painting again. This one turned out to be the best of
these 'occasion paintings' I am called upon to do. First of all, it was a heavy
paper, very lightly sized so that the sumi ink was much more controllable. It had
a warm, soft surface that was most receptive to the ink. I thought it would make
a wonderful watercolour paper. It was a large sheet about 1.5 meters X 80

¹¹³ See Appendix I for the Han frieze image.

¹¹⁴ Yukiko was involved in competitive horseback riding at that time.
centimetres. I did a horizontal work starting at the left centre and dragged in a range of about six mountains. I placed a big, black rock in the bottom foreground and an angry sky directly above it at the very top of the sheet. I asked the resident artist whose studio we had been working in, what was the name of this paper, and where I could buy it. He said it was very old and no longer available. The museum has only a few sheets which they keep for very special occasions such as this. I'm glad I found out now and not before I started to paint!

The last lunch in Chengdu before Mr. Du and his driver drove us to the airport for our 1:30 pm departure for Wuhan. Mr. Du wanted us to experience the most unique food of Sichuan which is normally only available from street vendors. That would be taking a chance! But he knew an eatery that served it all. Down a back alley and up the stairs to a room overlooking the crowded street below. The table was cleared and beer poured. The first dish was a roasted rabbit, laced with garlic and spices. A big plate of spiced meats, bamboo and what the Japanese call Koniyaku (a very sexy food), then a bowl of sweet soup made from peanuts in which floated a transparent mushroom called silver ear. There were lots of spiced vegetables and sweets made with soba powder among other things which resembles a sand castle. Finally, Zhongzi made from rice and red beans wrapped into a package with a bamboo leaf. It is eaten in

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115 Wuhan is the major metropolis of central China from which rail and river transport systems radiate.

116 Koniyaku: It is actually “konnyaku,” a yam cake that the Japanese consider a health food.
honour of the poet Qu Yuan,\(^{117}\) China’s first romantic poet who lived in Hubei province\(^{118}\) about 2000 years ago during the Warring States period. The story goes that local officials made his life very miserable, so he took his own life by drowning in the Milou River. He was much loved by the people, and when they heard what had happened, they rushed to the river and threw baskets of rice, so the fish would eat it and not their beloved poet Qu Yuan. We also eat a dish made from dried jelly fish, no doubt brought here by the Nationalists when they fled inland from the coast during the war. I am told that they missed seafood so much that they would send pilots on suicide missions to Shanghai just to get crabs.\(^ {119}\)

We arrived at the airport to have all our bulging luggage opened for inspection. That completed, we crossed the airfield and mounted a rickety ladder and into an old Y-7 which is the Chinese version of the Russian Antonov AS-24 Twin turboprop airliner. The seats are more like deckchairs. A fellow behind my seat hung an iron hoop with a parrot perched on it from the luggage rack directly over my head. I asked him politely if he would not mind hanging the bird over his

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\(^{117}\) Qu Yuan is one of China’s most celebrated literary figures. He was born into a nobleman’s family around 340 BC and he was a highly educated and patriotic man who gained the king of Chu’s favour. Qu Yuan became a leading government minister who gave wise political advice to the king. Unfortunately, the king disregarded his advice and dismissed him from office. Qu Yuan went into exile and wrote some of his greatest poems during that time. So great was his disenchantment with life that he drowned himself in the Milou River. Today, Chinese people commemorate his death with the yearly Dragon Boat Festival and the making of packages of glutinous rice wrapped in leaves. (TL 69)

\(^{118}\) Hubei province is located in central eastern China, to the east of Sichuan province.

\(^{119}\) Onley is very interested in *kamikaze* pilots. In another version of a Japan Diary entry I found in File 1.15, Onley recalls how he attempted to learn more about suicidal pilots, but ended up learning about a historian’s obsession with the sexual symbolism of Japanese historical events. The extra entry is dated May 12, 1978, which is the same date as the entry about Onley’s meeting with Isao, the man who dreamed of flying his own plane, in the original 1978 Japan Diary in File 1.5. See Appendix E for the extra entry.
own head. I recognized the seat belt as being the same one that let me down so badly when I crashed my Polish Wilga 80 on a mountain glacier in 1984.\footnote{120}

We were met by Hubei Province Cultural Bureau officials and whisked off to the Qingchuan Hotel overlooking the broad Yangtze River.\footnote{121} There was little time to enjoy the view as the Cultural Bureau had prepared a banquet in our honour. We were a little fatigued and the last thing on our minds would be round after round of toasting with powerful spirits. But it had to be done. I quickly got into my pin-striped suit and Yukiko into her dinner dress. The Cultural Director was very understanding and let us off early so that we could change back into our travelling togs and catch the midnight train to Shiyan, a six hour journey to the north-west corner of the province in Yanyang Prefecture.

Our guide, Mr. Chen from Hubei Cultural Bureau, Pei Lin, Yukiko and I shared a “soft sleeper,” as they are called. In fact, they are quite hard, but soft by comparison with sleeping on the floor as the hundreds that are fighting for space on this train are doing.

\footnote{120} For more on Onley’s crash, see March 11th entry, page 114, footnote 139. In Onley’s preface to \textit{Toni Onley’s British Columbia}, he writes, “Since 1975, I have used a Lake Amphibian, a modern flying boat, as my equivalent of Tom Thomson’s canoe. It takes me to the most remote locations in British Columbia, where I may land on beaches or lakes, even larger mountain lakes. For a short time in the early 1980’s, I also owned a Polish-built ski-plane which allowed me to land on glaciers. With these two planes, for three years I was intimately acquainted with the mountains of the Whistler region” (vii). One of his most adventurous feats was to fly solo on his own plane, the C-GHJE, up to the Arctic in the summer of 1975 for his second northern painting trip. Diaries and flight-log records of his Arctic flight can be found in File 1.4 and Boxes 26 and 27. His Arctic paintings and selected excerpts of his Arctic diaries have been published in \textit{Onley’s Arctic}, (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1989). Currently, he still enjoys flying out to wilderness locations within British Columbia in search of painting subjects. Files 1.15 and 14.1 contain magazine articles on the Wilga 80 model.

\footnote{121} The Yangtze River with a length of 5526 km, is the longest river in Asia and an important transport route as it flows by many densely populated areas. Although westerners call the entire river the
8 MARCH 1988

We are met in Shiyan by the local cultural bureau chief and taken to his headquarters for a 6 a.m. breakfast. Then off to Mt. Wudang, a Shangri-la of Taoist temples and pavilions. A place where the cosmic “breath” of nature energizes all things. We set off after breakfast on the last leg of our journey from Wuhan to Mt. Wudang in a 25 seat Toyota bus. Our party of four was now joined by another two guides plus the driver. Even so, I thought the bus was a bit of overkill, but as events unfolded, all seats would be needed. We were told that to their knowledge, we were the first Canadians to climb Tianzhu Peak. The peak, said to be the pillar that holds up the heavens, is crowned with a Taoist temple. About 75 foreign visitors a year make the journey to the mountain, mostly Japanese and Germans. It is not listed in the guidebook and is out of bounds to all those, except the most determined.

About an hour’s drive and we arrived at the foot of the Wudang Mountain and at a small village called Yao Ying (old camp). It was Woman’s Day and a parade led by an out of tune brass band being followed by all the young women of the village. They are all dressed in colourful costumes. Some of the women are in army uniforms and had decorated them with big, red, silk sashes. We

Yangtze River, the Chinese use the name Yangtze to refer to a section of what they call the Chang Jiang, or the Long River.

122 Onley spells Taoism the way it is pronounced — ‘daoism.’

123 Mount Wudang and its temples are considered one of Taoism’s most sacred and important sites because they form the central worship centre for the Taoist god, Zhenwu (“Zhenwu, the Perfected Warrior,” Taoism and the Arts of China. [online] [2000]). See footnote 128 for more on Zhenwu.

124 Onley’s term ‘breath’ refers to the Taoist concept of “Qi” which he explains later on in this entry.
arrived at the centre of the village, then were led through a great door and into
the court yard of a Taoist Temple to be met by more officials. Because this was
a small village, the visit of a foreign artist was a particularly auspicious occasion.
They had been awaiting my arrival with anticipation for the past month. Before
the temple in the far court, a table, like an altar has been set up, covered with a
new white felt on which had been laid out a sheet of fine rice paper, brushes and
sumi ink, awaiting some Taoist master’s hand. But it was me who was led to the
table. A local photographer was in place to record the event. Once again, I was
called upon to perform, but what to paint? Before me was a quite unusual
temple: the ends of the roof beams ending with carved heads complete with
antlers. So I painted their temple in a dry brush rendering. It was obviously met
with approval as it earned me a round of applause while I affixed my seal.\footnote{125}

The temple had been made into a museum in which was displayed some
very fine bronze statuary, most about 30-40 cm in height. They depicted Taoist
gods, most of them Ming Dynasty 1362-1644 and some Yuan Dynasty works
from the temples destroyed in the war that ended that Dynasty. There was one
magnificent life size Ming bronze of Zhang Sanfeng who established Wudang
Boxing.\footnote{126} Like Shachin Boxing (Kung Fu) it is an important school of martial
arts in China.

\footnote{125}{See Figure 13 on page 71 for an image of Onley's seal's imprint and page 76 for Onley's
description of his seal or chop.}

\footnote{126}{Zhang Sanfeng was a famous Taoist who founded a form of Tai Chi martial arts, which Onley
refers to as Wudang Boxing. Despite the term 'boxing,' this Tai Chi martial art form is not an aggressive
form of self-defence: the focus of Tai Chi is to build up strength, balance, and co-ordination through slow,
controlled movements, and the maintenance of various body postures. Wholeness of being can be achieved
when the posture of the body is matched with a tranquil, peaceful mind that is in harmony with the body
and with the surroundings.}
To continue our journey, we are joined by all the village officials, Mr. Xu, the museum’s curator, and a Jeep flying the Red Flag, with two uniformed policemen to lead the way. The drive from here is particularly dangerous. The road continually climbs and is carved from the sides of mountains. There are numerous landslides that force our bus to the edge. From my seat I could look straight down thousands of feet to a tiny, winding, jade green river. I consoled Yukiko by telling her not to worry, we would starve to death long before we ever reached the bottom. The final climb is up the face of Wudang Mountain in a long series of switchbacks with hairpin bends, until we are over the top and through a pass, and then, before us, lay the Palace of Heaven climbing the side of the mountain. First built in the Tang Dynasty 618-907, extended in the Song and Yuan Dynasties, until an emperor named Zhu Li of the Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 gave orders to his vice-construction minister to restore the structures. 300 000 soldiers and workmen who were pressed into service, took ten years to build eight palaces, two temples, thirty six convents, 72 cliff-hanging temples, thirty-three pavilions, and thirty-nine bridges. The Palace of Heaven is only the beginning of an extensive arena of mountain temples where Taoist monks for hundreds of years have been attuning themselves to qi—the cosmic “breath” of nature.127

We drove on, still climbing to the Pavilion of the Crows. I asked about this unusual name and was told by Mr. Xu that legend tells us of a group of

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127 Qi (Ch’i/Chi) is the Taoist concept that all things, both inanimate and animate, possess an essence which is the emanation of God’s interfusing life spirit. God, or the Tao, is the Way – the ever-
wandering gods who became lost in a wood hereabouts. A flock of crows found them and led them to safety. From the Pavilion of the Crows, the crows, riding the updrafts from the valley below, are fed daily. The keeper of the pavilion met us at the entrance with outstretched hands. He clasped my hand in both of his and led us to the second floor where a banquet had been laid out for us in one of the most spectacular view points in the whole arena of peaks. It was warm in the sun—though snow still lay on the ground. We were told that only a few days ago, we could not have come up here because there was so much snow. My mind was not on the food, but on the one unique peak that stands head and shoulders above the others. Tianzhu (the pillar that supports the heavens) is surrounded by 72 peaks which all appear to be bowing to it. On top of Tianzhu, there stands a temple in which is housed a bronze statue of the Taoist god, Zhenwu. When Emperor Zhu Li visited the completed work he had commissioned, he was surprised to find that the bronze statue of the god Zhenwu had been cast in his likeness, he had been mounted on a turtle, and seated behind a large table.

After lunch we took our pilgrim’s walking sticks in hand (provided by the good burghers of Lao-Ying) and headed off up a ridge to the South Crag Palace which has been clinging to the face of a cliff since Ming times. On the way we


Zhenwu, also known as the Perfected Warrior, is one of the most important gods of the Taoist pantheon. The god’s emblem is that of an entwined tortoise and the snake, but in the eleventh century, the god was depicted in human form. This warrior god is associated with the north, the direction from which China is often invaded. Zhenwu became known as the protector of the state and the imperial family, and he became so popular that the Buddhists decided to include him in their pantheon as well. Zhenwu’s central
stopped for me to do a painting of the palace from across a gorge. One of the policemen who was carrying my paint-box and paper was called up from the rear while other officials dusted off a rock for me to sit on. As I set out my watercolour palette, paper and board, I tried to attune myself with Qi—the great cosmic “breath,” that force of nature that animates and energizes all things. I tried to concentrate on the physical world before embarking on the imaginary one of the spirit. A great crowd had gathered to swell the ranks of my already sizeable delegation. They were pilgrims, staffs in hand and wearing yellow aprons displaying the great seals of the temples they had visited. I managed a watercolour, which, under the circumstances was not too bad, thanks to the imaginary world of the spirit! The policemen packed up my paints and followed as we climbed around the mountain to enter the South Crag Palace from the far side.

Everywhere we saw great stone pavilions in varying states of decay, like Mayan ruins, with vegetation sprouting from their roofs.

worship centre is on Mount Wudang ("Zhenwu, the Perfected Warrior," Taoism and the Arts of China. [online] [2000]).

According to Ben Willis, the author of The Tao of Art, the “third major principle of Tao [...] is that it is a creative principle [...]” a factor “that links the spiritual world with creativity.” (Willis 19) Willis defines art as "the living human mind reflecting the spiritual essence of reality" and "a medium of mystical spiritual knowledge carried through the higher mental process of intuition" (21). He also views the Tao of art as “the reality of the spiritual world emerging through the human mind and the voice of creative expression” (21). Onley tends to describe his creative process and his painting mindset in ways similar to Willis’ definitions of Taoist concepts. When Onley was in Mexico, he came across Taoist teachings in one of the many books he read and he seems to have carried these Taoist ideas into his art (Toni Onley, telephone interview, 30 January 2001.) His Taoist and Zen descriptions of his art can be found in various places, including the Taipei entry of the 1978 Japan diary (see this edition’s Appendix C) and in his introduction of Toni Onley’s British Columbia:

The simple linear and verbal way of understanding does not operate in true wilderness. Here we need to rely on the primitive unconscious. It wells up of its own accord, as we are overwhelmed and our inner balance is restored. The good paintings fall off the brush, the less successful take longer. (T.O.’s BC viii)
There are 12 of these in all, and each houses the stone carving of a giant turtle carrying on its back a monumental, vertical stone slab reaching to an opening in the roof, down which a shaft of light bathes the inscription containing the instructions of Emperor Zhu Li for the completion and maintenance of this massive undertaking. These 12 structures are built of such permanent materials that it leaves one with the impression that Zhu Li must have believed that his dynasty would last forever. We passed two of these great turtle pavilions on our way to the South Crag Palace. The palace consist of a series of rooms or places of worship with carved and cast statues of gods, each one with a crude number painted with white paint across its beautifully gilded and painted surfaces. A reminder that the Red Guard had been here during the Cultural Revolution taking
inventory. It's a miracle any of these priceless artworks have survived. Moving along, we come to an alcove containing a large carved wooden dragon, its back covered with coloured silks and its mouth filled with hundreds of cigarettes left as votive offerings. It seemed to me entirely appropriate as a dragon would not need a light. On our return our path took us past a great outdoor wooden statue of Zhenwu on an altar and under its own sheltering roof. Before it, great clouds of smoke rose from a great bronze incense burner, which, I was told, has not stopped burning since Ming times.

Yukiko and my delegation went into an adjoining pavilion to rest and have tea. I stayed before Zhenwu and did another watercolour. This one was to be the last and not the best of the two I did today.

Watercolours completed, 8 MARCH 1988 28 X 39 cm
1. South Crag Palace, Wudang Mountain, Hubei Province, China, 8 March, 88
2. Temple, Wudang Mountain, Hubei Province, China, 8 March 88

There were hundreds of stone steps to go, first up, then down to the pavilion of the crews. I thought as we descended from Wudang Mountain that this spot was probably less a jumping off place to heaven than it was a place to escape the hell that existed in the valleys. The poor pilgrims who come here today likely entertain the same thoughts.

I kept my pilgrim's walking stick to give to George Woodcock on our return to Vancouver. It was George's trip and George's itinerary that we have
been following. Originally, we were to have accompanied George and his wife Inge, but just days before we were all set to leave, George had an attack of arthritis in his hip, and could not walk without much pain. I thought the pilgrim's walking stick would be a fitting gift to bring back for him from Wudang Mountain. Both Buddhists and Taoists value beautiful settings for their temples and monasteries. These were the subjects George was working for, along with visits to the minority peoples of Yunnan Province, Stone Forest area. By default he had planned a landscape tour of Southern China that I could not have bettered, even if I had had all the information at my fingertips, which is what George has.

On our way back down the mountain, our police escort led the way, pulled over and flagged us down. There was a roadside discussion among all the officials and it was decided that we should all climb one more hill to a small Taoist temple called the Needle and the Well Temple. It was well worth the short climb because it contained the first frescoes we have seen so far. They depicted the legend of the Needle and the Well. There are four large panels on each of the side walls of the temple. The lower four are in poor shape from years of handling, big areas of two of three frescoes had broken off and had been replaced with white plaster. Fortunately, the one panel depicting the central message of the legend on the lower right wall was in pretty good shape as were the upper panels, particularly the two upper left. These were out of reach and

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George Woodcock and his wife, Inge, had visited China in mid-April 1987 and George had planned to see more of China with Onley and Yukiko in 1988 to do some more travel writing. The fruit of Woodcock's first trip to China is his book, Caves in the Desert: Travels in China, in 1988. See bibliography.
out of harm's way. They were painted in the Ming Dynasty in a fresh, spontaneous hand. The artist could certainly draw directly from mind to hand, because I did not see any incised markings in the plaster as an artist might use had he transferred his design with the aid of a cartoon sheet.

The story of the needle maker is a story about patience and how all things comes to he who waits. Once upon a time, there was a young prince who felt that he was not cut out to rule like his father. Instead, he wished he could find enlightenment by meditating on Mount Wudang. After many years of solitude, he felt he was not being enlightened. Besides, he missed his family and friends. So he packed his few belongings and descended the mountain. On his way down he met an old lady at a well with a large steel rod in her hand which she was slowly grinding on a stone with water from the well. The prince asked her what she was doing and she replied, "I am grinding this rod of steel down to make a needle," to which the prince questioned, "Surely you are going about it the hard way?" to which the old lady replied, "Everything that is worthwhile takes time!" The prince got the message, swung around, and headed back up the mountain to complete his meditation. Many years later, his parents, the emperor and the empress, began to worry about the son, so they sent an army to bring him back. On meeting the army, the prince immediately converted them all to Taoism and they never returned.

One of the fresco panels depicts the marching army. Half the soldiers are missing from the damaged panel. One panel shows the old lady at the well with the rod of steel, a thread from the oversized needle winds its way up into the
clouds, where there sits a god. In truth, the old lady is a god who has come to earth in the form of an old lady to teach the young prince a lesson. The above story is twice removed from Mr. Xu's telling to Pei Lin, then Pei Lin's translation to us. Yukiko, the ever practical woman, responded with an old Japanese saying, "Only fools and smoke climb to high places."

At the foot of the steps leading to the temple there were two 8" round steel needles driven into the stone forecourt, each with a hole for the thread. In the corner of the court, there is a small round water well.

The Needle Temple had been a perfect ending to a good day's outing. We were off now, back down to Shiyan and a farewell banquet before we caught the 8 p.m. train back to Wuhan. I was looking forward to being gently rocked to sleep in my "soft sleeper" after a good day of hiking in the clear, clean air. When Mr. Chen handed the sleeping car conductress our tickets, she rudely pushed them back at him saying she had not received our booking confirmation from the station ticket office. When Mr. Chen tried to reason with her that this lack of communication was not our fault, she became extremely hostile, all the "arrogance of office" came to the surface. An almighty hullabaloo ensued, which soon involved my whole delegation. The head of the Shiyan Cultural Bureau headed off to fetch the station master. When a stalemate was reached, both sides with heels firmly dug in, Mr. Chou decided that we had the strength of numbers. The rude conductress was pushed aside, as she deserved, and Yukiko and I were brought forward and helped aboard the train. Once Mr. Chen,
Pei Lin, and the two of us were in compartment #8, the compartment Mr. Chen had reserved, we locked the door.

Our conductress was obviously born under the sign of the snake. She was an extreme example of the indifference the foreigner encounters when doing business with anyone behind a counter. They are employees of the state, and are paid if they serve you or not. Your purchase is simply tossed across the counter, your change likewise. I find myself often scrambling on the ground to retrieve it. No one has ever placed my purchase in my hand or handed me my change. Chinese are so accustomed to it, it is accepted as the norm. Pei Lin, forever the Taoist said, “Rivers and Mountains can be changed, character can not.”

9 MARCH 1988

This is something of a goof-off day, resting and watching the great vessels coming up at the Yangtse River from Shanghai. Our 9th floor balcony affords us a great view of the city and the formidable concrete and steel Yangtse River Bridge constructed by the Russians to carry trains and traffic.131 On the far shore atop Snake Hill is the great Pagoda of the Yellow Crane, rebuilt in 1984 after it burnt down.132 In fact it has burnt down so many times over the centuries it has almost become a semi-annual ritual. In the afternoon, like “fools and smoke,” we climbed to the top. Then we crossed the river to take the elevator to the top of

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131 See page 78, footnote 76 for more on the Sino-Russian relationship.

132 The Pagoda of the Yellow Crane, which overlooks the Yangtze River, is also known as Yellow Crane Pavilion or Huanghelou. The Huanghelou was possibly built in the Three Kingdoms Period which was from 220 –280 AD (PRC 202, 203).
Wuhan's 280 metre communications tower and sup lemonade in the revolving restaurant. Later we shopped in a department store for a few odds and ends. It was more for the fun of seeing if we could catch our purchases and change as it was being flung at us.

10 MARCH 1988

Wuhan is a large military centre. We are met first thing in the morning with an elite corps of the Red Army Police, goose-stepping on parade. All with their automatic weapons clutched to their chests at a precise 45 degree angle. Like tin soldiers in a chorus line, they were fascinating to watch. It was a morning for museum visiting. First, the Wuhan city museum with a show of amateur painters, a group of elderly ladies called the Green Peach Society. As the director escorted us around the show, she commented on the state of health of each of the artists. In an adjacent room, there was an exhibition of scrolls which demonstrated some of the finest paper mounting techniques. It has been a constant puzzle to me why this exquisitely perfected art is not carried over to the displays of paintings in galleries. The exhibition of the ten Green Peach ladies' watercolours was stuck in battered metal framed behind broken and dirty glass. The watercolour paper itself attached to dirty piece of cardboard with scotch tape across each corner. We have seen priceless historical works hung in such a manner. At the Monastery of Precious Light, we saw the work of China's most treasured 20th century painter, Zhang Dagian,133

133 Zhang Dagian: see footnote 100 on page 89.
oversized frame and backed with old newspaper. Others hung with sheets of plastic over them. I could clearly see small mushrooms growing beneath the plastic, well-watered by the condensation that had collected. Museums often complain of having only small budgets, but this is no excuse for bad attitude.

We drove out to East Lake (Donghu)\textsuperscript{134} to visit the Hubei provincial museum which houses many of the objects excavated from the tomb of Jin Zhou (317-439 AD). The locals claim that this discovery made in the area, rivals the discoveries unearthed at Han Tomb #1 at Mawangdui, Chansha.\textsuperscript{135} It was an extraordinary collection of fine castings, with some exquisite detailing. One of the tombs' roof beams is on display, a massive square log 40 cm square X 8 m long. There was not a rotten spot on it, after being under dirt for 1600 years.

It was such a nice spot on the lake that I did a watercolour before we returned for lunch. We returned after lunch to the lake and I did three more watercolours of the Endless Sky Pavilion (Changtian). The guide book states that the "relaxing atmosphere of the lake attracts painters." It must be so, as I certainly felt attuned to Qi. The three watercolours are among the best.

\textsuperscript{134} East Lake: a scenic suburban lake frequented by tourists. From the lake, tourists can hear 2400 year old bells chime on display at the lakeside Provincial Museum of Hubei (PRC 202).

\textsuperscript{135} Han Tomb #1, Mawangdui is one of three tombs that were discovered by archaeologists in the 1970's. These tombs belong to the Marquis Dai, who died around 186 B.C., and his wife and son who both died eighteen years after him. Although the Marquis' tomb was damaged by water seepage, the other two were almost perfectly preserved. Han Tomb #1 belonged to Marquise Dai, and its remarkably well-preserved contents such as lacquerware, musical instruments, silk garments, and silk paintings, provide archaeologists with insight into life in the Han dynasty. The 2100 year old body of the Marquise herself is so well-preserved that an autopsy was conducted, revealing that she most likely died of a heart attack. The Marquise' son's tomb is a treasure trove of information, for it contains documents and manuscripts written on silk about philosophy, astronomy, Taoism, history, geography, and medicine. (TL 126, 145-157)

1. Bridge and Pagoda, Donghu, Wuhan, China, 10 March 88.
2. Pagoda, Donghu, Wuhan, China, 10 March 88.
3. Pavilion and Three Tress, Donghu, Wuhan, China, 10 March 88.

11 MARCH 1988

We were up at 5 AM, packed and left for the airport by 6 AM. Destination Zhengzhou\textsuperscript{136} in Henan province; the geographical centre of China.\textsuperscript{137} Again our aircraft is the Russian Antonov twin Y7.\textsuperscript{138} The seat backs are all at odd angles and cannot be adjusted. Mine is bolt upright which puts my knees up under my chin. Someone has cut all the seatbelts off, probably for pants belts. The aircraft twists and strains at its rivets in the take-off roll. My eye is on the bald tyres. A blow-out at this point in the take off could roll us up into a ball of flame. The lack of seat belts is more of a concern to me as a pilot, because I know what happens in clear air turbulence and what happens to an unrestrained body in the impact of

\textsuperscript{136} Zhengzhou is the capital city of Henan province, which is north of Hubei province, in central north-eastern China.

\textsuperscript{137} Onley would be more accurate in saying that the Henan province is at the centre of the most heavily populated area of China, which is the eastern part of the country. The geographical centre of China is actually the sparsely populated Kunlun Mountains.

\textsuperscript{138} See diary entry for March 7, 1988 for the description of their first flight on this aircraft.
a crash. I know. I have been there.\(^{139}\) To enter the toilet, it is necessary to be wearing rubber boots, and then to levitate. The pilot is wearing a uniform two sizes too big for him, and is chain smoking from the nervous strain. It would make Down East Airlines look like the Royal Flight.

We are met by the pretty secretary of Henan province’s cultural department, her name is Kang Jie; a poet, she will be our guide to Xi’an City, \(^{140}\) Kaifeng, Anyang and the Longmen caves. We have a brand new Citroën car which will be very comfortable. After settling into the International Hotel, the Director of the Cultural Department called on us and invited us to a banquet which had been prepared in a private room in the Hotel. We had not had breakfast so the thought of food was very much on our minds. We ate heartily

\(^{139}\) On September 7\(^{th}\), 1983, Onley and photographer, John Reeves, crashed onto a glacier in British Columbia’s Garibaldi Park / Whistler area. Miraculously, the body of the plane landed in an ice crevasse and the wings of his Wilga 80 kept the plane suspended over the 200 feet deep crevasse. Both pilot and passenger survived the crash and the 18-hour wait for rescue. In Onley’s article for the February 1985 issue of the Saturday Night Magazine, he says, “I would like to say that this was a magnificent piece of flying, but the truth is that I had lost control. Some other hand had pushed us into the only place that could have stopped our fall and cradled us through the long night”\(^{26}\). The plane crash has changed his whole outlook on life. At the end of the magazine article, Onley writes, “In the aftermath it was hard to get back to ordinary living. I’m not a religious person in the sense that I don’t belong to an organized group, but I believe there’s a power at work. I don’t understand it and I wish I did. There are things I can’t put words to but am always thinking about. Was I saved for some reason? Is there a divine plan? Do I have unfinished work?”\(^{27}\) In a personal interview with Onley on November 12, 2000, he explains his changed outlook on life, “After the crash, one thing that I was made most aware of is time. I’m living on borrowed time. I feel compelled to make good use of my time, to do things with my time and to not waste it. For me, to do things is to paint. I feel that I have to work on a painting each day. I would not feel guilty if I knew that I did something each day.” The manuscript for the article can be found in File 1.15 of UBC’s Onley collection and a photocopy of the magazine article can be found in File 14.1. A condensed version of his magazine article can be found on page 10 of Toni Onley’s British Columbia. In Appendix J, I have included an excerpt of Onley’s notes for the art exhibition that took place after his plane crash. The art show was an exhibition of paintings of landscape that Onley reached with his Wilga 80 ski-plane.

\(^{140}\) Onley spelled Xi’an or Xian city as “Shan” city. This city, formerly known as Changan, was an important cultural and political centre in China from the Zhou dynasty through to the Tang dynasty. Although the name Xi’an means ‘western peace,’ throughout history and even up until World War II, the city was an administration centre for warfare. Xi’an city was once the imperial capital city of China and was considered the largest city in the ancient world. (George Woodcock, Caves in the Desert: Travels in China [Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988] 95.)
and drank many toasts to everlasting Sino-Canadian relations. I was asked by
the director, Mr. Hong, if Norman Bethune was a hero in my country. I said
we are a very religious people and it is considered bad form in Canada to put
any one person above God; besides Norman Bethune was a communist. I
added that personally I felt he was a very wonderful human being who put his
fellow men far above his own comfort. In another age he may have been a saint

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141 Norman Bethune is a Canadian surgeon revered as a hero in China for his selfless service as a
surgeon for the Chinese Communist soldiers. He willingly assisted the Chinese in their resistance against
the Japanese and he served from the spring of 1938 until his death of blood poisoning on November 12,
1939. He has been immortalized in China by Mao Tse-Tung’s oft-memorized tribute essay, “In Memory of
Norman Bethune” which praised Bethune as a martyr and true communist who “selflessly adopt[ed] the
cause of the Chinese people’s liberation as his own” (Mao Tse-Tung, “Serve the People,” “Memory of
Norman Bethune,” “The Foolish Old Man Who Removed Mountains” [Peking: Foreign Language P,
1967] 4.) Canada officially recognized Bethune as a Canadian hero in 1973 when Prime Minister Pierre
Trudeau visited China on a state visit.

142 “very religious”: According to Canadian sociologist, Reginald Bibby, in 1990, only 29% of
Canadians claimed to be affiliated with organized religion. Perhaps Onley was thinking about the Canada
of the 1950’s when he first immigrated to Canada from the Isle of Man. In those days, over 80% of the
Canadian population were affiliated with organized religion. (Reginald Bibby, Unknown Gods: The

Although Onley himself is an agnostic, his interest in Asian spirituality is evident in his artwork
and in his descriptions of his creative processes. For example, in this diary, he often uses the concept of Qi
(Chi) to describe how he paints. See Taipei entry of the Japan diary in Appendix C. Also see the foreword
of his books, A Silent Thunder and Toni Onley’s British Columbia.

Onley’s strict Catholic school upbringing has influenced him greatly. For example, in 1995, when
Onley was a member of the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) Acquisitions Committee, he opposed the art
gallery’s decision to purchase two works by Andres Serrano that depicted the bust of Pope John Paul II
immersed in Serrano’s urine. Onley found the works “highly offensive to Catholics” and felt that if a
Jewish or Islamic symbol were defamed, VAG would never have considered the purchase, “but to the
VAG, Christian symbols appeared to be fair game for defamation.” (Chris Champion with notes from Jerry
Collins, “The Fine Art of Defamation,” News magazine Sept. 18, 1995: 28.) Onley was so upset with
VAG’s decision that he resigned from the committee. In a telephone conversation with Onley on
November 22, 2000, he explained to me that he kept thinking of his devout, Catholic grandmother who
would have cried if she saw Serrano’s artwork. He said that she was the most important person in his life
because she was the only person who encouraged him to paint.

143 The first of the Biblical Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:3)

144 On July 20, 1937, at a banquet held in his honour in Winnipeg, Bethune rebelliously and
proudly announced, “I have the honour to be a Communist.” (Roderick Sterwart, Norman Bethune [Don
Mills, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1974] 35.)
had he not liked the girls so much. I reminded them that he was also a good
dancer and was also a gifted painter.

It appears that the cold weather which followed us to Sichuan province in
now behind us. Wuhan was dry and warm, and here in Zhengzhou, it is equally
warm and dry, at least warm enough to dry my watercolours without lighting a
fire. It is only cold inside the great stone monuments that serve as museums.
We were conducted on a tour of Henan Provincial Museum in the afternoon and
put on extra sweaters for the occasion. The museum, like all of China's
provincial museums, contains displays of objects and artifacts discovered in their
particular province. This one is particularly rich in that regard, artifacts from
neolithic times to the present. They have a particularly good collection of Ming
Dynasty grave statuary, figures, horses, camels, houses etc. Here on the middle
Yellow River, we are in the cradle of Chinese civilization, going back to the Xia
Dyansty (2200-1700 B.C.) that constituted the first Chinese state. The museum
displays a good collection of written records called “oracle bones,” inscribed
bones and tortoise shells.

As I stood admiring a beautiful blue Ming vase, Pei Lin said, “We have a
number of those in my parents' home. They belonged to my grandmother. She
inherited them from her grandmother and so on down to Ming times. We use

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145 Bethune married Frances Campbell Penny in 1923, but they divorced in 1927. After the
divorce, he dallied with many women, but he never remarried.

146 Bethune's most well-known works of art were the nine paintings he created during his lowest
point in life when he was struggling to beat tuberculosis. In each of the paintings, he depicts himself at
various stages in his life, struggling against or succumbing to tuberculosis in mythic scenes. He called
them “The T.B.'s Progress” and he wrote an article explaining the meaning of each scene in The
Fluroscope (Vol. 1, No. 7., Aug. 15, 1932).
them to store rice and grain in." At first, it appeared to me that his was a cavalier, carefree attitude towards history. But then Pei Lin is the history of the Han people. They do not have to enter these cold mortuaries to know who they are. That is why these museums are always empty of people and good places to come to get away from the maddening crowd.

12 MARCH 1988

We were driven at high speed in a two-car cavalcade for the two-hour drive from Zhengzhou to Kaifeng. Cyclists have a sixth sense and part before us, the driver with his hand constantly on the horn. It is said that cyclists in China fear only three things: icy roads, dust storms, and other cyclists spitting.

Given the high status of the artist in China, our lodgings are only fitting. It is a former residence of Zhao Zijiang who was premier of the state council before becoming Chairman of the Communist Party of China and a member of the Central Committee. It's a stately yellow brick mansion with pagoda-like turrets rising from the roof. There is a barracks room with soldiers lolly-gazing about, who all snapped to attention hurriedly when we and our delegation entered. We are given the master bedroom with a large adjoining living room, and told us to

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147 Kaifeng was the capital city of the Song dynasty (PRC 202).

148 During the time of the Tienanmen Massacre in June, 1989, Zhao Zijiang (or Zhao Ziyang) and his ally, Hu Qili, strongly opposed the use of force against the protesting students in Tienanmen Square and was not in favour of martial law. At that time, Zhao Ziyang was the Communist Party Secretary; however, Deng Xiaopeng, the late leader of China, and other powerful officials, violated the Communist Party’s constitution by replacing Zhao with Jiang Zemin, who is the present leader of China. The Chinese government has taken away Zhao’s political powers and he is currently kept under government surveillance. (James Pringle. “Record of Panic over Tiananmen creates speculation in Beijing,” The Vancouver Sun. 8 Jan. 2001. A8.)
relax until 2:30 pm. It is now noon and we did not come here to relax inside, no matter how palatial. In front of the residence, there is a formal garden containing a collection of old bonsai trees. I took my watercolours outside and did three watercolours among the little twisted trees and rocks.

We took off at 2:30 to see the sights. Kaifeng itself is not very interesting, although the site is very old. It has the misfortune of being located on the Yellow River, which has swept the town away on many occasions. Throughout its history of disastrous floods and the 1644 attempt to defend the city against invading Manchus by opening the dykes of the Yellow River, was maybe its biggest disaster. What the invaders could not do, the river took care of by drowning 300 000 people. The town was never really rebuilt after it was pillaged by the invading Jin in 1127. After they had looted the place and done their worst with the women—those that had not escaped. They burnt the city of over 1 000 000 inhabitants. The only clue to what life and architecture was like in the Song Dynasty time is a long scroll painting by Zhang Zedung depicting the busy centre of Kaifeng. Of the old city the only structure that is still standing is the Iron Pagoda, a very beautiful 13 story, 53.4m high structure containing the bones of monks. It leans like the Tower of Pisa. It is covered with brown glazed tiles depicting mythical animals and Boddhisattvas.\[149\] From a distance it looks like rusting iron, hence the name.

We also visited the Dragon Pavilion, the former imperial stronghold of Song emperors. It was rebuilt in Ming times after being swept away in a flood.

\[149\] Boddhisattvas: Buddhist saints and companions to the celestial Buddha.
The Mayor of Kaifeng, on hearing of our presence in town, threw an impromptu banquet for us, because of an unsung Canadian hero who is buried here: Dr. Tillson Lever Harrison M.D. who died transporting medical supplies from Shanghai to Hadan, Hubei province on January 10, 1947. He is buried here in Kaifeng. He is a genuine martyr and hero in China. Few in Canada, our land of unsung heroes, have heard of him. They celebrate the 100th birthday of Dr. Harrison here in Kaifeng this year: 1888-1988. We will visit his monument tomorrow. Before the banquet ended we were both presented with a book on the life of Dr. Harrison in China, titled, *The International Fighter of Peace: Tillson Lever Harrison*. 150

Kaifeng is a relatively poor city of two-storey buildings. The intense urbanizing that has taken place in the last ten years in most of China’s cities has

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150 Dr. “Dixie” Tillson Lever Harrison may have died as a hero, but he certainly did not live as heroically as he died. Tillson lived under the shadows of his great-grandfather who founded the town of Tillsonburg, Ontario, and his grandfather who owned 85% of the area’s industry. He had an unhappy childhood filled with memories of his parents’ stormy marriage and divorce, and he ran away at the age of 14 to join the U.S. army. His grandfather was able to track him down and get him an honourable discharge from the U.S. army. Tillson returned to Tillsonburg where he attempted to pursue projects that his grandfather felt would be useful for him. When his grandmother died, Tillson used the money his grandmother left him in her will to enroll in medical school at the University of Toronto. After he received his medical degree, he travelled around the world as an adventurous, irresponsible, and womanizing man. He married several women, whom he abandoned, fathered a child whom he also abandoned, converted to Islam for a married, Turkish prostitute with whom he lived for a while when he was a medical officer at an allied hospital in Istanbul, and got arrested for his efforts. Tillson made friends wherever he went, but he quickly lost these friendships when, after pestering them for money, he would suddenly disappear without an explanation, leaving behind mountains of debts. He had many adventures: he served in France with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, resigned, served in the Royal Army Medical Corps during World War I, received the British War Medal and Victory Medal for his war efforts. Tillson travelled to many places like Turkey, Malta, Ireland, Venezuela, Trinidad, Jamaica, U.S.A., and, eventually, China. In almost every place that he travelled to, he would take on a job for a short period of time and then he would disappear. At the beginning of World War II, Dr. Harrison joined the Royal Navy and served until the war ended. After the war, he decided to join the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to serve in China. In 1946, Dr. Harrison made long, dangerous, and difficult trips to escort medical supply shipments to liberated (Communist controlled) areas in China as the Kuomintang tried their best to prevent these shipments from reaching their destination. Like Dr. Bethune, Dr. Harrison was seen as Communist China’s friend, and therefore worthy to be revered by the Communist government as a true saint. (Penelope Johnston, “Was he a rogue…or a hero? The colorful career of Dr. Tillson Lever Harrison,” *Medical Post*)
not happened here. The mayor asked me for my thoughts on developing his city. I told him he should learn from the mistakes we in North America continue to make. First of all, do not hire town planners. Let the people create their commercial, residential, and recreational areas. Do not worry about the congestion in the area of the vendors. It means that people are stopping to shop and the street is alive. We in North America respond to this healthy development by making all the streets one-way to facilitate the fast flow of traffic. People no longer stop to shop and the street dies. What is worse is to ban traffic altogether, except those on foot. Study where people like to play and make your parks there. Your job is to provide services, attend to the dykes, to see that you have no more biblical floods. The city will take care of itself. You cannot force it. Some cities die a natural death. Many of the great ones in history have, and it would be an expensive mistake to prop them up. I told the mayor that I get the feeling from seeing Zhang Zedun's scroll of the great Song city that once stood here that you would like to recreate it. You could do this if all you wanted was a Disneyland tourist attraction. I suggested that the city fathers not be anxious that other cities are moving faster. Take time to get the feel of your people, their hopes and ambition. After all, it is their city. Do not let your own ambition for a great Song city blind you to the reality of real need today. I don't know why I said all this. I really do know better. I know, for example, that when people ask questions, often they really do not want your answer. And the older I get, the more I realize that people don't change. "It is easier to change the shape of

Online 31.3,[online] [24 Jan. 1995].) The book which Toni and Yukiko received was a children's comic book on the life of Dr. Harrison. Unfortunately, this item is no longer in Onley's possession.
mountains and the course of rivers..." The last dish arrived. It was the head of a chicken and its feet. I thought I would have a polite nibble on a foot, but the mayor turned the sightless bird's head towards me saying, "This is always reserved for the emperor." Pei Lin said, "I've never heard of such a custom."

The Mayor smiled. I wondered?

13 MARCH 1988

We took in some of the sights that had not yet been washed away in the great floods. A tomb of Sun Yat Sen, the founder of the Chinese Republic—this crypt houses only his topcoat. And carved on the tomb are the words, "Man

151 See Pei Lin's quotation at the end of the 8 March 1988 entry.

152 Dr. Sun Yat Sen was born in China, but was educated in British and American schools. He was so greatly influenced by Western ideas that he converted to Christianity and became a revolutionary who sought to free the Chinese people from the rule of the Manchurian empire. Sun Yat Sen's greatest contribution was the Three Principles of the People, a political programme that calls for the People's Nationalism, the People's Socialism, and the People's Democracy. (John Robottom, Twentieth Century China [New York: Wayland, 1991] 32-33.) Sun Yat Sen and his military forces, which later became the Kuomintang, overthrew the Manchurians in 1911 (Lawson 27). He died of liver cancer in 1925 and was venerated as a greater hero after his death than when he was living (Schirokauer 186-188).

Onley's art exhibition and the Sun Yat Sen Garden/Tiananmen Massacre memorial fiasco: The Tiananmen Massacre occurred a year after Onley's visit to China, but he managed to get involved in the politics surrounding the Massacre in the summer of 1990 when he decided to set up an exhibition of his work at Vancouver's Sun Yat Sen Gardens. In July 1990, Raymond Chan (former Richmond MP) was the head of the Vancouver Society in Support of Democracy in China. On hearing of Onley's art show, Chan swiftly compiled a file of newspaper clippings and correspondence regarding the Sun Yat Sen Garden's refusal to display a statue of the Goddess of Democracy and delivered it to Onley in hope of persuading him to not proceed with his art exhibition. When the garden rejected the display of the statue because it did not want to become involved in politics, Raymond Chan and his Society interpreted the refusal as the garden's support for China's Communist government, or at least a refusal to stand for democracy for China. Onley wrote a letter to Raymond Chan to express his condemnation of the Massacre and his support of the idea that China should have democracy, and to state politely that he intends to proceed with the exhibition. In the letter, Onley strove to be diplomatic:

I agree with the garden's board that the statue is 'not in keeping with the cultural and historic aspects of the Museum' [...] It was unfortunate that when the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Garden's board declined the idea of honouring the statue that this was interpreted as somehow siding with China in their brutal putdown of the students. Nothing could be further from the truth or that my showing of my paintings for the garden indicates my support for the present leadership in China. It does not. My presence at the candlelight vigil outside the Chinese Consulate should tell you differently.
must be a hero." Then on to the massive Xianggo Si Monastery dating back to 555. It was once one of China's foremost Buddhist monasteries, but it is now an amusement park full of merry-go-rounds, electric car rides and puppet shows. The former temples are used as shops to sell cheap trinkets. The once fierce temple guards have been replaced with plaster replicas, painted gaudy day-glow colours. We carried on to the edge of town to find the tombs of the martyrs, where the Canadian Dr. Tillson Lever Harrison is buried. I had said to the mayor last night that I intended visiting this spot today. We were obviously expected because gentlemen of the Chinese press were awaiting our arrival. Workmen were repairing the tile work around his monument and as we watched, cameras flashed, our every word was jotted down. I recounted the outline of his last heroic journey that cost him his life while escorting much-needed medical supplies to the liberated zone of Hubei Province in January 1947. He was frozen, starved, and plain worn out. He was 59. The same age that I am now when he died. We were escorted to a nearby site where a museum is to be erected shortly to tell the story of his life. We were given tea in the Museum of the Martyrs and presented with more books on the good doctor's life, including a recent picture story book for Chinese children called *Children's Epic* dated 88/1.

It was a very well-drawn production. This year, being Dr. Harrison's 100th birthday, there is a ceremony planned to take place here in May. Brian Mulroney\[153\] will send a message and Canada will send a delegation to attend.\[154\]

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\[153\] Brian Mulroney was Canada's Prime Minister from 1984 – 1993.
We Canadians are very well-loved in China, thanks to Dr. Harrison and Dr. Bethune. We in Canada seem to produce men and women like Dr. Harrison out of all proportion to the size of our population. Wherever there is a spot on earth where people are dealt a rotten hand, you will find a Canadian. They are usually doctors or nurses ministering to the sick or feeding the starving. In these places, Canadians have an identity.

14 MARCH 1988

We visited a ‘factory’ of artists who were all labouring at copying the great Chinese masterworks from past dynasties. Over their heads hung great banners with slogans like, “Time is money” and “Knowledge is power,” whatever that meant in the studios of the copiers! I was more interested in the pasting room where the work was being mounted onto another sheet of paper and then mounted onto silk. After watching the experts at work, once in Taipei, I was

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154 In January, 1988, China sent a delegation to Tillsonburg, Ontario to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Dr. Tillson Lever Harrison’s birth. When the Chinese delegation arrived in Canada, the Chinese were surprised to hear from Canadian officials that their hero had lied about his age. Dr. Harrison was born in 1881 in Tillsonburg, the Canadian town founded by his great-grandfather, George Tillson. When Dr. Harrison applied to join the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration after the end of World War II, he felt he needed to lie about his age in order to be considered fit for the job. When he died of exhaustion and starvation on January 10, 1947, he was 66 years old.

The Chinese esteem Dr. Harrison greatly and consider him a martyr and a true hero. To honour their Canadian hero, the Chinese created a stamp of the doctor, published Dr. Harrison’s medical diary in both English and Chinese, named a hospital in Zhangshui, Henan province after him, erected a bronze bust of Dr. Harrison at the International Peace Maternity and Child Health Hospital in Shanghai, and even asked the Canadian government if they would like a copy of the bust. The Chinese celebrated Dr. Harrison’s 100th anniversary with much hoopla, pomp, gratitude, and diplomacy: they strove to make the celebration an event that would improve the trade relations between China and Canada. Unfortunately, Canada did not share the same enthusiasm, for most Canadians were unaware that such a person existed, and the people who did know Dr. Harrison knew too much about his sullied reputation to respect him as the Chinese did. (Johnston [online]) Because Dr. Harrison was a drifter and a chronic liar, much of his life is difficult to record, and because he was away from Canada so much, few Canadians knew anything about him. The lack of information on his life is shown in the lack of published information on this doctor. When I was researching information on Dr. Harrison, I had great difficulty finding published materials that even mentioned his name.
determined to learn. On my first try, I ended up with a mess that only a one-armed paper hanger could achieve. I am determined to master this craft if I can find a master to teach me.

Zhengzhou has all the outward appearances of a large international city. Our International Hotel is comfortable and would be a similar hotel anywhere in the world. The Chinese city builders have moved mountains and changed the course of the Yellow River to build this city of 1.2 million since 1950. But the idea of providing service for the traveller who comes to their modern hotels has not occurred to their managers. The job of the waiter or waitress is a very lowly occupation. One Communist does not serve another Communist! Pei Lin tells me that up until recent times, all restaurants were self-serve. Today was an extreme example. We sat down in the overstaffed Hotel dining room, placed our order at 12 noon. By 1:45, no food was in sight, even though other diners had come, eaten, and left. Even Pei Lin's protests did not help.

I said to Yukiko, the time has come to go back to our room and break out the emergency rations. We were warned before leaving, so we laid up a good stock of Miso soup packages and granola bars. The Chinese food is excellent if one can get served. But a word of warning: bring a rubber apron. Your tea will be poured with a great splash. Much of it is soaked up by the already stained tablecloth, and then onto your pants. The dishes of food are thrown down like a

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155 One of the basic principles of Communism is that everyone is equal; therefore the abolition of the class system was reflected in the service industry. If a person is to serve another, the person serving would be considered lower than the person being served; however, in the "overstaffed hotel" in which the Onley's resided, the poor service could be due to resentment toward foreigners (since other customers were served before they were) or simply because the staff is not well-trained.
poker player dealing a hand. I am often stirred from my reading by Yukiko’s
distressful call from the bathroom, “There is no toilet paper!” To the Chinese, the
façade is everything, like the false front in the old west. The training of staff and
management in the proper operation of these hotels is not very likely on the list of
priorities. The farther one travels from the coastal cities, the more likely one is
left to one’s own devices. If you do not instruct your driver to stay put when you
get out to take in the view, the chances are good he will take off for an hour and
leave you stranded. There is a particularly cavalier attitude in Henan Province
towards the traveller. To be fair, proper manners and pride of service went out
with the last of the Ch’ing Dynasty. It will take time to recover it. We are lucky to
be travelling as first class as it is possible in China. I pity the poor fellows on
their own. We have run into a few Americans and Europeans doing it on the
cheap and they did not look happy. We have Pei Lin and all the resources of the
Ministry of Culture to troubleshoot for us. Even so, I am sometimes frustrated.
Yukiko with all the patience of the Orient says, “There is an old Japanese saying
that goes, ‘Good manners come when there is sufficient food.’” That time has
arrived.

Watercolours completed in Kaifeng, 28 X 39 cm

15 MARCH 1988

We headed west from Zhengzhou following the Yellow River Valley until we came to Gongxian County and a landscape of rolling hills. To the south of us was the great snow-capped Mt. Songshan. Earthen tomb mounds dotted the landscape. We had entered the Northern Song Dynasties' "Valley of the Kings." We could see from the car the broad avenues, the Sacred Ways, lined with simple but very imposing statuary of generals, foreign envoys in turbans, civic officials and elephants. They are massive stone carvings, some standing 20 feet high. Sacred way after sacred way stretches across the hills as far as the eye can see. Each avenue of statues leading to a great pyramid mound of earth which contains the tomb of an emperor. There are seven tombs in all and they stretch across the valley for 15 kilometres. Standing before each tomb are huge stone guards of honour, unsophisticated, but with a powerful presence. To add to the drama, it was a bitterly cold day. A cold wind dropped down from Mt. Songshan.

We had walked a mile or so before coming to a ravine. On the far side we could see another sacred way of great statues of lions and horsemen. I climbed

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156 Valley of the Kings: Onley aptly uses the name of the famous Egyptian site to refer to the many Chinese pyramids of the emperors in the stark, tree-less landscape. According to feng shui principles, this flat geographic location is the ideal place to bury the dead, for the yin-yang forces of nature are balanced here, and will guarantee that the deceased, as well as the living relatives, would be blessed and secure (Juliano 198, 149).

157 The Sacred Ways are more commonly known as Spirit Roads. Spirit Roads usually run south to north and are lined with stone statues which serve as honour guards and a warning that the avenue is sacred. Each spirit road begins with two stone pillars at the southern end and the burial site, usually a large manmade hill with four faces facing each of the cardinal directions, is at the northern end, protecting the deceased from malevolent forces. (Juliano 149)
atop a nearby tomb mound to get a better view and could see below that this one had been broken into. The guarding lions had been decapitated and the great stone doors lay smashed. We were not dressed for the cold, so we headed back to our warm car. The site of the Song Tombs is much like Stonehenge on the Salisbury Plain. It is a bleak, untreed landscape, which provides the great stone carvings with a maximum dramatic effect. It struck me that this area was the preferred place to be buried in China. We visited tombs all day, some going back to 221 B.C. and the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, through to the T'ang tombs, one filled with frescoes and processions of horses, camels, and retainers. Clay pots full of food and a cooking stove to help him and his family on their long journey. The great poet Du Fu, who seems to follow us everywhere, was born in a cave, which we could see from the Song Tombs.\(^{158}\) We are staying overnight in Luoyang, the capital of ancient China.\(^{159}\)

16 MARCH 1988

A few days ago we thought that winter was well behind us. I was painting and drying my watercolours in the sun and 20 degree Celsius temperature. This morning I drew the curtains to see the rooftops covered in snow. The bugger is

\(^{158}\) Dufu: see 3 March 1988 entry.

\(^{159}\) Luoyang is actually one of four ancient capitals of imperial China. It was first the eastern Zhou capital and, later, it became the Han capital (PRC 202). Archaeological digs have unearthed many 'workshops' and manufactured goods such as stone and jade objects in the Luoyang area, providing evidence that Luoyang was an urban factory site in ancient times (TL 62). In A.D. 175, near the end of the Han dynasty, scholars came together in Luoyang to produce an official collection of Confucius' work and his teachings to preserve ancient wisdom for future generations. After the completion of this important compilation, thousands of scholars poured into Luoyang to behold the achievement. (TL 142) Unfortunately, the imperial city, along with its priceless library, was sacked and torched in AD 190 when the imperial system crumbled and unruly military men and barbarian fighters ran amok (TL 144).
that we have left our warm down clothing back in Zhengzhou thinking that we would not be needing them on this side trip to the Longmen Caves.\textsuperscript{160} I also have a cold. The caves are only 14 km south of Luoyang where we have stayed overnight at the Friendship Guesthouse. The Longmen carvings stretch across the whole side of one mountain as well as to the other side of the Yi River. Here 800,000 artisans over a period of 600 years, from 494 under the Northern Wei continuing into the 7\textsuperscript{th} century. Westerners were here in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} century and with little regard for the artwork that marks the highpoint of Buddhist culture in China, lopped off heads and dynamited off the cliff-side two great murals depicting a royal procession. Today, they can be seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and in the Nelson Gallery of the Atkinson Museum in Kansas.

The lopping off of heads of Buddhist statuary was the common practice of Westerners, which ended after the Red Guard had their go at it during the Cultural Revolution. But I cannot follow the thinking of those Westerners that would destroy a work of art with the idea of preserving it! So much that I have seen was completely destroyed during the removal attempt with rough and ready axe-work, rock splitting out through the face, and leaving in large part, parts of the heads still intact, but ruining the sculpture. We are being escorted on our historical tour of Luoyang by Miss Wong, who is the director of Luoyang Museum. She has provided us with an English-speaking guide with an intimate

\textsuperscript{160} The Longmen Caves (or Lungmen Caves) are a collection of approximately 350 caves, 750 niches, and 97,300 statues which have been carved out of the grey limestone cliffs of Henan province. Work on these caves began in 495 AD and continued until the eighth century. All of the carvings depict
knowledge of the Longmen Caves and grottoes. Little but the largest sculptures remains. The hundreds of niches that once housed Buddha carvings now stand empty. At the entrance of one grotto containing Buddha and Bodhisatvas, there is evidence of recent chisel marks, where a life size figure has been removed, probably a divine general or some malevolent spirit. Whatever it was, it is now housed in the Boston Museum. When the Japanese occupied this area in the thirties, they emptied 720 niches. The only ones left with any carving are in such low relief that they cannot be removed easily. When I asked our guide for her thoughts on the pilfering, like a true daughter of the Revolution, she rose a foot higher and pronounced, with arching brow, “This sacrilege was committed by Western Imperialists.” Everyone east of China is a Western Imperialist! I must say I share in her distress. There is still lots to see. Some of the largest figures are untouched, including the grand statue of Vairocana Buddha, 17.14 meters high and likely the finest Buddhist carving in all of China. The Vairocana Buddha has come to be known as China’s Mona Lisa because of his mystic and implicit smile. The Buddha is flanked by his disciples, Bodhisattvas, divine generals, and heavenly guards. It is a great monument to the artistic skill of the Tang Dynasty.

Anyone interested in the history of China should come to Luoyang. This city was the capital of China; some argue from the very first dynasty (Xia Dynasty 21st – 16th century B.C.) up to the later Jin Dynasty (923-946) when the capital was moved to Kaifeng. No one can build a house here without falling onto a Buddhist figures and themes. The caves serve as temples of worship or sites of pilgrimage. (Juliano 118-120)
tomb. All excavation for new building is done with the utmost care as ancient artifacts lay under every step one makes. Just before the Communist Revolution, there was a great frenzy of grave robbing. Seven out of nine tombs recently opened were found empty. But there are many still undiscovered. Much of the contents of the Luoyang Museum are the archaeological finds made when the museum’s foundations were being excavated.

Our hostess, Miss Wong, gave us a tour of her museum, which because of its location, has one of the best collections of artifacts in China. Her museum is now about the size of the Vancouver Art Gallery, but there is an expansion underway to make it three times larger. The collection we saw is only the tip of the total collection in storage. They have a particularly fine collection of Tang grave statuary. A big show of this is now packed and about to be shipped to Japan on loan. Miss Wong showed us some particularly fine replicas of frescoes in a local Han Dynasty tomb. They could have fooled me, aged, cracked, faded, and dusty. With a twinkle of pride, she said, "I painted these." Miss Wong has

161 When describing his travels in Asia, Onley repeatedly remarks how old and over-used Asian land is in contrast with the newness of Canadian landscape. In a telephone interview with Onley on October 25, 1999, he describes how living in Canada is like making a new start. "It’s that home-coming feeling, feeling of home, that binds Canadians together. I get that feeling most strongly when I’m coming back to Canada on the airplane and I’m heading toward Vancouver airport. It’s that feeling of ‘I’m coming home’ that links me to the land, to Canada. Coming to Canada is like making a new start. There’s all this space and miles and miles and miles of land. It’s like turning the clock backwards when coming to Canada. It’s a matter of starting right. There’s just so much untrodden wilderness in Canada – open spaces. China, Japan, and India are the opposite: it’s crowded, claustrophobic, over-populated. The land there has been experienced by so many people already. I climb a mountain here in B.C., and I might be the first person to do this. With my airplane, I fly over places people have never seen before. In China, I climb up a mountain and I see a temple built there, and foot paths made by thousands of people years ago. I see tombs all over China, too. It’s like I turn over a stone and it’s a grave: someone’s died there and is anchored to the land! It’s all so old, dead, and trodden! But in Canada, it’s like a fresh, new start, full of open wilderness, untrodden spaces [. . .]."

Onley also writes about this ‘Canadian fresh start’ in the penultimate entry of his Japan diary in File 1.7. See Appendix F.
published a book on the tomb frescoes which should be off to the press any time. On our return trip to Zhengzhou, we stopped at the White Horse Temple. The original monastery on the site was constructed in 75 A.D., making it the oldest Buddhist temple in China. Legend tells us that two monks from India riding astride a white horse delivered the Buddhist sutras to Luoyang. We saw many monks and were told it was active center for Chan (Zen) Buddhism. We sped on through the country where people live primarily in caves cut into clay hills. Men pulled ploughs by hand, three to a plough, across impossibly long fields. It could be one of Miss Wong's scenes from a fresco in a Han Dynasty tomb. The car radio blared, not revolutionary music, but western rock and roll: "Take my hand, pull me down/melt your body into mine."

We sped past signs which read, "One baby is happiness." Pei Lin tells me that the second baby will cost a 2000 yuan fine. Another sign outside a factory read, "15 days left to confess your crimes." Tomorrow will be 14 days. When the days have run out and you still have not confessed, it's the high jump for you, my lad! But tell us now and all it will cost you is a small act of contrition.

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162 The two monks are Jia Ye Mo Teng and Zhu Fa Lan.

163 Sutra: Buddhist scripture

164 Buddhism was brought into China by Indian monks in the first century AD, but did not become widely accepted in China until the sixth century (Janet Baker, The Flowering of a Foreign Faith [Mumbai, India: Marg, 1998] 12.). The Chinese incorporated Buddhist beliefs with Confucian teachings and Taoist concepts and as Buddhism gained popularity in China, Indian Buddhism evolved into various syncretic forms of Chinese Buddhism (Baker 14). In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Chinese created their own Buddhist sutras and practices, and the new forms of the religion appealed to the lay masses. As Buddhism became popular among the Chinese, Chinese schools of Buddhism were exported to the neighbouring countries of Korea and Japan (Baker 19).

maybe three “Hail Mary’s” and one “Our Father.” Communism is so like Catholicism. They have stolen all the church’s methods of control. Maybe that’s why they hate each other.

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166 In footnote 142 on page 115, I mentioned that Onley, as a child, was educated in a Catholic school. Onley begins his introduction to A Silent Thunder, with a description of how his art teacher, a Catholic nun whom he called ‘Our Lady of Perpetual Suffering,’ beat him with a cane to drive home the fact that daffodils have six petals, and therefore, Onley was wrong to paint a daffodil with seven petals. “The memory of her, her litany of punishments and the seven petalled daffodil have become branded in my mind forever,” states Onley (Boulet and Onley 7).

In a telephone interview, Onley talked about his Catholic school days:

“My grandmother was a strict Catholic and my father didn’t want to defy my grandmother, so he forced me to go to a Catholic school. It was a horrible, horrible experience! I think that Catholic schools prepare you for the worst in life. If you can survive Catholic school, you can live the rest of your life knowing that life could be worse! Any time in life is better than those times in Catholic school! [laughter] However, Catholic school was useful—it was very instructive. It taught me how to deal with hard times and to learn how to cope with difficulty.

There was a spiritual aspect to my times in Catholic school. There was a lot of music and I thoroughly enjoyed the spiritual aspect of music. I joined the choir because I loved music and I responded to the spirituality in Catholic music. I also joined to escape the harsh life of Catholic school, too! [chuckle] It seems that every few days, someone would die and then we would sing a requiem at the funeral mass. Oh, I loved the singing. I enjoyed music greatly. And the artwork. Christianity has inspired some of the best Western painting. It played an important role in Western painting. Yes, I did learn to appreciate painting and the spiritual/religious aspects of it in Catholic school. I do not think that painting would be as meaningful for me without the rough times of Catholic school. [sigh] Those times were hard.”

(Toni Onley, telephone interview, 12 November 2000)

167 Catholicism and Christianity were first introduced to China in the seventeenth century. The Jesuit and Dominican missionaries were generally accepted by the Ming government and the missionaries enjoyed the freedom to spread Christianity in China. However, after the middle of nineteenth century, the Chinese government felt threatened by Christianity and denounced it as barbaric. The government declared Christianity to be a heretical activity under the Ching Legal Code, section 162, and they circulated anti-Christian propaganda to discourage Chinese citizens from holding Christian beliefs. In the propaganda, Christianity was portrayed as immoral, uncivilized, and a threat to the independence of the Chinese. Tracts aimed at educated people ridiculed Christianity by depicting God as a boar whose son was an extremely licentious creature who preyed upon women. To scare the less educated people away from Christianity, the government portrayed Christian missionaries as sexually deviant people who seek Chinese converts for body parts for experiments in alchemy and control believers by inserting demons into them. The Chinese government was against Christianity because the Christians claimed that believers can have a direct, personal relationship with God, which suggests that believers will be under ‘foreign’ control instead of the Chinese government’s. The Taiping Rebellion certainly reinforced the idea that religious beliefs can cause people to turn against their own government. (Rudolf G. Wagner. Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion [Berkley: U of California, 1982], 9-17.) See 18 March 1988 entry, page 97, footnote 172, for more on the Taiping Rebellion.

Also see the Boxer Rebellion, mentioned in footnote 16, page 44.
17 MARCH 1988

The day was spent getting to Nanjing,168 and again we lounged in broken deckchairs aboard a Y7 Antonov. It is impossible to see out of the windows past the huge 2900 e.s.h.p. turbo-prop engines, a copy of the Russian Ivchenko Ai24A. The story is they plan on switching these out-sized monsters for Rolls-Royce Darts or even our Pratt & Whitney Canada PW 100 series engines. They would be slimmer and more efficient and the passengers could see China go by.

Nanjing was like coming back to civilization, after being in the bush for a month. The Jinling Hotel is five-star elegance. A fine string quartet169 was playing Mozart in the cocktail lounge. After a rest, we are escorted to a private banquet room to meet Mr. Zhang Hui, a famous actor in China with the Beijing Opera.170 He was a most worldly host. We were joined by Mr. Feng Jing-Wen from the Foreign Affairs Office and Mr. Hong Zeng, the director of the Nanjing Museum. The conversation ranged from world affairs, the theatre and painters of the Ming Dynasty—a favourite period of mine and a time in which I find many soul mates. We will go into this tomorrow when Mr. Ma will pull out some of the museum's painting treasures for me. The hotel has a brush shop which displayed some of the best quality Chinese brushes I have seen to date. The advice given to me by a shopping sage was, "If you see something you like

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168 Nanjing, or Nanking, is the capital city of Jiangsu province and was once considered the "New Jerusalem" of China during the Taiping Rebellion (Wagner x). See March 18 entry for more information on the history of Nanjing and the Taiping Rebellion.

169 In the File 1.7 photocopy of Onley’s China Diary manuscript, this entire line was cut off. I had to refer to Gloria Onley’s 1994 unpublished edition of the diary in order to find the missing words. (28.1)

170 For more on Communist control over Chinese opera productions, see page 42, footnote 10. See 3 March 1988 entry on Zhang You Ju’s situation.
in China, buy it. You may never see it again.” So, I stocked up on enough brushes to last me a lifetime. The ones not used Yukiko can use on my funeral pyre.\textsuperscript{171}

18 MARCH 1988

Looking into the faces of the happy, good-looking people of Nanjing gives no hint of the bloody recent history that this city has suffered. First by their own people during the Taiping Rebellion 1851-1855 in which 100 000 people were slaughtered.\textsuperscript{172} The Chinese Imperial Armies left Nanjing a devasted city.

\textsuperscript{171} The paint brushes that Onley currently uses are all from Asia and are made from natural materials such as bamboo, goat hair, and feathers. All of Onley’s brushes are very dear to him and he does not dispose of his old brushes lightly. In the book, A Silent Thunder, Onley describes to Boulet, the author, how he follows an old Japanese custom of brush burial called \textit{fude-suke} or \textit{fude-zuku}. Occasionally, he would take an old brush to a landscape, paint with it one last time, and bury it in a tree, or under a log or rock in the landscape so that the brush may be returned to nature.

(Boulet and Onley 25; Onley, \textsc{T.O.’s BC}, 54)

\textsuperscript{172} The Taiping Rebellion, which began in 1850 and ended in 1864, was a movement that tried to overthrow Manchurian (or Ch’ing) imperial rule and was later hailed by Mao Zedong and the Communists as the beginning of Communism in China (Schirokauer 94-98). The founder of the Taiping Rebellion was a man named Hung Hsiu-ch’uan, or Hong Xiuquan, who was born in 1814 and committed suicide in 1864 when the Rebellion faced defeat. The Taiping movement was based on Hung’s visions which he had during a long period of illness after he failed three exams for entry into civil service. According to Hung’s visions, he was taken to Heaven with much pomp by the Chinese god of lightning to meet the supreme God of Heaven, or Heavenly Father, whom he concluded was the Sinicized Judeo-Christian God. Hung was ordered to fight the demons that have taken people captive and to drive them out of Heaven. After completing his task, the god in his vision proclaimed Hung the Second Son of God and the king who will transform China into the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (T’ai-P’ing t’ien-kuo). The new kingdom would be established by Hung after the successful overthrow of the ‘demonic’ Manchurians and the imperialists, and would be an egalitarian utopia ordained by God in which private ownership of wealth, goods, and property would be abolished in favour of public ownership. (Rudolph G. Wagner, Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: the Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion, China Research Monograph 25. [Berkley: U of California, 1982] 17-54.)

Hung quickly developed a great following, for many people were unhappy with the corrupt Manchurian rule and were eager to improve China’s dismal economic and political state. In 1851, Hung formally proclaimed that the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace has been established, and when the Taiping forces took over Nanjing in 1853, Nanjing became the new Kingdom’s capital city. Hung and the Taiping army destroyed many Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist items and images in their zeal to obey the Judeo-Christian God’s commandment that His people should not worship idols. The leaders of the
destroying buildings and artworks. When the Japanese took the city by storm in 1938, they slaughtered 100 000 and raped 44 000 women. It is remembered today as “The Rape of Nanjing.”

We meet Mr. Hong in the morning at Nanjing Art Gallery and were introduced to 20 artists that the gallery supports. They had put up an impromptu exhibition of their work which I was expected to pass among and offer a critique of each work. This is expected of me everywhere we go and is one part of this tour I dislike. I see often only displays of technical skill, with little substance, when they are painting with traditional ink and water (Sumi) or oil paintings in a 19th century French manner. They remind me somewhat of Japanese contemporary painters and printmakers, their technique being the beginning and ‘end all.’ Painters are always introduced to me as being experts in oil or flower painters in ink as if the medium was the message. These same museums supporting the artists often house magnificent collections of historic works. The artists do not seem to be able to see beyond the brush handling in a painting, say, one of the great Ming monks, to what is eternal and everlasting in the work. If they do, it does not show itself very often in their work. All this I cannot say.

movement spoke in mystical terms as they led the Taiping followers into political and economic reform. Although the Taiping Rebellion was based on one man’s spiritual experiences and the interpretation of his vision, the movement became purely political.

In 1856, the leadership within the Taiping movement crumbled, the Taiping movement lost many supporters, and the Taiping army lacked the strength, unity, and leadership to fight against the Ch‘ing Imperial Army. When the Imperial Army captured Nanjing, Hung’s Kingdom of Peace disintegrated into carnage. (Schirokauer 96-99)

173 “The Rape of Nanjing” was an example of how ruthless the Japanese were toward the people who opposed their plan of establishing a “New Order in East Asia,” a political, economic, and cultural coalition, to resist Western imperialism and Soviet Communism (Schirokauer 232). The Japanese attack on China in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s temporarily united the Nationalists and the Communists as the Chinese gathered their forces to defend themselves and to drive out the Japanese invaders.
directly during these critiques. Except to say that it is an awesome task to add something of substance to Chinese art history that is over 5000 years old. I tell them paint is only a language, to be mastered surely, but, then to be used to convey a personal insight. The cult of the individual has not been fostered in China since the Revolution and herein lies the problem. Art is produced by true eccentrics, and in a country of work units and identity cards, there is no place for the seemingly unproductive, whimsical person that is the artist. I suggested to the artists that they look more closely at the paintings of the 8 Eccentrics who lived and painted in the declining years of the Ming Dynasty. This cannot be simply brushed off as Protest Art, this is profound painting, deceptive in its simplicity. This is Xieyi—painting with meaning. The technical skills that has gone into the making of these paintings is well-disguised. The subjects are of the simplest everyday kind. They make us look and see for the first time, a simple household pot, a stone, a cloud, or water. They are as personal as the artists' handwriting, yet universal in their simple beauty. During the Cultural Revolution, many painters stopped painting for fear of being accused of Western influence. The freedom to paint has only existed since 1976, so it may be expecting too much too soon.  

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174 See Taipei entry in Appendix C.

175 Refer to 3 March 1988 entry, page 117, footnote 142, for more on the Communist government's control over art and literature.
19 MARCH 1988 on 18 MARCH

We took the afternoon train from Nanjing to Suzhou, and shared our carriage with a group of noisy, foul-mouthed ghetto kids from New York City, mostly Hispanics and Chinese American. The girls looked like they had seen and done it all. Pei Lin asked me if I thought they were virgins. I asked their much harrowed teacher if their tour was a cultural exchange.

"Suzhou would be the last opportunity I would have to paint in China," I said to Pei Lin, "I don't care what the Cultural Bureau has arranged for the visit in Suzhou, I want the day and a half there to myself to paint. As I suspected, the Bureau had arranged our every move. But I held firm and won.

We spent the morning on Tiger Hill. I did three watercolours in spite of the rain, cold, and crowds of the curious. It is a truly magical place of Ming

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176 This entry for 18 March, 1988 was written on 19 March, 1988.

177 Stopping at Suzhou is mandatory for the sophisticated traveller (Strassberg 461). Suzhou is considered an earthly paradise because of its natural scenic beauty, but it is more famous for its unique gardens, like the Garden of the Foolish Politician, in which Onley painted on his last few days in China.

178 One way Onley defines himself as a Canadian is by contrasting himself with the Americans and stating that he is not American. On the train to Suzhou, he sees the group of rowdy teenagers as being typical American ghetto kids. In a letter that Onley wrote to persuade an American "lady friend" of his to move to Canada with him, he tried to make clear distinctions between Canadians and Americans: Canadians dissolve into the U.S. landscape and are hardly noticed, but we are so different [...]. The U.S. TV news spills over in my house, all I see is blacks, Hispanics and whites trading shots with each other across a wasteland. Canadians, on the other hand, are relatively complacent cosmopolitan liberals. In the presence of Quebec separation, we are simply puzzled. It wouldn't occur to us to take up arms. We simply appoint a royal commission [...]. Canada, the land of reason. It is with reason that we defend ourselves, not with a .357 magnum handgun. Our role in the world is that of peacekeeper, and peace does not make news night after night [...]. Here the Royal Canadian Mounted Police ablaze in scarlet uniforms mounted on spirited black horses charge into the fray and make short work of the would-be troublemakers: phone 911 and one of these magnificent men on horseback will show up in minutes to protect you. (Toni Onley, letter to Jamie, 11 December 1993.)

179 Tiger Hill is a park located outside of Suzhou city. This park has many paths, ponds, and pavilions, and its most famous feature is a small hill on which people stand to watch the moon rise. Tiger Hill gets its name from a legend that describes how this park was the burial place of King Ho-liü of Wu
pavilions, terraces, and the most satisfying pagoda in all of China. The scene changes with every step in true Taoist spirit. If it were not for the crowds, it would be completely magical. In the afternoon, I continued to paint in the Garden of the Foolish Politician, another crowded, magical place. I found a little pavilion on a small hill in one of the inner gardens. It had a stone table to lay out my watercolour. I painted, undisturbed, for three hours.

Watercolours completed in Suzhou. 28 x 39 cm.


The spring rains, which the farmers are welcoming in China have been splattering my watercolours for the past month. Today is no exception. It is

(circa 514 – 496 B.C.). According to this legend, three days after the king was buried, a white tiger came and crouched at his gravemound. Another explanation is that the hill looks like a crouching tiger. On Tiger Hill, a pavilion was built and dedicated to the God of Literature (Wen-ch’ang-ko), a celestial god whom the literati revered for they considered him to be in charge of fame and official position. (Strassberg 500)

Onley is referring to the Tiger Pagoda, built in 961 A.D.
fitting that it should rain on the last day I have to paint. I have been wet so long that finally I came down with a cold about a week ago, and now, I have lost my voice. I have often thought that I must be one of the last of the hairy-chested outdoor painters and, therefore, must suffer for my art and my backwardness.

We take a train in the late afternoon for Hangzhou. Our flight from Hangzhou to Guangzhou has been moved up one day because of a flight cancellation. Now we only stay overnight in Hangzhou, which is unfortunate as I would like to paint on Westlake (Xi Hu). I have completed over 40 watercolours in China, so I cannot complain. The trip has been 100% successful. If life is an education, mine is a little more complete. China is no longer that white area of the map waiting for me to colour. I know now, that if I come back, there are places I would like to dally much longer, such as the Guangxi and Sichuan provinces which have the most paintable mountains.

In the morning, we went to one of the smallest of the Suzhou gardens, in the hope that I could do just one more painting. I was assured that few people come here and as it was raining heavily, there would likely be no one to disturb me. The Garden of the Master of the Nets was laid out in the 12th century for a minor official. The courtyards, chambers, and covered walkways offer surprises

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181 Hangzhou (or Hang-chou) was called Lin-an when it was the Southern Song capital city. It is most famous for its West Lake. (Please see the following footnote.) Like Suzhou, Hangzhou is considered an earthly paradise. The beautiful scenery at Hangzhou and Westlake make these sites mandatory stops for travellers, especially travelling writers. During the Song dynasty, many writers and painters flocked to Westlake to capture the scenic beauty on paper and their immortalization of these sites brought about a demand for literature on and paintings of Westlake. (Strassberg 310)

182 Westlake, one of China’s most famous lakes, has many names: Xihu, Wulinshui, Qiantanghu, and Xizhihu. However, since the Song dynasty, the favoured name seems to be Westlake because it is located west of Hangzhou city. The Westlake area is packed with beautiful scenery, natural springs, caves, pavilions, pagodas, grottoes, waterside buildings, and ancient sites containing cultural relics.
at every turn. The pool reflects towers and pavilions with flying eaves. In the rain, it was very tranquil—a place to listen to the rain on the pool and study its mood. But the mood was shattered by cause of a New York accent bellowing across the still pool from one of the verandas. “Harry, get your fat ass out of the picture. I'm trying to photograph the lake.” I focussed through the rain across the pool to see an overweight and short lady with her sagging 50ish face made up like a heroine from a Beijing Opera. This was not the place to paint! Curious Chinese I can handle, American tourists are quite another thing. We retired to our hotel to pack for the six-hour train journey to Hangzhou.

We arrive in Hangzhou at 10pm in a downpour of rain. We were met by the Foreign Affairs man, Mr. Qian. The good news is that our flight to Guanzhou (Canton) is delayed until 8pm tomorrow night, which will give us a full day here and give me another chance to do a few watercolours. We were driven through the dark night around Westlake (Xi Hu) to the government's Hangzhou guesthouse. The odd light reflected into the lake, but we could see little else. (In China, cars do not use headlights at night.) We entered a vast parkland and were stopped occasionally by army guards at checkpoints where Mr. Qian flashed a paper with a turtle design on it. We were always waved on. I asked about the security and Mr. Qian said, “This is a compound where top government officials stay. The pavilion we are giving to you two is where Mao Tse-Tung

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183 Mao Tse-Tung or Zedong (1893 -1975): The Marxist Communism that Mao brought about in China abolished organized religion, for they agreed with Karl Marx that religion was what oppressed people turned to when they seek relief from the evil in the world. The Communist Party believed that the new China will free people from the hopeless oppression of the past of imperial rule and move forward to a technological and modern era which has no need for religion.
drafted China's first constitution. President Nixon stayed in your bedroom.” We have now slept in two beds formerly occupied by Richard Nixon.\textsuperscript{184} It's as inhibiting as having a picture of the Virgin Mary hanging over our bed.

21 MARCH 1988

The bedroom had a very large picture window and when I draw the curtains in the morning, we had an unobstructed view of West Lake, ringed with mountains. Our pavilion is said to be a masterpiece designed by China’s foremost architect Dai Nian-chi in the 50’s. Mists and rain swept the lake all day.

In the morning, I painted three watercolours from one of the upstairs rooms, and in the afternoon, I did more from our bedroom window. The dining room offered me more views of the gardens, pools, and other pavilions. We were offered a boat and our driver sat in the car all day, but I could not be enticed out of Mao’s pavilion. It was warm and the watercolours were drying as fast as I could paint.

Although Mao and his Communist Party were against organized religion, Communism itself became almost like a religion in China and Mao himself became a cult hero. During Mao’s years in power as the head of China, his followers exalted him as an immortal leader and the Little Red Book that he wrote on Communist action was revered like scripture. People who have seen him cry out to him as if he were their Messiah and they considered sightings of Mao unforgettable experiences. (Geoffrey Parrinder (ed). \textit{Man and His Gods: encyclopedia of the world’s religions}. London: Hamlyn, 1971. 428-429).

Now that the immortal leader has passed away, some Chinese followers create household Mao shrines or altars where they place his Little Red Book beneath his picture. These devout followers of Mao would pray and sing his praises before the altar and even plead for help or ask his blessing upon their household if they believe that they have been faithful and obedient to him. The worship of Mao is partly linked to Chinese ancestral worship in which the dead are believed to have god-like powers.

In 1978, China drafted a constitution that allowed people to practice religion. As evident in Onley’s government-controlled tour, the Chinese government presents China as a country of many religions, where people are free to practice any religion they desire without fear of discrimination or persecution, provided that they do not interfere with the state’s power, disrupt public order, or harm other Chinese citizens. (PRC 120) In reality, this is untrue for the government strictly controls the religious activities in the country and is highly suspicious of any religious belief or practice that threatens the state’s power over its people. E.g. Suppression of the Falun Gong movement, persecution of Christians.

\textsuperscript{184} The first time the Onleys stayed in a room where Nixon once stayed was on 24 February 1988.
them. Yukiko, feeling sorry for the Foreign Affairs people and Pei Lin in their forced idleness decided to do some last minute shopping in town. Tomorrow is our last day in China and likely and uneventful one of packing for the long trip home via Hong Kong.\footnote{Onley's idea of home, as mentioned in the 16 March 1988 entry is linked to the spaciousness of the Canadian landscape and paradoxical newness of untouched ancient land. In \textit{A Silent Thunder}, Onley writes, "After travelling the crowded earth, I come home to Canada and appreciate, time and time again, our great natural resource of space; the miles and miles of miles and miles. It's my cornucopia of subjects to paint without end. I drop in from the sky disturbing only momentarily, then leaving the ancient land once more to converse with the sky. It's my home and all I need" (9). Also see Appendix F.}

Watercolours Completed in Hangzhou. 28 X 39 cm


4. Rain Shower, West Lake (Xi Hu), Hangzhou, China. 21 March 1988.


Appendix A
Sketch Map of China
Showing the cities and provinces that Onley mentions in his China diary

(TIBET (XIZANG AUTONOMOUS REGION))

(PACIFIC OCEAN)

0 200 400 600 800 km
0 200 400 600 mile
(Approximate)
Appendix B  
Chinese Dynasties and Historical Periods  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty/Period</th>
<th>Time Period*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paleolithic Period</td>
<td>circa 600 000 – 7000 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neolithic Period</td>
<td>c. 7000 BC – 1600 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xia Dynasty</td>
<td>c. 2100 BC – 1600 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang Dynasty</td>
<td>c. 1600 BC – 1100 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou (Chou) Dynasties</td>
<td>1100 BC – 221 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warring States Period</td>
<td>475 – 221 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qin (Chin) Dynasty</td>
<td>221 BC – 207 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Dynasties</td>
<td>206 BC – AD 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Kingdoms Period</td>
<td>AD 220 – AD 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>220 – 265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shu</td>
<td>221 – 263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>222 – 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin Dynasties</td>
<td>265 – 420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Dynasty</td>
<td>420 – 589</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Dynasty</td>
<td>396 – 556</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sui Dynasty</td>
<td>581 – 618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tang Dynasty</td>
<td>618 – 907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Dynasties</td>
<td>AD 907 – AD 960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hou Liang</td>
<td>907 – 923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hou Tang</td>
<td>923 – 936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hou Jin</td>
<td>936 – 947</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hou Han</td>
<td>947 – 950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hou Zhou</td>
<td>951 – 960</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Song (Sung) Dynasty</td>
<td>960 – 1127</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Song (Sung)</td>
<td>1127 – 1279</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yuan Dynasty</td>
<td>1280 – 1368</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ming Dynasty</td>
<td>1368 – 1644</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qing (Ching/Manchu) Dynasty</td>
<td>1644 – 1919</td>
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<td>Republic of China</td>
<td>1912 – 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
<td>1949 to present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (PRC 216)  
Appendix C

Japan Diary 1.5.24-30

April 29, 1978

Taipei, Taiwan

China is as different from Japan as night is from day. Where Japan is neat, spotless, and organized, Taiwan is messy, chaotic and very friendly. I am here for the opening of my one-man show of prints and watercolours at the National Historic Museum. We were asked to arrive 10 days early so as to have time to select work and have it framed, also design and produce a catalogue and invitation. We were housed at Liberty House, a military officers’ club. (The army is a big part of national life, everyone is in it.)

After days of being treated like royalty, dined, entertained by the whole art and museum community, I began to worry about the still unselected, unframed show, not to mention the invitations. This was now three days before the opening, which would be attended by many high officials from government and, of course, the art community, numbering some 600 artists. Two days before the show the invitation was produced from the Museum’s own press in the basement, looking for all the world as if it had been printed in a Chinese laundry. Dr. Liou Ping-hen called and said, “We can now frame the show.” So I met him at the museum and we took the work across town to a frame shop, decided on 51 works to be framed in less than 2 days. The framer agreed. I picked the moulding and matting and left the poor man to two sleepless days and nights of framing. Cost: $7.00 US a frame.

The show was scheduled to open 3:00 pm Saturday, April 29. The day before, this time was moved up to the morning at 10:30 AM because there was to be a practice air raid throughout Taiwan at 3:00 PM. So there goes my opening we had spent 10 days waiting for in a bathtub of cold water to escape the 100° F heat and 80% humidity. But time and a little eastern patience and events will solve themselves. I said, “It’s too hot to be upset.”
My opening looked grand, the framing an excellent job, and the attendance comfortably crowded. In the next gallery hanging completely by chance, an exhibition of Shumo paintings by my Chinese patron saint, Pa-Ta-Shan-Ja, poet, prince, monk, drunk, and painter of 1000 paintings for each year of his 85 year life. His fish, flowers, trees and rocks all appear to be conversing with each other. At the hands of a lesser artist, they would be reduced to mere caricatures. But Pa-Ta-Shan-Ja has breathed life into his subjects that speak to me from across the ages. I could feel his presence from the Ming dynasty (1500), sitting in the room tippling sake for his inspiration. Somehow, his presence made all the bother of mounting this show of mine worthwhile.

The gallery was filled with chairs now as if for a concert. A podium flanked by 2 Republic of China flags, microphone and plusher chairs for the guests of honour. The seats began to fill mysteriously by 10:00 AM. The gallery was full and ready for 2 hours of speech-making, which the Chinese love. Dr. Liou, whom I previously mentioned, is a researcher at the Museum and volunteered to translate my remarks in Mandarin, which would not have been such a bad idea, if his English had been better and he understood what I was saying. But it wasn’t good, and he understood very little. We communicated for the past week half in sign language, half in pidgin English. There was still time before the opening ceremonies, he said, and asked me if I could outline what I intended to say, so he could be prepared. I actually hadn’t thought about it until then. I was rather counting on divine inspiration. I hadn’t really thought why I was in China having a show of western watercolours and prints until that moment. So I thought a bit and I said to Dr. Liou, “I was born in the British Isles and brought up on watercolour. English artists discovered watercolour through the Chinese in the 18th century and developed it in an entirely different direction from China. English ‘brushes’ are different: they are stiff sable for painting stiff, preconceived works. On the other hand, Chinese brushes are made from goat hair, are soft and pliable and hold a great quantity of colour and water. They produce surprising spontaneous effects that the artist can respond to. With these big, floppy brushes, the artist can create a dialogue between himself and his work as
it unfolds before him. Life and death, success and failure, the work demanding his total attention. The brush disappearing into an extension of his will. He 'becomes' his painting, chaos is controlled with a cobweb-thin rein that extends from his mind, keeping it all together for a moment longer until finally, the painting says, 'I'm finished, you can relax! My life is my own from now on. I am born!'

My early training in watercolour was always concerned with how, never why or what. How to paint the shine on a dog's nose. I was 13 or 14 and it was like learning the scales on the piano and playing simple tunes. But gradually, over the years, the medium became second nature and I didn't have to think how anymore and the question of what I was doing with this facility grew ever larger. I began to see Turner for the first time and through him, the Chinese and how they had it all together all along. None of this geometry of perspective with foreground, middle distance, and distance getting progressively paler 'like a lettuce salad dying' as Dylan Thomas called them. None of that bit of cow shit at the bottom of the sheet to establish foreground. But a fresh sheet, a loaded brush, and infinite possibilities. That was the life! The wind blowing through your whiskers, a beautiful woman by your side, and a bottle of saké for inspiration. That was the life that Pa-Ta-Shan-Ja would have understood. That is why it is a particular pleasure for me to be showing with him today and be at home in the home of watercolour. We might not speak the same language, but I would like to feel we speak through our paintings."

Dr. Liou Ping-hen was moved by my rantings and appeared for the first time to understand fully everything I was saying. He put his arms around me and said, "Now we can go into the gallery and enjoy the opening ceremonies." Dr. Ho, Director of the Gallery, launched into an hour-long address in Chinese, which could have been about the price of tea for all I know, because no one smiled. Polite clapping.

Dr. Ho was followed by Mrs. Poa-Ling Yang, member of the Legislator whose address also in Chinese is, I concluded, decidedly political, as I heard the word CANADA several times, and it wasn't until this moment that it suddenly dawned on me that Canada no longer recognizes Taiwan. I became a little
nervous, and wondered what kind of mess I had got myself into. At last, Mrs.
Poa-Ling Yang finished, looked at me rather sternly before stepping down from
the podium. In my embarrassment I clapped, but I was the only one to clap, so I
sat on my hands as Mr. Wang Lan, Director of the Chinese Centre International
and Executive Director of the Chinese Writers' and Artists' Association mounted
the podium. Mr. Wang Lan started out very serious for half an hour also and
then the mood lightened and people began to laugh at his remarks. One was
about my beard, I guessed. He sat down to a good round of applause.

Then it was my turn. By this time, I had become so disoriented I was
barely able to thank all the speakers by name. Everyone looked at me with, if not
a scowl, a very serious, expectant look. I thought I would win them over with a
little humour. I made a dumb remark about the weather, which no one
responded to. Maybe it was Dr. Liou's translation. I remember my voice
seeming to go nowhere beyond the podium, until a little man rushed up and
lowered the microphone to my height. After much amplified fumblings and audio
screeches, I continued my disconnected train of thought. No one understanding,
fortunately, a word I was saying. At some point, Dr. Liou, in response to my
babbling, launched into the most moving (as I was to discover later) address on
what we had discussed earlier. There was not a dry eye in the gallery. The
formalities are over.

I was hugged and kissed and smiled at. Legislator Poa-Ling Yang looked
at me long and seriously and said, "You have made more friends here today than
the Canadian Embassy made in 30 years in Taiwan. Why did they never tell us
they had artists like you? Why did you have to come here by yourself as a lone
ambassador? For us in China, art is as familiar as writing. In fact, writing is art.
Why all the years that your government was represented here did they not show
us their artists? Do you realize that you are the first Canadian artist to ever show
in a museum here? We would have understood much more about Canada. But
you have helped greatly, all by yourself. Your country should be very grateful." I
said, "Well, I don't answer for my government. I simply pay my taxes, close my
eyes, and vote, always to be disappointed."
Appendix D

From File 1.15
Used for Opus advertising of Toni Onley's Watercolour Box.

I fly my own plane to many of the sights which I paint. Often, I work in isolated natural splendour. Twenty years ago, I designed a watercolour box which would carry everything I needed to allow me to paint in the wild.

The new watercolour box made by Opus faithfully reproduces the services provided by my original. It carries fifty sheets of paper (1/4 imperial size – 11” X 15”) and a complete palette of large tubes of paint in an enclosed compartment. It also has plenty of room for brushes, tape, and a collapsible water container. The large, impervious plastic palette contains sixteen colour wells and four blending trays; the lid of the box acts as a drawing board.

Many of my friends and colleagues asked where they could get a box like mine, so I approached Opus Framing for help. Opus has created an exceptional replica of which I am most proud. It is made by hand of a beautifully grained ash, and has corner protectors which my original box never had. I hope you find using this watercolour box as valuable and as satisfying as I have.

Toni Onley
The English teacher, trying to dazzle me with his command of English, and impress the other Japanese guests, said, "How much rain do you experience during the Spring Equinox?" I said, "Really, I wouldn't know, but it once rained for forty days and forty nights."

The English teacher had a passionate interest in the historic figures of the little Island, and was at the moment writing an English Guidebook to Shodoshima. Phyllis, our hostess, was editing it for him, and had told me earlier that she was having great difficulty with him over it. He was apparently only interested in the sexual exploits of the historical figures of the island, and the sexual symbolism of events. I was interested in talking to him about the Kamikaze training program conducted on the island during World War II to mentally prepare the suicide pilots for death in little one-man submarines. He would know something, if anyone; he was the only historian on the island. It was when I asked him that I got my first sampling of his purple prose. "Ah, so," he said, "It was in the closing days of the war that our island was rocked by a series of orgasmic explosions as the little submarines went to watery womb." I noticed when he spoke that he entered into a series of nervous epileptic jerking motions, but only when he spoke English. I was to learn later that he was the long suffering husband of a very domineering, tongue-lashing wife. His only reprieve was to lock himself into his own bedroom and give vent to his long pent-up sexual frustrations by writing his English Guidebook to Shodoshima. His wife would sometimes stand outside his door shouting, "I know what you are doing in there, you dirty little man!" He smiles as he pens the dimensions of the breasts of the mistress of the last ruling daimyo of Shodoshima.
Appendix F

The penultimate entry of Onley's Japan Diary (File 1.5)

May 14, 1978 Osaka

Japan is an ancient land. Its paths are deep rutted by the passage of millions of pilgrims. And there is a path anywhere you want to go, because thousands have had the same idea, over many centuries. The hills are worn and tired from the burden of countless foot-weary travellers. The seasons are no longer a surprise, but a ritual observance. Nature is tired of trying against the onslaught of people and their garbage. There is also the other side of Japan. The fine design and craftsmanship of almost everything one comes in contact with in daily life, which Yukiko had taken for granted all her life, until now, returning to Japan after two years in Canada, she was able to discover, for the first time, the rich and beautiful heritage which was hers, and always will be wherever she goes. It was marvelous to watch her in the midst of discovery, as she would explain to me the purpose of a particular object or ritual. She would suddenly see how unusual it must all seem to me. And then how utterly unique everything was that she had accepted without a thought, all her life.

But we are both pleased to be returning to British Columbia. For the clean newness of it all. To where nature is making its first attempt at mountains, even at clouds. Where the air is clean and sweet, and the paths are not well trodden, and for the most part one has to make one's own path maybe into a valley where no one has walked before. We are indeed lucky to be in the last new place in a worn out world.
Appendix G
Original, Unedited Excerpt from 22 February 1988 entry of China Diary
(File 1.7.1-3)

Tonight being the seventh after the Chinese new year it is cause for celebration,
by sunset all the fireworks had expired and we could sleep with thoughts on the
very busy day. MR HE’S comment that painting and poetry in China are
indistinguishable and my comments that in the West they are distinguishable.
Our arrival at Guangzhou airport festooned in Red lags. The security men all
dressed like the doorman at the Ritz, in uniforms that seem to fir no-one, and
appear to come in only one size. And NO guns! For each form that had to be
filled out their was a uniformed functionary in charge. One man fast asleep was
in sole charge of the passport Red stamp. We declared all our worldly goods,
money carried, and that we did not have AIDS. Our bags were not searched;
after the last formality we were ushered to our awaiting hosts and waiting limo.
MR. HE remarked during his 20 course banquet that China has change so much,
that 10 years ago he could not have imagined it. For example his city is to have
a new cultural centre at a cost of 80,000,000 yuan / $35,000,000 CAN. And this
Hotel; world class by any standard, built only a year ago as a joint venture
between Hong Kong and China, was completed in time for the visit of Queen
Elizabeth. And the elevated highway winding above the old grey city, built for
Queen Elizabeth to drive on. They must miss their last Emperor!

MR HE tried to explain China with the legend of the golden ball and the
iron rod, we both missed the point. Then discribed the prawns we were eating as
coming from a very special place where fresh water meets the ocean. As I look
at the sunset reflecting golden into the Pearl River, I cannot imagine where this
magic place might be in China. The Pearl River looks as if one could walk on it!
We saw Tibetans at the monastery. A number are also staying at our hotel. I wonder how they can bear coming to this country or ever forgive the Chinese for ravaging their sacred artwork. The wholesale destruction of many of their thousand year old monasteries by Red Guards, sometimes using artillery. The thousands of monks and lay Buddhist that were sent to labour camps. And the biggest loss of all; the Dalai Lama, their spiritual head, forced to flee to northern India.
Appendix H

A Pinyin and Wade-Giles Conversion table

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*Source: (Schirokauer x-xii)*
Appendix J

The following is an excerpt of Onley's notes for his September 14-29, 1984 exhibition, “The mountains, Lakes & Glaciers of Toni Onley” at the Kenneth G. Heffel Gallery in Vancouver. A copy of his exhibition invitation / introduction card can be found in File 14.3. A manuscript of Onley's notes are in File 1.12. The notes were written on July 22, 1984, just several weeks before Onley's plane crash and the exhibition was held a week after the crash. Segments from these notes were printed in his article on his crash in the February 1985 issue of the Saturday Night Magazine which is in File 14.1.

I have come a long way from the little hills on the Isle of Man, even from my first landing on the glacier of Powder Mountain on September 17, 1982. I clearly remember my animal fear, of being out of my environment, out of my depth, in a world I was totally unprepared for, with a mind that had to be tamed. My time machine had suddenly thrust me into the ice age from the lush green meadows of Delta only 30 minutes away. I walked with unsure feet over possible crevasses ready to swallow me up, or avalanches to sweep me away. Since that first flight I have filled my log book with such flights onto every type of snow and ice. Flying onto tops of mountains is now 'going home' as John Muir [his friend who is also a pilot and artist] put it.

Why this initial fear of the glaciers I will never know. Up until this time I had flown the Canadian wilderness from coast to coast, up through Labrador to the Arctic Circle, explored Baffin Island in search of subjects, only occasionally did the adrenaline run free. I suppose it was because now for the first time I was stepping out of my airplane at 8000 feet, making one small footprint in the virgin snow in a deafeningly silent world made all the more silent after the noise of the airplane engine has died with the turn of the key. While flying around mountain peaks one feels god-like, but once down an on the mountain glacier I felt I was in their hands...
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