

Misplaced: Three Qing Manuscripts of a Medieval Poet

Wang Ji 王績 (590?-644) may not be one of the greatest Tang poets, but the transmission of his literary collection certainly presents us with dramatic twists and turns in the course of over a millennium. The most recent phase of the saga occurred barely twenty-five years ago, when a discovery was made of Wang Ji's collection in three separate manuscripts, one dating to the eighteenth and two to the nineteenth century.¹ These three manuscripts, though copied by different hands, are identical in their order of arrangement and content, and turn out to represent an edition of Wang Ji's collection that was thought to have been long lost.² Compared to the printed editions in popular circulation, this newly discovered edition reflected in the manuscript copies contains nearly seventy additional poems and about two dozen additional prose pieces; it spans five scrolls whereas the popular Wang Ji editions are in three scrolls.³ This discovery doubles the size of Wang

¹ One manuscript copy belonged to the famous scholar Zhu Yun 朱筠 (1729-1781) of Daxing 大興 (a county in the outskirts of Beijing); a Mr. Chen Wentian 陳文田 made a copy from it in 1865 when he was "temporarily lodged" in the Xuannan 宣南 area of Beijing. Xuannan was a Han-Chinese residential area in the Qing dynasty; scholars who came to the capital to participate in the civil service examination often stayed in this area. Chen Wentian was most likely one of the scholars from the provinces. The third was produced by Li Chan 李樞 (1793 *jinshi*) of Zhucheng 諸城 (Shandong) after 1814. For the authenticity and lineage of these ms. copies, see Zhang Xihou 張錫厚, "Guanyu Wang Ji ji de liuchuan yu wujuanben de faxian" 關於王績集的流傳與五卷本的發現, in *Zhongguo gudian wenxue luncong* 中國古典文學論叢 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), pp. 70-95. This article is reprinted in his book-length study, *Wang Ji yanjiu* 王績研究 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1995; hereafter, *WJYJ*), pp. 161-203. Also see Han Lizhou 韓理洲, *Wang Wugong wenji wujuanben huijiao* 王無功文集五卷本會校 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987; hereafter, *Wang wenji*), pp. 7-10.

² It has been suggested that these fuller editions might contain poems that were not in Wang Ji's original collection but found their way into the editions "later from other sources." This, however, is highly improbable, given our understanding of the nature of textual transmission of pre-Song writings. To put it bluntly, after a certain point in the Northern Song, the sources for pre-Song literature became stabilized and standard; these sources remain largely known to us; in late-imperial times, unless engaged in outright forgery, people usually did not just find a lost Tang poem "from other sources" that are obscure to us.

³ The five-scroll edition of Wang Ji's collection seems to have never been printed, and as

Ji's collection and drastically changes the critical evaluation of his work; indeed it is considered one of the twentieth century's greatest discoveries in classical Chinese literary studies. Significant as it is, the discovery is in fact the least exciting part of Wang Ji's story. If we follow the entire story of Wang Ji's collection since the seventh century, we see that the collection first shrinks and then grows, and then swells even more. This process provides us with many puzzles as well as fascinating insights into the interaction of poet, editors, readers, copyists, and printers from the Middle Period through late-imperial China.

In this paper I argue that the original edition of Wang Ji, compiled shortly after his death, was anthologized by a later editor largely due to the particular literary climate in the last part of the eighth century, an era commonly known as the "mid-Tang." Since the shortened edition became the most popular edition and went into print many times since the seventeenth century, Wang Ji's image was reduced to that of a straightforward, plainspoken poet who seemingly embraced a "return to antiquity." Such an image obscures the fact that Wang Ji was very much writing in the tradition of the Southern Dynasties court poetry. His most important poetic model is none other than Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581), the most famous writer in the second half of the sixth century, whose writings represent the crowning achievement of Southern court literature and are characterized by a distinct personal style. This paper hopes not only to reestablish a literary "lineage" for Wang Ji (and Yu Xin), but also to bring attention to certain larger issues implied in Wang Ji's case: namely, how changed poetic taste during the Tang influenced the making of a selective edition of a poet; how such a selective edition subsequently influenced the writing of literary history; and how, in our studies of classical Chinese literature, especially

a result remained largely unknown except in very limited circles. Wang Zhongmin 王重民 (1903–1975) thought it was lost since Yuan and Ming times; *Dunhuang guji xulu* 敦煌古集敘錄 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1958), p. 286. Wan Man 萬曼 (1903–1971) mentioned that he noticed a five-scroll edition of Wang Ji's collection in the Beijing Library (now National Library of China) catalog of "fine editions," but he did not see it or pursue the matter; Wan, *Tang Ji xulu* 唐集敘錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), p. 2. *Tang Ji xulu* was published posthumously in 1980, and only then did the information about Wang Ji's collection come to the attention of scholars. It seems that Han Lizhou and Zhang Xihou both began tracking down the extant five-scroll editions of Wang Ji's collections at about the same time, and published their research in the early 1980s. In his postscript to *Wang Ji yanjiu*, Zhang Xihou states that alerted by Wan's work, he first located the three five-scroll editions in 1982, and then completed his collation of the editions in 1983; and yet, for various reasons, his collated edition was published as late as in 1995 (as part of *Wang Ji yanjiu*); *WJYJ*, pp. 445–48. Han Lizhou's collated edition based on his study of the three five-scroll editions and a number of three-scroll editions was, on the other hand, published in 1987; it has been widely used by scholars and students of Tang literature ever since.

of Middle Period literature, the importance of manuscript culture and its later interaction with print culture prove to be a key element that we can no longer afford to ignore.

WANG JI AND HIS TWO EDITORS

Also known by his self-appellation, Donggaozi 東皋子, Master of the Eastern Hill, Wang Ji was born around 590 into an elite family that claimed its lineage from the illustrious Taiyuan Wang 太原王 clan.⁴ His brother, Wang Tong 王通 (584?-617), was a prominent scholar of Confucian classics. Wang Ji went through several ups and downs in his public career from the Sui (581-618) to Tang (618-907). Despite his early fame as a talented writer, he never rose to any high office, and in his last years he lived in retirement at his home estate in Longmen 龍門 of Jiangzhou 絳州 (modern Hejin 河津, Shanxi 山西). A number of his poems are about reclusion, drinking, and the unfettered life. The traditional image of Wang Ji has been one of a recluse and a drinker, a latter-day Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263) or Tao Qian 陶潛 (365?-427); indeed Wang Ji's poetic style is widely believed to have been influenced by Tao Qian.⁵ After Wang Ji died in 644, his writings were collected into five scrolls by his friend Lü Cai 呂才 (600-665). Lü Cai also penned

⁴ Wang Ji's official biography is included under "Biographies of Recluses" in Liu Xu 劉昫 et al., comps., *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 192, p. 5116. A more elaborate version appears in Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 et al., comps., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 196, pp. 5594-96. For studies of Wang Ji in English language, see the section on Wang Ji's life and poetry in Stephen Owen's *The Poetry of the Early Tang* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1977), pp. 60-71. This was written, however, before the five-scroll edition of Wang Ji's collection came to light. For a recent book-length study of Wang Ji, which develops Owen's concept of "opposition poetics" and makes use of the five-scroll edition, see Ding Xiang Warner's *A Wild Deer amid Soaring Phoenixes: The Opposition Poetics of Wang Ji* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2003).

⁵ For instance, Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) was one of the first people to associate Wang Ji with Ruan Ji and Tao Qian in "Seeing off Scholar Wang" 送王秀才序; *Han Changli quanji* 韓愈全集校注, ed. Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 and Chang Sichun 常思春 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1996), p. 1592. Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (fl. 1211-1249) notes that Wang Ji asked for an office so as to be close to a good wine-brewer just as Ruan Ji did; *Zhi zhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題, printed in vol. 674 of *Yingyin Wenyuan ge siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983) 16, p. 798. Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 (ca. 1254-1323), *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986) 231, p. 1843, cites *Zhou shi shebi* 周氏涉筆 in stating that Wang Ji integrated "Yuanming's ancient style" in his regulated poems (for a study of the work *Zhou shi shebi*, see Tong Weimin's 全衛敏 recent article, "Zhou shi shebi kao" 周氏涉筆考, in *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 2007.1, pp. 89-93). This argument is echoed by many critics in later times, e.g., the famous Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899-1946) claims that "Wang Ji's poetry may be said to have derived from Tao Qian" (*Wen Yiduo xuan Tang shi* 聞一多選唐詩, annot. Zhang Zhihao 張志浩 and Yu Runqian 俞潤泉 [Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1986], p. 480). Zhang Xihou says that Wang Ji "compared himself to Ruan Ji and Tao Qian, and imitated their styles in writing poetry"; *WJYJ*, p. 235.

a long preface to this five-scroll collection that contains detailed biographical information about Wang Ji's life.⁶

The eremitic, eccentric self-image is true of Wang Ji's poetry to a certain degree, but the matter is complicated by a preface to a Wang Ji collection edited by a mid-Tang figure Lu Chun 陸淳 (d. 805). Lu Chun says in the preface:

Every time I read his collection, I imagine what he was like and regret I am not his contemporary and close friend. Thereupon I have deleted those pieces expressing worldly ambitions, so as to preserve intact his aims to untie his official's tassel and hang up his official's cap. If ever he should rise from the dead, I would not be ashamed of being an understanding friend from a different age. 余每覽其集，想見其人，恨不同時得爲忘形之友。故祛彼有爲之詞，全其解懸之志。庶乎死而可作，無愧異代之知音耳。

What Lu Chun did was to make a selection of Wang Ji's original collection compiled by Lü Cai: this was a common practice in the Tang, when literary collections seldom circulated in entirety but were often excised into "selected works 小集." This selection, as Lu Chun would have us believe, represents a purely ideological choice: in order to keep Wang Ji's image as a recluse intact, he removed all writings portraying a man of action rather than a man of quiet withdrawal from public life. But is this claim credible? In other words, are all of the excised writings expressions of worldly ambitions? To answer this question we must not only look at the pieces included in Lu Chun's edition, but more important, look at those excluded from Lu Chun's edition.

Here we seem to be facing an impasse, because we no longer have Lu Chun's edition. Many scholars believe Lu Chun's edition is none other than the three-scroll printed edition in popular circulation in late-imperial China. How did this belief come about, and is it built on solid ground? To answer this question we need to examine briefly the history of the popular three-scroll edition.

There are two major recensions of the three-scroll edition of Wang Ji's collection, both of which have been consulted in writing this essay.⁷ The first recension is Zhao Qimei's 趙琦美 (1563-1624) collated manuscript copy, with a colophon dated 1607. Zhao Qimei states in the

⁶ See *Wang wenji*, pp 1-5; *WJYJ*, pp. 23-27.

⁷ Apart from the two major recensions, there is another version represented by a manuscript copy with a colophon by Lin Yunfeng 林雲鳳 dated 1602. This version will be discussed later in this paper.

colophon that it was copied from a manuscript copy in Jiao Hong's 焦竑 (1540–1619) collection. This edition was printed in the early-seventeenth century, with a preface by Huang Ruheng 黃汝亨 (1558–1626). It was later used as the base edition for inclusion in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書.⁸ The second recension is Sun Xingyan's 孫星衍 (1753–1818) manuscript copy, which Sun claims was copied from a manuscript owned by Yu Xiaoke 余蕭客 (1729–1777).⁹ Yu Xiaoke in turn claims that he copied it in 1775 from a “shadow copy” made by Wu Songyan 吳松岩 from a “Northern Song printed edition.” Neither Sun Xingyan nor Yu Xiaoke had, however, seen the legendary “Northern Song printed edition” itself; nor did they specify the provenance of that edition, which makes the claim sound dubious at best. It was, after all, a common practice in their day to boast of an edition's lineage from the Northern and Southern Song. In his preface to this edition Sun Xingyan made the speculation that the three-scroll edition was the same as Lu Chun's edition.¹⁰ The modern scholar Wang Zhongmin made the same assumption.¹¹

There is, however, no evidence supporting this speculation. Instead, the Bibliography of the *Song History* (*Song shi* 宋史), as well as the Northern Song imperial library catalogue, *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目, both record a Wang Ji collection in two scrolls, and the *Song History* Bibliography states explicitly that the two-scroll edition was edited by Lu Chun.¹² This point has been nicely discussed by Zhang Xihou, who also speculates that the three-scroll edition was a later expansion of Lu Chun's two-scroll edition, either from the Southern Song or even later than the Southern Song, since no extant Song source ever mentions a three-scroll edition.¹³ According to Zhang, Lu Chun's edition in two

⁸ Zhang Xihou claims that the *Siku quanshu* edition was based on Cao Quan's 曹奎 (1628 *jinshi*) 1641 printed edition, but this information does not appear correct; see *WJYJ*, p. 176. Zhang may have been misled by the statement of the *Siku quanshu* editors that the SKQS edition was based on a “Chongzhen 崇禎 [1628–1644] printed edition.” See Wang Ji, *Donggaozi ji* 東臯子集, in vol. 1065 of *Yingyin Wenyuan ge siku quanshu*, p. 2. I suspect that this “Chongzhen printed edition” is either identical with or derived from the printed edition prefaced by Huang Ruheng, as an edition was not always printed as soon as a preface was written. Zhao Qimei's copy was again photo-reprinted in *Sibu congkan xubian* 四部叢刊續編 (Shanghai: Hanfenlou 涵芬樓, 1934).

⁹ Sun Xingyan's copy was the base edition used in the printed edition of Luo Zhenyu's 羅振玉 (1866–1940) *Tangfeng lou* 唐風樓 edition of 1906.

¹⁰ For Sun Xingyan's preface, see *Wang wenji*, p. 228; *WJYJ*, p. 401.

¹¹ Wang, *Dunhuang*, pp. 284–85. For a comparison of the similarities and differences between Zhao's and Sun's editions, see *WJYJ*, pp. 175–76.

¹² *Chongwen zongmu* 11 has “Donggaozi's Collection in two scrolls” 東臯子集二卷. See *Yingyin Wenyuan ge siku quanshu*, vol. 674, j. 11, p. 133. *Song shi* has “Lu Chun's Abridged Edition of *Donggaozi* in two scrolls” 陸淳東臯子集略二卷 *Song shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977) 208, p. 5332.

¹³ *WJYJ*, pp. 168–71.

scrolls, though in limited circulation, seems to have survived in late-imperial times. Citing Wang Wenjin's 王文進 (1894–1960) *Catalogue of the Books of Wenlu tang* (*Wenlu tang shujimu* 文祿堂書籍目), he notes a Ming-era manuscript copy in the collection of Han Dejun 韓德均 of Songjiang 松江 (in Shanghai).¹⁴ Zhang also relates that he once heard that the library of Linyi county 臨猗縣, Shanxi province, had a two-scroll edition of Wang Ji hand-copied by Peng Yuanrui 彭元瑞 (1731–1803). He took a trip there, only to find out that the library building had collapsed in a rainstorm and all the books had been moved to a new location; and that the two-scroll Wang Ji edition was lost during the move.¹⁵ In this case, a manuscript copy existed as a local phenomenon and never made it to the national arena, as opposed to the three lucky manuscript copies that made their way into large metropolitan libraries where they were “discovered.” This incident also reminds us that despite the flourishing of print culture, hand-copying a manuscript was still a widespread practice into the late-nineteenth century, and that many rare editions were circulated in the form of manuscripts, not in the form of printed editions.

In the absence of Lu Chun's edition in two scrolls, it is useful to compare the five-scroll edition with the once popular three-scroll edition, which may very well be an expanded version of Lu Chun's. Remarkably, many of the additional poems in the five-scroll edition describe nothing but a life of reclusion. To cite a few explicit titles: “Being Summoned to Serve and Declining on the Pretext of Illness” (“Beizheng xiebing” 被徵謝病), “Reading *The Biographies of Authentic Recluses*” (“Du *Zhenyin zhuan*” 讀真隱傳), “Summer Days in the Mountain: Nine Poems” (“Shanjia xiari” 山家夏日), “Escaping from Summer Heat in the Mountains” (“Shanzhong bishu” 山中避暑), “By Nature I Do Not Like Managing My Estate; I Speak of My Feelings upon Getting Up from Bed” (“Xing buhao zhichan xinghou yanhuai” 性不好治產興後言懷) and the not-too-subtle “On Reclusion” (“Yong yin” 詠隱). By a rough count, more than half of the sixty-odd extra poems in the five-scroll edition

¹⁴ *WJYJ*, p. 169. Wang Wenjin was a well-known antique book dealer based in Beijing, and Wenlutang was the name of his bookshop. He was the author of *Wenlu tang fangshuji* 文祿堂訪書記, which records more than 700 Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing printed editions as well as manuscripts he had handled. It mentions two manuscript copies of Wang Ji's edition, both in three scrolls; *Wenlu tang fangshuji* (Beijing: Wenlutang, 1942) 4, p. 5a.

¹⁵ *WJYJ*, p. 201. One of the manuscript copies of the Wang Ji edition recorded in *Wenlu tang fangshuji* was likewise from the Peng Yuanrui collection, collated and with a colophon hand-written by Dong Wenhuan 董文煥 (1833–1877), a native of Shanxi, in 1861. One wonders if it might be one and the same as the Linyi county edition, for “two scrolls 二卷” and “three scrolls 三卷” could easily get mixed up in copying.

portray Wang Ji's life as a recluse and sing the praises of a reclusive lifestyle. Lu Chun may have removed Wang Ji's "expressions of worldly ambitions," but he also seems to have expunged the poems that fit his pronounced selection standard. So the question is: what other criterion might have guided Lu Chun in making his selections?

UNCOVERING LU CHUN'S TRUE SELECTION CRITERION

This leads us back to the old dilemma about the absence of Lu Chun's edition, but fortunately, Lu Chun's edition may not have entirely vanished out of sight after all, once again thanks not to printed editions but to manuscript copies. The earliest extant manuscript copy of Wang Ji's edition, with a colophon by Lin Yunfeng 林雲鳳 dated 1602, even though spanning three scrolls, contains only twenty-nine poems (to these Lin Yunfeng added three poems gleaned from anthology sources). This is only about half the size of the standard three-scroll editions. Lin Yunfeng claims in his colophon that the collection was copied out by his grandfather, and that "it was stored away for a long time." This pushes the date of the original manuscript copy back to the mid- to late-sixteenth century.¹⁶ As Zhang Xihou speculates, this manuscript copy may very well represent something close to Lu Chun's edition, of which the standard three-scroll editions are later expansions.¹⁷

This speculation is supported not just by the fact that the standard three-scroll editions contain all the poems in Lin Yunfeng's manuscript, but also by the fact that the standard three-scroll editions show one significant addition: fifteen quatrains. These quatrains are:

1. "Parting from Recluse Li in the Mountains" ("Shanzhong bie Li chushi" 山中別李處士)
2. "Early Spring" ("Chu chun" 初春)
3. "In Drunkenness" ("Zui hou" 醉後)
4. "Written on the Wall of a Tavern" ("Ti Jiudian bi" 題酒店壁)
5. "Playfully Written on the Wall of a Fortune-telling Shop" ("Xi ti bupu bi" 戲題卜鋪壁)
6. "Tasting Spring Ale" ("Chang chun jiu" 嘗春酒)
7. "Drinking Alone" ("Du zhuo" 獨酌)
8. "Happily Running into Recluse Wang on an Autumn Night"

¹⁶ For Lin Yunfeng's colophon, see *Wang wenji*, p. 223.

¹⁷ See *WJYJ*, pp. 171-72. The three scrolls are divided by genre rather than by the volume of writing contained in each scroll: the first scroll contains *fu*; the second, poetry; the third, prose pieces.

(“Qiuye xiyu Wang chushi” 春夜喜遇王處士)

9. “Tuning a Zither at Night in the Mountains” (“Shanye tiaopin” 山夜調琴)

10. “Watching the Brewing of Ale” (“Kan niangjiu” 看釀酒)

11–15. “Passing by a Tavern” (“Guo jiujiu” 過酒家), with a variant title: “Written on the Wall of a Tavern” (“Ti jiudian bi” 題酒店壁)

All of these fifteen quatrains can be found in one anthology source: the Southern Song scholar Hong Mai’s 洪邁 (1123–1202) *Ten Thousand Tang Quatrains* (*Wanshou Tang ren jueju* 萬首唐人絕句).¹⁸ Except for the poem series “Passing by a Tavern,” the ten quatrains even appear in exactly the same order in the three-scroll editions, whereas they are scattered in various places in the five-scroll edition.¹⁹ The variant title for the series, “Written on the Wall of a Tavern,” is the one used in *Ten Thousand Tang Quatrains*, and is duly noted in Zhao Qimei’s edition. Remarkably, the five-scroll edition includes eight poems in the series under the title, “Eight Quatrains Written on the Wall of a Tavern” (“Ti jiudian loubi jueju bashou” 題酒店樓壁絕句八首), but the five quatrains included in the three-scroll edition coincide neatly with the five quatrains selected in Hong Mai’s anthology. Finally, in cases of variant titles, the three-scroll edition always agrees with Hong Mai’s anthology rather than with the five-scroll edition. For instance, “Happily Running into Recluse Wang on an Autumn Night” is given in the five-scroll edition as “Happily Running into Recluse *Yao Yi* on an Autumn Night” 秋夜喜遇姚處士義 (my italics), but the title remains the same in Hong Mai’s anthology. There is very little possibility that these similarities between the quatrains included in the standard three-scroll edition and Hong Mai’s anthology are mere coincidences; instead, the similarities forcefully demonstrate that the fifteen quatrains were directly lifted from the *Ten Thousand Tang Quatrains* to replenish Lu Chun’s edition.

The twenty-nine poems in Lin Yunfeng’s manuscript and the fifteen quatrains account for forty-four out of the fifty-five or fifty-six poems in the standard three-scroll editions.²⁰ The rest – eleven or twelve poems in total – can also be shown as mostly collected from various encyclopedia and anthology sources:

¹⁸ See Huo Songlin 霍松林, ed., *Wanshou Tang ren jueju jiaozhu jiping* 萬首唐人絕句校注集評 (Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1991) 1, pp. 21–28.

¹⁹ It needs to be pointed out that even though Zhao Qimei’s and Sun Xingyan’s editions are different in the order of arrangement of the poems, the order of the ten quatrains remains the same.

²⁰ Zhao Qimei’s edition contains 55 poems, whereas Sun Xingyan’s edition contains 56 poems.

1. “The Ninth Day of the Ninth Month” (“Jiuyue jiuri” 九月九日) appears in the Southern Song anthology *Gujin suishi zayong* 古今歲時雜詠 (*juan* 33) compiled by Pu Jizhong 蒲積中 with his preface dated 1147.
- 2–3. “Watching a Performance at Zhang Chao’s Pavilion to the West of the City of Yizhou” (“Yizhou cheng xi Zhang Chao ting guan ji” 益州城西張超亭觀妓) and “Watching a Performance at the Residence of Judge Xin” (“Xin sifa zhai guan ji” 辛司法宅觀妓) appear in *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (*juan* 213); they were written by Lu Zhaolin 盧照鄰 (ca. 636–695) but are misattributed to Wang Ji.²¹
4. “Passing by an Old Han City” (“Guo Han gucheng” 過漢故城) also appears in *Wenyuan yinghua* (*juan* 309), where it is attributed to Wu Shaowei 吳少微 (fl. early-eighth century), but because it is next to a poem by Wang Wujing 王無競 (fl. ca. 701), its authorship got mixed up with Wang Ji’s courtesy name, which was Wugong 無功.²²
5. “On Mount Wu” (“Yong Wushan” 詠巫山), which appears as a quatrain in Wang Ji’s collection, is in fact half of a regulated poem attributed again to Wang Wujing. The poem appears in an anecdote in *Yunxi youyi* 雲溪友議 by Fan Shu 范攄 (fl. late ninth century), cited in the tenth century compendium *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*juan* 198).²³ In the eleventh century anthology *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 it is attributed to another early Tang poet Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 (ca. 656–713).²⁴
6. “Gazing Out in the Wilds” (“Ye wang” 野望) is anthologized in *Tang shi pinhui* 唐詩品彙, compiled by Gao Bing 高棅 (1350–1423) (*juan* 56), as well as in Li Panlong’s 李攀龍 (1514–1570) *Gujin shishan* 古今詩刪 (*juan* 14).
7. “Sitting Alone” (“Duzuo” 獨坐) is cited in *Zhou shi shebi*, which is in turn cited in Ma Duanlin’s *Wenxian tongkao*.²⁵
8. “North Mountain” (“Beishan” 北山), a poem of miscellaneous line lengths, appears in slightly variant form as part of Wang Ji’s “*Fu* on Roaming North Mountain” 游北山賦. Han Lizhou speculates that someone culled the passage from the *fu* and presented it as an independent poem with seven- and five-syllable lines.²⁶ Alternatively, however, Wang Ji himself might have reworked the poem into his

²¹ *Wenyuan yinghua* (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban, 1979), p. 1061.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1584.

²³ *Tang wudai biji xiaoshuo daguan* 唐五代筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), p. 1263. *Taiping guangji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 1491.

²⁴ See *Yuefu shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996) 17, p. 240.

²⁵ On these works, see n. 5, above.

²⁶ See *Wang wenji*, p. 206.

fu. In any case, the poem appears in the well-known Ming critic Yang Shen's 楊慎 (1488–1559) discussions of poetry, *Conversations across a Thousand Miles* (*Qianli miantan* 千里面譚), which were very popular in the late-sixteenth century and circulated as printed editions.

9. “Singing of My Concerns” (“Yonghuai” 詠懷). This poem appears in Sun Xingyan's edition, but not in Zhao Qimei's. It is gleaned from the Southern Song work *Yunyu yangqiu* 韻語陽秋, a “random notes” *biji* collection authored by Ge Lifang 葛立方 (d. 1164).²⁷

Thus, of the fifty-five or fifty-six poems in the popular three-scroll editions, apart from the twenty-nine poems from Lin Yunfeng's manuscript copy, we have demonstrated that fifteen quatrains are from Hong Mai's *Ten Thousand Tang Quatrains*, and that nine can be traced to encyclopedias, anthologies, and “random notes” collections that are still available to us today. What do these numbers tell us? They tell us that the standard three-scroll edition bears no direct filiation to the five-scroll edition; instead, it is most likely based on Lu Chun's two-scroll edition, which is represented in Lin Yunfeng's manuscript copy. The additions to Lun Chun's two-scroll edition were most likely made between the thirteenth and sixteenth century, between the Southern Song and late Ming. Lin Yunfeng's practice, namely adding three poems he happened to have seen in various sources to the old manuscript copy of Wang Ji's collection made by his grandfather, best illustrates the process: they were still making their own selections as Lu Chun had done, except that they were trying their best to augment, not expunge, a literary collection authored by an earlier poet, especially if the poet was from the pre-Song era, in other words, from before the time when print culture could facilitate the preservation of writings.

A quick examination of the poems included in Lin Yunfeng's manuscript yields a number of fascinating finds, which may shed light on Lu Chun's unspoken selection criteria. First, we notice that there is a notable shortage of quatrains in this manuscript edition: in fact there are only two quatrains out of twenty-nine poems. This forms a remarkable contrast with the popular three-scroll edition, which contains seventeen quatrains out of fifty-odd poems; or with the five-scroll edition, which contains twenty-one quatrains, comprising about one-fifth of Wang Ji's entire poetic output.

²⁷ See *Yunyu yangqiu* 11, in Wu Wenzhi 吳文治, ed., *Song shihua quanbian* 宋詩話全編 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998), p. 8277.

Second, compared with the five-scroll edition, Lin Yunfeng's manuscript edition does not favor prototypical "Recent Style verse" (*jinti shi* 近體詩, also known as "Regulated Verse," *lüshi* 律詩). By "prototypical Recent Style verse" I refer to poems of eight lines, with the two middle couplets being parallel couplets, and adhering more or less to the tonal rules of alternating level and deflected tones in key positions of a line and in corresponding key positions between lines. Of the 110-odd poems by Wang Ji, thirty-seven are such prototypical regulated poems, almost one third of Wang Ji's poetic oeuvre;²⁸ and yet, Lin Yunfeng's edition only includes three such poems, a paltry one-ninth of Wang Ji's poetic collection represented by this edition. These three poems are: 1. "Presented to Recluse Cheng" ("Zeng Cheng chushi" 贈程處士); 2. No. 2 of "Farming Homes" ("Tianjia" 田家); 3. "On a Performer" ("Yong ji" 詠妓).

All the others in Lin's edition are so-called Old Style (*guti* 古體) poems that are at least ten lines long and often span as many as forty-eight lines. Interestingly, Wang Ji's most anthologized and best-known regulated poem in late-imperial and modern times, "Gazing Out in the Wilds," is not included in the original manuscript copied by Lin Yunfeng's grandfather.²⁹ The poem was added to the original manuscript by Lin Yunfeng from an anthology source, namely Gao Bing's *Tang shi pinhui*.³⁰ Even in the popular three-scroll edition, which represents an expansion of Lu Chun's two-scroll edition, the situation is not improved much, for it only contains eight prototypical regulated poems, which comprises no more than one seventh of Wang Ji's fifty-five poems contained therein.³¹ All major three-scroll editions, including Lin Yunfeng's manuscript copy, begin with the Old Style poem series entitled "Old Themes" ("Guyi" 古意). These poems indeed evoke poems

²⁸ The remarkably large portion of regulated poems or prototype regulated poems in Wang Ji's collection has led several scholars to argue that Wang Ji should be credited with a more important role in the maturation of Regulated Verse in the Tang. See Wang Zhihua's 王志華 pioneering article, "Wuyanlü dianjizhe jiushuo yingyu tuifan: Congping Wang Ji zai shigeshi shang de diwei" 五言律奠基者舊說應予推翻, 重評王績在詩歌史上的地位, *Jinyang xuekan* 晉陽學刊 1990.3, pp. 9-11. Also see Du Xiaoqin 杜曉勤, "Cong Yongming ti dao Shen Song ti: Wuyan lüti xingcheng guocheng zhi kaocha" 從永明體到沈宋體, 五言律體形成過程之考察, *Tang yanjiu* 唐研究 2 (1996), pp. 130-35.

²⁹ The canonization of "Gazing out in the Wilds" is an interesting process, a largely Ming and Qing phenomenon which continues until today. It is regarded as a perfect early example of the Tang regulated verse.

³⁰ He added a note under the title saying, "See *Tangshi pinhui*"; *Wang wenji*, p. 78.

³¹ Apart from the three poems from Lin Yunfeng's edition, these poems are: 1. "Gazing out in the Wilds"; 2. "The Ninth Day of the Ninth Month"; 3. "Sitting Alone"; 4. "Watching a Performance at Zhang Chao's Pavilion to the West of the City of Yizhou"; 5. "Watching a Performance at the Residence of Judge Xin."

such as “Singing of My Concerns” by Ruan Ji, but they are not characteristic of Wang Ji’s poetic oeuvre as a whole or his general poetic style. In fact they are a minority when seen in the context of the five-scroll edition.

The early-seventh century was an important intermediate stage in the development of Regulated Verse, which was perfected in the first decades of the eighth century. Brevity of poetic form, well-crafted parallel couplets, and a strict observation of tonal rules are the key elements of Regulated Verse, which was *the* modern form in the seventh century. Judging from his complete poetic oeuvre in the five-scroll edition, Wang Ji was a skillful practitioner in this form, but this is not reflected in Lin Yunfeng’s manuscript copy or the enlarged three-scroll editions. If Lin Yunfeng’s manuscript represents Lu Chun’s abridged edition, then the overall impression created by Lu Chun’s editorial decision is that Wang Ji wrote mostly in Old Style but rarely in the shorter, more modern forms such as quatrain and prototypical regulated verse.

Another striking characteristic of the poems in Lin Yunfeng’s edition is that all the poems in this edition are in five-character line. It does not include Wang Ji’s two eight-line poems in seven-character line, “Offhand Composition When I Visit Recluse Cheng and We Have a Drink Together” (“Guo Cheng chushi yin shuai’er chengyong” 過程處士飲率爾成詠) and “Resigning from the Office of Magistrate of Liuhe and Coming Home” (“Jie Liuhe cheng huan” 解六合丞還). As for “North Mountain,” a poem described by the famous Ming literary critic Yang Shen as a prototype “regulated poem in seven-character line 七言律之濫觴,” it was added to the original manuscript by Lin Yunfeng, who had likely encountered the poem in Yang Shen’s work *Conversations across a Thousand Miles* printed in 1576.³²

The preference for poetry in five-character line seems to be yet another example of editorial conservatism: poetry in seven-character line had grown in popularity in the sixth and seventh century, but Lu Chun, a mid-Tang figure, most likely edited Wang Ji’s collection in the last part of the eighth century, the very era when the battle-cry “return to antiquity” (*fugu* 復古) carried the day. Much has been written about the “return to antiquity” movement of the mid-Tang.³³ Since what happened to Wang Ji’s collection against the backdrop of the movement rather than the movement itself is our focus in this essay, we will not go

³² See Wu Wenzhi 吳文治, ed., *Ming shihua quanbian* 明詩話全編 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), p. 2728.

³³ See, e.g., Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: High Tang* (New Haven: Yale

into a lengthy discussion of the literary-cultural context of Lu Chun's editorial activity here; suffice to say that changed values in the literary scene led to a conscious turn away from parallelism in poetry writing and to a renewed interest in poetry written in "ancient style." Style became invested with an ideological weight, and "ancient style" with little regard to tonal rules or parallel principle was thought to possess a high moral seriousness denied to writers of parallel prose and finely crafted regulated verse. Viewed against the larger background of the "return to antiquity" movement, Lu Chun did not just make an ideological choice – he made a stylistic choice as well – a stylistic choice that implies a more profound ideological agenda.

Since Wang Ji's quatrains possess a simplicity that can be easily associated with an "ancient" aura and are more often than not written in the "ancient style" (that is, observing no tonal rules), some reader may wonder why Lu Chun should have wanted to exercise quatrains from Wang Ji's edition. The answer is simple enough: early classical poets such as Ruan Ji and Tao Qian almost did not write quatrains at all, and even in the first half of the sixth century the quatrain in the five- and seven-syllable line was still a rather novel literary form; they were associated primarily with *yuefu* songs in the Southern Dynasties; and, though elite poets often tried their hand in composing *yuefu* lyrics, they did not consider quatrain a venerable poetic form. If Lu Chun had intended to make Wang Ji sound respectably "ancient" like Ruan Ji and Tao Qian, he would, quite understandably, remove quatrains from his collection. By the thirteenth century, however, the quatrain form had of course long lost the "modern feel" it had once had in Wang Ji's time, and whoever put together an expanded three-scroll edition on the basis of Lu Chun's edition would have felt no compunction about incorporating fifteen quatrains from Hong Mai's Tang quatrain anthology to replenish Wang Ji's collection.

The three-scroll edition represents a Wang Ji whose image can be largely summarized as follows: a wine-loving, reclusive poet who writes almost exclusively in Old Style, his poems being characterized by a simplicity of diction and imagery. This simplicity is considered as presenting a glaring contrast with the ornate and elegant court poetry of the Southern Dynasties and the early Tang. And yet, when we compare the Wang Ji emerging from the abridged editions with the Wang Ji of the five-scroll edition, we realize that it does not really matter

U.P., 1981), pp. 8–9, 225–46. For a general discussion of *fugu* and Tang poetry, see chap. 1 of Owen's *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1975), pp. 8–23.

whether Wang Ji was a pure recluse or not; what is at stake turns out to be his stylistic choices and, ultimately, his position in literary history. In many of the regulated poems or prototypical regulated poems in the five-scroll edition, we see Wang Ji's tendency toward well-wrought parallel couplets. Herein we detect the influence not of early-medieval poets like Ruan Ji or Tao Qian as is traditionally believed, but of the Southern Dynasties court poets, particularly Wang Ji's immediate predecessor, Yu Xin.

Yu Xin, the great Southern court poet who went north after the Hou Jing 侯景 Rebellion (548-552), had an enormous impact on the Northern literary scene, and his influence was strongly felt in Sui and early-Tang court poetry. By the end of the eighth century, however, because members of a younger generation, represented by Han Yu, Li Guan 李觀 (766-794), and Ouyang Zhan 歐陽詹 (d. after 799), passionately advocated ethical values associated with an imaginary "antiquity," the splendor of court poetry was rejected; regulated verse, with its parallel couplets and tonal regulations, was not in favor with this turn-of-the-century generation. With Ruan Ji and Tao Qian as poetic models in the eighth century, it is no wonder that Wang Ji was edited to live up to such an eremitic, free-spirited image. It turns out that Yu Xin, the Southern Dynasties poet, was the one being suppressed in the mid-Tang editorial practice. If some reader should find the polarization of Ruan Ji and Tao Qian on one side and Yu Xin on the other a bit over-simplifying, I can only say that this was the Tang people's doing, not mine.

SUPPRESSING YU XIN

As a poet, Yu Xin is known today primarily for his set of "Imitations of 'Singing of My Feelings'" 擬詠懷, based on the model of Ruan Ji. This was not, however, the Yu Xin favored and emulated in the sixth and seventh centuries, not to mention the fact that Yu Xin had completely transformed Ruan Ji in his "imitations." Yu Xin was the son of the Liang court poet Yu Jianwu 庾肩吾 (487?-551). Along with Xu Ling 徐陵 (507-583) and Xu Ling's father Xu Chi 徐摛 (474-551), they were the most prominent members of the Liang Crown Prince Xiao Gang's 蕭綱 (503-551) literary salon. Together they dominated the Liang literary scene in the 530s and 540s, so much so that Palace Style poetry, a poetry of "new transformations," was also known as the "Xu/Yu Style" 徐庾體. This poetry is characterized by exquisite parallel couplets and intense attention to the patterning of things, by elegance of diction,

delicate display of learning, and restrained expression of sentiments. Yu Xin was a consummate Southern court poet in these terms, but he also managed to cultivate a distinct style of his own, as his later writings produced in the North are marked by a lucid diction couched in intricate parallel couplets.³⁴ Lucidity of diction and intricacy of parallelism are the very elements that one sees so often in Wang Ji, who was once praised as “today’s Yu Xin” in his youth for a *fu* he wrote.³⁵ If “Ruan Ji” and “Tao Qian” are used to represent a generalized “ancient aura” of early classical poetry, then the influence of this particular poet, Yu Xin, on Wang Ji’s writings is unmistakable. On more than one occasion, we observe a remarkable similarity between Yu Xin and Wang Ji’s poems, not just in general terms such as the use of parallelism, the observation of tonal regulations, or the expression of an agrarian mood, but also in terms of echoes of specific lines, stanzas and even conscious imitation of an entire poem.³⁶

Sometimes a parallel couplet by Wang Ji evokes one by the earlier poet:

³⁴ For a detailed discussion of Palace Style poetry and Yu Xin’s writings in the North, see chaps. 5 and 8 in Xiaofei Tian’s *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502–557)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center Press, 2007), pp. 211–259, 389–412.

³⁵ This comment by the Northern poet Xue Daocheng 薛道衡 (540–609) is recorded in Lü Cai’s preface to the five-scroll edition; *WJYJ*, p. 24. In the same preface Xue Daocheng had also praised Wang Ji as “a Wang Zhongxuan,” that is, the poet Wang Can 王粲 (177–217); but the comment was occasioned by Wang Ji’s ability to recite Xue Daocheng’s “Ode on Conquering the Chen” (*Ping Chen song* 平陳頌) after reading it only once, not by Wang Ji’s literary writings, as Wang Can was famous for his legendary ability of fast memorization (see *Sanguozhi* 三國志 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959] 21, p. 599). Although Xue’s comparison of Wang Ji to Yu Xin was based on his reading of one *fu*, it attests to two things: Yu Xin’s immense popularity at the time; and Wang Ji’s stylistic similarity to Yu Xin.

³⁶ Ge Xiaoyin 葛曉音 is one of the few modern scholars who have noticed Yu Xin’s legacy in Wang Ji’s poetry, but she limits her discussions to the two poets’ “fields and garden poetry,” arguing that Yu Xin’s “description of the environment and use of detail to depict the life of reclusion” was “most appropriate to express the mood of an agrarian life.” See her *Shanshui tianyuan shipai yanjiu* 山水田園詩派研究 (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1993), pp. 94–95. Du Xiaoqin discusses the influence of Yu Xin on Wang Ji in terms of tonal regulations; see “Cong Yongming ti,” pp. 131–35. In a recent article co-authored with Chen Yu 陳瑜, Du contends that Wang Ji learned from Yu Xin because Yu Xin was the poet who, “after Tao Yuanming, acquired the essence of Wei-Jin ‘poetry on arcane discourse’ *xuanyan shi* 玄言詩 more than anyone else”; Chen Yu and Du Xiaoqin, “Wang Ji shege yu He Fen jingshen” 王績詩歌與河汾精神, *Shaanxi shifan daxue xuebao* 陝西師範大學學報 2007.1, p. 105. This is a debatable point. Strictly speaking, “poetry on arcane discourse” did not exist in the Wei (third century); it is a term applicable to the kind of poetry written in the Eastern Jin (fourth century). There is not much “poetry on arcane discourse” extant; from the few examples we have, its dense, bland, and slightly arcane style is a world apart from the Southern Dynasties court poetry such as written by Yu Xin.

Wang Ji:

障子遊仙畫 The arras: a painting of roaming immortals;
屏風章草書 On the screen, the standardized draft script.

Yu Xin:

遊仙半壁畫 Painting of roaming immortals covering half a wall;
隱士一床書 For the recluse gentleman, a bed full of books.³⁷

Yu Xin has a poem entitled “Written in Harmony with the Prince of Zhao on Watching Performers” (“He Zhao wang kanji” 和趙王看伎). It begins with the couplet:

綠珠歌扇薄 Green Pearl’s fan for singing is diaphanous;
飛燕舞衫長 Flying Swallow’s dancing robe hangs long.

It ends with the couplet:

懸知曲不誤 She knows she has not erred in her song,
無事畏周郎 There is no need to fear the young Master Zhou.³⁸

The second half of Wang Ji’s poem “On a Performer” is a transformation of Yu Xin’s lines:

早時歌扇薄 The singer’s fan used to be diaphanous in an earlier era;
今世舞衫長 Nowadays the dancer’s robe hangs long.
不應令曲誤 She should not have erred in her song;
持此試周郎 She is only testing the young Master Zhou.³⁹

The first two lines derive from the opening couplet of Yu Xin’s poem, whereas the last two lines present a new twist to Yu Xin’s ending couplet. The allusion used here is to Zhou Yu 周瑜 (175–210), the young, stylish Wu general. It is said that he was a connoisseur in music, and whenever a performer made a mistake, he would give him or her “the look.”⁴⁰

Even though the tones of the two poems are quite different, one tranquil and one melancholy, Wang Ji’s “Summer Days in the Mountain” No. 1 echoes Yu Xin’s “Mountain Studio” (“Shanzhai” 山齋) in phrasing, structure, and imagery.⁴¹

³⁷ Wang Ji’s couplet is from “Shanjia xiari,” No. 6; *Wang wenji*, p. 86; *WJYJ*, p. 61. This series of poems is only found in the five-scroll edition. Yu Xin’s couplet is from a poem entitled “Hanyuan jimu” 寒園即目, “Cold Garden: On What I See.” See Lu Qinli 遼欽立, ed., *Quan Bei Zhou shi* 全北周詩, in *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995) 3, p. 2377.

³⁸ *Quan Bei Zhou shi* 4, p. 2391.

³⁹ *Wang wenji*, p. 132; *WJYJ*, p. 100.

⁴⁰ *Sanguo zhi* 54, p. 1265.

⁴¹ *Quan Bei Zhou shi* 3, p. 2378; *Wang wenji*, p. 84; *WJYJ*, p. 60.

Yu Xin

寂寥尋靜室 Quiet, alone, I seek
out calm chambers;
蒙密就山齋 Going through dense
foliage to reach my mountain
studio.

滴瀝泉遶路 A trickling stream
encircles the path;
穹窿石臥階 Arching in arches,
stones reclined on stairs.

淺槎全不動 A log in shallow wa-
ters, not budging at all;
盤根唯半埋 Coiling roots, only
half buried.

圓珠墜晚菊 Round beads plummet
from evening chrysanthemum,
細火落空槐 Tiny fires fall from the
hollow pagoda tree.

直置風雲慘 The gloom of wind-
blown clouds
彌憐心事乖 Makes me feel even
more how heart's concerns are
thwarted.

Wang Ji

寂寞坐山家 Quiet, alone, I sit in
my mountain home,
蕭條玩物華 In solitude I enjoy the
splendor of things.

樹倚全擁石 Trees bend over, fully
embracing stones;
蒲長半侵砂 Cattails tall, half cov-
ering sandy shores.

池光連壁動 Light on pool stirs
reflection of the wall;
日影對窗斜 Facing the window,
sun's rays slanting.

石榴兼布葉 Pomegranates spread
their leaves,
金[登]唯作花 But mountain sagit-
taria only makes flowers.

落藤斜引蔓 Hanging ivies stretch
vines sideways,
伏筍暗抽芽 Reclining bamboo
shoots covertly sprout.

高臥長無客 Lying on a high pil-
low, having no visitor,
方知人事賒 Only now do I feel the
distance of human affairs.

The opening couplet in both poems begins with the descriptive phrase “quiet and alone” (*jimo* 寂寞 being a variation of *jiliao* 寂寥); the syntactic structures also echo each other (adverb + verb + noun-object). The difference is that while Yu Xin describes a journey to his mountain retreat, Wang Ji shows himself as being “already there” from the outset: Yu Xin’s state is mobile/restless while Wang Ji remains static/at ease, each in accordance with the theme and mood of his poem. The next couplet in both poems depicts a land/water scene: Yu Xin first talks about a stream, then stones; Wang Ji, vice versa. In both couplets nature is portrayed as aggressive; however, in Yu Xin’s poem nature is intrusive toward the human world, blocking the poet’s progress, while in Wang Ji’s poem things of nature are acting out only toward other things of nature and so pose no threat to humans. Wang Ji does choose

張翰不歸吳 Zhang Han does not return to Wu;
 陸機猶在洛 Lu Ji still lingers in Luoyang.
 永別張平子 Departing for good – Zhang Pingzi;
 長埋王仲宣 Always remaining buried – Wang Zhongxuan.⁴²

This trope, while a commonplace in *fu*, is seldom employed so prevalently in poetry before Yu Xin, and yet, it appears everywhere in Wang Ji:

鄭玄唯解義 Zheng Xuan only expounds the meaning of the Classics;
 王烈鎮尋仙 All Wang Lie does is to seek immortality.
 解組陶元亮 Untying his official tassels – Tao Yuanliang;
 辭家向子平 Taking leave of his family – Xiang Ziping.⁴³

The examples cited above demonstrate Yu Xin's influence on Wang Ji – the Wang Ji who very much writes in the tradition of the late Six Dynasties, an affiliation that is “edited out” by his mid-Tang editor Lu Chun. Interestingly, while traditional commentators all stress Wang Ji's stylistic simplicity and plainness based on their exposure to the abridged editions, modern scholars who have the benefit of using the full edition continue to repeat the same old opinion, and sometimes cite the majority of their examples from the abridged editions. This shows how powerful the force of convention is.

CONCLUSION

The case of Wang Ji – how his collection was edited and transmitted, shrank and swelled – is instructive to scholars of the Chinese “Middle Period.” In the face of immense interest in print culture in recent years, we must not forget that manuscript copying had never been supplanted by printing: hand-copying a manuscript remained a major means of textual transmission into the late-nineteenth century.⁴⁴ Many books never found their way into print, and consequently were limited in circulation and received little, if any, scholarly attention.

Why did people continue to copy a book even with the flourishing of a huge market for printed books? The answers are manifold. Some

⁴² The couplets are from “Tong Zhang shizhong shuhuai” 同張侍中述懷, and “Shang Wang situ Bao” 傷王司徒喪; *Qian bei zhou shi* 3, p. 2371; 3, p. 2384.

⁴³ The couplets are from “Chunri shanzhuang yanzhi” 春日山莊言志 and “Shanzhong du-zuo zizeng” 山中獨坐自贈; *Wang wenji*, pp. 46, 90; *WJZ*, pp. 27, 66. These poems are only found in the five-scroll edition.

⁴⁴ For detailed discussions of this issue, see Xiaofei Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture: The Record of a Dusty Table* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2005), pp. 17, 221–22.

copied because they could not afford to buy a printed book; some, like the great bibliographer Huang Pilie 黃丕烈 (1763–1825), copied because they considered copying a scholarly activity and were preparing a collated edition; some copied because the books they borrowed were themselves manuscript copies, and unless someone with the financial means and connections decided to put it in print, the manuscript would survive only in hand-made copies. We see this not only in the case of a vernacular novel like *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅), which circulated as a manuscript copy among top elite members for at least a quarter of a century before it went to print, but also in the case of Wang Ji, who was regarded as a minor figure of the early Tang at best. In late-imperial times people also copied from a much earlier printed edition from the Song or Yuan; in some such cases the copyist, usually hired by a wealthy patron, took great care to reproduce the original edition as closely as he could. Manuscript copies thus made were dubbed “shadow copies 影鈔” and were quite expensive, sometimes even costing more than the original printed editions.⁴⁵

Barring the legendary “Northern Song printed edition,” the major three-scroll edition of Wang Ji’s collection – Zhao Qimei’s manuscript copy and Sun Xingyan’s copy of a copy – were not printed until the seventeenth and late-eighteenth century. Even if we are ready to believe the shadowy existence of such a “Northern Song printed edition,” we should not forget that it ultimately derived from Tang manuscripts and, more important, survived in manuscripts. Indeed, the two most important editions, namely Lin Yunfeng’s edition and the five-scroll edition, were transmitted only as manuscript copies, preserved in family collections and circulated among a small circle of acquaintances. That the three-scroll editions found their way to the printing press while the five-scroll editions did not was perhaps partially a historical accident and partially due to Wang Ji’s marginal status in literary history; but once the three-scroll editions were printed, their popularity increased even more, and the five-scroll editions were completely eclipsed. This is a point worth our consideration because it not only throws light on the relation of printing to literary canons and taste but also calls our

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Zhang Hongwei’s 章宏偉 discussion of the great book collector and publisher Mao Jin’s 毛晉 (1599–1659) practice of having copyists make “shadow copies;” in Zhang, *Chuban wenhua shilun* 出版文化史論 (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 2002), pp. 196–97. Mao Jin’s son Mao Yi 毛昺 (1640–1713) once asked his teacher Qian Meixian 錢梅仙 to produce a shadow copy of an old printed edition of Tao Yuanming’s collection written in Su Shi’s 蘇軾 calligraphic style, which took Qian Meixian a year to complete; Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture*, p. 48.

attention to the local nature of manuscript copies, which formed the basis for all printed books.

Here the meaning of “loss” and “discovery” becomes much complicated: in what sense was Wang Ji’s five-scroll edition as contained in the three manuscript copies “lost,” when we learned that all three manuscripts were discovered in the most prominent Chinese libraries – two in the National Library of China (formerly Beijing Library) and one in the Shanghai Library? We realize that the five-scroll edition was not “lost” until it was “discovered” – that is to say, it had existed, and circulated, as a local phenomenon in private collections until modern public libraries acquired the manuscript copies and stored them away, in much the same way as a museum appropriates works of art from private homes; and then, when scholars found their way to these manuscript copies in the library storage, modern printed media forced its “loss” upon national attention. In many ways the story of the Wang Ji collection is an allegory of how local and national discourses clash and negotiate in modern times.

In her meticulous study of Wang Ji’s poetry, Ding Xiang Warner observes, “it would seem to be imperative that any scholar writing on Wang Ji since 1987 (the publication date of Han Lizhou’s critical edition of the five-*juan* text) would have to take into account the textual differences between the two versions – and, moreover, would have to rely primarily on the latter.”⁴⁶ To “rely primarily on the latter” (the five-scroll edition) speaks to the impulse of a literary scholar to resort to an authoritative fixed edition representing the “original” Wang Ji, whereas both three-scroll editions (including Lin Yunfeng’s edition) and five-scroll editions represent a long tradition of copying, selecting, and mediating, which began in the mid-Tang and continued through the nineteenth century. That being said, it is nevertheless indeed imperative that we take note of the textual differences between the two versions, and ask not just how the choice of difference textual variants (except for the obvious copyist errors based on similar graphs or homophones) affects our reading of a particular poem, but also how the different versions demonstrate different anthologizing ideologies. As we have seen, these different anthologizing ideologies are not confined to concerns with preserving intact Wang Ji’s image as a high-minded recluse; it was also a matter of stylistic choice and the moral values associated with such a choice.

⁴⁶ Warner, *Wild Deer amid Soaring Phoenix*, p. 150.

Sometimes an awareness of the nature of manuscript culture and of the various copying, editing, anthologizing practices (these three activities often being one) in manuscript culture saves us from making anachronistic assumptions. In a recent history of Tang literature, the chapter on Wang Ji claims that Wang Ji's corpus "does not contain the kind of social poetry frequently seen in an average poet's poetic collection."⁴⁷ This impression is not exactly accurate even when one only looks through the three-scroll edition, and turns out to be more obviously wrong if we compare the three-scroll edition with the five-scroll edition, for in the latter we see a number of poems with much longer titles relating the social occasions on which they were written. For instance, a poem cited earlier in this article, "On a Performer," is entitled "On a Performer at the Residence of Vice Director Pei" ("Pei puye zhai yong ji" 裴僕射宅詠妓) in the five-scroll edition. The poem simply entitled "Leaning on My Staff and Looking for the Recluse" 策杖尋隱士 in the standard three-scroll edition is entitled "At Lu Xinping's Residence We Compose to Old Topics and I Am Assigned the Topic 'Leaning on Staff: A Recluse'" (Lu Xinping zhai fu guti de 'Cezhang yinshi'" 盧新平宅賦古題得策杖隱士. "Roaming Immortals" ("Youxian" 游仙), a generic title, turns out to be "I Visited the Mountain Temple to Seek out Su the Daoist but Missed Him, and Wrote These Four Poems on the Wall" ("Guo shangguan xun Su daoshi bujian tibi sishou" 過山觀尋蘇道士不見題壁四首).⁴⁸ This is because it was a common practice for a medieval copyist to shorten a poem title by getting rid of the "occasional" part. Like most Chinese recluses, Wang Ji withdrew from the public life but not from the social life, and it was misleading to look for a "pure" poetry deprived of social aspects in his collection.

Aesthetic considerations can often mask ideological concerns in the choice of a textual variant. Take a couplet from Wang Ji's well-known poem, "Gazing out in the Wilds," for example: "Tree after tree, autumn colors everywhere 樹樹皆秋色; / hill upon hill, only sunset glow 山山唯落暉." "Autumn colors" has a textual variant: "spring colors" (*chunse* 春色).⁴⁹ Granted, this famous couplet might very well be modeled upon two lines by Wang Ji's master Yu Xin: "Tree after tree:

⁴⁷ Qiao Xiangzhong 喬象鍾 and Chen Tiemin 陳鐵民, eds., *Tangdai wenxue shi* 唐代文學史 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1995), p. 67.

⁴⁸ In *Wenyuan yinghua* the poems are listed under the general topic "Roaming Immortals" but the editors added under the title: "Xun Su daoshi xiao zuo" 尋蘇道士效作. See *Wenyuan yinghua* 225, pp. 1126–27.

⁴⁹ Lin Yunfeng's edition only gives "spring colors." Sun Xingyan's edition notes under the line: "Also as 'spring colors.'"

