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Illustration on p. 2: Qian Xuan (Chinese, ca. 1235–before 1307). Detail of *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, late 13th century. See fig. 10, p. 36.

Contents

ARTICLES

Stone Sculpture and Ritual Impersonation in Classic Veracruz

CAITLIN EARLEY, 8

Qian Xuan's Loyalist Revision of Iconic Imagery in

Tao Yuanming Returning Home and *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*

SHI-YEE LIU, 26

Workshop Practice Revealed by Two Architectural Reliefs

by Andrea Della Robbia

WENDY WALKER AND CAROLYN RICCARDELLI, 47

All the City's Courtesans: A Now-Lost Safavid Pavilion and
Its Figural Tile Panels

FARSHID EMAMI, 62

Epigraphic and Art Historical Responses to

Presenting the Tripod, by Wang Xuehao (1803)

MICHAEL J. HATCH, 87

John Singer Sargent Painting Fashion

ANNA REYNOLDS, 106

RESEARCH NOTES

New Research on a Rare Enameled Horse Bit from
the Angevin Court at Naples

MARINA VIALLO, 125

Passignano, Not Leoni: A New Attribution for

A Cardinal's Procession

IAN KENNEDY, 136

Margareta Haverman, *A Vase of Flowers*:

An Innovative Artist Reexamined

GERRIT ALBERTSON, SILVIA A. CENTENO, AND ADAM EAKER, 143

The *Cornish Celebration Presentation Plaque* by

Augustus Saint-Gaudens: Newly Identified Sources

THAYER TOLLES, 160

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Founded in 1968, the *Metropolitan Museum Journal* is a double-blind peer-reviewed scholarly journal published annually that features original research on the history, interpretation, conservation, and scientific examination of works of art in the Museum's collection. Its scope encompasses the diversity of artistic practice from antiquity to the present day. The *Journal* encourages contributions offering critical and innovative approaches that will further our understanding of works of art.

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p. 65; Smith and Harding 2006, pp. 7–10, fig. 23).

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ABBREVIATIONS

MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art
MMAB *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*
MMJ *Metropolitan Museum Journal*

Height precedes width and then depth in dimensions cited.

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Qian Xuan's Loyalist Revision of Iconic Imagery in *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* and *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*

SHI-YEE LIU

The illustration of vignettes from the lives of eminent historical figures is an ancient subgenre of Chinese art that has been widely esteemed for nearly two thousand years. Notable works from as early as the second century indicate a predilection for moral paragons as subjects.¹ While Confucian themes would predominate in biographical illustration, amusing anecdotes from the lives of royals and nobles were added to the repertory during the Tang dynasty (618–907).² It was not until the Song dynasty (960–1279) that the lives of the literati became important subjects for leading painters, but they soon gained lasting popularity. The beloved poet-recluse Tao Yuanming (365–427) and the patriarchal figure of Chinese calligraphy Wang Xizhi (303–361) were notable among such subjects who were celebrated repeatedly

and over many centuries in paintings illustrating famous episodes from their lives. Two of these works, both of them handscrolls, are in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art: *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* and *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*. The first, formerly considered a genuine work by the painter Qian Xuan (ca. 1235–before 1307), is now thought to be a close copy of an original by Qian;³ the second is by Qian's own hand.

The most important of Qian's predecessors in depicting the life of Tao Yuanming was the preeminent Song painter Li Gonglin (ca. 1041–1106). Li presented episodes from Tao's life in sequential scenes on a handscroll, occasionally diverging from literary sources in order to infuse an image with his own Confucian-influenced values.⁴ His depiction of Tao's homecoming, however, faithfully follows its source in an ode Tao composed shortly after his return, and it set the template for future versions of the scene. It was during this same period in the Song dynasty that the iconographic paradigms for illustrations of the life of Wang Xizhi were established.⁵

Subsequent biographical illustrations of this kind largely deferred to tradition. No matter how varied in style and secondary motifs, the images seldom departed significantly from Song prototypes in iconography and composition. Those that did were produced by culturally sophisticated scholar-painters at a fraught historical moment. Furthering Li Gonglin's subjective approach to illustration, these artists took liberties with textual and pictorial sources in order to reflect the social and intellectual ethos of their own times. Qian Xuan's portrayals of Tao Yuanming and Wang Xizhi in the Metropolitan Museum exemplify this revisionist practice.⁶ By comparing these two works with illustrations of the same subjects by other artists, this article demonstrates how Qian Xuan broke with artistic convention to present a tragic dimension—unacknowledged in earlier illustrations—of the events depicted. It was this aspect of the past that preoccupied Qian and his loyalist contemporaries after China fell under alien rule during their lifetimes.

QIAN XUAN, CONFUCIAN LOYALIST

Qian Xuan lived through one of the most traumatic chapters in Chinese history, the transition from the native Song dynasty to the Mongol-ruled Yuan dynasty (1271–1368).⁷ The Mongol invasion culminated in the second conquest of Song China by foreign nomads. In the first, which occurred in 1127, the Jurchens, from Manchuria, took northern China into their domain.

In response, the Chinese polity fled to the south; hence, the dynastic appellations Northern Song (960–1127) and Southern Song (1127–1279).

Dynastic change always stirred profound anguish among Confucian scholars, who upheld loyalty to the imperial regime. The distress felt by the early Yuan Confucians was especially severe because those who had seized power were not Chinese. There can be no doubt that Qian Xuan was deeply affected. He was a rigorous Confucian scholar who aspired to serve his country under the Southern Song.⁸ To this end he took the civil service examination in 1262 but failed, and therefore was disqualified from taking office. He did, however, publish at least four books on the Confucian classics.⁹ After the Mongol conquest, adhering to Confucian tenets, he refused to serve the new regime. Instead, he chose to live on the sale of his paintings, with all the indignities and hardships that could entail.

Qian Xuan revealed loyalist nostalgia for the Song dynasty in his writings. Particularly poignant is a pair of poems titled *Za shi* (Miscellaneous thoughts).¹⁰ The texts allude to a sixth-century classic, Yu Xin's (513–581) *Ai Jiangnan fu* (Lament for the south), which deplores the conquest of the native Chinese state, in the south, by nomads from the north, the Western Wei, who remained in power from 535 to 557. Through this reference, Qian Xuan showed himself to be a kindred spirit of Yu Xin's—and one in a similar plight.

Qian's contemporaries took note of his virtue and praised him in inscriptions on his paintings. Wang Silian (1238–1320), for instance, wrote that Qian Xuan used painting as a means to eulogize the previous dynasty.¹¹ Chen Yan (early 14th century) regarded the flowers in Qian's painting as an evocation of Hangzhou, the capital of the Southern Song dynasty.¹² And Zhang Yu (1333–1385) contrasted Qian Xuan with Qian's friend Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322), a descendant of the Song imperial house who agreed to serve the Mongols. Zhang remarked bitterly: "Who understands Master Qian's loneliness and pain in preserving his integrity? In old age he lived on making paintings while his hair was turning white."¹³

The most powerful manifestations of Qian Xuan's loyalist sentiments are his paintings *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* and *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*. Both Tao and Wang were loyal officials of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420) at the moment when the Chinese state was driven south of the Yangtze River by northern nomads. Because of the political circumstances that ensued, both men voluntarily but reluctantly



fig. 1 After Qian Xuan (Chinese, ca. 1235–before 1307). Yuan (1271–1368) or Ming dynasty (1368–1644). *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*, 14th century. Handscroll; ink, color, and gold on paper, image $10\frac{1}{4} \times 42$ in. (26 × 106.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913 (13.220.124)

abandoned their commitment to government service, much as Qian Xuan would relinquish his own political aspirations after the overthrow of the Song dynasty. Also comparable to Qian's experience were Tao's and Wang's lifelong concerns and sorrow over the nation's decline. Yet Tao Yuanming was far better known for his transcendent poetry and fondness for wine, and Wang Xizhi for his masterful calligraphy and disregard of social etiquette, than either man was for his frustrated political ambition and profound sense of alienation. Thus, as discussed below, the two were portrayed in Song illustrations as free spirits liberated from bureaucratic drudgery. Qian Xuan, however, found their devotion to the Eastern Jin state a more admirable and compelling attribute. Acknowledging the Song prototypes while boldly deviating from them, he portrayed the two ancients as careworn patriots rather than carefree retirees, a shift that emblemized the new ethos among Confucian intellectuals after the Mongol conquest.

TAO YUANMING RETURNING HOME

Tao Yuanming Returning Home shows the poet, who referred to himself as the Master of Five Willows, standing in a boat as it approaches a foreground shore with five willows (fig. 1).¹⁴ Behind the trees, three

figures stand before a rustic, walled dwelling. Across the river, a stretch of pale blue hills helps balance the diagonal composition. In keeping with the pictorial conventions for depicting ancient recluses, Tao wears a gauze hat, a flowing, dark-bordered robe, and a leopard-skin shawl. Gazing ahead, he raises his right arm in a beckoning gesture to the two boys, who appear to be chatting together, and to the woman by the gate, who looks back into the compound. None of them respond to him.

Although the brushwork appears weaker than that found in the best of Qian Xuan's works, the painting displays enough of the artist's style to qualify as a close copy of a lost Qian Xuan original, as a comparison with his masterpiece, *Shanju tu* (Mountain dwelling), demonstrates (fig. 2). Both works present an expansive river scene executed with diluted mineral pigments of azurite and malachite, in which ink textures are nearly absent. Rocks and peaks are presented in crisp outline filled with minimally modulated colors, like faceted crystalline structures. Rows of two-tone dots—hints of vegetation—accent the contours of hills, and sharply drawn parallel lines representing folds in the earthen surfaces and other embankments patternize those features. Perhaps most extraordinary in both paintings is the evocation of atmospheric



fig. 2 Qian Xuan. *Mountain Dwelling*, late 13th century. Section of a handscroll; ink and color on paper, overall 10% × 43³/₁₆ in. (26.5 × 111.6 cm). Palace Museum, Beijing

recession by means of translucent color washes, an effect rarely seen in the tradition of mineral-colored landscape paintings.

Several motifs and narrative details in the Metropolitan Museum's *Returning Home* vary significantly from their representations in the work's textual source and in earlier illustrations of this scene. The changes are sophisticated and resonate with the

revisionist view, held in Qian Xuan's time, of Tao's withdrawal from politics. They could have been introduced by none other than Qian himself; no one of lesser erudition or political conviction could be their author. The presence of these telling details in the Metropolitan Museum's painting further suggests that this work is a faithful copy of a lost original by Qian Xuan and a reliable conduit of his thoughts on the subject.

fig. 3 After Li Gonglin (Chinese, ca. 1041–1106). Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*, early 12th century. Section of a handscroll; ink and color on silk, 14 $\frac{9}{16}$ in. × 17 ft. 2 in. (37 × 521.5 cm). Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Gift of Charles Lang Freer (F1919.119)

fig. 4 Chinese, Yuan (1271–1368) or Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Formerly attributed to Lu Tanwei (Chinese, act. second half of the 5th century). Song of the Southern Dynasties (420–479). *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*, 14th–15th century. Handscroll; ink and color on silk, 17 × 56 in. (43 × 142.3 cm). National Palace Museum, Taipei

The painting depicts the turning point in the life of Tao Yuanming—his homecoming after relinquishing office. In *Guifulai ci* (“Ode on returning home”), which he composed in 405 at the age of 41, he exults in the joy of newfound freedom after withdrawing from politics. The text has since become a classic celebration of eremitism. On the left end of the scroll, Qian Xuan’s poetic inscription sums up Tao’s new life in retirement:

In front of his gate he planted five willows;
By the eastern fence, he picked chrysanthemums.
His long chant rang with a lingering purity;
To his regret, there was never enough wine.
In this world, it was fine to get deeply drunk;
Taking office brought nothing but humiliation.
Inspired by the moment, he composed “Returning Home,”
An ode that remains unique after a thousand years.¹⁵

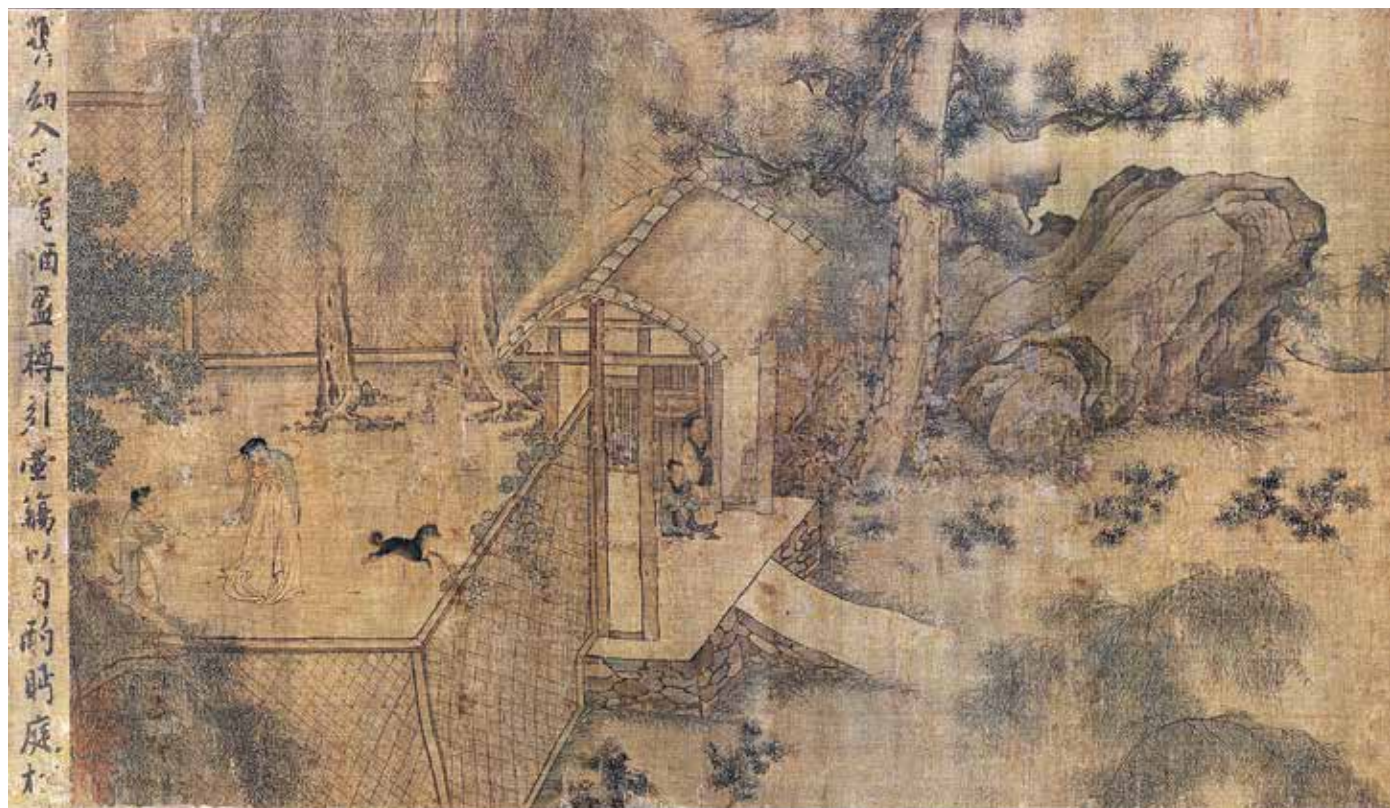
A panel attached to the left of this inscription but not shown in figure 1 bears a transcription of Tao’s “Ode on returning home” by Xianyu Shu (1246–1302), an eminent calligrapher and friend of Qian Xuan.¹⁶

Tao Yuanming has been a painting subject since the eighth century, if not earlier, and is still being portrayed today. Textual records mention a portrait of him by the distinguished scholar and artist Zheng Qian (mid-8th century) and an anonymous Tang painting

depicting him at his rural retreat on Mt. Lu.¹⁷ But it was not until Li Gonglin created a sequential episodic illustration of Tao’s “Ode” that the poet’s iconic image was firmly established for centuries to come. A close copy of Li’s work is preserved in a handscroll now in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.¹⁸ Unrolled from right to left, the scroll begins with the homecoming scene (*fig. 3*), which is described in this excerpt from the “Ode”:

My boat rocks in the gentle wind;
My garment flutters in the brisk breeze.
—————
Upon seeing my cottage,
I dash forward, filled with joy.
Servants come to greet me;
My young sons wait at the door.
The three paths have become desolate,
But pines and chrysanthemums still remain.

In Li’s composition, Tao Yuanming, wearing the gauze hat and dark-bordered, loose robe of a recluse, stands in the returning boat. As in the poem, the wide sleeves and long ribbons of his garment flutter in the breeze. He waves with his right hand to family and friends who have come to greet him on the shore. On the left is a courtyard behind a bamboo fence. Two youngsters,



probably his sons, watch him from the gate. Inside the courtyard, a woman who may be his wife rushes to the gate while adjusting her hairdo with both hands.

Unlike Li Gonglin, who illustrated Tao Yuanming's entire "Ode," Qian Xuan depicts only the homecoming episode. The earliest extant example of this scene illustrated by itself may be a painting in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, with the diagonal composition, delicate brushwork, sensitive tonal variations, and subtle atmospheric effects typical of the Southern Song style, although the coarser rendering of the figures suggests a later execution (fig. 4).¹⁹ The painting's composition, with its expansive view and overlapping willows on the

shoreline, compares closely with Qian Xuan's illustration—more closely, in fact, than Li Gonglin's does. In the upper right corner of the Taipei work, a spit of land is dotted with trees; farther back is an earthen slope. The distance of these elements from the foreground is evoked by the small scale of the trees and a sense of intervening, moisture-laden atmosphere. The distinct three-stage spatial recession from lower left to upper right recalls a scene in *Twelve Views of Landscape* by the Southern Song painter Xia Gui (fig. 5); after the pine tree with long angular branches spreading sideways at the left end of the scroll is a motif associated with Ma Yuan (act. 1190–1225), another Southern Song master



4





fig. 5 Xia Gui (Chinese, act. 1180–1224). Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). *Twelve Views of Landscape*, early 13th century. Section of a handscroll; ink on silk, overall 10¾ × 99¾ in. (27.3 × 253.7 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust (32-159/2)

fig. 6 Ma Yuan (Chinese, act. 1190–1225). Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). *Scholar Viewing a Waterfall*, early 13th century. Album leaf; ink and color on silk, image 9¾ × 10¼ in. (25.1 × 26 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Gift of the Dillon Fund, 1973 (1973.120.9).

(fig. 6). Although the Taipei scroll may be a post-Song production, it must have been based on a Southern Song original, one that very likely inspired Qian Xuan's *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*.

However, it is clear that Qian Xuan's figure of Tao Yuanming follows Li Gonglin's model and not the seated one in the Taipei scroll. In Qian's painting, Tao's stance and beckoning gesture, the structure of the boat, and even the oarsman's pose are all strikingly similar to Li's rendering of those elements. Qian Xuan evidently knew very well the various conventions for illustrating Tao's return and was able to blend them seamlessly. At the same time, as demonstrated below, he altered them to invoke an important aspect of Tao's emotional experience that was not expressed in the poet's triumphant Ode: the sorrow that accompanied his withdrawal from political office—a sorrow that resonated deeply with the educated class of Qian Xuan's time.

As early as the sixth century, scholars had noted Tao Yuanming's ambivalence toward his decision to withdraw from politics, and their comments were echoed in succeeding generations of the Tang and Song dynasties. But until Qian, no artist is known to have



addressed the matter in visual terms.²⁰ Tao had served under two of the most powerful men of his time, the warlord Huan Xuan (369–404) and the general Liu Yu (363–422). He was employed by Huan Xuan from 398 until the winter of 401, when his mother died and mourning obligations required him to resign from office and return home. Huan attempted to usurp the Jin throne in 403, but the next year was defeated and killed by Liu Yu's army. Tao Yuanming, who had just turned forty in Chinese years, joined Liu Yu's campaign to reinstate the Jin emperor.²¹ He did so before completing the requisite three-year period of mourning—a serious breach of the Confucian code. Presumably, for Tao, the urgency of a national crisis outweighed rules of propriety.²² In the poem *Rongmu* (Hibiscus), composed shortly afterward, Tao declared that his ambition, before growing old, was to bring peace and prosperity to all under heaven.²³ But despite such a strong sense of mission, and after trying out three government posts in the next year and a half, he permanently renounced the civil service.

Over the centuries, scholars have pondered the reasons for the swift dissipation of Tao Yuanming's loyalist fervor. After all, Tao had served in the two most influential military cliques at a most turbulent time in state politics, a choice indicating deep commitment to the national cause.²⁴ But his chances of rising through the ranks were slight, given his immediate family's modest circumstances; clan prestige was crucial to anyone hoping to ascend in official circles. Another obstacle in his path was Liu Yu's low regard for well-educated men. However, Tao's greatest disadvantage may have been his former affiliation with Huan Xuan, a tie that made it impossible for him to win Liu Yu's full trust.²⁵ The prospect of a bleak political career, as portended by Tao's three last, inconsequential government posts, may have been his most compelling reason to withdraw from politics. This supposition is supported by writings he composed in retirement, which recount the heroic deeds of his ancestors, among others, and lament his own failure to fulfill the Confucian ideal



of serving his country. Until the end of his life, Tao was unable to rid himself of his sorrow and indignation at being an observer rather than an active player in state affairs.²⁶

Qian Xuan's revisionist portrayal of Tao Yuanming was grounded in such views, which were prevalent among his Confucianist peers and forebears. Several generations earlier, for instance, Zhu Xi (1130–1200), the ultimate authority on Confucian thought through the centuries, singled out Tao's poem *Yong Jing Ke* (Tribute to Jing Ke) for admiration.²⁷ The subject of the poem, Jing Ke (d. 227 B.C.), was a warrior entrusted by Dan (d. 226 B.C.), the crown prince of Yan, to assassinate King Zheng of Qin, who was poised to conquer Yan and other states in his bid to unify China. Jing accepted and carried out this momentous mission, fully aware of its fatal implications. In his tribute to Jing, Tao illuminates how he envied him for earning a lofty place in history by sacrificing his life for an appreciative ruler and a noble cause.²⁸ Zhu Xi considered "Tribute to Jing Ke" as the poem "that reveals Tao's true nature"; its agitated language, he wrote, shatters the idea that Tao was a man who was "tranquil at heart."²⁹ Zhu Xi's view that Tao's serene facade belied his loyalist impulse would have been familiar to scholars like Qian Xuan.

Qian Xuan was presumably alert to the judgments of contemporary scholars also, such as Liu Xun (1240–1319), and Wu Cheng (1249–1333). Liu Xun elaborated on the seemingly unlikely kinship that Tao Yuanming, a recluse, felt toward Zhuge Liang (181–234), a devoted and influential premier. This affinity was initially pointed out by Huang Tingjian (1045–1105) in a poem he composed on a visit to Pengze, where Tao served his last post.³⁰ Huang's observation won him Liu Xun's praise as the most insightful of all commentators on Tao Yuanming. Liu wrote:

Tao Yuanming's admirers are numerous from past to present, but only Huang Tingjian was able to probe the depth of his mind. His poem in memory of Tao . . . truly delves into Tao's mentality. People of the world tend to regard

Tao as a detached recluse, which is wrong. Living through dynastic change, he was anguished and indignant beyond himself. He wished to be like Zhuge Liang, who helped prolong the Han dynasty by encouraging hopes for a dynastic revival. But in Tao's time there were no heroic leaders like Emperor Zhaojie with whom Tao could attempt a dynastic revival.³¹ Since there was nothing he could do, Tao abandoned himself to poetry and wine. That was all. In his old age, he adopted "Yuanliang" as an auxiliary name, which shows how much he adored Zhuge Liang. People think of Tao as a detached recluse simply because he resigned from his post in Pengze to return home to Chaisang. They are wrong.³²

Wu Cheng, who may have been acquainted with Qian Xuan, was in his day the preeminent authority on Confucian thought in southern China. Wu echoed Zhu Xi and Liu Xun in affirming that Tao's "Tribute to Jing Ke," and also his *Shu jiu* (Wine-inspired remarks), revealed the poet's desire to emulate Zhuge Liang as well as his regret for being unable to do so.³³ Given the prestige of Zhu Xi and the early Yuan Confucianists, their view that Tao retired out of disillusionment with politics must have been widely held.³⁴

In his painting, Qian Xuan distorted the iconic motifs of Tao Yuanming's homecoming in order to convey his fellow scholars' understanding of the event. True to Tao's line "My garment flutters in the brisk breeze," Li Gonglin had shown the poet wearing a loose robe with billowing sleeves and fluttering ribbons (see fig. 3). Signs of insouciance, these sartorial details persisted in Southern Song portrayals of Tao, as the one by Liang Kai (act. early 13th century) demonstrates (fig. 7). But in Qian Xuan's painting they are absent, and Tao appears grave rather than exultant. Similarly, the bamboo fence on the east side (*dongli*), a familiar attribute mentioned in Qian Xuan's inscription that derives from one of Tao's autobiographical poems, is rendered by Qian as a tall, thick, earthen wall lined with deep fissures.³⁵ This massive enclosure heralds a life of isolation and alienation from the surrounding world. On the bank, the nearest willow tree curves backward, intertwining with the branches of another willow standing at a distance behind it (see fig. 1). This drastic distortion of the pictorial space, which cannot be a slip from so skillful a painter as Qian Xuan, is most likely intended as a metaphor for the disrupted world order and for Tao's inner conflict of political engagement versus withdrawal.

Important to note in Li Gonglin's composition and in the Taipei scroll (see fig. 4) are the multiple figures that await Tao's return. Such groupings were included

fig. 7 Liang Kai (Chinese, act. early 13th century). Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279). *Lofty Scholar of the Eastern Fence*. Detail of a hanging scroll, early 13th century. Ink and color on silk, overall 28½ × 14½ in. (71.5 × 36.7 cm). National Palace Museum, Taipei



fig. 8 He Cheng (Chinese, b. 1223). Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*, late 13th century. Section of a handscroll; ink on paper, overall 16½ in. × 23 ft. 2¾ in. (41.2 × 707.8 cm). Jilin Provincial Museum

fig. 9 Shen Zhou (Chinese, 1427–1509). Ming dynasty (1368–1644). *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*. Fifth leaf of the album *Jiudianjin* (Nine-Section Silk Brocade), late 15th century. Ink and color on paper, 7 × 12¾ in. (17.8 × 32.6 cm). Kyoto National Museum



in the homecoming scene into the early Yuan dynasty, as can be observed in the illustration by the court painter He Cheng (b. 1223), who even added lively villagers to the welcoming party (fig. 8). Qian Xuan, however, shows only two boys and a female servant—all unresponsive to the approaching Tao Yuanming, who waves to them in vain.

Thus, by all indications, the Metropolitan Museum's illustration of Tao Yuanming's homecoming is not a celebration of withdrawal. Susan E. Nelson was the first to suggest this when she noted that Tao appears "more victim than victor."³⁶ His chilly reception and evident sense of frustration have no basis in the "Ode" and no known precedent in illustrations. Their appearance here is explained by the scholar-artist Shen Zhou (1427–1509) in a colophon formerly attached to the painting:³⁷

The Jin state has perished;
The master [Tao] feels he withdrew too late.
Like the young grass, Jiniu [Liu Yu, Emperor Wudi of
the Liu-Song dynasty, r. 420–22] flourishes
across the entire land.
Nothing remains but a few chrysanthemums by
the fences.³⁸

Shen Zhou's colophon contains not a word about Tao's joy in retiring. Rather, it tells of his sense of futility in the face of the national upheaval triggered by Liu Yu, who had usurped the Jin throne and founded a new dynasty, the Liu-Song, a move Tao surely did not anticipate while in his service. Tao's alienation is symbolized by the chrysanthemums, symbols of integrity in Chinese culture, that survive near the fence of his dwelling. Young grass thrives all around, metaphoric of the new dynasty of Liu Yu.

In Shen Zhou's own illustration of Tao Yuanming's homecoming (fig. 9), the tree trunks in the foreground crisscross in the same spatially impossible way that Qian Xuan's do. This entanglement of forms is at odds with Shen Zhou's usual style of natural ease, and it strongly suggests that Shen based his work on a Qian Xuan painting, very like the one in the Metropolitan Museum.³⁹ Shen amplified his model's somber mood by removing all human presence from the shore, where ominous crows fill the branches of bare trees. In the paintings of both Shen and Qian, the lack of cheer and warmth at the turning point of Tao's life seems to signal his worldly irrelevance from that moment on, a destiny he was painfully aware of.





fig. 10 Qian Xuan. *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, late 13th century. Handscroll; ink, color, and gold on paper, 9 1/8 × 36 1/2 in. (23.2 × 92.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Gift of The Dillon Fund, 1973 (1973.120.6)

fig. 11 Chinese, late Yuan (1271–1368) or early Ming dynasty (1368–1644). *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, from *Lanting tu* (Picture of the orchid pavilion gathering), late 14th century. First section of a handscroll; ink-on-paper rubbing of a stone engraving based on a 12th- or 13th-century painting. Shanghai Museum

WANG XIZHI WATCHING GESE

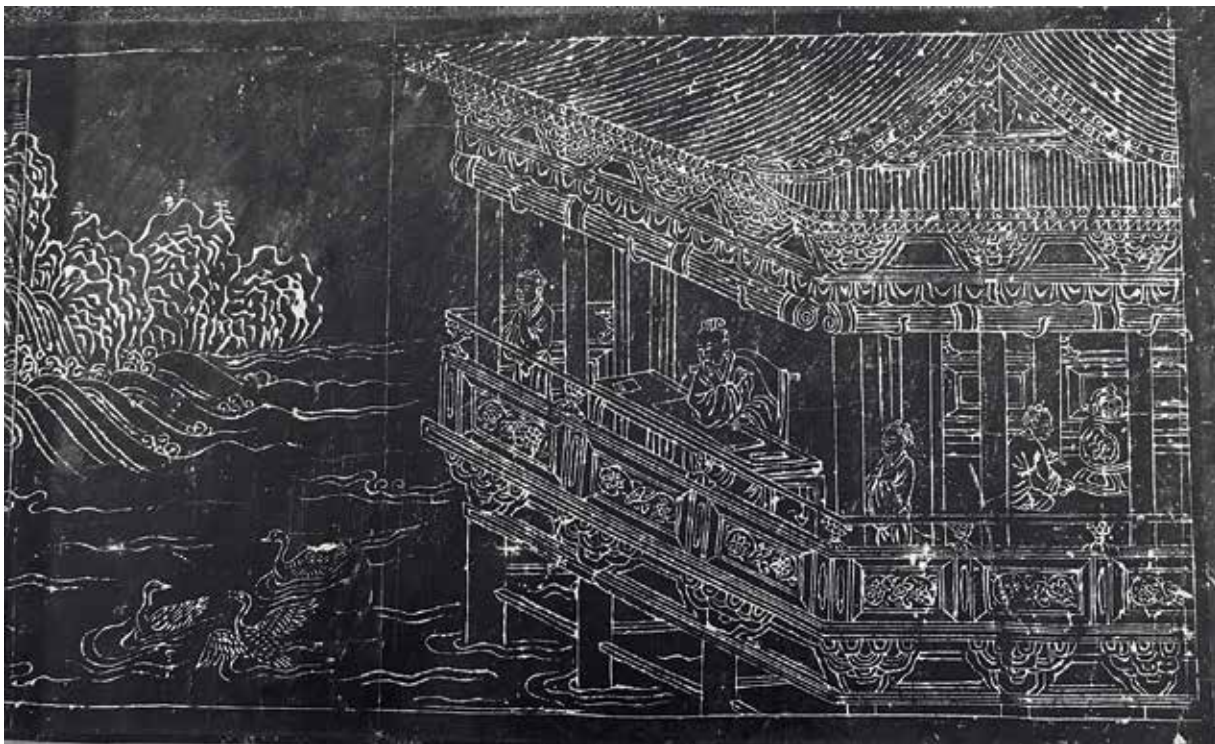
In Qian Xuan's painting *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, the subject, who was known as the "sage of calligraphy," is shown standing in an elegant pavilion on a riverbank while two white geese frolic in the water below (fig. 10). On the opposite bank, sketchy trees and cottages line a misty shore at the foot of massive, dark mountains. The heavy, flat application of malachite and azurite with gold highlights, the perplexing architecture of the pavilion, intricate patterning of the foliage, implausible intertwining of trees, and schematized rock forms create a decorative fantasyland in which the more naturalistically rendered, mist-veiled village across the water appears incongruously ethereal.⁴⁰ Compared with the pale, distant hills in *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* (see fig. 1), the sharply chiseled, deep blue mountains in *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese* loom large and are finely detailed, indicating that they are intended not only to balance the composition but also to convey meaning. Qian Xuan's inscription on the left end of the scroll reads:

What a joy to be among the tall bamboo and trees!
How does it feel to relax with bared stomach in a peaceful pavilion?

Transcribing the *Daode jing* [*The classic of the way and its power*] for a Daoist priest
Earns him the enduring image of a romantic who loves geese.⁴¹

Qian's inscription alludes to an oft-cited incident in which Wang Xizhi reportedly transcribed a classical Daoist text in exchange for live geese.⁴² Knowledge of this transaction inspired later commentators to associate Wang's fondness for geese with his calligraphic art. The eleventh-century painter and theorist Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090), for instance, stated: "It is said that Wang Xizhi loved geese because he admired the way they turned their necks, which resembles the turning of a calligrapher's wrist in structuring characters with his brush."⁴³ The supposed link between Wang's sinewy brushwork and the agile necks of geese led artists to add a goose-watching scene as the lead image to their illustrations of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering, a historic event that Wang hosted near Shaoxing, Zhejiang province, in 353, and at which he created his most celebrated masterpiece, *Lanting ji xu* (Preface to the orchid pavilion poems).

The earliest known example of the goose-watching scene is a fourteenth-century rubbing of an engraving based on a Southern Song dynasty painting (fig. 11).⁴⁴ The image shows Wang Xizhi seated at a desk, brush in



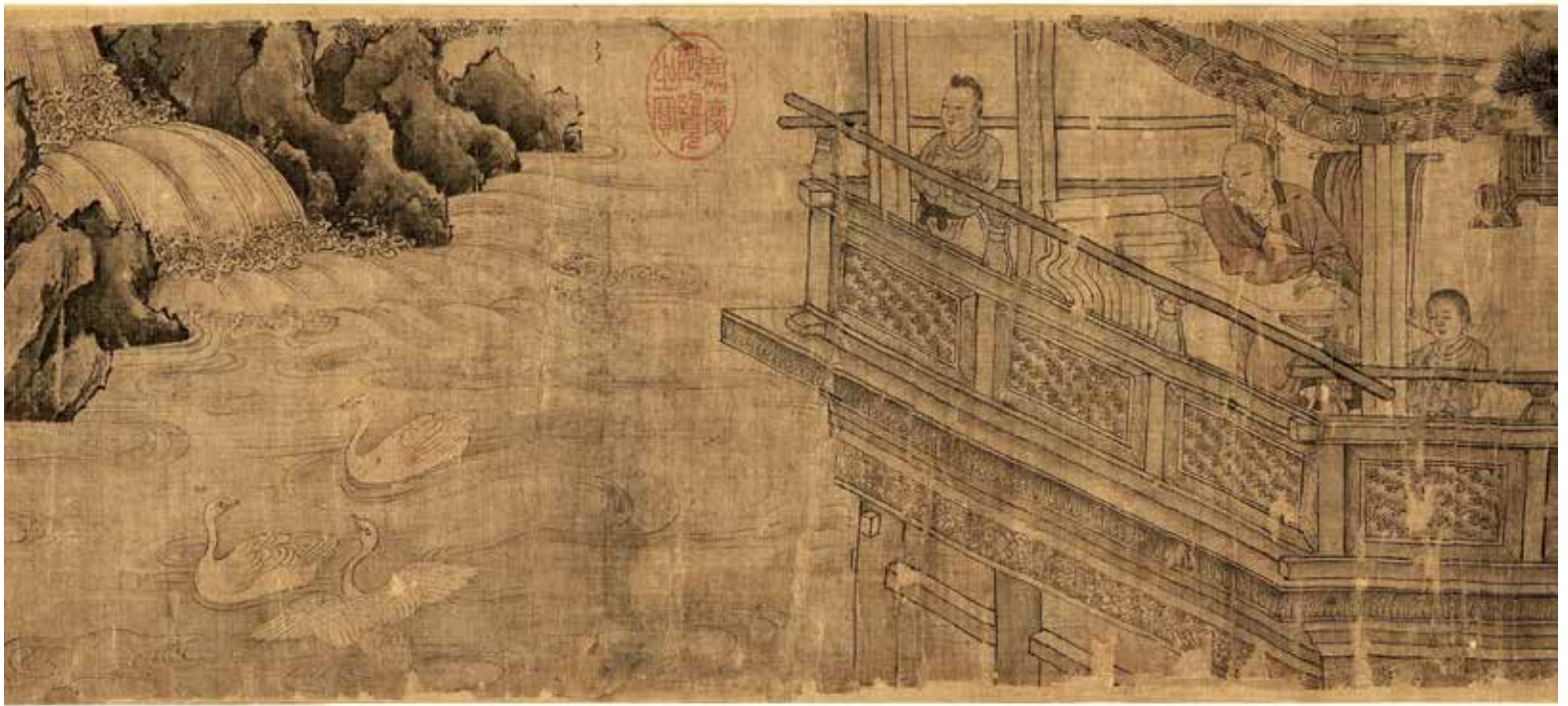


fig. 12 Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Attributed to Guo Zhongshu (Chinese, d. 977). Five Dynasties (907–960)/Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, from *The Orchid Pavilion Gathering after Gu Kaizhi*, 14th or 15th century. First section of a handscroll; ink and light color on silk, overall 9¼ in. × 23 ft. 4¼ in. (23.5 × 71.8 cm). National Palace Museum, Taipei

hand, in a pavilion built over the water. Leaning forward to watch three geese in the stream below, Wang looks absorbed in his art. With little variation, this scene opens Zhao Yuanchu's *Orchid Pavilion Gathering* illustration, dated 1364, and that of an early Ming (1368–1644) handscroll (*fig. 12*).⁴⁵ Likewise, the first scene in an illustration by Qian Gu (1508–ca. 1578) of the *Orchard Pavilion Gathering*, datable to 1560, shows Wang Xizhi seated in the same pose in a pavilion elevated over water (*fig. 13*). The consistency of this image from the Southern Song dynasty to the sixteenth century is remarkable, and Qian Xuan surely knew it well.

Wang Xizhi's putative goose-watching had nothing to do with the *Orchid Pavilion Gathering*. Nonetheless,

illustrations combine the two events, as seen in figures 11, 12, and 13. Yet the events are combined in such a way that the goose-watching scene, furnished with stock motifs—the calligrapher in a pavilion on the water, geese in the stream below—holds its own picture space. Qian Xuan's painting seems at first glance to depict Wang as usual, observing geese. The form of the pavilion and its angled perspective as well as the goose looking back at its companion indicate the painter's knowledge of the Southern Song prototype as preserved in the rubbing. However, the goose-watching scene has been pushed from the foreground to the middle ground and its share of the overall picture has shrunk to accommodate abundant landscape elements.

fig. 13 Qian Gu (Chinese, 1508–ca. 1578). Ming dynasty (1368–1644). *Gathering at the Orchid Pavilion*, datable to 1560. First section of a handscroll; ink and color on paper, 9½ × 14 ft. 3½ in. (24.1 × 435.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ex coll.: C. C. Wang Family, Gift of Douglas Dillon (1980.80)

fig. 14 Detail of *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese* (fig. 10)

This refocusing of the scene plays an essential role in changing its meaning. The geese, so small as to be barely noticeable, lose narrative significance. Far more conspicuous is the vegetation flanking the pavilion, which was added to match the “lush wood and tall bamboo” (*maolin xiuzhu*) that Wang mentions in his famous *Preface* when describing the site of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering. This correspondence of image and text embeds Qian’s goose-watching scene in that historic event.⁴⁶ The illustration’s widened focus and concomitant reduction of scale concentrate viewers’ attention on the evocation of the Orchid Pavilion setting, with its ornate architecture, exuberant foliage, verdant bamboo grove, and blue rocks on a green shore.

Contrary to the prototype, Wang Xizhi is shown standing, with his right hand on the railing of the elevated pavilion, rather than seated, brush in hand, at a table. He gazes not at the geese below but ahead, toward the mist-shrouded village across the river (fig. 14).⁴⁷ The particulars of the scene vividly recall the intimate lakeside views of the Northern Song artist Zhao Lingrang (act. ca. 1070–1100), most notably his *Summer Mist along the Lake Shore* (fig. 15).⁴⁸ In both paintings, a shallow V-shaped shoreline is edged on both sides with rows of trees. Behind them in a clearing, a cluster of

cottages is rendered in simple, soft contours. Each cottage has three bays in front and an ochre-tinged roof. The trees steadily diminish in size and tonality along a shore fringed with parallel water ripples and earthen bands. Qian Xuan once stated that he had studied Zhao’s work in his youth.⁴⁹ His *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese* bears out this claim unequivocally.

Zhao Lingrang, as a member of the Song imperial family, was prohibited from traveling more than 500 *li* (approximately 200 miles) from home. Consequently, his landscape subjects were to be found in the vicinity of the Northern Song capital.⁵⁰ After the fall of northern China to the nomadic Jurchens, Zhao’s lakeside imagery would have triggered, in those who had fled south, memories of the dynasty’s erstwhile capital. Qian Xuan evidently appropriated Zhao’s composition for *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese* in order to produce just such an effect in viewers, who would have seen the object of Wang’s gaze not as any ordinary village but as the fallen northern capital.

The scene depicted in *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*, which deviates from textual references, most likely was inspired by early Yuan scholars’ reexamination of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering in its historical context. The Gathering was nominally held to revive the celebration





of Purification Day, a traditional festival of physical and spiritual cleansing that drew people to rivers and lakes to enjoy the spring weather. The festival was also a social occasion for scholars. Wang and his guests held a poetry competition at their gathering, and Wang himself composed the introduction to their collected poems, “Preface to the orchid pavilion poems.”

Rather than focusing on the sunny atmosphere of a spring festival, Wang’s text exudes melancholy, as do several of the collected poems, which lament the transience of life. Wang wrote:

What previously had gratified them is now a thing of the past, which itself is cause for lament. Besides, although the span of men’s lives may be longer or shorter, all must end in death. And, as has been said by the ancients, birth and death are momentous events. What an agonizing thought! In reading the compositions of earlier men, I have tried to trace the causes of their melancholy, which too often are the same as those that affect myself. And I have then confronted the book with a deep sigh, without, however, being able to reconcile myself to it all. But this much I do know: it is idle to pretend that life and death are equal states, and foolish to claim that a youth cut off in his prime has led the protracted life of a centenarian. For men of a later age will look upon our time as we look upon earlier ages—a chastening reflection.⁵¹

The peculiar sense of doom on this ostensibly festive occasion was explained by Zhou Mi (1232–1298), a contemporary of Qian Xuan and an eminent literatus, who organized a gathering in Hangzhou on the fifth day of the third month of 1286, in honor of the gathering held at the Orchid Pavilion 933 years earlier. A detailed account by Dai Biaoyuan (1244–1310), a participant in the gathering, quoted Zhou Mi as saying:

Before the Jin dynasty moved to the south, the denizens of the former capital lived at the center of the world and

continued the popular practices of earlier times. Men and women all in festive garb took spring excursions and performed purification rites, which was a custom among commoners. After the Jin moved south, scholars and officials there took temporary lodging in reduced circumstances. Full of sorrow and regret, they wished in vain to be denizens of the former capital in prosperous times, so they composed poems on their excursions to express their sorrow, which had nothing to do with purification. I have read the writings from the Orchid Pavilion Gathering. Composed on a whim by the stream, the poems generally refrained from straightforward expression of their authors’ minds. Like Changju and the recluse with a basket on his shoulder, they are reticent and aloof.⁵² Those who were more articulate barely managed to cast aside daily concerns, as Zhuangzi did, and breezily longed for the ease of dead ashes and dry bones. You think they enjoyed themselves? They didn’t. At our gathering here, it is only natural that we enjoy ourselves even less than our Jin counterparts. Why is this?⁵³

In Zhou Mi’s understanding, Wang Xizhi revived the Purification custom of the former capital out of a nostalgic longing for the lost homeland, and the pathos in the Orchid Pavilion writings resulted from the attendees’ frustration over their inability to win back the north from the nomads. Zhou intuited the dark mood of the legendary gathering because he had likewise lost his homeland to northern nomads—in his case, the Mongols. The answer to the question he posed at the end of the passage quoted above was clear: the Jin moved south but did not perish, whereas the Song did. Zhou’s view was shared by his companions, as Dai Biaoyuan relates: “Upon hearing these words, those in their prime among the guests were lost in thought, and the faces of the elderly fell in sadness.”⁵⁴

Zhou Mi attributed Wang Xizhi’s lament over life’s vicissitudes, generally regarded as merely a literary trope, to Wang’s loyalist sorrow over the nation’s

fig. 15 Zhao Lingrang (Chinese, act. 1070–1100). Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). Detail of *Summer Mist along the Lake Shore*, 1100. Section of a handscroll; ink and color on silk, overall 10 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. × 22 ft. 9 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. (25.9 × 694.5 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Keith McLeod Fund (57.724)

decline, and his claim was well substantiated. For roughly thirty years—from his twenties until the age of fifty-three—Wang Xizhi devoted himself to civil service.⁵⁵ A committed official, he shamed two affluent colleagues by telling them that material comfort was not the goal of taking office, and he urged his scholar-official friend Xie An (320–385) to apply himself to state affairs rather than to metaphysics and wordplay.⁵⁶ Desiring the restoration of the north yet ambivalent about the possible consequences of military action, Wang analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of a northern campaign in memorials to the powerful courtier Yin Hao (ca. 303–356) and the future Emperor Taizong of Eastern Jin, Sima Yu (320–372, r. 372), as well as in his private correspondence.⁵⁷ Then, in the year prior to the Orchid Pavilion Gathering, nomadic Xianbei tribes sacked Yecheng, a major city in today's Hebei province. This event foreshadowed the Eastern Jin's loss of the lower Yellow River region and made the reconquest of the former capital impossible.⁵⁸ The dimming prospect of dynastic revival stifled the anticipated good cheer of the Gathering and underpinned the melancholy in the writings produced there.

Qian Xuan did not attend the restaging of the Orchid Pavilion Gathering in Hangzhou; however, his close friend Dai Biaoyuan did attend and documented the event.⁵⁹ And although Qian is not known to have been acquainted with Zhou Mi, Zhou's stature among the intelligentsia suggests that his views were widely known and respected in early Yuan cultural circles. Thus, there is good reason to believe that the Orchid Pavilion Gathering's association with loyalist nostalgia prompted Qian Xuan's unconventional portrayal of Wang Xizhi gazing toward the northern capital in total disregard of the geese swimming nearby.⁶⁰ The calligrapher was absorbed not in his art, but in his longing for the homeland.

Qian Xuan employed idiosyncratic motifs to reinforce his loyalist interpretation of the scene. For instance, in the pair of trees growing out of a blue rock in the foreground, the one on the right curves inexplicably around a third tree standing at some distance behind the rock. Recalling the bizarrely entangled willows in *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* (see fig. 1), this tree, like those, stands for a world in disarray and for inner conflict—in this case, Wang Xizhi's, which pitted his longing for national unification against his knowledge of the risks that would be involved in a military campaign. Equally suggestive is the voluminous cloud of reddish leaves cascading between the distorted tree and the pavilion, intimating decay amid

splendor. Yet another telling motif is that of the distant, geometricized mountains, the emphatic dark tone of which makes them appear to advance toward the viewer rather than to recede. This unnatural mass overhanging the naturalistic village scene associated with the Northern Song capital seems to symbolize the native Song's inability to break free of powerful alien dominance (see fig. 14). Grief over the loss of their homeland to foreign forces created among early Yuan scholars an emotional bond with Wang Xizhi that surely struck a deeper chord than playful geese.

QIAN XUAN'S REVISIONIST PROGRAM

Qian Xuan's formal means for conveying his revisionist views included the bright palette that instantly distinguishes his illustrations of Tao Yuanming's and Wang Xizhi's biographical anecdotes from those by Song artists. While Song examples are monochrome or executed in ink blended with colors, the landscape elements in Qian Xuan's works are mostly rendered with mineral pigments of malachite and azurite without ink washes. This technique was commonly used in the early phase in the blue-and-green landscape tradition (*qinglü shanshui*). Emergent in the fourth century and fully developed by the eighth century, during the Tang dynasty, the blue-and-green landscape manner features geometrically stylized, crystalline rock forms delineated by distinct outlines that are filled in with barely modulated mineral colors. With the rise of naturalism in landscape painting during the succeeding Song dynasty, new elements were introduced into the rigid, decorative Tang mode. Contours became less angular and distinct; texture strokes and ink washes were used with mineral pigments to create shading for three-dimensional effects.⁶¹

The forms and colors of the landscape features in *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* and *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese* recall the Tang style. As Richard Vinograd has noted, the schematized demarcation of the color zones, the overlapping of crisply angled earthen banks, and the interlocking of cone-shaped peaks locate Qian Xuan's pictorial source squarely in pre-Song antiquity; Qian's painting style compares particularly well with the one exemplified in *Youchun tu* (Spring excursion), attributed to Zhan Ziqian (ca. 545–ca. 618) (fig. 16).⁶²

More than evoking the temporal remoteness of his paintings' subjects, Qian Xuan's choice of the strikingly unnaturalistic Tang mode of representation denotes his revisionist intent.⁶³ By substituting a vibrant blue-and-green palette for the ink washes and subdued colors of

fig. 16 Chinese, Tang (618–906) or Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). Attributed to Zhan Ziqian (Chinese, ca. 545–ca. 618). Sui dynasty (581–618). Detail of *Spring Excursion*, early 11th century(?). Handscroll; ink and color on silk, overall 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (43 × 80.5 cm). Palace Museum, Beijing



more recent prototypes, Qian signaled that his interpretation of the events portrayed would differ fundamentally from those of his Song predecessors.

As has been noted elsewhere, the world conjured in *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*, with its schematized natural forms and beguiling spatial idiosyncrasies, is a figment of the artist's vivid imagination.⁶⁴ The same can be said of *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*. In order to illuminate Tao's and Wang's true identities as committed but despairing loyalists, Qian Xuan boldly departed from the biographical records and made up the scenes of Tao returning home to an unexpectant family and Wang gazing toward the lost northern capital. The explicitly artificial blue-and-green landscape is an ideal vehicle for conveying the fictive nature of the two narratives. Ironically, it is through invented constructs of daring originality that the two ancients' true characters, as Qian Xuan perceived them, are revealed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 Examples include the second-century stone engravings on the walls of the Wu Family Shrine in Jiaxiang, Shandong province, illustrating exemplary deeds of virtuous men and women; and *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* (*Nüshi zhen*), a handscroll traditionally attributed to Gu Kaizhi (ca. 344–ca. 406), which illustrates episodes from a third-century text on the ethical code for imperial women. For the Wu Family Shrine engravings, see Cary Liu, Nylan, and Barbieri-Low 2005. The date and authorship of the *Admonitions Scroll*, now in the British Museum, are still disputed. See McCausland 2003a and 2003b.
- 2 For the central role of Confucian ideology in Chinese narrative illustration, see Murray 2007. Examples of the genre's diversification during the Tang dynasty include two paintings that, unfortunately, are no longer extant: *Emperor Xuanzong Watching Cockfight and Hunting Birds*, by Zhang Xuan (718–755); and *Imperial Consort Yang after Her Bath*, by Zhou Fang (act. late 8th century). Emperor Xuanzong reigned from 712 to 756, and Yang was his consort. See *Xuanhe huapu*, chaps. 5 and 6, cited in Chen Gaohua 2015a, pp. 178, 244.
- 3 The attribution of *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* was revised in 2010 by the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Asian Art.
- 4 Brotherton 2000, pp. 253–58; Murray 2007, pp. 69–70.
- 5 Chen Yunru 2014, pp. 214–16; Tao 2014.
- 6 Outstanding discussions of various aspects of the paintings are in Vinograd 1979, especially pp. 108–9 (blue-and-green landscape tradition); Shih 1984, pp. 198–229 (eremitism); Hay 1991 (painting and poetry).
- 7 For the experience of native Chinese living under Mongol rule, see Wai-kam Ho's 1968 essay, which remains a classic.
- 8 Qian Xuan's scholarship was said to be superior to his painting. Zhao Mengfu, the leading cultural authority of the early Yuan dynasty, studied Confucian classics as well as painting with Qian. See the colophon by Huang Gongwang, dated 1348, on Qian's *Fuyu shan ju* (*Dwelling in the floating jade mountains*), Shanghai Museum.
- 9 Qian Xuan's exam failure is discussed in Tan 2013, p. 69. For his publications, see Zhao Fang, *Dongshan cunqao*, chap. 2, pp. 55a–55b.
- 10 Shih 1984, pp. 227–28.
- 11 Wang Silian, "Ti Shouyang meizhuang tu, Qian Xuan hua"; cited in Tan 2013, p. 35.
- 12 Chen Yan, "Ti Qian Xuan hua hua"; cited in Tan 2013, p. 36.
- 13 Zhang Yu, "Qian Shunju Xi'an tu"; cited in Chen Gaohua 2015b, pp. 415–16.
- 14 This reference is found in his autobiography; see Tao Yuanming, "Wuliu Xiansheng zhuan" (*Biography of Master Five Willows*), in Yang Yong 1979, p. 287.
- 15 Translation after Fong 1992, p. 316.
- 16 The Metropolitan Museum's painting and Xianyu Shu's calligraphy were produced separately. They were mounted together by a collector sometime before the seventeenth century. See Zhang Chou, "Qian Zhachuan shese *Guiqulai tu* juan."
- 17 The portrait by Zheng Qian is recorded in the Northern Song catalogue of the imperial painting collection *Xuanhe huapu*, chap. 5, cited in Chen Gaohua 2015a, p. 216. For the anonymous Tang work, see Brotherton 2000, pp. 228–29.
- 18 For a thorough study of this work, see Brotherton 2000.
- 19 The painting was once attributed to Lu Tanwei (mid- to late 5th century). For documentation, see National Palace Museum 1989–2013, vol. 15, pp. 7–8.
- 20 In his preface to a compilation of Tao Yuanming's writings, Xiao Tong (501–531) states that Tao frequently mentioned wine in his poetry and drank it to escape his sorrow. See Xiao Tong, "Tao Yuanming ji xu," in Peking University and Peking Normal University 1962, p. 9. For examples of Tang and Song dynasty scholars' comments on Tao Yuanming's sorrow over his political withdrawal, see Liu Shi-ye 2010, pp. 6–7, 15–17.
- 21 According to Chinese custom, people are said to be one year old on the day they are born. Tao Yuanming was therefore forty in the year 404.
- 22 For the details and significance of Tao Yuanming's service to Huan Xuan and Liu Yu, see Yuan 1997 and Yang 1979, pp. 418–35.
- 23 Yang 1979, pp. 430–31.
- 24 Yuan 1997, p. 101.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 94; He 1994, pp. 134–36.
- 26 Wang Guoying 1999, pp. 135–66.
- 27 Zhu Xi's *Lunyu jizhu* (*Annotated analects of Confucius*) and *Mengzi jizhu* (*Annotated book of Mencius*) became official textbooks in the state education curriculum in 1212, making the author the most influential Confucian scholar for centuries to come.
- 28 Wang Guoying 1999, p. 151.
- 29 Zhu Xi, *Zhu Zi yulei*, chap. 140, in Peking University and Peking Normal University 1962, pp. 74–75.
- 30 Huang Tingjian, "Su jiu Pengze huai Tao ling," in Peking University and Peking Normal University 1962, p. 37. Huang's interpretation was widely embraced by scholars of the Southern Song and early Yuan dynasties, including Wang Zhidao (1093–1169), Xin Qiji (1140–1207), Xie Fangde (1226–1289), Zhang Zhihan (act. ca. 1264), Lu Zhi (1242–1314), and Yu Ji (1272–1348). See Liu Shi-ye 2010, pp. 15–17.
- 31 Emperor Zhaolie (r. 221–23) employed Zhuge Liang as prime minister.
- 32 Liu Xun, *Yinju tongyi*, chap. 8, pp. 16a–16b (*Duhua Zhai congshu* ed.).
- 33 Wu Cheng, "Hukou Xian Jingjie xiansheng citang ji," in Zhong 1991, p. 78; Wu Cheng, "Zhan Ruolin *Yuanming ji buzhu xu*," in Peking University and Peking Normal University 1962, p. 125. For Wu Cheng's importance in early Yuan Confucian scholarship, see Gedalecia 1981. For Qian Xuan's acquaintance with Wu Cheng, see Tan 2013, pp. 113–18.
- 34 For Yuan scholars' view of Tao Yuanming as a lifelong loyalist, see Zhong 1991, pp. 77–79.
- 35 See Tao's poem titled "Yinjiu" (*Drinking wine*), fifth in a series of twenty poems, in Yang 1979, pp. 144–45.
- 36 Nelson 1998, pp. 75–76.
- 37 According to Zhang Chou's seventeenth-century description, the Metropolitan Museum's painting and Xianyu Shu's calligraphy were followed on the handscroll by two colophons by Shen Zhou and Xue Zhangxian (1455–1514), respectively. See Zhang Chou, "Qian Zhachuan shese *Guiqulai tu* juan." The two colophons were no longer attached to the scroll when it entered the Qing imperial collection in the eighteenth century. See Wang Jie et al., *Midian zhulin shiqi baoji* xubian, chap. 65 (1971 reprint ed., vol. 6, p. 3196).
- 38 Zhang Chou, "Qian Zhachuan shese *Guiqulai tu* juan."
- 39 Two versions of Shen's composition are known, and they are contained in very similar albums. One of the albums, now in a private Hong Kong collection, is complete, with nine leaves of uniform size. See *Fine Classical Chinese Paintings*, sale cat., Sotheby's Hong Kong, October 3, 2016, lot 2882. The other album, in the Kyoto National Museum, contains six leaves of

- slightly different sizes and is incomplete. See Nezu Museum 2005, no. 32-5. In his essay on the Kyoto album, Itakura Masaaki observes, as I have, the similarities between Shen Zhou's depiction of a scholar returning home and Qian Xuan's *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* in the Metropolitan Museum. See Itakura 2016, p. 113, and Liu Shi-yee 2010, p. 11.
- 40 On the rendering of the pavilion and the trees, John Hay writes: "Does it [the pavilion] have two rooms, or has the roof fallen apart? If it has two sections, why does the right section have no farther finial and the left no nearer? A magical transformation has been wrought within the foliage patterns. The shifting pattern has incorporated the pavilion, which has been transposed into a space where its parts are connected in quite unexpected ways." See Hay 1991, p. 188.
- 41 Translation after Hearn 2008, p. 74.
- 42 See Wang Xizhi's biography in Fang Xuanling et al., *Jin shu*, chap. 80; cited in Chen Chuanxi 1990, p. 88.
- 43 Guo Xi, "Hua jue"; quoted in Yu 1957, vol. 1, p. 643.
- 44 Tao 2014.
- 45 Chen Yunru 2014, p. 217. Both paintings are in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Zhao Yuanchu, also known as Zhao Zhong, was a painter of the late Yuan and possibly early Ming dynasty (1368–1644). See Yu 2005, p. 1287.
- 46 Shih 1984, p. 225.
- 47 Ibid., p. 224; Hay 1991, p. 191.
- 48 Vinograd 1979, p. 109.
- 49 See Qian Xuan's colophon, dated 1297, to the *Willows and Geese (Equn tu)*, attributed to Zhao Lingrang. Fujita Museum sale 2017, lot 511, pp. 114–15; and Shih 1984, p. 222. The painting was documented in Zhang Zhao et al., *Midian zhulin shiqu baoji*, chap. 5 (1971 ed., vol. 2, p. 966).
- 50 See the entry on Zhao Lingrang in Deng Chun, "Houwang guiqi"; see also "Lingrang," in *Xuanhe huapu*, chap. 20. Both are cited in Chen Gaohua 1984, p. 409.
- 51 Translation by H. C. Chang in Campbell 2009.
- 52 Changju and the man with a basket were ancient recluses disillusioned with worldly affairs. Respectively, they appear in the "Weizi" and "Xian wen" chapters of Confucius's *Analects*.
- 53 Dai Biaoquan, "Yang shi chitang yanji shi xu."
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Luo 2007, pp. 75–139.
- 56 Fang Xuanling et al., *Jin shu*, chap. 80; Liu Yiqing, *Shishuo xinyu*; as cited in Chen Chuanxi 1990, p. 92.
- 57 For Yin Hao, see Fang Xuanling et al., *Jin shu*, chap. 77, section 47 of the "Biographies." For Sima Yu, see *ibid.*, chap. 9, section 9 of the "Emperors."
- 58 Luo 2007, pp. 111–20.
- 59 Dai Biaoquan's account of Qian Xuan painting in his presence while half-drunk attests to the familiarity of the two men. See Dai Biaoquan, "Tihua."
- 60 I am grateful to Alfreda Murck for pointing out the importance of geese in the iconography of Wang Xizhi.
- 61 On the origin and evolution of the blue-and-green landscape tradition, see Vinograd 1979, pp. 101–8, and Feng 1996, pp. 276–98.
- 62 Vinograd 1979, p. 108. Based on the architecture in the painting, the *Spring Excursion* is most likely a Northern Song copy of Zhan Ziqian's original, although it appears to have preserved much of the landscape style of the Tang dynasty. See Fu 1978.
- 63 Qian Xuan sometimes schematized natural forms even more than his Tang predecessors. For example, clusters of vegetation depicted along the ridges in Zhan Ziqian's painting are reduced to dots in Qian Xuan's works.
- 64 Barnhart 1983, p. 42.

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METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM
JOURNAL 54

ARTICLES

Stone Sculpture and Ritual
Impersonation in Classic Veracruz
Caitlin Earley

Qian Xuan's Loyalist Revision of Iconic
Imagery in *Tao Yuanming Returning Home*
and *Wang Xizhi Watching Geese*
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Ian Kennedy

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