East Meets West

POETRY OF LOSS

AND THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CHINESE COURT OF THE WARLORD CAO CAO (155–220)

by

HSIANG-LIN SHIH

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AS MY FRIEND Jennifer J. M. Liu observes, this book is like a negative film of my dissertation. While my dissertation focuses on the convivial gatherings of the Cao court writers, this book acknowledges their poems that meditate on such themes as aging, widowhood, epidemic, frustration, and parental loss. Weighty as these themes are, most of their poetic compositions took place in a community. Sorrow and community were not only interrelated, but also negotiated between.

On this tortuous journey, I deeply appreciate Professor David R. Knechtges' unflagging support. My journey through the sorrowful realm is surely not comparable with Dante's *Inferno*, but Professor Knechtges is certainly my Virgil, who has guided me in and out of the early medieval Chinese world with his erudition and kindness. I also want to express my deep appreciation to the late Professor C. H. Wang. Whenever a sense of frustration overwhelms me, it is his abiding faith in poetry and humanity that gives me the strength to move forward.

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INTRODUCTION

Tossed by wind, flying like tumbleweed,
I encounter cold and heat in the meantime.

—Cao Zhi, "*Shi* on the North Wind"

Poetry of Loss

Siding with the Han imperial house and condemning the warlord Cao Cao's 曹操 (155–220) control of it, traditional commentators of early medieval Chinese poetry share a strong sentiment with the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi 三國演義). They are mainly concerned with how Cao Cao disclosed his traitorous thoughts in his song verses (*geshi* 歌詩, more commonly known today as *yuefu* 樂府 or "music bureau" poems), how his second son Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) did the same and eventually dethroned Emperor Xian of Han 漢獻帝 (r. 189–220), and how his fourth son Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), a distinguished poet of the time, was envied and oppressed by Cao Pi. Upon seeing notions of frustration and sorrow in Cao Zhi's song verses and *shi* 詩 poems (a genre that resembles song verses in prosody but is divorced from music), the commentators tend to take the melancholy expressions as evidence of sibling rivalry and political upheaval.

In his 1964 article on Cao Zhi's poetry, Hans H. Frankel proposes another approach: instead of viewing a melancholy tone as a reflection of the poet's "sad sack in real life," let us consider it "the noblest mode of Chinese lyric poetry." What Frankel attempts to refute is the biographical approach that reduces everything to the sibling rivalry between Cao Pi and Cao Zhi. As he points out, a melancholy tone is also prevalent in Cao Cao's song verses that have little to do with sibling rivalry. To avoid such a fallacy, Frankel proposes to turn our attention to the poetic art *per se* as New Critics do. When reading Cao Zhi's melancholy descriptions of tumbleweed, for example, we should resist the temptation to associate those with Cao Zhi's being sent from one fief to another by his brother Cao Pi. Since Cao Cao also writes about tumbleweed in his song verse, we should explore how Cao Zhi adapts the tumbling image and creates a poetic world in "the noblest mode of Chinese lyric poetry."[1]

1 Frankel, "Fifteen Poems by Ts'ao Chih," 11, 14.

While acknowledging the fallacy of reducing everything to sibling rivalry, I am not persuaded to cast biographical information aside, especially when our understanding of the poetic world can be nuanced by the social situations of the poets, and when such information is available to us. Among all the biographical materials, the prefaces that the Cao court poets provided for their own poems, especially for their rhapsodies (*fu* 賦, another poetic genre that was recited rather than sung), make the most significant difference. The prefaces, whose fragments are mainly found in later literary compendia and were pieced together by the Qing-dynasty scholar Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843), inform us that a melancholy tone can result from various losses that the Cao court experienced due to the unfortunate occurrences of epidemic, frustration, and war, as well as the natural course of aging and declining. The social situations of the poets at Cao Cao's court include, but certainly are not limited to, sibling rivalry and political upheaval.

Yan Kejun's reconstruction of the rhapsodies and their prefaces should have been available to Frankel. Why did those materials not contribute to Frankel's study of Cao Zhi's poetry? Besides his reservations concerning the biographical approach, it was also because by "poetry," Frankel referred to "song verses" and "*shi* poems" but not "rhapsodies." To Frankel as well as Yan Kejun, rhapsodies were closer to prose (*wen* 文) than to poetry (*shi* 詩). Yan Kejun thus included his reconstruction of the rhapsodies and their prefaces in his *Complete Prose of High Antiquity, Qin, Han, Three States, and Six Dynasties* (Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文), Frankel thus conceptually separated rhapsodies from song verses and *shi* poems, and Yan Kejun's reconstruction of the rhapsodies and their prefaces thus contributed little to Frankel's study of Cao Zhi's poetry. But to Cao Zhi and his fellow poets, rhapsodies were not only a poetic genre, but a more established poetic genre than song verses and *shi* poems. Naturally, it was a more common practice for them to provide prefaces to their rhapsodies than to their song verses or *shi* poems. To gain a more complete picture of early medieval Chinese poetry, therefore, one cannot ignore the rhapsodies. In recent decades, rhapsodies have gradually regained their reputation as an established poetic genre. In light of this scholarship,[2] I actively include the Cao court's rhapsodies and their prefaces—along with other biographical materials such as letters and histories—in my research of the Cao court poetry.

2 Recent scholarship on rhapsodies is embodied in Williams et al., *The Fu Genre of Imperial China*; and Williams et al., *Reading Fu Poetry*.

In her 2018 book on the literary memories of the Cao court, Xiaofei Tian points out another approach that has dominated our imagination: viewing the dynamics of the Cao court nostalgically after the outbreak of an epidemic in 217–218. Tian traces how this perspective is adopted by Cao Pi in his letter to Wu Zhi 吳質 (178–230), reinforced by Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) in his poem suite titled "Impersonating the *Shi* [Poets] at the Ye Gathering [Hosted] by the Heir Designate of Wei [Cao Pi]" (Ni Wei taizi Ye zhong ji shi 擬魏太子鄴中集詩), and canonized by the sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* 文選, which includes both Cao Pi's letter and Xie Lingyun's poem suite. But as Tian observes, Cao Pi's nostalgic, post-epidemic view is only one of the many ways of remembering the Cao court and approaching its poetry.[3]

Here my study diverges from Tian's. When cross-referencing canonical and noncanonical poems, Tian uncovers the Cao court's darker scenes of political manipulation, but my focus is rather on the Cao court's diverse ways of addressing losses. When exploring alternative memories of the Cao court, Tian goes into subsequent dynasties, but I stay in the time period of the Cao court to examine the court poets' memories of themselves. As memory studies inform us, our memories change in response to every present moment we live in.[4] While Tian studies the multiple present moments throughout the dynasties, I research the multiple present moments of loss through the course of Cao Cao's life and court.

The Cao Court

In political history, the Cao court can be described as a group of people who worked under his command. On close examination, we notice that they did not all necessarily serve on Cao Cao's staff. Some were in the imperial palace, others were in regional governments, and still others were assigned to serve his sons. In addition, we notice that the ardent supporters of either Cao Pi or Cao Zhi did not necessarily serve on their young lord's staff. For example, Cao Zhi was supported by the brothers Ding Yí 丁儀 (d. 220) and Ding Yì 丁廙 (d. 220),[5] but they served respectively on Cao Cao's staff and in the imperial palace.[6] As to the brothers' staff, they did not always get what they wanted. Cao Cao appointed Bing Yuan 邴原 (ca. 158–ca. 208) as Chief

3 Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, chap. 1, "Plague and Poetry."

4 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3–4.

5 Ding Yí 丁儀 was the elder brother and Ding Yì 丁廙 was the younger. Their names are differentiated in romanization by tone markers.

6 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1564.

Clerk (*Zhangshi* 長史) on Cao Pi's staff, and Xing Yong 邢顒 (d. 223) first as Household Aide (*Jiacheng* 家丞) on Cao Zhi's staff, later as Grand Mentor (*Taifu* 太傅) on Cao Pi's staff. Neither Bing Yuan nor Xing Yong was close to Cao Pi or Cao Zhi. The former confronted Cao Pi at a social gathering, and the latter was reportedly at odds with Cao Zhi.[7] The Cao brothers could ask their father for a particular person to be their Scholar (*Wenxue* 文學) or Cadet (*Shuzi* 庶子), but again, it was up to Cao Cao to decide.[8]

In contrast to a political approach, the Cao court can be described in literary history as a community of accomplished writers known for the "three Caos" (*san Cao* 三曹): Cao Cao, Cao Pi, Cao Zhi; and the "seven masters" (*qizi* 七子): Kong Rong 孔融 (153–208), Chen Lin 陳琳 (d. 217), Wang Can 王粲 (177–217), Xu Gan 徐幹 (171–218), Ruan Yu 阮瑀 (d. 212), Ying Yang 應瑒 (d. 217), and Liu Zhen 劉楨 (d. 217).[9] Drawing on kinetic imagery, the sixth-century literary critic Liu Xie 劉勰 (d. ca. 537) vividly captures the energy in their composition of pentasyllabic *shi* poems as follows:[10]

> When it came to the Jian'an reign [196–220], pentasyllabic *shi* burgeoned and flourished. Emperor Wen [Cao Pi] and Prince Si of Chen [Cao Zhi] freed the reins to gallop; Wang [Can], Xu [Gan], Ying [Yang], and Liu [Zhen] followed in their footsteps to race. Side by side they delighted in the wind and the moon, took excursions to ponds and preserves, gave account of the glories of enjoying favour, and told of festively tipsy feasts. Impassioned, they gave free rein to their vitality; openhearted, they employed their talent. When they expressed their feelings and related things, they never resorted to petty cleverness; when they drove the vehicle of words to catch the appearances of things, they only valued the capability of being lucid: These are what they shared in common.
>
> 暨建安之初，五言騰踊。文帝陳思，縱轡以騁節；王徐應劉，望路而爭驅。並憐風月，狎池苑，述恩榮，敘酣宴。慷慨以任氣，磊落以使才。造懷指事，不求纖密之巧；驅辭逐貌，唯取昭晰之能：此其所同也。

The expression "side by side" (*bing* 並) in my translation above highlights a feature of their group composition: Instead of excusing themselves, the Cao lords actively took part in it. Take Cao Pi's preface to his "Rhapsody on

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7 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 11.1108, 1182.

8 For the Cao brothers' fight for Handan Chun 邯鄲淳 (fl. 190–220), see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 21.1667.

9 For the first reference of the seven masters, see Cao Pi's essay "On Literature" (Lun wen 論文), a chapter from his *Normative Discourses* (Dian lun 典論), in *Wen xuan*, 52.2270.

10 Liu, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 6.196.

Climbing the Terrace" (Deng tai fu 登臺賦) for example. For a long time I had understood Cao Cao's command stated in the preface as asking his sons to compose among themselves, side by side with their brothers. It is not until recently that I realized Cao Cao was also a participant, asking his sons to compose on the spectacular complex of the Bronze Bird Terrace (Tongque tai 銅爵臺) and West Garden (Xiyuan 西園) side by side with him:[11]

> In the spring of the seventeenth year of the Jian'an reign [212 CE], [His Highness, which refers to Cao Cao] roamed in the West Garden, climbed the Bronze Bird Terrace, and commanded us brothers to compose side by side [with him].
>
> 建安十七年春，[上]遊西園，登銅雀臺，命余兄弟並作。

Take Cao Pi's preface to his "Rhapsody on the Widow" (Guafu fu 寡婦賦) for another example. For a long time I had understood Cao Pi's command stated in the preface as asking others to compose among themselves, side by side with one another. Again, it is not until recently that I realized Cao Pi was asking them to compose side by side with him:[12]

> Ruan Yuanyu [style name of Ruan Yu] of Chenliu was a friend of mine. Ill-fated, he died early. Whenever I think of his bereaved children, I am invariably grief-stricken and wounded in heart. I therefore have composed this rhapsody to relate the sorrow and pain of his wife and children, and commanded Wang Can and others to compose theirs side by side with me.
>
> 陳留阮元瑜與余有舊，薄命早亡。每感存其遺孤，未嘗不愴然傷心。故作斯賦，以敘其妻子悲苦之情，命王粲等並作之。

My understanding of the expression "side by side" changed when I read the concept of "emulation" introduced by the art historian Thomas Crow. In his 2006 book *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France*, Crow distinguishes emulation from mere imitation. In French lan-

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11 Two lines of Cao Cao's "Rhapsody on Climbing the Terrace" are extant in *Shui jing zhu*, 10.9a (213); Cao, *Cao Cao ji*, 29. For a discussion of Cao Cao's extant lines, along with Cao Pi's and Cao Zhi's rhapsodies, see Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 213–17; also see Tsao, *The City of Ye*, chap. 2, "Ye in Jian'an Literature." For Cao Pi's preface, see *Yiwen leiju*, 62.1120. A missing character following the character *chun* 春 is indicated by Yan Kejun in *Quan Sanguo wen*, 4.5a (1074) and by Lu Bi 盧弼 (1876–1967) in *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1553n10. Wei Hongcan 魏宏灿 supplies the word *Shang* 上 (His Highness) in Cao, *Cao Pi ji jiaozhu*, 102.

12 Yan Kejun reconstructs this preface in his *Quan Sanguo wen*, 4.4a (1073) from Li Shan's 李善 (ca. 630–689) commentary on Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247–300) "Rhapsody on the Widow" (Guafu fu 寡婦賦) (*Wen xuan*, 16.735) and from the *Yiwen leiju*'s quote of Cao Pi's "Rhapsody on the Widow" (*Yiwen leiju*, 34.600).

guage and the studio of the artist Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), the word suggests a relationship more of empowerment than a rigid hierarchy, more of side-by-side competition than top-down control:[13]

> [Jean-Germain Drouais's] paintings extended and confronted the hardest lessons that David had to teach. At his death, his teacher declared in a famous and resonant lament, "I have lost my emulation." The English cognate does not adequately convey the sense of the pupil being recognized as peer, and even master.

The group compositions in which both the lords and the scholar-officials at the Cao court engaged have long drawn scholarly attention, but scholars have debated their value. To some, those represent a golden era of mutual appreciation and literary splendour; to others, the panegyric tone of the poems sounds all too suspicious. In recent decades, scholars tend to refrain from judging the poems by how genuine the lords and court poets could have been. In Robert Joe Cutter's 1984 article, for example, their gatherings are compared to ancient Greek symposiums and the conviviality of the scenes is vividly reconstructed. In Cheng Yu-Yu's 鄭毓瑜 1996 book chapter, for another example, their light-hearted composition is read as a crucial vehicle that helped not only perfect poetic art, but also forge a bond among the participants.[14] Following in their footsteps, in my 2013 dissertation I reconstructed their poetic dialogues and explored the social implications of those.

What I found too challenging to address in my dissertation is their "Rhapsodies on the Widow." As the above-quoted preface reads, the Cao court poets composed the rhapsodies in response to the death of their friend Ruan Yu. Their motivation is not hard to understand, but the way they composed their rhapsodies is: They lamented for their friend's death not in their own voices but in the voice of his widow, thus titled "Rhapsodies on the Widow." Venturing to cross the boundaries drawn by the mortuary rituals, how could such a group composition have helped forge a bond among the participants? And why did they write in such a distinct way from Cao Pi's lament for his many friends' deaths in the 217–218 epidemic?

The former question will be addressed in Chapter 2. Here I would like to address the latter by introducing the "multidirectional approach" developed by Michael Rothberg in his 2009 book *Multidirectional Memory: Remem-*

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13 Crow, *Emulation*, 1. For a review of Crow's concept of "emulation," see Liu, "Guankan, guannian, guan wu," 378–82.

14 Cutter, "Cao Zhi's (192–232) Symposium Poems," 1–32. Cheng, "Shilun gongyan shi," 171–218.

bering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization. Collective remembering, Rothberg stresses, is not a zero-sum endeavour. The remembrance of X does not necessarily displace the remembrance of Y. When we live in the age of Y (e.g., decolonization), our remembrance of X (e.g., the Holocaust) typically involves negotiation with the remembrance of Y, even to the point of cross-referencing and borrowing it, much more than simply displacing it. In Rothberg words, "the contest of memories cannot be reduced to a battle over real estate."[15]

This approach is multidirectional in that it recognizes the dynamics within and without a community. The community that is supposed to keep certain memories is not static. Not only do their collective memory and ways of remembering change in response to every present moment they live in, but so, too, does the community itself change over time. In his studies of the 1949 émigrés from mainland China to Taiwan, Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang adopts Rothberg's approach and reveals how the émigré community keeps reinventing itself, its collective memory, and its ways of remembering through various traumatic moments. In light of Rothberg's and Yang's memory studies, I propose that we also view the Cao court and its poetry of loss multidirectionally. Rather than sticking to Cao Pi's post-epidemic standpoint, let us observe how the Cao court drew on experiences of loss to reinvent itself, its collective memory, and its ways of remembering.

Chapter Outline

Each chapter of this book addresses a key experience of loss. In Chapter 1 we look at Cao Cao's experience of the death of Guo Jia 郭嘉 (170–207), the youngest among his military consultants. By associating Guo Jia's premature death with Cao Cao's poetic reflection on aging, I explore how the warlord mentally and emotionally sustained a military-political community by presenting his melancholy yet heroic song verses. Chapter 2 addresses the loss of Ruan Yu. To commemorate their friend, the first among them to pass away, Cao Pi commanded his fellow poets to write with him in a peculiar way: in the voice of Ruan Yu's widow. It turns out this was not the only group composition in which the Cao court poets assumed the voice of a bereaved woman. I compare and contrast these compositions to examine why they responded to Ruan Yu's death so. While Chapter 1 tells how Cao Cao sustained a military-political community outside of the Han imperial court,

15 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3, 310.

Chapter 2 tells another story: how Cao Pi developed his own community besides his father's.

The 217–218 epidemic, which killed Chen Lin, Xu Gan, Ying Yang, and Liu Zhen, is addressed in Chapter 3. In addition to Cao Pi's nostalgic view of their good old days, I trace Cao Zhi's remembrance of a brilliant summer and ask these questions: What role does summer play in the collective memory of the Cao court? In what sense can we read their remembrance as an early medieval variation of the ancient soul-summoning poetry? In Chapter 4 I revisit the moments when Xu Gan quit and several other colleagues felt frustrated at the Cao court. Cao Zhi was the one who presented them with poems of consolation, only to find that they were like the skull in the philosophical treatise of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, content in their world of withdrawal and unwilling to return. While in Chapters 1 and 2 the Cao court survived multiple moments of loss, in Chapters 3 and 4 we find it broken into shards of memories.

Cao Cao passed away in 220. As a matter of course, his death is addressed in the last chapter. I track how his bereaved sons Cao Pi and Cao Zhi as well as his bereaved grandson Cao Rui 曹叡 (204–239, r. 226–239), despite the brokenness of the Cao court, tried their best to sustain themselves and their community through poetic composition. In the Epilogue, I revisit the research question raised by Hans H. Frankel and reflect on the multidirectional approach I adopt in this book. While it is neither my intention to displace Cao Pi's nostalgic memories of the Cao court, nor my goal to exhaust every possible way of remembering the community, I hope this book offers a rich array of approaches to the early medieval Chinese court poetry of loss.

Translation of Chinese Texts and Terms

Integral to my approach is translating the Chinese texts and terms into English. Here I would like to introduce the conventions of translation I follow in this book. A historical personal name that appears for the first time in each chapter consists of three parts: the pinyin romanization, the Chinese characters, and the dates in parentheses. For example, Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220). A personal title follows a similar fashion, but the dates are usually the person's reign. For example, Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE). A poem or book title that appears for the first time in each chapter consists of an English translation in quotation marks (if it is a poem) or in italics (if it is a book), followed by parentheses in which the pinyin romanization and the Chinese characters are provided. For example, "Short Song" (Duan ge xing 短歌行); *Balanced Discourses* (Zhong lun 中論). But if the

book is named after a person, or it is one of the Thirteen Classics (*Shisan jing* 十三經) or Twenty-Four Standard Histories (*Ershisi shi* 二十四史), or its title is not directly relevant to the discussion, there is no English translation but the pinyin romanization in italics and the Chinese characters. The nature of such a text, nevertheless, is clear from context. For example, the philosophical treatise *Zhuangzi* 莊子; the historical records *Sanguo zhi* 三國志; the classic of poetry *Shi jing* 詩經 (or *Mao shi* 毛詩); and the literary compendium *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚. Chinese terms are in English translation, followed by parentheses in which the pinyin romanization of the term is in italics (except for proper nouns, whose romanization is not in italics) and the Chinese characters are provided. For example, song verses (*geshi* 歌詩); Bronze Bird Terrace (Tongque tai 銅爵臺).

When translating a poem, I pay special attention to the rhyme scheme. Generally speaking, a stanza rhymes every other (even-numbered) line. Rhyming characters are underlined. If there is a rhyme change, it is signified by a space between the stanzas. Take the following two stanzas of Cao Pi's "Rhapsody on the Widow" for example:

惟生民兮艱危　Verily, all people experience hardship and danger;
在孤寡兮常悲　But to orphans and widows, it is perpetual sorrow.
人皆處兮歡樂　Everyone else lives in joy and happiness,
我獨怨兮無依　I alone resent that I have no one to rely on.
撫遺孤兮太息　Patting the bereaved children, I heave a great sigh;
俛哀傷兮告誰　Lowering my head in lament—whom shall I tell?

三辰周兮遞照　Sun, moon, and stars revolve, shining in succession,
寒暑運兮代臻　Cold and heat rotate, arriving in turn.
歷夏日兮苦長　I have passed summer days, which were way too long;
涉秋夜兮漫漫　I have crossed autumn nights, which went on and on.
微霜隕兮集庭　Light frost fell and gathered in the courtyard;
鷰雀飛兮我前　Swallows and sparrows flew away from me.
去秋兮就冬　Autumn left and winter approaches;
改節兮時寒　The season has changed and it gets cold.
水凝兮成冰　Water has frozen and become ice;
雪落兮翻翻　Snow is falling lightly and airily.
傷薄命兮寡獨　Grieving for my ill fate, I live lonely in widowhood;
內惆悵兮自憐　Feeling low and down, I feel for myself.

In contrast to the block quote of a poem, which has Chinese text on the left and English translation on the right, the block quote of a non-rhyming text is presented with English translation on the top and Chinese text at the bottom. Compare Cao Pi's "Rhapsody on the Widow" with his preface to it:

> Ruan Yuanyu [style name of Ruan Yu] of Chenliu was a friend of mine. Ill-fated, he died early. Whenever I think of his bereaved children, I am invariably grief-stricken and wounded in heart. I therefore have composed this rhapsody to relate the sorrow and pain of his wife and children, and commanded Wang Can and others to compose theirs side by side with me.
>
> 陳留阮元瑜與余有舊，薄命早亡。每感存其遺孤，未嘗不愴然傷心。故作斯賦，以敘其妻子悲苦之情，命王粲等並作之。

Although arranged differently, neither the block quote of a poem nor that of a non-rhyming text provides pinyin romanization. And since the Chinese text looks distinct enough from the English translation, it is not put in parentheses. Now, how did the Cao court poets process their loss—a friend in this case—through poetry in each present moment of their intertwined lives? Let us turn to the chapters to explore.

Chapter 1

AGING WITH FELLOW MORTALS

UPON THE FALL of the Han empire, the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) took the emperor under his control and established his military-political community in the North China Plain. He constantly confronted death, but grieved when Guo Jia 郭嘉 (170–207)—the youngest among his military consultants—passed away. He revealed to the other consultants what Guo Jia's death meant to the community:[1]

> You gentlemen are about the same age as I am. Fengxiao [style name of Guo Jia], being the youngest, was an exception. My plan was to entrust the remaining tasks to him when I am done with my work on the realm, but he died early in his middle years. This is fate!
>
> 諸君年皆孤輩也，唯奉孝最少，天下事竟，欲以後事屬之，而中年夭折，命也夫！

Cao Cao presented a memorial to the emperor for a posthumous award for Guo Jia, indicating it was not only to care for the bereaved but also to hearten newcomers (褒亡為存，厚往勸來也).[2] Besides requesting a posthumous award, how did he mentally and emotionally sustain a community grieving for its absent youth, or more broadly, an aging community?

In this chapter I will first argue that the so-called "inauspicious" lines in his well-known "Short Song" (Duan ge xing 短歌行) is part of a sentimental song in which Cao Cao, as a charismatic host of a feast, negotiates meanings of life with his guests. Then, I will discuss how Cao Cao integrates seemingly incongruous elements—transcendence arts, coffin-carrying songs, and his military expeditions—into a musical performance. Finally, by placing his song verse "Striding Out of the Spacious Gate" (Bu chu xiamen xing 步出夏門行) in this rich context, I will explore how Cao Cao changes his poetic identity from that of a roaming transcendent to that of an aging fine steed, and what this change could have meant to an aging community that still aspired to run a thousand *li* with fellow mortals.

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1 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 14.1292.

2 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 14.1293.

Negotiation

Cao Cao has been shaped as a villain who killed carelessly while drinking and singing. In episode 48 of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi 三國演義), he held a feast prior to the Battle of the Red Cliff. Half-drunk, with a halberd in hand, he sang the "Short Song" with these famous opening lines: "With wine and songs before us— / How long can human life last? / Like the morning dews— / The days gone by are all too many." Among the audience, Liu Fu 劉馥 (d. 208) considered the penultimate stanza inauspicious, suggestive of their loss in the forthcoming battle: "The moon is bright, the stars are few, / Crows and magpies are flying south. / Thrice they circle a tree, / On what branch can they roost?" Annoyed by the comment, Cao Cao reportedly killed Liu Fu with the halberd in hand. This violence proves fictional, for Liu Fu had died before Cao Cao launched this military campaign.[3] Nevertheless, the *Romance* storyteller captures two elements of Cao Cao's "Short Song": the performative nature and a sentimental tone.

The "Short Song" belongs to a poetic genre known as "music bureau poetry" (*yuefu shi* 樂府詩). Here I follow the Han practice to refer to such poems as "song verses" (*geshi* 歌詩), whose musical performances are vividly described in the "Seven Elucidations" (Qi shi 七釋) by the Cao court poet Wang Can 王粲 (177–217):[4]

於是白日西移	Thereupon the blazing sun shifts west,
轉即閑堂	People turn about and enter an idle hall.
號鍾絚瑟	The Sounding Bell [of Bo Ya] and the tautly strung zitherns
列乎洞房	Are arrayed in connecting rooms.
管蕭繁會	Flutes and panpipes in a profuse ensemble
雜以笙簧	Is mingled with mouth organs.
夔牙之師	Music masters like Kui and Bo Ya,
呈能極方	Demonstrate their skills and exhaust their arts.
奏白雪之高均	They perform the lofty tune of "White Snow,"
弄幽徵與反商	Play the sombre *zhi* note and reverted *shang* note.
聲流暢以清哇	The sound flows easy and smooth, brisk and voluptuous,
時忼慨而激揚	Sometimes impassioned, intensely rousing.

3 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 15.1353n1.

4 *Ri cang Hongren ben*, 414.131.

虞公含詠　The Venerable Yu mouths a song,
陳惠清微　Chen Hui sounds brisk and soft.
新聲變用　New music and altered application,
慘悽增悲　Sad and heart-wrenching, bring more sorrow.
聽者動容　Those who listen change their expressions,
梁塵為飛　Dust on the rafters is made to fly up.

As the last few lines indicate, the primary aesthetics of song performance in Han times lay in *bei* 悲, which can be translated as "sorrow" or more neutrally, "sentiments." To such sentimental music that "moves" the audience as well as the dust on the rafters, Cao Cao composes "Short Song" to negotiate meanings of life with his audience:[5]

對酒當歌　With wine and songs before us—
人生幾何　How long can human life last?
譬如朝露　Like the morning dews—
4 去日苦多　The days gone by are all too many.

慨當以慷　Impassioned and fervid,
憂思難忘　We cannot forget these worries.
何以解憂　How can we banish our worries?
8 唯有杜康　Only by Du Kang's gift of wine.

青青子衿　Blue, blue is your lapel,
悠悠我心　Ever, ever in my heart.
但為君故　Only because of you
12 沈吟至今　I have sunk in musing.

呦呦鹿鳴　*ʔjiou-ʔjiou* call the deer,
食野之苹　Eating cudweed in the field.
我有嘉賓　I have fine guests—
16 鼓瑟吹笙　Strum the zitherns! Blow the reed organs!

明明如月　Bright, bright is the moon,
何時可掇　Can it ever be grasped?
憂從中來　Worries come from within,
20 不可斷絕　In an unbreakable chain.

5 *Wen xuan*, 27.1281–82. For my discussion of the *Song shu* version (21.610), which I suspect to be an abridgement, see Shih, "Into the New Realm of *Belles lettres*," 46–47.

越陌度阡　Crossing paths, traversing lanes,
枉用相存　You have deigned to inquire after me.
契闊談讌　After long separation, here we converse and feast,
心念舊恩　Recalling former friendships to our hearts.

月明星稀　The moon is bright, the stars are few,
烏鵲南飛　Crows and magpies are flying south.
繞樹三匝　Thrice they circle a tree,
何枝可依　On what branch can they roost?

山不厭高　The mountain is not satiated with height,
海不厭深　The sea is not satiated with depth.
周公吐哺　The Duke of Zhou spat out his food,
天下歸心　All under Heaven turned their hearts unto him.

Just as many Chinese sentences come without a grammatical subject, so does the opening line of Cao Cao's "Short Song." I had rendered the opening line with a personal "I" and read this person as Cao Cao. With a feast and an audience in mind, nevertheless, I decided to render the line with an impersonal "us,"[6] which is echoed by a general reference to human beings in the second line: "With wine and songs before us— / How long can human life last?" Having lamented the brevity of life in the first stanza, "we" ask: "How can we banish our worries?" Such worries reappear in the odd-numbered stanzas. The fifth and seventh stanzas further turn to the night sky. The bright moon hangs out of reach. The birds fly without rest. If this song verse was performed after sunset, these melancholic evening scenes must have been quite moving.

While the odd-numbered stanzas prompt worries, the even-numbered stanzas adapt the strategy of multipartite suasion from the sevens (*qi* 七) to provide solutions. The sevens, as the name indicates, is structured with seven enticements presented by one persuader (or several) to another person. The most common enticements of the sevens are a lavish feast, a palatial mansion, a musical performance, and a grand hunt. Cao Cao's "Short Song" consists of eight stanzas, every two of which constitute a mini exchange of an enticement: Du Kang in the second stanza, which refers to his invention of wine,[7] is the enticement in response to the worry that "the days gone by

6 For a discussion of impersonal pronouns, see Harbsmeier, "Xunzi and the Problem of Impersonal First Person Pronouns," 181–220.

7 Xu, *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, 7b.52a (361), in the entry of 耑.

are all too many" in the first stanza. And interestingly, the classic poem "Your Lapel" (Zi jin 子衿, *Mao shi* 毛詩 91) quoted in the third stanza is matched by another classic poem "Call the Deer" (Lu ming 鹿鳴, *Mao shi* 161) quoted in the fourth stanza. The beloved one who wears a "blue, blue lapel" in the former poem now seems to be entertained with a feast that is described in the latter poem. By separating the classic lines from their contexts and incorporating them into his new song verse, Cao Cao transforms the diplomatic tradition of citing a *Shi jing* 詩經 poem into his own mode of song verse composition. Then, the bright moon in the fifth stanza represents something unreachable, but old friends in the sixth stanza shorten the distance. "Crossing paths, traversing lanes," they visit one another from afar after long separation. The last enticement about the revival of a sagely rule is even more joyful. He is like the Duke of Zhou 周公 (fl. 1042–1035 BCE), so afraid to lose an interview with an outstanding man that "in washing my hair, I must thrice catch the wet hair up; and in having my meal, I must thrice spit the food out."[8] The crows and magpies in the seventh stanza represent the travelling scholars who could not find an understanding lord. Upon meeting a fine lord like Cao Cao, who would not find rest? What sagely rule could not be revived?

Cao Cao tells of worries in the four odd-numbered stanzas, and provides enticements as solutions—drinking, feasting, mutual understanding, and the revival of a sagely rule—in the four even-numbered stanzas. By blending sorrow with joy, Cao Cao presents his suasion, leading his audience to reflect on the reason why they are here. Is it for drinking to forget the brevity of life, or to feast with their beloved one? Do they simply hope to visit old friends, or to achieve something great together so that they can say it is worth living? The multipartite structure implies the answer. The so-called "inauspicious" lines, therefore, are not an omen of defeat or a catalyst for violence as the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* claims, but rather part of a sentimental song by which the charismatic host Cao Cao negotiates meanings of life with his guests. It is the recurrence of worries that forms a continuous, sentimental tone appealing to the audience; it is with the four enticements that Cao Cao entertains his guests and arouses lofty aspirations in them despite the brevity of life.

8 Han, *Han shi waizhuan jinzhu jinyi*, 3.135; Han, *Han shi wai chuan*, 3/31 (114).

Transcendence

In addition to earthly enticements, the arts of transcendence were also adopted in Han times in response to the brevity of life. Some conducted physical practices such as avoiding grains and taking alchemical drugs to prolong life; others sought for the land of transcendents (*xian* 仙),[9] especially the Penglai Island in the east and Mount Kunlun in the west, to learn the secrets of eternal life. To Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), it was both and beyond. According to a Daoist adept called Li Shaojun 李少君, the emperor had to offer sacrifice to the deity of the stove to obtain materials that transform cinnabar into gold. By eating and drinking from vessels made of the gold, he could prolong his years and be able to visit transcendents on the Penglai Island. In addition to such a visit, the emperor was advised to perform *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices as the legendary Yellow Emperor presumably did. When all the measures were carried out, the adept claimed, the emperor could achieve deathlessness.[10]

Conditions did not allow Cao Cao to undertake this imperial project. Instead, he shows his interest in the arts of transcendence in seven song verses: one by the title of "Moshang sang" 陌上桑, three by "Qi chu chang" 氣出唱, one by "Jing lie" 精列, and two by "Qiu Hu xing" 秋胡行.[11] These poems describe wanders to the land of the transcendents and visits to the transcendents, as Cao Cao's "Moshang sang" sings: "Galloping the rainbows, / Riding the red clouds, / I climb Mount Jiuyi and pass the Jade Gate [of Heaven]. / Crossing the Han River in Heaven [i.e., Milky Way], / Arriving at Mount Kunlun, / I meet with the Queen Mother of the West and visit the Lord of the East." These are called "roaming-into-transcendence" (*you xian* 遊仙) poems in traditional categorization.

Like the "Short Song," these song verses were meant to be sung. The music was lost, but the lyrics are extant in historical records, especially in the "Monograph on Music" (Yue zhi 樂志) of the *Song shu* 宋書, thanks to the indispensable role of music in state sacrifices, court ceremonies, and royal entertainments. Most of the received song verses attributed to Cao Cao were "accompanied" (*xianghe* 相和) songs, which were sung by a bamboo-clapper holder in a musical ensemble.[12] And according to Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372–451) commentary on Cao Cao's biography in the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志,

9 Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 33–34.

10 *Shi ji*, 12.455.

11 For a discussion of these seven song verses, see Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 142–43.

12 *Song shu*, 21.603. Also see *Yuefu shiji*, 26.377.

"whenever [Cao Cao] composed poems, he had them set to wind and string accompaniment, so that they all became musical pieces."[13]

The popularity of the accompanied songs can be observed from the "Rhapsody on the Long Flute" (Changdi fu 長笛賦) by the Eastern-Han writer and musician Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166). In the preface he tells how excited he was upon hearing "Qi chu [chang]" and "Jing lie" played on the flute by someone from the capital Luoyang 洛陽 (present-day Luoyang, Henan): "I have been away from the capital for over a year and, upon hearing this music, I suddenly felt both sad and happy over it."[14] To these two songs from the capital Luoyuan, Cao Cao composed his roaming-into-transcendence poems. While Ma Rong enjoyed the flute music alone, it is more likely that Cao Cao's poems were presented at a convivial gathering. His third song verse by the title of "Qi chu chang" ends with a feasting scene that is almost indistinguishable from an earthly one, with the host and guests wishing each other longevity:[15]

	東西廂	In the east and west wings,
	客滿堂	Guests pack the halls.
	主人當行觴	The host attends to offering toasts:
	坐者長壽遽何央	"May all in the seats enjoy a long life—is there even an end?"
12	長樂甫始宜孫子	"Lasting joy is just beginning, fit for grandsons!
	常願主人增年	We devoutly hope our host lives long,
	與天相守	Stays intact with Heaven."

This merry scene of drinking and wishing for longevity is also described by Cao Cao's son Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) in his song verse "Harp Lay" (Konghou yin 箜篌引, also known as Yetian huangque xing 野田黃雀行, as noted in the *Song shu*; for the entire poem, see Chapter 4). We see how a gathering reached its climax:[16]

	樂飲過三爵	Happily drinking, we exceed the three-beaker limit;
	緩帶傾庶羞	Loosening our belts, we empty out the many delicacies.
	主稱千金壽	The host wishes all a long life with a thousand in gold,
12	賓奉萬年酬	The guests propose a toast for his myriad-year life.

13 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 1.215; Frankel, "The Development of Han and Wei *Yüeh-fu*," 262.

14 *Wen xuan*, 18.808; *Wen xuan or Selections*, 3:259.

15 *Song shu*, 21.604.

16 *Song shu*, 21.620; *Wen xuan*, 27.1286.

In this celebratory atmosphere, Cao Cao's first song verse by the title of "Qi chu chang" presents magical flights, each of which begins with a celestial vehicle (dragons, wind, clouds, deer, or the means of drinking jade elixir, which transforms a mortal person into a transcendent) and continues with a destination in the realm of transcendents (the sacred Mount Tai, the Penglai Island on the East Sea, or Heaven). A musician signals the transition of flights with a bamboo-clapper. There are also female dancers acting the transcendental roles of the "jade maidens," as Cao Cao's second song verse by the title of "Qi chu chang" sings: "Jade maidens rise, / They rise to dance and shift several times."[17]

As Lee Fong-Mao 李豐楙 shrewdly titles his 1996 book *Worries and Wanders* (You yu you 憂與遊), this joy of transcendence is often juxtaposed with expressions of sorrow in roaming-into-transcendence poetry.[18] In some of his poems, Cao Cao does not provide any solutions to this sorrow. The sorrowful endings of those poems come as abruptly and painfully as death does to many. Take the "Jing lie" for example. In juxtaposition with a wish to visit Mount Kunlun and the Penglai Island is a repeating reminder that death is inevitable, even to sages like the Duke of Zhou and Confucius (551–479 BCE). The song verse concludes: "Having come to the evening years— / What can we do about it? / Gone is time and there is less time to come."[19] A similar sigh can be heard in his second song verse by the title of "Qiu Hu xing": "Health and intelligence / Will never come back. / If one cherishes his time and works hard, / Whom will he benefit? / Idling and indulging oneself— / I do not see what that is for either."[20]

In Confucian thought, an individual finds his proper position in society by nurturing himself with classical poetry and music, which value restrained emotions. Cao Cao entertained himself and his feasting guests with a new type of poetry and music: coffin-carrying songs (*wan ge* 挽歌). The Ming-dynasty scholar Zhu Jiazheng 朱嘉徵 (1602–1684) reminds us it was a common practice in Han times that people sang coffin-carrying songs at merry gatherings. That may be the reason, Zhu Jiazheng observes, for Cao Zhi's song verse "Harp Lay" to turn sharply from a feast to death: "Living an exis-

17 *Song shu*, 21.604. Huang Jie 黃節 (1873–1935) takes the "jade maiden" as the name of a peak. If so, we can imagine how the images of a sacred mountain, a female transcendent, and a dancer merge in the musical performance. For his note, see Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 191.

18 Lee, *You yu you*, 6–12.

19 *Song shu*, 21.604.

20 *Song shu*, 21.612.

tence, we have ornate homes to rest; / Withering and wasting, we return to hilly graves."[21] In fact, a coffin-carrying song is even less restrained than Cao Zhi's "Harp Lay." Cao Zhi's song verse at least offers solace with this conclusion: "Among those prior to us, who did not die? / Knowing fate, why worry anymore?" By contrast, a coffin-carrying song finds no solace: "On the shallot the dew— / How easily it dries! / The dew dries but next dawn, they will drop once more; / Human beings die but once gone, when will they come back?"[22]

Just as the coffin-carrying singer posts a question about death that no one can answer, so does Cao Cao post questions about aging in his second song verse by the title of "Qiu Hu xing." Through this type of poetry and music, he directly addressed mortality, expressed deep sorrow, and posed questions rather than answers. Life and death were juxtaposed; joy and sorrow were enjoyed at once. As part of this aesthetic and social approach to mortality, Cao Cao roamed not only into transcendence, but also out of it, with a heavy sigh that echoed in everyone's heart.

Encounter

The arts of transcendence had long promised emperors and kings longevity, as well as disappointed them. What did Cao Cao, known for his skepticism, think of such arts? As anecdotes relate, when someone named Zuo Ci 左慈 claimed to master such arts, Cao Cao tested, humiliated, and even attempted to kill him.[23] This explains why Cao Cao casts doubts on the arts of transcendence in his roaming-into-transcendence poems.

Cao Cao takes another approach in his first song verse by the title of "Qiu Hu xing." Instead of passively hearing about the transcendents and testing their authenticity, he shares his encounter with a transcendent on a military expedition. The song verse begins with a specific location, Mount Sanguan 散關山, which Cao Cao visited on his 215 CE military expedition against the Daoist kingdom of Zhang Lu 張魯 (d. 216).[24] The first section of the song verse reads:[25]

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21 *Song shu*, 21.620; *Wen xuan*, 27.1286. For Zhu Jiazheng's comment, see Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 95. Also see *Yuefu guangxu*, 8.4a (388).

22 For the song verse, titled "Dew on the Shallot" (Xie lu 薤露), see *Yuefu shiji*, 27.396. Also see Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 75–81. For my further discussion, see Chapter 4.

23 Campany, *Making Transcendents*, chap. 7, "Adepts, Their Families, and the Imperium."

24 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 1.183.

25 *Song shu*, 21.610–11; for the variants, see *Yuefu shiji*, 36.526–27.

晨上散關山　At dawn I climb Mount Sanguan,
此道當何難　How hard can this road be?
晨上散關山　At dawn I climb Mount Sanguan,
此道當何難　How hard can this road be?

牛頓不起　Oxen collapse, not getting up;
車墮谷間　Chariots fall into the valley.
坐槃石之上　Sitting upon a boulder,
彈五弦之琴　I play a five-stringed zither.
作為清角韻　Making the *qingjue* tones,
意中(述)[迷]煩　I feel puzzled and vexed.

歌以言志　Let us sing to tell our aspirations.
晨上散關山　At dawn I climb Mount Sanguan.　(一解 section 1)

Line 8 surprises the audience, for zithers seldom enter the realm of military expeditions, especially when oxen collapse and chariots fall. Moreover, the zither is a five-stringed zither, which is an invention of the ancient sage Shun 舜. The tones it makes are the *qingjue* tones, which are played fast and at a high pitch, challenging for the ears of those deficient in virtue.[26] Having found troubles on the road, the speaker is even more troubled by the music. At this time of crisis, a mysterious figure titled "Thrice Venerable" appear in the second section (*jie* 解, a musical term comparable to a "movement" in a concerto):[27]

有何三老公　Who is this Thrice Venerable,
卒來在我傍　Suddenly coming to my side?
有何三老公　Who is this Thrice Venerable,
卒來在我傍　Suddenly coming to my side?

(員)[負]揜被裘　Putting on overcoats, donning furs,
似非恒人　He seems not to be an ordinary man.

26 Liu et al., *Huainanzi jishi*, 2.109; Han, *Han Feizi jijie*, 3.65.

27 I translate *Sanlao gong* 三老公 as a title instead of "three old men" because the Thrice Venerable surnamed Dong 三老董公 was well-known in Han times for his advice for Emperor Gaozu of Han 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE), and *san* 三 in his title was understood as "much" in age. See *Shi ji*, 8.370. There was also a ceremony of feeding the Thrice Venerable, called *Sanshou* 三壽 in Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139 CE) "Rhapsody on the Eastern Metropolis" (Dongjing fu 東京賦). See *Wen xuan*, 3.120; *Wen xuan or Selections*, 1:285 (line 488).

謂卿云何 He says: "Why are you
20 困苦以自怨 Constrained and troubled, loathing yourself?
徨徨所欲 Why jumpy and uneasy at your longings,
來到此間 Coming to this place?"

歌以言志 Let us sing to tell our aspirations.
24 有何三老公 Who is this Thrice Venerable? (二解 section 2)

With the sudden appearance of this Thrice Venerable and his speech, the audience finds the song verse not only a musical piece, but also a dramatic one. His clothing is unordinary, his words are intriguing, and his identity is yet to be revealed. The suspension arouses curiosity in the audience. From mountain climbing to zither playing to the sudden appearance of this mysterious figure, the song verse successfully puts itself under the spotlight.

The third section reveals his identity as a transcendent. Mount Sanguan is usually irrelevant to transcendence, but now becomes a site of witnessing the True Man from Mount Kunlun and makes the encounter all the more engaging. From free roaming to ascetic practices, lines 29–32 are packed with conventional vocabulary of transcendence arts. Line 32 is especially intimidating with its length and severity. While the protagonist hesitates, the transcendent leaves him behind:

我居崐崘山 "I live in Mount Kunlun,
所謂者眞人 Known as True Man.
我居崐崘山 I live in Mount Kunlun,
28 所謂者眞人 Known as True Man.

道深有可得 "The Way is profound yet attainable:
名山歷觀 View all the famous mountains,
遨游八極 Roam and ramble to the Eight Limits,
32 枕石漱流飲泉 Make rocks your pillow, rinse in currents, drink from springs."
沈吟不決 Sunk in musing, I hesitate,
遂上升天 Thereupon he ascends to Heaven.

歌以言志 Let us sing to tell our aspirations.
36 我居崐崘山 "I live in Mount Kunlun." (三解 section 3)

In the final section, the speaker keeps wailing until the pentasyllabic metre is replaced by a classical, tetrasyllabic metre. Line 43 "Upright and not deceitful" (正而不譎) is how Confucius described Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公

(r. 685–643 BCE),[28] a hegemon who reputedly served the king of Zhou and fended off the "barbarians." As a warlord who served the emperor of Han and fended off other warlords, Cao Cao is comparing himself to Lord Huan:

去去不可追　Gone, gone, he cannot be pursued,
長恨相牽攀　I always regret attempting to catch hold of him.
去去不可追　Gone, gone, he cannot be pursued,
40 長恨相牽攀　I always regret attempting to catch hold of him.

夜夜安得寐　Night after night, how can I sleep?
惆悵以自憐　Low and down, I feel for myself.
正而不譎　"Upright and not deceitful,"
44 辭賦依因　Songs and rhapsodies are composed accordingly.
經傳所過　This is what classics and traditions pass on,
西來所傳　This is what is transmitted from the west.

歌以言志　Let us sing to tell our aspirations.
48 去去不可追　Gone, gone, he cannot be pursued.　(四解 section 4)

Lines 43–46 have been puzzling to commentators. To decipher those, we have to know not only what happened to Lord Huan in the western land, but also how the words *guo* 過 and *zhuan*/*chuan* 傳 were used in Han times. What happened to Lord Huan in the western land is the easier part. As late-Qing scholar Huang Jie 黃節 (1873–1935) points out, Lord Huan claimed to have launched a military expedition in the western land (西伐大夏，涉流沙).[29] Now that Cao Cao marches in the western land as Lord Huan did, the analogy is obvious. As for *guo* 過 and *zhuan*/*chuan* 傳, let us start with the latter word. In his study of transcendence arts in early medieval China, Robert Ford Campany pays special attention to how the adepts transmitted (*chuan* 傳) their traditions (*zhuan* 傳) to the public.[30] Cao Cao also uses the word both as a verb and as a noun. It is just that the tradition (noun) he transmits (verb) to his audience is not transcendence art, but that of an admirable hegemon like Lord Huan. What Huang Jie fails to recognize is that the word 過 was synonymous with the verb *chuan* 傳 "to transmit" in Han times. The two verbs were juxtaposed by the Eastern-Han scholar Wang Chong 王充 (27–post 100): "Just as postmen *pass on* letters, so do disciples *transmit*

28 *Lun yu zhushu*, 14.7b (126).

29 *Shi ji*, 28.1361, 32.1491.

30 Campany, *Making Transcendents*, 11.

teachings (郵人之過書，門者之傳教也).[31] Similarly, Cao Cao juxtaposes the synonymous verbs in lines 45–46: "This is what classics and traditions *pass on*, / This is what is *transmitted* from the west" (經傳所過，西來所傳). The "upright" legacy of Lord Huan, having been transmitted by classics and traditions from the western land, surpasses the "deceitful" arts of transcendence and reaffirms the legitimacy of Cao Cao's military expedition.

Every section of this song verse ends with a line mirroring the opening and this expression: "Let us sing to tell our aspirations" (歌以言志). The expression develops from "reciting a *shi* poem to tell one's aspirations" (賦詩言志), which can be traced further back to the ancient practice of reciting a *Shi jing* poem to express oneself in a diplomatic setting. Cao Cao claims the same social function for song verses, expressing his aspiration to transmit Lord Huan's legacy.

Seasons of Life

Cao Cao's "Striding Out of the Spacious Gate" is a song verse that has not been considered in a roaming-into-transcendence context, for it does not mention transcendental figures (such as Master Red Pine, Prince Qiao, and the Queen Mother of the West), places (such as Mount Kunlun and the Penglai Island), or vehicles (such as dragons and deer). Although the prelude (*yan* 豔) mentions clouds and rain, those have been read as favours from Heaven rather than transcendental vehicles. Mount Jieshi 碣石 from which one can look at the East Sea and search for the Penglai Island, is also mentioned, but it has been read as a landmark located on Cao Cao's 207 CE military expedition against Yuan Shao's 袁紹 (d. 202) two sons and the Wuhuan 烏桓 people. Therefore, when hesitance is mentioned (line 4), it has been associated with the dissenting opinions that Cao Cao's military consultants held about the expedition, especially whether to launch it and which route to take.[32]

In contrast to the above observations, we have seen earlier how Cao Cao integrates seemingly incongruous elements of transcendence arts, coffin-carrying songs, and his military expeditions into his song verse to respond to mortality. Such integration not only challenges our definitions of roaming-into-transcendence poems, but also suggests fluid approaches to mortality that Cao Cao shared with his military-political community. By placing

31 Wang, *Lun heng jiaoshi*, 27.1114.

32 Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 228; de Crespigny, *Imperial Warlord*, 230–39.

Cao Cao's "Striding Out of the Spacious Gate" in this rich context, I would like to re-examine the prelude:[33]

	雲行雨步	With clouds I walk, with rain I stride,
	超越九江之皐	Leaping over the swamp of the Nine Rivers,
	臨觀異同	Looking on to what is different or similar.
4	心意懷游豫	Wavering and havering in my mind,
	不知當復何從	I do not know which I should follow.
	經過至我碣石	Passing by my Mount Jieshi,
	心惆悵我東海	I feel low and down by my East Sea.

(雲行至此為豔 From "With clouds I walk" to here is the prelude.)

The prelude would be difficult to understand if detached from the context of pursuing transcendence. The Nine Rivers (Jiujiang 九江) in line 2, for example, are not found on Cao Cao's 207 CE military expedition, but in Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 (179–117 BCE) "Rhapsody on the Great Man" (Daren fu 大人賦). According to the *Shi ji* 史記, Emperor Wu of Han felt like he was floating in the air upon hearing about a transcendental journey:[34]

徧覽八紘而觀四荒兮	Gazing all over at the Eight Bounds and viewing the Four Wastes—
朅度九江而越五河	He departs over the Nine Rivers and crosses the Five Waterways.

The Nine Rivers, we realize, exist in the realm of transcendence. The numbers eight, four, nine, and five are synonymous with "many" and "all." Just as the Eight Bounds and Four Wastes refer to all the places, so do the Nine Rivers (Jiujiang 九江) and Five Waterways (Wuhe 五河) refer to all the rivers south and north. In Sima Xianru's poetic performance, the great man owns the power to roam freely across the rivers. Accompanied by clouds and rain, the speaker in Cao Cao's song verse also transcends the limits, "Leaping over the swamp of the Nine Rivers, / Looking on to what is different or similar" (lines 2–3).

But when he arrives at Mount Jieshi, he hesitates: "Wavering and havering in my mind, / I do not know which I should follow." In the next two lines, there is another expression that commentators fail to address, which I italicize in the translation below:

33 *Song shu*, 21.619.

34 *Shi ji*, 117.3063; Williams, *Chinese Poetry as Soul Summoning*, 88.

經過至我碣石　Passing by *my* Mount Jieshi,
心惆悵我東海　I feel low and down by *my* East Sea.

In his commentary on Cao Cao's "Striding Out of the Spacious Gate," modern scholar Xia Chuancai 夏傳才 (1924–2017) takes *wo* 我 as a syllable filler, which completes the musical line rather than carries any substantial reference.[35] In my observation, the word is used as a possessive determiner "my." By calling the mountain and the sea "*my* Mount Jieshi" and "*my* East Sea," the speaker in Cao Cao's song verse identifies himself as a transcendent just as the speaker in Cao Zhi's does: "Mount Kunlun was originally *my* dwelling, / The central provinces are not *my* home" (崑崙本吾宅，中州非我家) in Cao Zhi's "Far Roaming" (Yuan you shi 遠遊詩, also known as Yuan you pian 遠遊篇); and "I don *my* cinnabar afterglow robe, / Put on *my* white rainbow skirt…I attach *my* belt pendants of carnelian and chalcedony, / Rinse the mouth with *my* broth of midnight mists" (披我丹霞衣，襲我素霓裳…帶我瓊瑤佩，漱我沆瀣漿) in Cao Zhi's "The Fifth Roaming" (Wu you yong 五遊詠).[36] Moreover, Mount Jieshi marks an entrance to the East Sea, where transcendents reside. By claiming both as "mine" but feeling dejected upon passing both, the speaker in Cao Cao's "Striding Out of the Spacious Gate" is not returning to his transcendental home.

The wavering and sinking heart in the prelude finds a path to follow in section 1 (again, *jie* 解 "section" is a musical term comparable to a "movement" in a concerto). By turning his back to the transcendental home and assuming the identity of a mortal, the speaker displays a totally different view of the East Sea. There is simplicity: the horizontal line of calm, full water and the vertically rising islands. There is life: the lush trees and grasses, and the breathing of the sea that can be observed in the soughing wind and the surging waves. There is grandeur: so grand that the celestial bodies seem to rise from its weaves. "So fortunate, so perfect!" This is an exclamation of amazement at discovering a world, an exciting mortal world that has been overshadowed by the pursuit of transcendence. The expression "Let us sing to intonate our aspirations" appears at this point. What we aspire is no longer longevity but a fresh eye on life:

8　東臨碣石　Eastward I approach Mount Jieshi
　　以觀滄海　To view the vast sea.
　　水何淡淡　How calm and full the water is!
　　山島竦峙　Mountainous islands rise aloft.

35 Cao, *Cao Cao ji zhu*, 18.

36 *Yiwen leiju*, 78.1332–33; *Yuefu shiji*, 64.922–23.

樹木叢生　Trees grow in thick clumps,
百草豐茂　Grasses are lush and luxuriant.
秋風蕭瑟　The autumn wind soughs and sighs,
洪濤湧起　Overwhelming waves surge up.
日月之行　The sun and the moon move
若出其中　As if rising from their midst.
星漢粲爛　The starry Han River [i.e., Milky Way] glitters and glistens,
若出其裏　As if rising from their inside.

幸甚至哉　So fortunate, so perfect!
歌以詠志　Let us sing to intonate our aspirations.

(觀滄海 一解 "View the vast sea": section 1)

Not only is the path Cao Cao decides to take in this song verse down to earth, it also evolves with seasons. The autumn wind that "soughs and sighs" on the East Sea in section 1 (line 14) turns into the winter wind that "loiters and lingers" in section 2 (line 23). In the onset of winter, some become more active than others. Birds are migrating while bears burrow into hibernation; merchants are travelling while farming tools are set aside:

孟冬十月　In the onset of winter, the tenth month,
北風裴回　The north wind loiters and lingers.
天氣肅清　The air is quiet and cold,
繁霜霏霏　Profuse frost falls and flurries.
鵾雞晨鳴　Great fowl call at down,
鴻雁南飛　Swan-geese fly south.
鷙鳥潛藏　Birds of prey hide away,
熊羆窟栖　Bears rest in their caves.

錢鎛停置　Spades and hoes are set aside,
農收積場　The harvest is piled on the threshing floor.
逆旅整設　Inns are made ready,
以通賈商　For merchants to travel.

幸甚至哉　So fortunate, so perfect!
歌以詠志　Let us sing to intonate our aspirations.

(冬十月 二解 "In winter, the tenth month": section 2)

The vibrant view of the migrating birds and travelling merchants further freezes into a still and barren landscape in section 3, where boats can hardly move, the earth can hardly be pierced, and people can hardly find peace of mind:

36	鄉土不同	Each region is different:
	河朔隆寒	North of the Yellow River is severely cold.
	流澌浮漂	Floes of ice drift about,
	舟船行難	Boats move with difficulty.
40	錐不入地	Drills cannot pierce the earth,
	蘴藾深奧	Turnip and pearly everlasting grow deep.
	水竭不流	Water dries up and stops flowing,
	冰堅可蹈	Ice is firm enough to walk on.
44	士隱者貧	Men in seclusion are poor,
	勇俠輕非	Bold outlaws do wrongs lightly.
	心常歎怨	In their hearts are constant complaints,
	戚戚多悲	Sad, sad, so much sorrow.
48	幸甚至哉	So fortunate, so perfect!
	歌以詠志	Let us sing to intonate our aspirations.

(河朔寒 三解 "North of the Yellow River is cold": section 3)

On the one hand, the seasonal and landscape transitions correspond to Cao Cao's 207 CE military expedition. It was autumn when Cao Cao arrived at the East Sea coast, and winter when he returned from the frozen north. On the other hand, the transitions also correspond to the different stages of a mortal life. During the autumn and early winter of a mortal life, one enjoys grandeur (as in section 1) and tranquility (as in section 2). When it comes to the deep winter, there are various difficulties and immense sorrow (as in section 3). Even so, every section concludes with this celebratory expression: "So fortunate, so perfect!"

In his reading of this song verse, Paul W. Kroll observes: "[Cao's] journey north was not the fabulous progress of a [Daoist], but it did bring him, the foremost lord of the State, to lands which seemingly appeared as strange and aweful as those visited by a dream-wanderer."[37] This reminds us that section 3 starts with this observation: "Each region is different." The difference is both spatial and temporal. We might prefer the view of a threshing floor piled with harvest and inns packed with travellers, to the view of a fro-

37 Kroll, "Portraits of Ts'ao Ts'ao," 93.

zen river and anxious people, but from a broader perspective, those are integral to the journey of life. Dark and heartbreaking as some moments might be, they are still marvellous.

This military expedition was the one during which Cao Cao lost his youngest and most brilliant consultant Guo Jia. Other military consultants, as Cao Cao noted in his letter to Xun You, were about the same age as Cao Cao. For this audience, in response to the north wind and frozen river in life, the speaker in this song verse does not immerse himself in deep sorrow as in the "Jing lie" and the second song verse by the title of "Qiu Hu xing." Instead, in section 4 he passionately celebrates the unending aspirations with his fellow mortals. Between the soaring serpent and an aging steed that "aspires to run a thousand *li*," he chooses the latter; between the long-lived tortoise and a mortal man with "a grand vision that never fades," he also chooses the latter. Being pleased (*yi* 怡) and nourished (*yang* 養) by this feast and this song verse,[38] one may transcend the limits of lifespan. We can imagine that at this time, the host Cao Cao rises from his seat, inviting his guests to enjoy their journeys in the mortal world to the fullest. The indecisive and dejected figure in the prelude now dazzles the audience with his charisma:

	神龜雖壽	The sacred tortoise, though long-lived,
	猶有竟時	Still comes to an end.
52	騰蛇乘霧	The soaring serpent, riding the mist,
	終為土灰	Eventually turns into dirt and ash.
	驥老伏櫪	A fine steed, aging, lying in the stable,[39]
	志在千里	Aspires to run a thousand *li*.
56	烈士暮年	A man of honour in his evening years
	壯心不已	Has a grand vision that never fades.
	盈縮之期	Our lifespan, full or shortened,
	不但在天	Is not determined by Heaven alone.
60	養怡之福	Blessed with nourishment and a pleasant heart,
	可得永年	We can prolong our years.

38 The juxtaposition of *yi* 怡 and *yang* 養 can be found also in the concluding lines of an anonymous "Man ge xing" 滿歌行. See *Yuefu shiji*, 43.636–37.

39 Line 54 "A fine steed, aging, lying in the stable" (驥老伏櫪) is read alternatively—and perhaps more popularly—as "an aging fine steed lying in the stable" (老驥伏櫪), as we will see soon.

幸甚至哉　　So fortunate, so perfect!
歌以詠志　　Let us sing to intonate our aspirations.
(神龜雖壽 四解 "The sacred tortoise, though long-lived": section 4)

The social and performative setting reconstructed above has been obscured by later uses of Cao Cao's song verses. For example, the following lines from Cao Cao's "Striding Out of the Spacious Gate" were passionately recited by the Eastern-Jin warlord Wang Dun 王敦 (266–324):

老驥伏櫪　　An aging fine steed lying in the stable,
志在千里　　Aspires to run a thousand *li*.
烈士暮年　　A man of honour in his evening years
壯心不已　　Has a grand vision that never fades.

According to *A New Account of the Tales of the World* (Shishuo xinyu 世說新語), a collection of distinctive speeches and deeds compiled under the sponsorship of Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444), Wang Dun intonated the above lines whenever he drank, and beat time with his *ruyi* baton on a spittoon until "the mouth of the spittoon was completely in shards."[40] Later, this anecdote is contextualized as Wang Dun's ambition being oppressed by the emperor in his biography in the *Jin shu* 晉書.[41]

Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037–1101) "Rhapsody on the Red Cliff" (Chibi fu 赤壁賦) is another well-known example of using Cao Cao's song verses in the context of frustration. It relates a moonlit night of the banished poet on the Yangtze River. At the Red Cliff, where he thought to be the ancient site of Cao Cao's Battle of the Red Cliff, a "guest" persona played mournful tones on the flute and recited the following lines from Cao Cao's "Short Song":

月明星稀　　The moon is bright, the stars are few,
烏鵲南飛　　Crows and magpies are flying south.

"Are these not lines by Cao Mengde [style name of Cao Cao]?" said the guest. "He poured wine as he gazed across the river and composed poetry with his halberd lying across his lap. Without a doubt he was the greatest warrior of his age, and yet where is he today? And what about you and me, we fishermen and woodcutters of the river islets?"[42] These quotations of Cao Cao's

40 Liu et al., *Shishuo xinyu jianshu*, 13/4 (598); Liu et al., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, 13/4 (323).

41 *Jin shu*, 98.2557.

42 Su, *Su Shi wenji*, 1.5–6; Egan, *Word, Image, and Deed*, 223.

song verses, one by a general with unfulfilled aspirations and the other by a guest persona accompanying his banished friend, reinforce the long-held assumption that the poetry of loss is developed by those who were expelled from the court.

This chapter, on the other hand, reconstructs a social and performative setting in which transcendence arts, coffin-carrying songs, and military expeditions were integral to the poetic experience. We realize Cao Cao was not only another hero who perished. In his limited lifespan, he was also a charismatic host who presented sentimental songs at a feast to facilitate grief for the absent youth, and a warlord who adapted roaming-into-transcendence poetry to sustain his military-political community. Aging as they were, they chose to leave the transcendental home behind, singing and celebrating seasons of life with fellow mortals.

Chapter 2

SURVIVING IN HER VOICE

DEATH WAS "SOCIAL" primarily at the lineage level. It was to the bereaved lineage, with a focus on the male heir, that mourning and sacrificial rituals were ascribed. According to the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, "people do not offer sacrifice to those not of their house." Confucius (551–479 BCE) also said that "to offer sacrifice to spirits who are not your ancestors is ingratiating."[1] Mourning anyone of a lateral or an unrelated lineage (e.g., a cousin or a friend) was considered proper only to some extent. As Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303 CE) put it, a gentleman was expected "not to lament until arriving at a funeral, and to cease wailing upon seeing plants rooted for over a year."[2] Therefore, Lu Ji had to defend himself when grieving for Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), who had been gone for decades. Despite the boundaries drawn by the mortuary rituals, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226) composed poems in the voices of these bereaved women: Cai Yong's 蔡邕 (133–192) bereaved daughter Cai Yan 蔡琰 (ca. 178–post 206),[3] Ruan Yu's 阮瑀 (d. 212) widow, and Cao Pi's mother Lady Bian 卞夫人 (159 or 161–230) in mourning for a Cao clan child.[4] Moreover, Cao Pi commanded other poets to compose theirs side by side with him.

"Writing in the voices of others" is called *ni* 擬, *dai* 代, or *nidai* 擬代 in Chinese. For the economy of language, I also translate it as "to impersonate" or "impersonation" (without any negative connotations attached to this

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1 Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society*, 23–24 and Part I; Campany, "Ghosts Matter," 17–18. For Durrant, Li, and Schaberg's translation of 民不祀非族, see *Zuo Tradition*, Lord Xi 10/3 (1:300–1). For Chin's translation of 非其鬼而祭之，諂也, see *The Analects*, 2/24 (24).

2 These lines (臨喪殯而後悲，覩陳根而絕哭) are from Lu Ji's "Mourning Emperor Wu of Wei" (Diao Wei Wu wen 弔魏武帝文). See *Wen xuan*, 60.2594–601. The expression of "plants rooted for over a year" (*chen gen* 陳根, literally "old roots") is from the expression of "grass growing for over a year" (*su cao* 宿草) in the *Li ji* 禮記: "On the tomb of a friend, if there is grass growing for over a year, one stops wailing thereafter" (朋友之墓，有宿草而不哭焉). See *Li ji jinzhu jinyi*, 3.66; Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 175.

3 For a discussion of Cai Yan's dates, see Frankel, "Cai Yan and the Poems," 133–34.

4 For Lady Bian's dates, see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 5.580; *Taiping yulan*, 872.10a. Also see Cutter and Crowell's note in the historical records *Empresses and Consorts*, 195n15.

English word). Impersonation is common in *yongwu* 詠物 poems such as a rhapsody on a caged oriole. It is also essential to the trope of a "longing wife" (*sifu* 思婦) or "abandoned wife" (*qifu* 棄婦), whose laments and complaints are conventionally read as a frustrated scholar's yearning for his lord's recognition.

But while impersonating a caged oriole or a longing wife was typical of a court composition, impersonating a bereaved woman was not. The mortuary rituals would discourage such composition in a court setting and for the purpose of expressing one's yearnings for his lord's recognition. Why did Cao Pi venture to cross the ritual boundaries? And why did he command other poets to do the same? Did death become bonding because the poems assumed the role of the bereaved at court? Or was it marginalizing, since those were written not in a male voice but a female one, not under Cao Cao's command but Cao Pi's? To look for answers, this chapter will reconsider the interrelationship among mortuary rituals, mourning genres, the trope of a longing wife, and court composition.

Away from Chang'an

A couplet from Wang Can's 王粲 (177–217) pentasyllabic *shi* 詩 poem "Sevenfold Sadness" (Qi ai 七哀) captures the moment when he fled the old capital and gazed back at it:[5]

南登霸陵岸	Southward I climbed Baling's slope,
迴首望長安	Turning my head I gazed at Chang'an.

Baling is the burial mound of Emperor Wen of Han 漢文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE), whose posthumous title represents cultural elegance. Chang'an 長安 (present-day Xi'an 西安, Shaanxi), literally "long-lasting peace," had been the capital city during his reign, but in 192 it became an arena of revolts, assassins, and massacres. What Wang Can gazed back at was a falling empire and what he mourned was the death of cultural elegance.

In addition to the grand images of an imperial mound and an old capital, Wang Can includes a mother's voice in the same poem. The sixteen-*sui* poet did not know who she was,[6] not to mention to which lineage she belonged. But by impersonating her, he makes us hear the pain and think of all the mothers who have to leave their children behind:

5 *Wen xuan*, 23.1087.

6 *Sui* is a classifier of age. In traditional calculation, people turn one *sui* as soon as they are born.

路有飢婦人　On the road there was a starving woman,
抱子棄草間　Hugging her child and leaving it in the grass.
顧聞號泣聲　Looking back she heard it wailing and weeping,
揮涕獨不還　Wiping her tears, she still did not return.
未知身死處　"I do not know where I shall die,
何能兩相完　How can I keep the two of us alive?"
驅馬棄之去　Spurring my horse, I left her behind—
不忍聽此言　I could not bear to listen to these words.

Wang Can kept heading south while Cai Yan was abducted to the north. They were the two book inheritors of the leading scholar Cai Yong: Wang Can as a young talent who had won Cai Yong's acclaim, and Cai Yan as the only child of Cai Yong's principal wife.[7] During the political upheavals of Chang'an, Cai Yong was put to death and the two young people went in opposite directions. Wang Can fled south and served the warlord Liu Biao 劉表 (142–208) in present-day Hubei; Cai Yan was seized by non-Han cavalry and became a Xiongnu chieftain's wife in present-day Shanxi. It took them more than a decade to return to the central land, and Cao Cao was the key to their returns: He ransomed Cai Yan from the Xiongnu and remarried her to a commandant called Dong Si 董祀; when he launched a military expedition against Liu Biao, Wang Can joined his court.

In contrast to the anonymous female voice in Wang Can's poem, Cai Yan was known because of her father, the celebrated scholar Cai Yong. By arranging her ransom and remarriage, Cao Cao assumed the role of a guardian, not only of Cai Yong's heir but also of the cultural heritage that Cai Yong represented. According to the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, when Dong Si committed a capital offence and Cai Yan pleaded on her husband's behalf, Cao Cao did not meet her separately to take care of the matter in private. Instead, he announced her to his guests—including high officials, famous scholars, and envoys from afar—as Cai Yong's daughter. Cai Yan managed to impress and move everyone with her plea, but Cao Cao again turned the focus to her role as Cai Yong's heir, asking if she remembered the books her father had owned. She did not disappoint Cao Cao, writing from memory the books she

7 Cai Yong had another daughter, who was likely born to a concubine. See Cao and Shen, *Zhonggu wenxue shiliao congkao*, 44. The books Wang Can received from Cai Yong were inherited by his cousin, whose son was the famous scholar Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249). For a discussion of the circulation of Cai Yong's books, see Yu, "Jian'an qizi nianpu," 418–19.

still remembered.[8] Ransoming Cai Yong's bereaved daughter thus presented double meanings: the lineage of Cai Yong as well as the cultural heritage of a court.

In response to this meaningful ransom, Cao Pi composed a poem titled "Rhapsody on Cai Bojie's [style name of Cai Yong] Daughter" (Cai Bojie nü fu 蔡伯喈女賦). For its reference to a black jade disk, the preface is extant in the entry of "jade disk" (*bi* 璧) in the Song-dynasty literary compendium *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽. The main text of the rhapsody, on the other hand, is not included in the compendium or found elsewhere:[9]

> My father was as fond of Cai Bojie just as Guan [Zhong] was of Bao [Shuya], and therefore commanded an envoy, Zhou Jin, to take a black jade disk to the Xiongnu to ransom Cai's daughter. When she was back, he married her to Dong Si, Commandant of the Commanderies with Agricultural Garrisons.
>
> 家公與蔡伯喈有管鮑之好，乃命使者周近持玄玉璧於匈奴贖其女，還以妻屯田郡都尉董祀。

In the Tang-dynasty literary compendium *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, in the entry of "resentment" (*yuan* 怨), we find another rhapsody on Cai Yan. It is attributed to Ding Yì 丁廙 (d. 220), who joined Cao Cao's court during its founding years. It is possible that this piece was written for the same occasion as Cao Pi's, but the extant text in the literary compendium, which hardly quotes anything in full length, stops before referring to the ransom.

The first rhyme group in the extant text begins with a third-person pronoun *yi* 伊. She is described as sixteen *sui* and as splendid as the flowers in the legendary Deng Grove.[10] She modelled herself after those in the first six chapters of the *Traditions of Exemplary Women* (Lie nü zhuan 列女傳) (line 5).[11] Moreover, she was "under the clear instructions given by her father" (line 7, which alludes to the relationship between Confucius and his son).[12]

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8 *Hou Han shu*, 84.2800–801.

9 *Taiping yulan*, 806.9b (3584). Also see Frankel, "Cai Yan and the Poems," 134, 149; de Crespigny, *Fire over Luoyang*, 137–38n44.

10 For the legend in which the sun-chasing giant Kuafu's 夸父 staff transformed into the Deng Grove, see *Shanhai jing jiaozhu*, 8.238–39.

11 The *Traditions of Exemplary Women* is attributed to Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–78 BCE). Among its seven chapters, the first six present moral models (called *Liu Lie* 六列 in line 5), whereas the seventh presents "bad" examples.

12 The expression of "across the courtyard" (*guo ting* 過庭) in line 7 is from *The Analects* (16/13), in which Confucius gave his son instructions while the latter hurried across the courtyard. See *Lun yu zhushu*, 16.9b (150).

Then the metaphorical "cold frost" set in (line 14), marking a transitional point in her life. According to the *Hou Han shu*, her first husband, Wei Zhongdao 衛仲道, died early, and since they did not have children, Cai Yan returned to her maiden home. In Ding Yì's observation, she "only wished to fully enjoy her remaining years" (line 16). But by marrying a Xiongnu chieftain, in Ding Yì's unfair judgment, she was "ashamed to face the 'Cypress Boat' poet of old" (line 21).[13] While the widow in the classic poem "Cypress Boat" (Bo zhou 柏舟, *Mao shi* 毛詩 45) refused to remarry, she "betrayed" the soul of her husband and was remarried. The entire rhyme group reads:[14]

	伊太宗之令女	She is the esteemed daughter of the great clansman,
	稟神惠之自然	Born with a disposition of unearthly grace.
	在華年之二八	When it came to her sixteenth in blossom,
4	披鄧林之曜鮮	She displayed the splendour of Deng Grove.
	明六列之尚致	Enlightened by the nobility in the six *Exemplary Women* chapters,
	服女史之話言	She engraved on her mind the words of the lady scribes.
	參過庭之明訓	Under the clear instructions given by her father,
8	才朗悟而通玄	She was bright and perceived the abstruse.
	當三春之嘉月	During the three favourable months of spring,
	時將歸於所天	It was time to marry to her "heaven," the husband.
	曳丹羅之輕裳	Trailing a light skirt of cinnabar-red gossamer,
12	戴金翠之華鈿	She wore hair-ornaments of gold and kingfisher feathers.
	美榮曜之所茂	While praising how the luxuriant splendour thrived,
	哀寒霜之已繁	One laments that the cold frost has grown profuse.
	豈偕老之可期	Could anyone expect to grow old with their partner?
16	庶盡歡於餘年	She only wished to fully enjoy her remaining years.
	何大願之不遂	How come her major wish was not fulfilled—
	飄微軀於逆邊	Her humble body drifted to the borders among the rebels.
	行悠悠於日遠	Travelling away and afar, further distant daily,
20	入穹谷之寒山	She entered the cold mountains among the deep valleys.
	慚柏舟於千祀	Ashamed to face the "Cypress Boat" poet of old,
	負冤魂於黃泉	She betrayed his soul under the Yellow Springs.

13 For the "moral contempt in which Cai Yan was held by many," see Frankel, "Cai Yan and the Poems," 155.

14 *Yiwen leiju*, 30.542.

In the next two rhyme groups Ding Yì switches to the first-personal pronoun *wo* 我 to assume Cai Yan's inner voice. In her voice, more classical allusions are made, all of which are from the *Shi jing* 詩經 airs of Bei 邶, Yong 鄘, and Wei 衛, known for female laments: "I fear I will be worn out by the 'wild and windy'" (line 26, alluding to *Mao shi* 30), "I grieve that 'there is no regard for my person'" (line 38, alluding to *Mao shi* 35), and "Facing the 'south wind,' I weep tears of blood" (line 42, alluding to *Mao shi* 32). In addition to the *Shi jing*, the melancholy *Chu ci* 楚辭 is alluded to. "Intonating 'fragrant grass ten thousand *li* away'" (line 27), she attempts to summon her late husband's soul (see Chapter 3). But as the protagonist in the *Chu ci* usually does, she fails and finds herself approaching the "mulberry and elm" (line 34), where the rays of the setting sun linger. Neither accepted by her late husband (in the second rhyme group), nor recognized by her current one (in the third rhyme group), she becomes an abandoned wife in the conventional trope. The two rhyme groups read:

	我羈虜其如昨	Since I was abducted, which feels like yesterday,
24	經春秋之十二	I have passed twelve springs and autumns.
	忍胡顏之重恥	Enduring the deep shame, the criticism of "how unabashed she is,"
	恐終風之我萃	I fear I will be worn out by the "wild and windy."
	詠芳草於萬里	Intonating "fragrant grass ten thousand *li* away,"
28	想音塵之髣佛	I recall his voice and traces in any semblance.
	祈精爽於交夢	I prayed to meet his spirit in my dream,
	終寂寞而不至	In the end, all that arrived was silence and stillness.
	哀我生之何辜	I lament what wrongs I have done,
32	為神靈之所棄	That I am abandoned by his spirit?
	仰蒴華其已落	Looking up at the hibiscus flower—they have fallen;
	臨桑榆之歔欷	Approaching the mulberry and elm—I sob and sigh.
	入穹廬之祕館	Since I entered the chieftain's residence in a yurt,
36	亟踰時而經節	I have been anxious to pass the hours and seasons.
	歎殊類之非匹	Sighing that he, of a different kind, is not a good match,
	傷我躬之無悅	I grieve that "there is no regard for my person."
	脩膚體以深[…]	Cultivating my form with deep [a character is missing here],
40	念蘭澤之空設	I worry the thoroughwort oil is applied in vain.
	佇美目於胡忌	Fixing my beautiful eyes afar, what am I afraid of?
	向凱風而泣血	Facing the "south wind," I weep tears of blood.

The two poems attributed to Cai Yan and incorporated in the *Hou Han shu* are emotional in a distinct sense. What hurt her most was not being rejected by her late husband and unrecognized by her current one, but leaving behind the two children whom she bore the Xiongnu chieftain. She recalls:[15]

> 兒前抱我頸　My children came forward and hugged my neck,
> 問母欲何之　Asking, "Mother, where are you going?
> [...]
> 兒呼母兮號失聲 My children, calling "Mother," cried themselves hoarse;
> 我掩耳兮不忍聽 I, covering my ears, could not bear to listen.

Such a painful expression echoes the voice of a mother in Wang Can's "Sevenfold Sadness," but this time the tragedy takes place ironically upon Can Yan's return to the central land. The *Hou Han shu* makes us realize that she was not only an abducted daughter or an abandoned wife. She was also a mother of two children whom she had to leave behind upon her ransomed return. And as mentioned before, her life was no easier afterwards. Dong Si, the husband Cao Cao arranged for her, committed a capital offence, and it was she who pleaded on his behalf. To survive all the hardships, how resilient Cai Yan must have been! While her contemporary Ding Yì makes a biased judgment of her and uses the conventional trope of an abandoned wife in his rhapsodic impersonation, the post-Cao scholar Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445) remarkably includes a resilient image of her in his historiography.

Beyond Ritual Time

Cao Pi, Wang Can, and a member of the Ding family impersonated another female of their time:[16] Ruan Yu's widow. Cao Pi's preface to his "Rhapsody on the Widow" (Guafu fu 寡婦賦) reads:[17]

> Ruan Yuanyu [style name of Ruan Yu] of Chenliu was a friend of mine. Ill-fated, he died early. Whenever I think of his bereaved children,[18] I am invari-

15 *Hou Han shu*, 84.2802–3.

16 The Ding family member who impersonated the widow could be Ding Yí 丁儀 (the elder brother), Ding Yì 丁廙 (the younger brother), or the wife of either one of them. See my discussion later.

17 Yan Kejun reconstructs this preface in his *Quan Sanguo wen*, 4.4a (1073) from Li Shan's commentary on Pan Yue's "Rhapsody on the Widow" (*Wen xuan*, 16.735) and from the *Yiwen leiju*'s quote of Cao Pi's "Rhapsody on the Widow" (*Yiwen leiju*, 34.600).

18 One of the children whom Ruan Yu left behind was the poet Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263). When Ruan Yu died, Ruan Ji was only three *sui*.

> ably grief-stricken and wounded in heart. I therefore have composed this rhapsody to relate the sorrow and pain of his wife and children, and commanded Wang Can and others to compose theirs side by side with me.
>
> 陳留阮元瑜與余有舊，薄命早亡。每感存其遺孤，未嘗不愴然傷心。故作斯賦，以敘其妻子悲苦之情。命王粲等並作之。

Before Cao Pi's poetic impersonation, there were few poems that address a widow's sorrow and pain except for rhapsodies on music (*yinyue fu* 音樂賦). Instead of elaborating on the grand and splendid aspects of the empire, these rhapsodies charm by going into the desolate and sorrowful realm of life.[19] In the music section of Mei Sheng's 枚乘 (d. 141 BCE) "Seven Stimuli" (Qi fa 七發), for example, a zither is decorated with the earrings of the "nine-son widow" (九寡 or 九子之寡母) and produces the saddest music that one can ever hear. In Wang Bao's 王褒 (ca. 84–ca. 53 BCE) "Rhapsody on the Panpipes" (Dongxiao fu 洞簫賦), for another example, Qi Liang's widow (杞梁之妻) is remembered for the moving music she played prior to her suicide.[20] Both widows are included in the *Traditions of Exemplary Women*. The "nine-son widow" is portrayed as a role model who abided by traditional expectations for women. Before visiting her maiden home, she asked her adult sons' permission; when returning, she was also careful not to interrupt her adult sons. Qi Liang's widow, childless and without kin, provides another traditional role model. When her husband was killed in battle, she asked the lord for proper mourning. Her laments were so earnest that the city wall where her husband lay crumbled. Moreover, she stated her resolution not to remarry and took her own life.[21]

Impersonating a friend's widow is different from impersonating historical characters: It risks crossing the boundaries drawn by the mortuary rituals. Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300) must have sensed the risk, so he justified his "Rhapsody on the Widow" on the grounds that the widow was not only the wife of his boyhood friend Ren Hu 任護 (d. 276 or 277), but also a sister of his wife. His predecessor Cao Pi, on the other hand, did not have any familial relationship with Ruan Yu's widow. What was the circumstance, then, in which Cao Pi composed a rhapsody in the widow's voice, and commanded other poets to compose theirs side by side with him?

In a letter to Wu Zhi 吳質 (178–230), Cao Pi recalls a night excursion with Ruan Yu and other poets in Nanpi 南皮, a prefecture of Bohai 渤海 (present-

19 Chu, *Han fu shilue xinzheng*, 453.

20 *Wen xuan*, 34.1562, 17.787.

21 Liu, *Gu Lienü zhuan*, 1.24a–25b, 4.12b–13b.

day Cangzhou 滄州, Hebei) that Cao Cao captured in 205 when he defeated Yuan Shao's 袁紹 (d. 202) first son Yuan Tan 袁譚 (d. 205). There Cao Pi had a great time with his poet friends. They enjoyed all kinds of pleasures from scholarly studies to board games, indoor to outdoor, north to south, day to night, fast to slow. Most important of all, they gathered as a group of like-minded men, sharing not only joyful thoughts but also sorrowful ones:[22]

> When the blazing sun hid away, it was succeeded by the bright moon. We rode together in the same carriage to roam in the rear park. The carriage wheels slowly moved; the entourage did not utter a sound. A cool breeze rose in the night; sorrowful reed pipes softly moaned. As joy departed, sadness arrived. We were grief-stricken and wounded in mind. I looked back and said, "This joy will not last." You and the others all thought it was true. Now we are indeed separated, each located in a quarter. Yuanyu [style name of Ruan Yu] has eternally gone, turning into an alien thing. Whenever thinking of this, [I would like to tell you all, but] when can I tell [you all ever again]? Just now the *ruibin* pitch marks the time [i.e., the second month of summer], with the Effulgent Wind fanning everything. The air is pleasantly warm, and a multitude of fruits all grow profuse. Sometimes I drive a carriage to roam, to the north along the bend of the Yellow River. Attendants sound reed pipes to clear the way, and my scholars ride in carriages behind. Seasons return but not time. Everything remains the same except for the people. How heavy-hearted I am!
>
> 白日既匿，繼以朗月，同乘竝載，以遊後園，輿輪徐動，參從無聲，清風夜起，悲笳微吟，樂往哀來，愴然傷懷。余顧而言，斯樂難常，足下之徒，咸以為然。今果分別，各在一方。元瑜長逝，化為異物。每一念至，何時可言？方今蕤賓紀時，景風扇物，天氣和暖，衆果具繁。時駕而遊，北遵河曲，從者鳴笳以啓路，文學託乘於後車。節同時異，物是人非，我勞如何！

The letter is dated to 215, three years after Ruan Yu's death.[23] The expression "whenever" (*mei* 每) suggests that the letter is a culmination of years' of remembrance. The same expression is found in Cao Pi's preface to his "Rhapsody on the Widow": "Whenever [*mei* 每] I think of his bereaved children, I am invariably grief-stricken and wounded in heart." We realize that the rhapsody is not necessarily an immediate response to Ruan Yu's death. It can be like the letter, written beyond ritual time: With a dirge (*lei* 誄) presented at the funeral, the living has spoken to the departed in public for the

22 The letter is titled "Letter to Wu Zhi, Magistrate of Zhaoge" (Yu Zhaoge ling Wu Zhi shu 與朝歌令吳質書). See *Wen xuan*, 42.1895.

23 For the date of the letter, see Shih, "Jian'an Literature Revisited," 227–30.

last time;[24] with grass growing for over a year on the tomb, the expected extent for a collegial condolence has also passed. But for the widow and Cao Pi, the pain of loss persists.

Their "Rhapsodies on the Widow" are extant in the literary compendium *Yiwen leiju*. A few additional lines are found in Li Shan's 李善 (ca. 630–689) *Wen xuan* 文選 commentary, especially that on Pan Yue's "Rhapsody on the Widow." As mentioned earlier, it is questionable that the *Yiwen leiju* ever quotes anything in full length. Take Pan Yue's "Rhapsody on the Widow" for example. In the sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan*, the rhapsody provides personal details (such as Ren Hu's widow being orphaned) and funeral details (such as changing the furnishing colours to white and carrying the coffin to the graveyard). The *Yiwen leiju* skips not only most of those details, but also classical allusions if any of those are quoted elsewhere in the literary compendium.

Cao Pi's "Rhapsody on the Widow" in the *Yiwen leiju* most likely has undergone similar abridgement. With few personal and funeral details, everything becomes indefinite and infinite. There is no spring, and the summer days and autumn nights feel too long. Soon it is winter, which only freezes the lonely one further into loneliness:[25]

惟生民兮艱危　Verily, all people experience hardship and danger;
在孤寡兮常悲　But to orphans and widows, it is perpetual sorrow.
人皆處兮歡樂　Everyone else lives in joy and happiness,
我獨怨兮無依　I alone resent that I have no one to rely on.
撫遺孤兮太息　Patting the bereaved children, I heave a great sigh;
俛哀傷兮告誰　Lowering my head in lament—whom shall I tell?

三辰周兮遞照　Sun, moon, and stars revolve, shining in succession,
寒暑運兮代臻　Cold and heat rotate, arriving in turn.
歷夏日兮苦長　I have passed summer days, which were way too long;
涉秋夜兮漫漫　I have crossed autumn nights, which went on and on.
微霜隕兮集庭　Light frost fell and gathered in the courtyard;

24 Most of the dirges use second-person pronouns to speak to the departed, whereas most of the rhapsodies in memory of the departed are written from a third-person perspective (except for the finales, if any). Compare how Pan Yue refers to his father-in-law in his "Dirge for Yang, Inspector of Jing Province" (Yang Jingzhou lei 楊荊州誄) and his "Rhapsody on Yearning for Former Friends and Kin" (Huai jiu fu 懷舊賦) in *Wen xuan*, 56.2439–44 and 16.730–32. Also see Chapter 5 for Cao Pi's lament (equivalent to a dirge) and Cao Zhi's dirge, both referring to their deceased father by second-person pronouns.

25 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.600.

12	鷰雀飛兮我前	Swallows and sparrows flew away from me.
	去秋兮就冬	Autumn left and winter approaches;
	改節兮時寒	The season has changed and it gets cold.
	水凝兮成冰	Water has frozen and become ice;
16	雪落兮翻翻	Snow is falling lightly and airily.
	傷薄命兮寡獨	Grieving for my ill fate, I live lonely in widowhood;
	內惆悵兮自憐	Feeling low and down, I feel for myself.

In addition to the "Rhapsody on the Widow," a "*Shi* on the Widow" (Guafu shi 寡婦詩) is also attributed to Cao Pi in the *Yiwen leiju*.[26] In his study of Pan Yue's rhapsody and its precedents, Nicholas Morrow Williams suspects that the *shi* poem, resembling the rhapsody in contents and metre, may have been a section of the rhapsody.[27] In my observation, the *shi* poem may have been no other section but the finale, at least part of it.

A finale is usually marked with "as the summary goes" (*luan yue* 亂曰), sometimes with "as the appended reiteration goes" (*xi yue* 系曰), and other times with "as the reprise goes" (*chong yue* 重曰). The finale of Pan Yue's "Rhapsody on the Widow," for example, is marked with *chong yue*. From these markers we know the main function of a finale is to summarize and reiterate. Cao Pi's rhapsody may lose its finale marker in the process of quotation and transmission, but his *shi* poem is indeed a reiteration of his rhapsody, including the falling frost, migrating birds, and the loneliness of the widow:

	霜露紛兮交下	Frost and dew, in a flurry, swirl down;
	木葉落兮萋萋	Tree leaves fall in profusion and abundance.
	候鴈叫兮雲中	Migrant geese call in the clouds,
4	歸鷰翩兮徘徊	Returning swallows, lightly, flutter to and fro.
	妾心感兮惆悵	I, your handmaid, feel low and down;
	白日急兮西頹	The blazing sun, in haste, is dropping west.
	守長夜兮思君	I stay awake through the long night, longing for you, Milord;
8	魂一夕兮九乖	In one evening, my soul departs from me nine times.
	悵延佇兮仰視	At a loss, I remain standing and look up—
	星月隨兮天迴	Stars and moon revolve with the sky.

26 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.595–96. Another "*Shi* on the Widow" is attributed to Cao Zhi in Li Shan's commentary. The extant lines (高墳鬱兮巍巍，松柏森兮成行) follow the same metre as Cao Pi's. See *Wen xuan*, 23.1094, under 松柏森已行.

27 Williams, "Pan Yue's 'Study of a Widow,'" 354.

徒引領兮入房　Craning forward in vain, I enter the room;
12 竊自憐兮孤栖　Feeling for myself in secret, I rest alone.
願從君兮終沒　I wish to follow you, Milord, to sink away for good;
愁何可兮久懷　This sorrow—how can I bear it long?

When reading this "reiteration," we immediately find something different: the use of personal pronouns. Line 5 uses the humble first-person pronoun "I, your handmaid" (*qie* 妾); lines 7 and 13 use the honorific second-person pronoun "Milord" (*jun* 君). By using these pronouns, the *shi* poem/finale impersonates a widow who is speaking to her husband. The rhapsody/body, on the other hand, uses *wo* 我, a first-person pronoun without any relational connotations, to impersonate a widow who is speaking to a general audience. Same distinction exists between the body and finale of Pan Yue's rhapsody. In the body of Pan Yue's rhapsody, the widow uses *yu* 予, another first-person pronoun without any relational connotations, to refer to herself. When it comes to the finale, she addresses her husband by using the honorific second-person pronoun "Milord" (*wujun* 吾君). These traces suggest that the poetic impersonation of a widow consists of a body with her self-statement to a general audience, and a finale with her words for her husband.

In Wang Can's "Rhapsody on the Widow," she closes the door to sweep the floor (line 1), obviously not to greet guests.[28] She sees, or remembers, the world in blossom (line 7), but now lives in a secluded world of falling leaves (line 8). The days are not bright enough to pull oneself together, nor are the nights dark enough to rest. Li Shan cites Wang Can twice: lines 3–4 and lines 17–18. In both cases Wang Can turns our attention to the young children, echoing what Cao Pi writes in the preface: "Whenever I think of his bereaved children, I am invariably grief-stricken and wounded in heart. I therefore have composed this rhapsody to relate the sorrow and pain of his wife and children, and commanded Wang Can and others to compose theirs side by side with me." The extant text reads:[29]

闔門兮却掃　Closing the door to sweep the floor,
幽處兮高堂　I live secluded in the lofty hall.
提孤孩兮出戶　Carrying the fatherless children out the door,

28 I read *quesao* 却掃 as "to take a step back to sweep the floor," or simply "to sweep the floor" with the implied retreating motion in mind. Similarly, *queli* 却立 means "to take a step back to stand" or simply "to stand back" in the context of Lin Xiangru's 藺相如 (fl. 298–266 BCE) threat to smash a precious jade disk. See *Shi ji*, 81.2440.

29 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.601. The last two lines are supplied from Li Shan's commentary. See *Wen xuan*, 16.739, under 鞠稚子於懷抱兮，羌低徊而不忍.

與之步兮東廂　I walk together with them in the east wing.
顧左右兮相怜　Looking to my left and right, I feel for them;
意悽愴兮摧傷　Sad and grief-stricken, I am broken and wounded.

觀草木兮敷榮　Seeing grasses and trees display their luxuriance,
感傾葉兮落時　I feel for the tilting leaves, for their falling time.
人皆懷兮歡豫　Everyone else experiences joy and happiness,
我獨感兮不怡　I alone feel discontented.

日掩曖兮不昏　The sun, obscure and overcast, is not dusking;
朗月皎兮揚暉　The bright moon is pure, sending forth its radiance.
坐幽室兮無為　Sitting in my secluded chamber, I do nothing;
登空床兮下幃　Climbing into the empty bed, I let down the curtains.
涕流連兮交頸　My tears flow in streams, crossing at my neck;
心慴結兮增悲　My heart aches and knots, loaded with more sorrow.

[欲引刃以自裁　Planning to draw a blade to end myself,
顧弱子而復停]　I looked back at my delicate children and stopped.

Finally, there is a rhapsody attributed to a member of the Ding family. Some scholars believe it is an autobiography of Ding Yi's widow (or that of his elder brother Ding Yí's 丁儀 widow) when the Ding brothers were executed.[30] I doubt this interpretation. The extant text refers to *ruo zi* 弱子, literally "sons in delicate ages," as the last line of Wang Can's rhapsody does. But while Ruan Yu was survived by sons, the Ding family was not. According to the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, all the male members of the Ding family were killed along with the Ding brothers.[31] Therefore, the rhapsody is more likely a court composition in the voice of Ruan Yu's widow than a Ding widow's autobiography, and the "peril" mentioned in the rhapsody (line 10) is more likely Ruan Yu's death than Ding Yí/Yì's. The first rhyme group reads:[32]

惟女子之有行　Verily, that women go forth to marry
固歷代之彝倫　Certainly is the rule through the ages.

30 *Quan Han fu jiaozhu*, 1174n5.

31 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1564.

32 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.601. I replace 情 with 清 in line 4 according to *Chuxue ji* (14.354, under 辭父母 遠兄弟) ; *Beitang shuchao* (84.7b, under 辭父母); and Cao Zhi's line 君若清路塵 in his "Sevenfold Sadness" (*Wen xuan*, 23.1086). Lines 7–8 are supplied from Li Shan's commentary. See *Wen xuan*, 16.735–36, under 懼身輕而施重兮，若履冰而臨谷.

辭父母而言歸　Leaving my parents and going to wed,
奉君子之(情)[清]塵 I served in his lord's immaculate traces.
如懸蘿之附松　Just as hanging moss clings to the pine,
似浮萍之託津　I was like floating duckweed on the riverbank.
[恐施厚而德薄　Fearing his favour was too much for my scarce virtue,
若履冰而臨淵] I felt like treading on ice and approaching an abyss.
何性命之不造　How come I was so ill-fated,
遭世路之險迍　That I met such a peril on my life journey?
榮華曄其始茂　When my luxuriant florescence shines and began to thrive,
所恃奄其徂泯　He whom I relied on, all of a sudden, departed and vanished.

The second rhyme group begins in a way similar to Wang Can's poetic impersonation, with her quietly shutting the door. The third rhyme group also resembles Wang Can's poetic impersonation by referring to the young children. What distinguishes this rhapsody from Wang Can's is its inclusion of funeral details. Here we see the widow changing everything to white and plain, which tells us that it was during the first few days:

靜閉門以却掃　Quietly I shut the door to sweep the floor;
魂孤煢以窮居　My soul was all alone, living depleted.
刷朱扉以白堊　Daubing the vermilion door in white plaster,
易玄帳以素幬　I replaced the black bed curtains with plainsilk.

含慘悴以何訴　Heart-wrenched and worn—whom shall I tell?
抱弱子以自慰　I hugged my delicate children to console myself.
時翳翳以東陰　The hour, gloom of gloom, darkened the east;
日亹亹以西墜　The sun, onward and onward, dropped west.
雞斂翼以登棲　Roosters folded their wings and climbed up to nest,
雀分散以赴肆　Sparrows scattered and vanished into the marketplace.
還空床以下帷　Returning to my empty bed, letting down the curtain,
拂衾褥以安寐　I dusted the quilt and mat to have a sound sleep.
想逝者之有憑　Thinking that the departed had mediums,[33]
因宵夜之髣髴　I clung to the nights for his semblance.
痛存沒之異路　It pains me that the living and the deceased go different ways,

33 Wilt L. Idema translates *shenping* 神憑 as "a spirit's manifestation" in Cao Zhi's "Discourse on the Skull" (Dulou shuo 髑髏說). See Idema, *The Resurrected Skeleton*, 277. But since the core meaning of *ping* 憑 is "to lean on," I translate it as "mediums," which are for a spirit to lean on (i.e., to possess).

28 終窈漠而不至 In the end all that arrived was sombreness and stillness.

As the hope to see the departed ended in the third rhyme group, the funeral procession began in the fourth rhyme group. A "dragon hearse" was hitched,[34] and the "setting-out sacrifice" was offered:[35]

時荏苒而不留 Time slipped and elapsed, never staying;
將遷霊以大行 We were transporting him for the great procession.
駕龍輴於門側 The dragon hearse was hitched by the gate,
32 設祖祭於前廊 The setting-out sacrifice was offered in the front hall.
彼生離其猶難 A parting in life is already hard,
矧永絕而不傷 How could I bid him a final farewell without feeling wounded?

Alternative to lines 27–32 in the *Yiwen leiju* extract above are lines 27–30 below, which are reconstructed from Li Shan's commentary and the *Yiwen leiju*:[36]

痛存亡之異路 It pains me that the living and the deceased go different ways,
28 將遷靈以大行 Now that we were transporting him for the great procession.
駕龍輴於門側 The dragon hearse was hitched by the gate,
旐繽紛以飛揚 The banners, in a rich array, soared and fluttered.
彼生離其猶難 A parting in life is already hard,
32 矧永絕而不傷 How could I bid him a final farewell without feeling wounded?

In the latter version, the hope to see the departed at night did not fade into darkness; it was the funeral procession that wrecked hope and made one realize "the living and the deceased go different ways" (line 27). And instead of the solemn setting-out sacrifice, it was a rich array of fluttering banners that accompanied the dragon hearse. As a result, the final farewell sounded even more rushed and difficult. Shorter than the *Yiwen leiju* extract by two lines, this version reconstructed mainly from Li Shan's commentary is more

34 The "dragon hearse" (*long'er* 龍輴) was reserved for the funeral procession of a ruler. To use it otherwise was considered ritual violence. However, we find it not only in this rhapsody, but also in Pan Yue's "Lamenting the Eternally Departed" (Ai yongshi wen 哀永逝文) and his "Rhapsody on the Widow." See Lai, "The Art of Lamentation," 419, line 3.

35 For the "setting-out sacrifice" (*zuji* 祖祭), see Lai, "The Art of Lamentation," 420, line 15.

36 Lines 27–28 and lines 29–30 are from Li Shan's commentary in *Wen xuan*, 16.738, respectively under 痛存亡之殊制兮，將遷神而安厝 and 龍輴儼其星駕兮，飛旐翩以啟路. Lines 31–32 are identical to lines 33–34 above, also from the *Yiwen leiju*.

dramatic in transitioning to the funeral procession, and to the fourth rhyme group.

The fifth rhyme group relates the widow's pain that goes beyond the funeral. As winter is approaching, she has come to the icy season of her life. The screens and awnings make an architectural, pictorial, and poetic space for seating or resting.[37] But from her perspective those are set out in vain:

自銜恤而在疚　Since I harboured this woe in the ritual mourning,
履冰冬之四節　I have trodden the icy winter, the fourth season.
風蕭蕭而增勁　The wind, soughing and whistling, is increasingly fierce;
寒凜凜而彌切　The cold, freezing and forbidding, is progressively severe.
霜悽悽而夜降　Frost, chilling and numbing, falls at night;
水濂濂而晨結　Water, hardening and solidifying, freezes by dawn.
瞻霊宇之空虛　Looking up at the eaves he dwelled under, now an empty void,
悲屏幌之徒設　I lament that the screens and awnings are set out in vain.
仰皇天而歎息　Looking up at August Heaven I heave sighs,
腸一日而九結　My intestines knot ninefold in a single day.

The sixth rhyme group is again a combination of Li Shan's commentary (lines 43–44) and a *Yiwen leiju* extract (lines 45–48), reconstructed by the Qing-dynasty scholar Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843) according to the rhyme scheme and the context. In other cases I am hesitant to follow Yan Kejun's reconstruction.[38] But in this rhyme group he reconstructs, the widow reaches a closure as the deceased's spirit (*shenshuang* 神爽, literally "the spiritual and refreshing," a synonym of *jingshuang* 精爽 "the essential and refreshing") fades away and the work of a year is done (lines 43–44). She

37 For the architectural, pictorial, and poetic space of screens, see Wu, *The Double Screen*, 9–28. For awnings (*huang* 幌, also written as 榥), see *Wen xuan or Selections*, 1:396 (line 339).

38 For Yan Kejun's reconstruction, see his *Quan Hou Han wen*, 96.10b–11a (991–92). I am hesitant to follow his reconstruction of these lines: 涕流迸以淋浪 (Yan Kejun makes this a rhyming line and places it at the end of the fourth rhyme group about the funeral procession, but it can be also placed with lines 17–18 about embracing the children as long as it is not a rhyming line), 氣憤薄而交縈；撫素枕而歔欷 (Yan Kejun combines these with other lines to make 氣憤薄而交縈 rhyme with line 25 想逝者之有憑, but the third rhyme group would be broken), 顧(顏)[領]貌之艴艴，對左右而掩涕 (Yan Kejun places these with lines 17–18 about embracing the children, but again, the third rhyme group would be broken), and 鳥淩虛以徘徊 (Yan Kejun places this with lines 21–22 about nesting roosters and returning sparrows, but it can be also placed in a finale as Pan Yue does).

who is forever frozen in the extant texts of Cao Pi's and Wang Can's poetic impersonations finally finds peace:[39]

神爽緬其日永　His spirit is far away, further distant daily;
歲功忽其已成　The work of a year, all of a sudden, is already done.
惟人生於世上　Verily, human life upon this earth
若馳驥之過櫺　Is like catching a sight of a racing steed from a lattice.
計先後其何幾　While calculating how early or late others died,
亦同歸乎幽冥　We, too, together return to darkness and gloom.

The following two lines are separated from previous lines by Yan Kejun for their distinct source, rhyme, and context:[40]

賤妾煢煢　I, your humble handmaid, am all alone,
顧影為儔　Gazing at my shadow for a companion.

It is likely that these tetrasyllabic lines (XXXX，XXXX) are from the finale, whereas the previous text in the "Li sao" metre (XXXyXX，XXXyXX) is from the body of the rhapsody. The metre in a finale often differs from that of the body. The finale of Pan Yue's rhapsody, for example, adopts the Chu song metre (XXX兮XX，XXX兮XX) while the body adopts the "Li sao" metre (XXXyXX兮，XXXyXX). Moreover, as we have seen in Cao Pi's "*Shi* on the Widow," a particular personal pronoun is used to impersonate the widow speaking to her husband: the first-person pronoun "I, your humble handmaid" (*jianqie* 賤妾) turns the lines into words for her husband. It is just that her words are doomed to be a soliloquy, as related in the following lines of Pan Yue's rhapsody:[41]

廓孤立兮顧影　Standing all alone, I gaze at my shadow;
塊獨言兮聽響　Speaking in total isolation, I hear only my voice.

Coincidentally, in the same year that Cao Pi wrote the letter about the Nanpi excursion with Ruan Yu—and perhaps also commanded Wang Can and a Ding family member to impersonate Ruan Yu's widow—Cao Zhi 曹植

39 *Quan Hou Han wen*, 96.11a (992). For lines 43–44, see *Wen xuan*, 16.739, under 亡魂逝而永遠兮，時歲忽其遒盡.

40 *Quan Hou Han wen*, 96.11a (992). For these two lines, see *Wen xuan*, 16.740, under 廓孤立兮顧影，塊獨言兮聽響.

41 *Wen xuan*, 16.740. For a discussion of this soliloquy, see Williams, "Pan Yue's 'Study of a Widow,'" 361.

(192–232) wrote a poem that addresses Wang Can and Ding Yí/Yì:[42] "Mr. Ding is resentful at court, / Master Wang enjoys making his own plans" (丁生怨在朝，王子歡自營).[43] This coincidence reminds us of the special statuses of Wang Can and Ding Yì. Unlike other poets, who were either Scholars (*Wenxue* 文學) or Cadets (*Shuzi* 庶子) on the staff of the Cao brothers, they respectively served as Palace Attendant (*Shizhong* 侍中) for Cao Cao the Duke of Wei, and Gentleman Attendant at the Palace Gate (*Huangmen shilang* 黃門侍郎) for the emperor.[44] Were the Cao brothers respectively seeking support from outside of their offices through poetic composition, to develop their own community besides their father's? Both Cao Pi's letter and Cao Zhi's poem are dated to 215, and Cao Cao did not name his Heir Designate until 217. Did the competition between the Cao brothers become heated during this time?[45]

In the Private Space

In his dirge for Ruan Yu, Wang Can numerates his colleague's feats in the public domain; that is, the military and political services that Ruan Yu did for the state.[46] Since most of the dirges use second-person pronouns to speak to the departed, as mentioned earlier, I follow the practice in my translation of the extant lines of Wang Can's dirge:[47]

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42 Huang Jie dates Cao Zhi's "Presented Again to Ding Yí and Wang Can" (You zeng Ding Yí Wang Can 又贈丁儀王粲) to 215, whereas Cao Daoheng and Shen Yucheng date it to 211. See Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 56; Cao and Shen, *Zhonggu wenxue shiliao congkao*, 43. I follow Huang Jie in dating it to 215. See Chapter 4 for my discussion. Although the title says this is presented to the elder brother Ding Yí, which Huang Jie accepts, Li Shan believes this is to the younger brother Ding Yì. See Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 56; *Wen xuan*, 24.1121. Either way, Cao Zhi could connect himself to the Ding family.

43 *Wen xuan*, 24.1122.

44 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1648, 1564.

45 As mentioned earlier, another "*Shi* on the Widow" is attributed to Cao Zhi in Li Shan's commentary. If Cao Zhi wrote it also under the command of Cao Pi, my speculation here would need revision.

46 Examples are the letters Ruan Yu drafted for Cao Cao to Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252) and Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223). For the former letter, see *Wen xuan*, 42.1887–93; for the latter (only two lines of which are extant), see Li Shan's commentary on Pan Yue's "*Shi* Composed at the Jingu Gathering" (Jingu ji zuo shi 金谷集作詩) in *Wen xuan*, 20.978.

47 *Beitang shuchao*, 103.3b–4a.

既登宰朝　Having risen to the chancellor's court,
充我秘府　You were appointed to our repository for rare books.
允司文章　Verily you ministered writing,
爰及軍旅　Which involved military matters.
庶績惟殷　Your feats of all kinds were abundant;
簡書如雨　Your letters on bamboo slips were like rain.
强力(成敏)[敏成]　The great force was sharp-wittedly formed,
事至則舉　Upon assignment, every task was carried out.

In his poetic impersonation of Ruan Yu's widow, Wang Can presents the same person in a different space: the private quarter around which the bereaved family still lives. Instead of a battlefield or the court, it is the east wing where Ruan Yu once dwelled but is now left empty, constantly reminding the bereaved of his perpetual absence:

提孤孩兮出戶　Carrying the fatherless children out the door,
4 與之步兮東廂　I walk together with them in the east wing.

Line 4 alludes to the "Rhapsody on the Tall Gate Palace" (Changmen fu 長門賦) attributed to Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 BCE) in which an abandoned palace lady also wanders to the east wing.[48] Ruan Yu's former room may not be as ornate as a palace one, but with the perpetual absence of its former dweller, it is as lonesome. Likewise, in the "Rhapsody on the Widow" attributed to a Ding family member, a hall is nothing but an empty void because its former dweller is no longer there:

瞻霊宇之空虛　Looking up at the eaves he dwelled under, now an empty void,
40 悲屏幌之徒設　I lament that the screens and awnings are set out in vain.

Which matters upon one's departure: their traces in the public domain, or those in their private quarter? And to whom do those matter? Cao Pi addresses these questions by impersonating his mother Lady Bian, who grieves for the premature death of a Cao clan's child named Cao Wenzhong 曹文仲 (dates unknown). Titled "Rhapsody on Mourning the Young Departed" (Dao yao fu 悼夭賦), the poem is found in the entry of "laments" (*aishang* 哀傷) in the *Yiwen leiju*, the same entry where quotes of the "Rhapsodies on the Widow" are found. The preface highlights kinship, suggesting Lady Bian and Cao Pi

48 *Wen xuan*, 16.714, especially the lines 間徙倚於東廂兮，觀夫靡靡而無窮.

are not merely an aunt and an elder cousin, but the Cao clan's first lady and eldest living son (Cao Cao lost his eldest son Cao Ang 曹昂 in 197):[49]

> A younger cousin of mine, Wenzhong, died at the age of eleven. My mother grieves for his premature death, recalling and mourning him incessantly. Out of affection for my kin, I therefore have composed this rhapsody.
>
> 族弟文仲亡，時年十一。母氏傷其夭逝，追悼無已。予以宗族之愛，乃作斯賦。

Before reading the extant text, let us see what the critic Liu Xie 劉勰 (d. ca. 537) says about the mourning genre for children. In his erudite project titled *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons), Liu Xie compares the mourning genres as follows: For adults, the mourning poems are called "dirge" (*lei* 誄), which "consists of a selection of the sayings and an account of the life of the deceased" (選言錄行). For children, the mourning poems are called lament (*ai* 哀), which speaks of the young departed as bright since they were "young and had not established their merits" (幼未成德).[50]

Rather than following the conventions, Cao Pi's "Rhapsody Mourning the Young Departed" focuses on the grieving mother and places her in a private quarter: the boy's bedroom, with the clothes he wore still on the bed. And as if speaking to the boy, she directly addresses him by using the second-person pronoun "you" (*er* 爾 in line 3, corresponding to *jun* 君 in Cao Pi's "*Shi* on the Widow"):[51]

	氣紆結以填胸	Disordered breaths, twisted and knotted, fill my breast;
	不知涕之縱橫	I was unaware of my tears crisscrossing my face.
	時徘徊於舊處	Sometimes I linger to and fro in your former living quarters,
4	睹靈衣之在床	Seeing the clothes you wore on the bed.
	感遺物之如故	It moves me that the objects you left behind remain as those were,
	痛爾身之獨亡	It pains me that your body is the only thing that has perished.

The room, clothes, and other items all remind her of the child. Having no rest, she entrusts the daylily (*xuancao* 萱草 in line 10, or 諼草 in *Mao shi* 62), known as sorrow-forgetting herb, in the hope that she can take a break from flooding memories. Conventionally used in the trope of a longing wife, the

49 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.599.

50 Liu, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 12.442, 13.472.

51 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.599–600.

sorrow-forgetting herb finds a new context of mourning poetry. This rhapsody, moreover, is not just another mourning poem of traditional values; it reaches the private quarters where the bereaved still lives:

	愁端坐而無聊	In sorrow I sit upright, getting no relief;
8	心慼慼而不寧	My heart is sad, so sad, finding no peace.
	步廣廈而踟躕	Walking to and fro in the spacious mansion,
	覽萱草於中庭	I view the daylily in the courtyard.
	悲風蕭其夜起	The sorrowful wind soughs, rising at night;
12	秋氣憯以厲情	The autumn air is heart-wrenching, arousing thoughts.
	仰瞻天而太息	Looking up I gaze at heaven and heave a great sigh,
	聞別鳥之哀鳴	Hearing the parting birds sadly calling.

Wang Can is attributed in the same *Yiwen leiju* entry with a poem with a similar title, "Rhapsody Grieving for the Young Departed" (Shang yao fu 傷夭賦). Although Wang Can is not mentioned in Cao Pi's preface, he can be also impersonating Cao Pi's grieving mother. The unnamed "disordered breaths" (*qi* 氣) in the first line of Cao Pi's mourning poem becomes clear in the first four lines of Wang Can's. We realize those must arise when the bereaved accuses August Heaven of failing to be just in allotting lifespans:[52]

	惟皇天之賦命	Verily, the way August Heaven allots lifespans
	實浩蕩而不均	Is indeed powerful but not just.
	或老終以長世	Some meet their end when they are old, living a long life;
4	或昏夭而夙泯	Others die prematurely, vanishing early.
	物雖存而人亡	Although everything remains, the person has perished;
	心惆悵而長慕	Feeling low and down, I forever yearn for him.
	哀皇天之不惠	Lamenting that August Heaven is not kind,
8	抱此哀而何愬	I harbour this sadness—whom shall I tell?
	求魂神之形影	I seek his soul and spirit, in any form or shadow,
	羌幽冥而弗迕	But alas, darkness and gloom is all I encounter.

52 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.600–1. Yang Xiu 楊修 (175–219) is another poet who might write in the same context. His rhapsody is also titled "Rhapsody Grieving for the Young Departed" (Shang yao fu 傷夭賦), two lines of which are found in Li Shan's commentary: "I lament that his body and mien are submerged and obscured,/ In my eyes there is constantly his former form" (悲體貌之潛翳兮，目常存乎遺形). See *Wen xuan*, 23.1092, under 寢興目存形，遺音猶在耳 of Pan Yue's "*Shi* Mourning Her Death" (Dao wang shi 悼亡詩).

淹低徊以想像　Immersed in thoughts, I try to conjure up his image;
心彌結而紆縈　My heart knots further, so twined and twisted.
晝忽忽其若昏　In the morning, I am dazed and drowsy as if it were evening;
夜炯炯而至明　At night, I am restive and restless until it dawns.

As intimacy finds its place in a private quarter, poets of later times continue their reflection on mortality in such a space, including the Bronze Bird Terrace (Tongque tai 銅爵臺) on which female entertainers danced for their departed lord.[53] In the face of death, which matters, and to whom do those matter? In the voices of the bereaved daughter, wife, and mother Cao Pi and his community give a unique answer: Death is alienating, but it can also be bonding when we continue speaking to the departed in a private space that matters to us.

53 Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 222–53.

Chapter 3

SOUL-SUMMONING AND A BRILLIANT SUMMER

SUMMER WAS A low season for court events in the Eastern-Han writer Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139) "Rhapsody on the Eastern Metropolis" (Dongjing fu 東京賦). In spring there were events ranging from a New Year Assembly and a Suburban Sacrifice, to ceremonies of Sacred Field and Great Archery, to an inspection tour to Mt. Tai; autumn had a ceremony of feeding the Thrice Venerable, a sacrifice to the Exalted Ancestor, and an inspection tour to harvest; in winter there was a hunt in the Imperial Forest on top of a ceremony of Grand Exorcism.[1] Summer was the only season on which Zhang Heng did not elaborate. Moreover, summer heat was impossible to bear. An emperor could take shelter in a touring palace among the mountains, but a warlord like Yuan Shao 袁紹 (d. 202) could only get drunk to survive the heat.[2]

Curiously, the Cao court's well-known "*Shi* on the Lord's Feast" (Gongyan shi 公讌詩 or 公宴詩) are set in summer when poets enjoy access to an "air-conditioned" summer resort: "An ornate lodge rests on the flowing waves, / Open and spacious, it brings in cool breezes," celebrates Liu Zhen 劉楨 (d. 217). In addition, they go on a night excursion with their young lord Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), as Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) writes: "The young lord respects and cherishes his guests, / Throughout the feast he does not feel fatigue. / In the cool night we roam in the West Garden, / Our flying canopies follow one another."[3]

Such refreshing summer scenes are widely acknowledged and fondly remembered, as the sixth-century critic Liu Xie 劉勰 (d. ca. 537) vividly summarizes: "Side by side they delighted in the wind and the moon, took excursions to ponds and preserves, gave account of the glories of enjoying favour, and told of festively tipsy feasts" (並憐風月，狎池苑，述恩榮，敘酣宴).[4] Accordingly, we know that when Cao Pi recalls their pre-epidemic days in his "Letter to Wu Zhi" (Yu Wu Zhi shu 與吳質書) and mentions their for-

1 *Wen xuan*, 3.106–27. Also see *Wen xuan or Selections*, 1:262–99.

2 *Yiwen leiju*, 5.86.

3 *Wen xuan*, 3.945, 943.

4 Liu, *Wenxin diaolong yizheng*, 6.196.

mer roaming, the summer night's excursion must be an integral part of it.[5] This chapter asks: Why are their "*Shi* on the Lord's Feast" set in summer? As another survivor of the epidemic, how does Cao Zhi remember their pre-epidemic summer? What role does summer play in the collective memory of the Cao court? And in what sense can we read their remembrance as an early medieval variation of the ancient soul-summoning poetry?

Otherworldly Night

Although Liu Xie captures the conviviality of the Cao court and its pentasyllabic *shi* composition, what he leaves unnoticed is the otherworldly ambience celebrated in its summer poems. Take the following lines from Cao Pi's "Written at the Lotus Pond" (Furong chi zuo 芙蓉池作) for example. There is no mighty warlord to serve or august ancestor to worship, but wonders to be remembered by Cao Pi and his guests. Marvelling at the cinnabar afterglows and heavenly hues, the poets seem to enter a different world:[6]

丹霞夾明月　Cinnabar afterglows surround the bright moon,
華星出雲間　Lustrous stars emerge from the clouds.
上天垂光彩　Heaven casts down splendid hues,
12 五色一何鮮　How lustrous the five colours!

Sharing scenes with the above poem and with one another, the Cao court's "*Shi* on the Lord's Feast" were likely written for the same occasion. It was in the moonlit West Garden (Xiyuan 西園) of the Ye 鄴 city (present-day Linzhang 臨漳, Hebei), built around the same time as the Bronze Bird Terrace (Tongque tai 銅爵臺).[7] To the west of Cao Cao's palace, the terrace-garden complex was the top venue for the Cao court events; in one of the events, Cao Cao commanded his sons to compose side by side with him on the spectacular terrace-garden complex (see Introduction). According to the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, Cao Cao was quite amazed by his fourth son Cao Zhi.[8]

5 *Wen xuan*, 42.1896–98.

6 *Wen xuan*, 22.1031–32.

7 According to the *Sanguo zhi*, the terrace was constructed in the winter of 210. See *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 131–32. Cao Pi's preface to his "Rhapsody on Climbing the Terrace" (Deng tai fu 登臺賦) mentions a visit paid by Cao Cao, Cao Zhi, and himself to the terrace-garden complex in the spring of 212, which most likely marks its formal completion (see Introduction). Obviously, it was not complete before the Battle of the Red Cliff (which took place in 208) as claimed in episode 44 of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi 三國演義). See Luo, *Sanguo yanyi*, 44.371–72.

8 For Cao Cao's comment on Cao Zhi's rhapsody, see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1547.

But on an eventless summer day,[9] Cao Pi became the host, his younger brother Cao Zhi and other poets served as his guests, and their gathering extended from indoors to outdoors, from day to night. Liu Zhen captures the change of light in the first eight lines of his "*Shi* on Lord's Feast." The poem begins with the daylight, then the darkness, and soon "the moon rises, shining in the garden" (line 7), so that the trees appear and look dark green. Along with the change of light, the poets also experience physical and mental transitions, feeling as if they are flying into an otherworld:[10]

	永日行遊戲	Throughout the day we roam and play,
	懽樂猶未央	Our joy has not come to an end.
	遺思在玄夜	Directing our thoughts to the dark night,
4	相與復翱翔	With one another we further wheel on wings.
	輦車飛素蓋	Carriages have plain canopies in flight,
	從者盈路傍	Followers crowd the roadsides.
	月出照園中	The moon rises, shining in the garden,
8	珍木鬱蒼蒼	Precious trees grow dark green.

With the rising moon as his single light source, Liu Zhen then depicts the perfect arrangement of objects in this otherworld. In the lotus pond, there are boundaries made of rapids to which the fish avoid getting close; there are also boundaries made blurry when the lotus buds brim over the dikes:

	清川過石渠	The cold stream passes the stone-paved sluiceway,
	流波為魚防	Its flowing waters form fish weirs.
	芙蓉散其華	Lotuses spread their blossoms,
12	菡萏溢金塘	The buds brim over the metal-strong dikes.

The garden becomes even more dreamlike with virtuous animals roaming around and cool breezes brought in the lodge. While Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 (179–117 BCE) idealized emperor still "shoots" the classics and "captures" the talents in the "Rhapsody on the Imperial Park" (Shanglin fu 上林賦),[11] Cao Pi's guests can simply relax as the numinous birds and benev-

9 Yu Shaochu 俞紹初 dates their West Garden gathering to the summer of 211. See Yu, "Jian'an qizi nianpu," 466–70. To be safe, we may say it took place sometime between 211 (after the initial construction of the terrace-garden complex) and 216 (before the outbreak of the epidemic that took many poets' lives).

10 *Wen xuan*, 20.945.

11 *Wen xuan*, 8.377. Also see *Wen xuan or Selections*, 2:111 (lines 466–69).

olent beasts do. This otherworldly ambience is not only a tribute to the host, but also a token of their friendship:

	靈鳥宿水裔	Numinous birds spend the night at the waterside,
	仁獸遊飛梁	Benevolent beasts roam on the flying bridge.
	華館寄流波	An ornate lodge rests on the flowing waves;
16	豁達來風涼	Open and spacious, it brings in cool breezes.
	生平未始聞	All my life I have never heard of this,
	歌之安能詳	How could it be fully conveyed in my song?
	投翰長歎息	I lay aside my quill pen and heave a long sigh—
20	綺麗不可忘	This exquisite beauty cannot be forgotten.

But an epidemic struck in 217–218 and took many Cao court poets' lives. In 219 Cao Pi wrote about the pain of loss in his "Letter to Wu Zhi."[12] For the departed, he had edited their writings into a collection. When he looked at the names, and perhaps the above poem by Liu Zhen, memories came flooding back:[13]

> Many relatives and old friends were stricken by last year's epidemic. Xu [Gan], Chen [Lin], Ying [Yang], and Liu [Zhen] passed away all at once. How can I tell the pain! In the old days when we roamed and rested, our carriages followed one another on an outing, and our seating mats touched one another during a break. Did we spend a single moment apart? Whenever kylixes and ladles were passed around, strings and panpipes played in unison, then tipsy and flushed, we looked up and composed poems. At such a moment, obliviously, we did not know that we were happy. We took a lifespan of a hundred years for granted, and we thought together we could always keep ourselves intact. Who would have expected that in a matter of a few years they would wither, waste, and be all gone? It wounds my heart to speak of this. Lately I have edited the writings they left behind into a collection. As I looked at their names, I realized they were all in the register of ghosts. When I think back to our former roaming, it remains vivid in my mind's eye. Yet these gentlemen have already turned into dung and dirt. How can I bear to say anything further!
>
> 昔年疾疫，親故多離其災，徐陳應劉，一時俱逝，痛可言邪！昔日遊處，行則連輿，止則接席，何曾須臾相失。每至觴酌流行，絲竹並奏，酒酣耳熱，仰而賦詩，當此之時，忽然不自知樂也。謂百年己分，可長共相保。

12 For the date, see Shih, "Jian'an Literature Revisited," 227–30.

13 *Wen xuan*, 42.1896–97. Also see Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 25.

> 何圖數年之間，零落略盡，言之傷心。頃撰其遺文，都為一集。觀其姓名，已為鬼錄。追思昔遊，猶在心目，而此諸子，化為糞壤，可復道哉！

In the ancient poem "Summoning the Soul" (Zhao hun 招魂), which is attributed to Song Yu 宋玉 (fl. 298–263 BCE), the shaman follows the soul into the springtime Southland and relives the soul's night hunt with its king. By witnessing someone else's loss, the shaman already feels the pain and laments, "My vision penetrates one thousand *li*—it wounds this heart of spring" (目極千里兮傷春心). How much more painful can Cao Pi be when reliving his own night excursion with the poets, only to realize they were all in the register of ghosts? "It wounds my heart to speak of this" (言之傷心), he writes. In addition to old friends, he realized what he lost is also the aspirations (*zhiyi* 志意) in the old days. Thus he writes in the same letter:[14]

> As I am getting on in years, I have myriad contingencies to think of. Sometimes I am so concerned about something that I stay up all night. How can my aspirations ever be like those in the old days? I am already an oldster in every sense except that my hair has not turned white.
>
> 年行已長大，所懷萬端。時有所慮，至通夜不瞑，志意何時復類昔日？已成老翁，但未白頭耳。

Back on a pre-epidemic summer night, Cao Pi was like a powerful shaman who had an entourage of phoenixes and wind under his command. Below are the descriptions of the otherworldly entourage in the "Encountering Sorrow" (Li sao 離騷), which is attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE):[15]

吾令鳳鳥飛騰兮	I command the phoenixes to mount up in flight,
繼之以日夜	And continue flying day and night.
飄風屯其相離兮	The floating wind masses and pairs up,
帥雲霓而來御	Marshaling clouds and second rainbows to greet me.

And below are the descriptions of the otherworldly entourage in Cao Pi's summer poem "Written at the Lotus Pond":[16]

	驚風扶輪轂	A startling wind supports our wheel hubs,
8	飛鳥翔我前	Flying birds soar in front of us.

14 *Wen xuan*, 42.1898. Also see Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 28.

15 Qu et al., *Chu ci buzhu*, 1.40.

16 *Wen xuan*, 22.1032.

We find similar descriptions in Cao Zhi's "*Shi* on Lord's Feast," but the flying phoenixes are replaced by soaring aspirations:[17]

	神飇接丹轂	A prodigious gust catches the cinnabar wheel-hubs,
12	輕輦隨風移	Our light carriages move with the wind.
	飄颻放志意	Afloat and aflutter we let our aspirations soar—
	千秋長若斯	May a thousand autumns always be this way!

Let us first read Cao Zhi's "*Shi* on Lord's Feast" in its full length. Greeted by a charming young lord, the guests enters a summer night that is cool (*qing* 清, in lines 3, 5, 9) and devoid of worldly weight (*qing* 輕, in line 12):[18]

	公子敬愛客	The young lord respects and cherishes his guests,
	終宴不知疲	Throughout the feast he does not feel fatigue.
	清夜遊西園	In the cool night we roam in the West Garden,
4	飛蓋相追隨	Our flying canopies follow one another.
	明月澄清景	The bright moon cleanses its chilly rays,
	列宿正參差	The arrayed constellations spread zigzag.
	秋蘭被長坂	Autumn thoroughwort blankets the long slopes,
8	朱華冒綠池	Vermilion blossoms cover the green pond.
	潛魚躍清波	Submerged fish leap in the cold ripples,
	好鳥鳴高枝	Fine birds sing from high boughs.
	神飇接丹轂	A prodigious gust catches the cinnabar wheel-hubs,
12	輕輦隨風移	Our light carriages move with the wind.
	飄颻放志意	Afloat and aflutter we let our aspirations soar—
	千秋長若斯	May a thousand autumns always be this way!

While Liu Zhen takes the moon as his single source of light in which trees look dark green, Cao Zhi finds the lotus pond as bright as the moon. The brilliant red blossoms against the green surface of the pond is the bold colour combination that the Tang-dynasty poet Wang Bo 王勃 (649–676; alt. 650–676) emulates: "The green bamboos in the Sui Park, so vigorous, soar above the goblet of Pengze [i.e., Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (ca. 365–427)]; the vermilion blossoms on the Ye water, so bright, shine

17 *Wen xuan*, 20.943.

18 *Wen xuan*, 20.943. There are various ways to translate *qing* 清, one of which is "clear." While "clear" is possible, I translate it as "cool, cold, chilly" here, which share the core meaning of "unheated" and are thus favourable on a summer night; and as "brisk" in the context when the song is compared to cold, refreshing water.

on the writing brush of Linchuan [i.e., Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433)]" (睢園綠竹，氣凌彭澤之樽；鄴水朱華，光照臨川之筆).[19] The autumn thoroughwort in Cao Zhi's couplet of the lotus blossoms (lines 7–8) seems unseasonal. It makes sense, however, if we read the couplet as an allusion to Zhang Heng's "Rhapsody on the Eastern Metropolis." As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, summer is the only season that Zhang Heng does not elaborate on. Instead, he juxtaposes it with other seasons for a sense of completeness, such as: "Lotus covers the water's surface, / Autumn thoroughwort blankets the banks" (芙蓉覆水，秋蘭被涯). When incorporating this couplet into his pentasyllabic lines, Cao Zhi keeps the autumn thoroughwort, but highlights the summer vegetation with its vermilion blossoms (*zhuhua* 朱華) in place of its name (*furong* 芙蓉). By writing about leaping fish and calling birds in the next couplet (lines 9–10), Cao Zhi continues alluding to Zhang Heng, who follows his lotus-thoroughwort couplet with a catalogue of aquatic and aerial lives.

A prodigious gust suddenly blows in (line 11). While interrupting the balanced scenery, it also catches the roaming poets. This is the place where we find their soaring aspirations and their wish to enjoy a thousand years. According to another Eastern-Han writer Wang Yanshou 王延壽 (ca. 118–ca. 138), a royal palace like the Hall of Numinous Brilliance in Lu (Lu Lingguang dian 魯靈光殿) will last a thousand years because "deities and spirits brace its ridgepole and roof" (神靈扶其棟宇).[20] Cao Zhi also feels this divine support when he soars in the otherworldly wind, which is another tribute to the host and another token of their intimate relationship.

But political reality soon ended this relationship. The following lines are from Cao Zhi's "*Shi* on the North Wind" (Shuofeng shi 朔風詩). The speaker is like the trooping soldier in the classic poem "Plucking Bracken" (Cai wei 采薇, *Mao shi* 毛詩 167), leaving home at the best time of his life. To the soldier, it was when willows grew lush and full (楊柳依依); to Cao Zhi's speaker, it was when vermilion blossoms had not dwindled (朱華未希). But when they finally returned, the luxuriant vegetation was replaced by lifeless snow:[21]

昔我初遷	When I was first transferred,
朱華未希	Vermilion blossoms had not dwindled;

19 These lines are from Wang Bo's "Preface for the Farewell Banquet after Climbing on a Autumn Day the Pavilion of the Prince of Teng in Hongzhou" (Qiuri deng Hongfu Tengwang ge jianbie xu 秋日登洪府滕王閣餞別序). See Wang, *Wang Zi'an ji zhu*, 8.232.

20 *Wen xuan*, 11.508–18.

21 *Wen xuan*, 29.1361–62.

今我旋止　　Now on my way back,
16 素雪雲飛　　Plain snow drifts like clouds.

There are various interpretations of this journey. Most scholars take "transfer" (*qian* 遷) literally, reading it as Cao Zhi's being sent from one fief to another. In 220 when Cao Cao passed away, Cao Pi sent his brothers to their respective fiefs. Without special permission, they could not return to the capital or meet with one another. In addition, Cao Zhi was transferred from one place to another. Scholars interpret this to mean that the place to which he returned was one of his previous fiefs. Huang Jie 黃節 (1873–1935), for example, believes the poem was written in Yongqiu 雍丘 (present-day Qi 杞 *xian*, Henan).[22]

Zhao Youwen 趙幼文 proposes another reading: Cao Zhi is lamenting the death of Wang Can, and the word "transfer" is synonymous with "go" (*wang* 往) in the formulaic expression of "When I went…; Now on my way back…" from the classic poem. He believes this reading is more consistent with Cao Zhi's longing for "the capital of the Wei kingdom" (Wei *du* 魏都; i.e., Ye) in the poem. But by focusing on Wang Can's death, Zhao Youwen fails to address the speaker's pledge of loyalty in the same poem as Robert Joe Cutter rightly points out.[23]

We may integrate Huang Jie's and Zhao Youwen's analyses into a more general understanding: Cao Zhi is contrasting the brilliant summer in his fond memory (represented by the vermilion blossoms) with the coldness of the political reality (represented by the plain snow).[24] There is no longer a young lord who respects and cherishes his guests. The otherworldly wind

22 Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 76n1.

23 Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.175. For another piece of evidence that "Wei du" refers to Ye, see Cao Zhi's "Dirge for Empress Dowager Bian" (Bian Taihou lei 卞太后誄). For Cutter's comment on Cao Zhi's pledge of loyalty, see Cao, *The Poetry of Cao Zhi*, 357–58, additional notes on 4.22.

24 Both Huang Jie and Zhao Youwen suspect that Cao Zhi returned to Ye for a short stay, but they do not agree on when and in what context he did so. See Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 37n1; Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 2.237, 576. Their points of divergence seem to be 于彼冀方 in Cao Zhi's *shi* poem "Chastising Myself" (Ze gong 責躬), and 反我舊居，襲我初服 in Cao Zhi's "Command of the Sixth Year of Huangchu" (Huangchu liunian ling 黃初六年令). Professor David R. Knechtges pieces information together as follows: "In 222 several officials accused Cao Zhi of an unspecified offense. He then went to the capital to plead his own case. Cao Zhi was allowed to return to his old home in Ye, where he stayed for a short time before returning to Juancheng." See *Wen xuan or Selections*, 3:372. Also see Cao, *The Poetry of Cao Zhi*, 205n1.

that carried their carriages and aspirations aloft is now tossing the speaker up and down, into cold and heat, as if he is nothing but tumbleweed:[25]

	俯降千仞	Downward I descend a thousand fathoms,
	仰登天阻	Upward I ascend a sky-high fastness.
	風飄蓬飛	Tossed by wind, flying like tumbleweed,
20	載離寒暑	I encounter cold and heat in the meantime.

Back to the summer night: Liu Zhen and Cao Zhi pay tributes to their host Cao Pi by celebrating the otherworldly ambience of the garden; and to honour his guests, Cao Pi sets off "fireworks" of heavenly hues with his poem "Written at the Lotus Pond." The poem starts low from the ground, then rises to the treetops, and finally shows a dynamic mixture of colours and lights in the sky. Along with the climbing sight, the carriages also set out in a strolling manner, then have their canopies brushed by tree boughs, and finally have their wheels carried by a startling wind and their aerial path cleared by flying birds:[26]

	乘輦夜行遊	Riding carriages, we go roaming at night;
	逍遙步西園	Carefree and breezy, we stroll in the West Garden.
	雙渠相溉灌	Twin waterways pour into one another,
4	嘉木繞通川	Fine trees wind around the free-flowing stream.
	卑枝拂羽蓋	Low boughs brush our feathered canopies,
	脩條摩蒼天	Long branches rub the night sky.
	驚風扶輪轂	A startling wind supports our wheel hubs,
8	飛鳥翔我前	Flying birds soar in front of us.
	丹霞夾明月	Cinnabar afterglows surround the bright moon,
	華星出雲間	Lustrous stars emerge from the clouds.
	上天垂光彩	Heaven casts down splendid hues,
12	五色一何鮮	How lustrous the five colours!
	壽命非松喬	Without a lifespan of Master Red Pine and Prince Qiao,
	誰能得神仙	Who can attain transcendence?
	遨遊快心意	Let us roam and ramble to gladden our hearts and mind,
16	保己終百年	Keep ourselves intact to complete our hundred years.

25 For a discussion of the tumbleweed image, see Frankel, "Fifteen Poems by Ts'ao Chih," 11.

26 *Wen xuan*, 22.1031–32.

Cao Pi's "fireworks" display a picture of transcendence made of cinnabar, known as a life-prolonging material in transcendence arts, and afterglows, known as a vehicle ridden by transcendents. Line 13, therefore, refers to the transcendents Master Red Pine (Chisong zi 赤松子) and Prince Qiao (Wangzi Qiao 王子喬). Although Cao Pi does not wish for a thousand years of happiness as his brother does, and admits that there is little chance for them to attain transcendence, he is sure that they can each complete a hundred years simply by roaming together. Marvelling at the otherworldly sky and being treated with such gracious words, the poets enjoy a special night that promises so much.

But the wish to "keep ourselves intact to complete our hundred years" (line 16) did not come true; several of them died in the epidemic of 217–218. The following section from Cao Pi's "Letter to Wu Zhi," which is quoted earlier, directly responds to the last line of his own poem "Written at the Lotus Pond":[27]

> At such a time, obliviously, we did not know that we were happy. We took a lifespan of a hundred years for granted, and we thought together we could always keep ourselves intact. Who would have expected that in a matter of a few years they would wither, waste, and be all gone? It wounds my heart to speak of this. Lately I have edited the writings they left behind into a collection. As I looked at their names, I realized they were all in the register of ghosts. When I think back to our former roaming, it remains vivid in my mind's eye. Yet these gentlemen have already turned into dung and dirt. How can I bear to say anything further!
>
> 當此之時，忽然不自知樂也。謂百年己分，可長共相保。何圖數年之間，零落略盡，言之傷心。頃撰其遺文，都為一集。觀其姓名，已為鬼錄。追思昔遊，猶在心目，而此諸子，化為糞壤，可復道哉！

The moment when they wished one another a hundred years of happiness, Cao Pi realizes, *was* the moment when they were truly happy. From a post-epidemic standpoint, all he can do is summon the souls by editing the writings they left behind into a collection and remembering them in his mind's eye.

27 *Wen xuan*, 42.1897.

Carefree Day

In 216, the year before the epidemic broke, Cao Zhi sent a letter to Yang Xiu 楊修 (175–219), commenting on writers of the time and presenting copies of his own rhapsodies.[28] In his response, Yang Xiu praises Cao Zhi's rhapsodies and mentions another set of summer poems titled "Rhapsodies on Great Summer Heat" (Dashu fu 大暑賦), abbreviated as "Rhapsodies on Summer Heat" (Shu fu 暑賦) as follows:[29]

> That is why I declined to write a rhapsody on the snow pheasant upon seeing yours, and why I composed a rhapsody on summer heat but did not present it throughout the day.
>
> 是以對鷬而辭，作暑賦彌日而不獻。

It may have been in the same year of 216, or sometime earlier, that they composed the rhapsodies on summer heat. There is no preface to contextualize their composition, but according to Yang Xiu, it was likely that Cao Zhi first completed his rhapsody and then commanded other poets to present their works to him. In addition to Cao Zhi and Yang Xiu, the group may also have included Liu Zhen, Wang Can 王粲 (177–217), Po Qin 繁欽 (d. 218), and Chen Lin 陳琳 (d. 217). While Cao Zhi's rhapsody is put together in his collection, those of others are scattered in later literary compendia, especially in the entry of "hot" (*re* 熱) of the Tang-dynasty literary compendium *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚.

While we wonder why the court poets picked such an odd subject, their vivid descriptions of the sun's chariot impress us. For example, the first few lines of Liu Zhen read:[30]

其為暑也	As to how summer heat is built up:
羲和總駕發扶木	Xihe yokes horses to the chariot, setting out from the Fusang tree;
太陽為輿達炎燭	The great *yang* serves as the chassis, transporting the fiery torch;

28 It is titled "Letter to Yang Dezu [style name of Yang Xiu]" (Yu Yang Dezu shu 與楊德祖書) in *Wen xuan*, 42.1901. Also see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1548. Cao Zhi notes in the letter that he was twenty-five *sui*, thus it is dated to 216.

29 The response is titled "Memorandum in Response to Marquis of Linzi [a title of Cao Zhi]" (Da Linzi hou jian 答臨淄侯牋) in *Wen xuan*, 40.1819. Also see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1550.

30 *Yiwen leiju*, 5.90; for the variant, see *Quan Han fu jiaozhu*, 1132n2.

靈威參(垂)[乘]步朱轂　Divine Might attends the chariot,
mounting the vermilion hubs.

Here the sun is referred to as the "fiery torch" (*yanzhu* 炎燭), whereas "great *yang*" (*taiyang* 太陽), a modern word for the sun, serves as the base of the chariot-box. When tracing the origins of summer heat, Liu Zhen first finds the sun charioteer Xihe setting out from the Fusang tree, which is a well-known image in the ancient poem "Encountering Sorrow." What Liu Zhen adds to the team is Divine Might (Lingwei 靈威), who is noted in a prognostication text of Han times as the deity of the east and spring.[31] Now that the deity of the east and spring serves as an attendant, we know summer is the dominant season. Moreover, Liu Zhen uses seven-syllable lines with consecutive entering-tone rhymes, creating a tense, oppressive, and enticing atmosphere.

Cao Zhi also mentions Xihe and the Fusang tree in his opening lines. In his imagination, Xihe pulls the reins to slow the chariot, prolong the day, and build up the heat. The Fusang tree, where the sun's chariot sets out, glows with tall flames. To enrich the dazzling summer scene, Cao Zhi refers to those who govern the south, fire, and summer: the southern lord Fiery Emperor, the fire deity Zhu Rong, and the Bird of the South dancing on the ruling tool of summer.[32] Moreover, he integrates special practices of ritual clothing in the last month of summer—the officials wear yellow instead of red with which summer is usually associated[33]—and juxtaposes the change of ritual clothing with the slough of divine creatures:[34]

炎帝掌節　The Fiery Emperor governs the season,
祝融司方　Zhu Rong oversees the region.

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31 The prognostication text is titled *Shang shu diming yan* 尚書帝命驗. For Divine Might, see *Weishu jicheng*, 368.

32 *Heng* 衡 can refer to a crossbeam in architectural contexts such as the "Rhapsody on the Hall of Numinous Brilliance in Lu" (Lu Lingguang dian fu 魯靈光殿賦) (lines 118–19: 朱鳥舒翼以峙衡，騰蛇蟉虯而遶榱). See *Wen xuan*, 11.514; *Wen xuan or Selections*, 2:271. But here (lines 1–4), in a governmental context like the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (執衡而治夏…夏治以衡), it refers to a ruling scale. See Liu et al., *Huainanzi jishi*, 3.186, 5.441.

33 For wearing yellow in the last month of summer, see *Li ji jinzhu jinyi*, 6.223. Wang Can and Po Qin also mention the last month of summer in their rhapsodies. The title "Great Summer Heat" (Dashu 大暑), in addition, is a solar term of the last month of summer. Another factor to consider is that the word "yellow" (*huang* 黃) rhymes. As for wearing black to pray for rain (and wearing yellow in the last month of summer), see *Hou Han shu*, *zhi* 5.3117.

34 Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.148–49; for the variants in the passages translated later, see 1.150nn15–16.

	羲和按轡	Xihe pulls the reins,
4	南雀舞衡	The Bird of the South dances on the ruling scale.
	暎扶桑之高熾	Glowing with the tall flames of the Fusang tree,
	燎九日之重光	Burning with the double rays of the nine suns,
	大暑赫其遂蒸	Great summer heat blazes, and thereupon rises;
8	玄服革而尚黃	Black clothing is removed, and yellow is revered.
	蛇折鱗於靈窟	Serpents slough their scales in numinous dens,
	龍解角於皓蒼	Dragons shed their horns in the splendid sky of the east.

According to the ritual classic *Li ji* 禮記, it is deer, not dragons, that shed their horns in summer.[35] But in Cao Zhi's "grand visions" (*zhuangguan* 壯觀),[36] dragons replace deer. Since dragons and east are symbols of spring, when dragons shed their horns in the east, we are reminded again that spring yields to summer. When turning to the mortal world, Cao Zhi continues taking a bird's eye view to describe how the mountains crack, seas boil, animals migrate, and human beings scatter like chess pieces:

	遂乃温風赫曦	Thereupon, the warm wind blazes,
12	草木垂榦	Plants and trees droop their stems.
	山坼海沸	Mountains crack, seas boil,
	沙融礫爛	Sand melts, gravel turns to mush.
	飛魚躍渚	Flying fish leap onto the isles,
16	潛黿浮岸	Submerged turtles drift onto the shores.
	鳥張翼而(近)[遠]栖	Birds open their wings and roost afar,
	獸交(游)[逝]而雲散	Beasts leave in swirls and scatter like clouds.
	於時黎庶徙倚	Thereupon, the common people pace to and fro,
20	棋布葉分	Dispersed like chess pieces, spread like leaves.
	機女絶綜	Weavers leave their heddles behind,
	農夫釋耘	Farmers abandon their weeding work.
	背暑者不羣而齊跡	Those fleeing the heat are not gathering but have the same pace,
24	向陰者不會而成羣	Those heading for shade are not meeting but form a group.

35 *Li ji jinzhu jinyi*, 6.219.

36 Wu Zhi 吳質 (178–230) attributes "grand visions" to Cao Zhi in his "Letter Replying to the Prince of Dong'e [another title of Cao Zhi]" (Da Dong'e wang shu 答東阿王書). For the letter, see *Wen xuan*, 42.1908–11.

Wang Can takes a different approach. While Cao Zhi observes the world from above, he observes it from below; while Cao Zhi begins with divine beings, he begins with earthly characterization of the last month of summer—including the *linzhong* 林鍾 pitch, "moist earth" (*tu ruen* 土潤), "humid heat" (*ru shu* 溽暑), and "warm wind" (*wen feng* 温風)—in the ritual classic *Li ji*.[37] The first rhyme group reads:[38]

惟林鍾之季月　Verily, in the last month of the *linzhong* pitch,
重陽積而上昇　Double *yang* accumulates and rises.
(喜)[熹]潤土之溽暑　It bakes the moist earth, makes humid heat,
扇温風而至興　Fans the warm wind until it gets vigorous.
[或赫熾以燀炎　Sometimes it blazes, exhaustingly hot;
或鬱術而燠蒸]　Other times it swells, rising like steam.

In the next rhyme group, Wang Can describes how the heat rampages through the wilds and plains, halls and courtyards, bodies and hearts. His descriptions are not without legendary details—for example, Kunwu in line 11 is a volcano in the far south that the sun reaches at midday[39]—but it is clear from line 19 that he continues taking a perspective from below:

獸狼望以倚喘　Beasts with wolfish gaze rest panting,
鳥垂翼而弗翔　Birds with drooping wings do not fly.
[根生苑而焦炙　Roots growing in the preserve are parched—
豈含血而能當]　How can blooded creatures endure this?
遠昆吾之中景　Distant from Kunwu's midday sunshine,
天地翕其同光　Heaven and earth dazzle, glowing with it.
征夫瘼於原野　Wayfarers are wilted on the plains and wilds,
處者困于門堂　Those at home are constrained in the gates and halls.
患衽席之焚灼　They are vexed by their sleeping mats with burning heat,
譬洪燎之在牀　As if having great torches on the beds.
起屏營而東西　They rise flitting and fluttering, from east to west;

37 *Li ji jinzhu jinyi*, 6.220–21.

38 *Yiwen leiju*, 5.90; for the variant in the passages here and later, see *Quan Hou Han wen*, 90.1a–b (958); for the supplied lines (except for the last two) in the passages here and later, see *Taiping yulan*, 34.3a (160); for the last two lines (lines 39–40), see *Beitang shuchao*, 132.6b.

39 Liu et al., *Huainanzi jishi*, 3.234. Also see Zhang Heng's "Rhapsody on Contemplating the Mystery" (Si xuan fu 思玄賦) in *Hou Han shu* 59.1921–22n5; *Wen xuan*, 15.660; *Wen xuan or Selections*, 3:116 (line 139).

欲避之而無方 They wish to escape, but have nowhere to go.
仰庭槐而嘯風 They look up at the courtyard pagoda trees for soughing wind;
20 風既至而如湯 When the wind comes, it is like boiling water.
[氣呼吸以祛短 Breath is inhaled and exhaled, loosening the shorts;
汗雨下而沾裳 Sweat is pouring like rain, soaking the lower garment.
就清泉以自沃 Going to a cold spring to wash themselves,
24 猶渜涊而不涼 They still sweat and swelter, feeling no coolness.
體煩茹以於悒 With irritated bodies, they sigh and sob;
心憤悶而窘惶] With frustrated hearts, they find no way out.

The extant pieces of Po Qin, Liu Zhen, and Chen Lin are short and fragmentary, but interestingly, they all refer to a feast. Po Qin whines about feasting in such a heat:[40]

粉扇靡(救)[效] White fans are useless,
宴戲勘歡 Feasting and playing lack joy.

Liu Zhen celebrates iced beverages:[41]

實冰漿於玉醆 They fill iced beverages into jade cups.

And Chen Lin writes about the joy of feasting by alluding to the *Analects* (7/18) and the *Shi jing* (*Mao shi* 161):[42]

樂以忘憂 In his delight, he forgets to worry;
氣變志遷 His vitality alters, his aspirations shift.
爰速嘉賓 Thereupon he invites fine guests,
式燕且殷 To feast and extend his hospitality.

By referring to a feast, all the above "Rhapsodies on Great Summer Heat" differ from the "Rhapsody on Dry Clouds" (Hanyun fu 旱雲賦) attributed to Jia Yi 賈誼 (ca. 200–168 BCE). Although sharing the subject of hotness, the "Rhapsody on Dry Clouds" blames heaven for the parched land and thus reads like political criticism,[43] whereas the above "Rhapsodies on Great Summer Heat" consist of dangers *and* a feast, reminding us rather of the "Summoning the Soul." In this ancient poem, someone's "heavenly

40 *Yiwen leiju*, 5.89; for the variant, see *Beitang shuchao*, 135.14b.

41 *Yuzhu baodian*, 6.15a.

42 *Yun bu*, 1.22b, under 遷.

43 Knechtges, "The *Fu* on Dry Clouds," 50.

and earthly souls are divided and scattered" (魂魄離散) and the lost soul is departing for another world.[44] To persuade the lost soul to return, a shaman first warns it against the dangers in otherworlds (for example, ten scorching suns in the east), and then presents a variety of enticements (for example, a sumptuous feast) to enjoy in its former dwelling. Although the Cao court poets do not call "O Soul—return, return!" as shamans did, they structure their "Rhapsodies on the Great Summer Heat" in a similar way.

Just as the lost soul is summoned to its former dwelling to relax and take pleasures, so does the "great man" (*daren* 大人) in the second half of Cao Zhi's "Rhapsody on the Great Summer Heat" move to a summer resort to "ease his mind and nourish his spirit" (緩神育靈). There he enjoys "air-conditioning" with cold springs, ice, and the tune of "White Snow" played on the zithers:

	於是大人遷居宅幽	Thereupon, the great man moves to a secluded dwelling
	緩神育靈	To ease his mind and nourish his spirit.
	雲屋重構	The cloud-high roof is built in tiers,
28	閑房肅清	The lateral rooms are quiet and cold.
	寒泉涌流	Icy springs bubble and flow,
	玄木奮榮	Black trees vigorously bloom.
	積素冰於幽館	With white ice piled in the secluded lodge,
32	氣飛結而為霜	The air wafts and freezes, turning into frost.
	奏白雪於琴瑟	To the "White Snow" played on the zithers,
	朔風感而增涼	The north wind responds, bringing more coolness.

Detached from the other lines in Cao Zhi's collection for their distinct source, rhyme, and context, the following lines reveals that the summer resort is an imperial dwelling:

	壯皇居之瑰瑋兮	How grand is the imperial dwelling's mighty magnificence!
36	步八閎而為宇	Measuring the Eight Bounds to be its area under the eaves.
	節四運之常氣兮	Regulating the four seasons' routine air,
	踰太素之儀矩	It goes over Great Plainness' norms and principles.

As if echoing this last detail, Wang Can calls the protagonist in the second half of his rhapsody "emperor" (*dihou* 帝后) and identifies the imperial dwelling as the Forest Light Palace (Linguang 林光) in the Sweet Springs (Ganquan 甘泉) among the Nine Peaks (Jiuzong 九嵕). The Sweet Springs complex was

44 Qu et al., *Chu ci buzhu*, 9.312.

the place where Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) established the altar to the heavenly deity Grand Unity (Taiyi 太一) and visited on numerous occasions. Located three hundred *li* northwest of Chang'an 長安 (in present-day Chunhua 淳化 *xian*, Shaanxi), it was also a summer resort for Han emperors.[45] Wang Can's lines on the summer resort read:

	於是帝后順時	Thereupon the emperor observes the season,
28	幸九(峻)[嶻]之陰岡	Graces the Nine Peaks of shady hills,
	託甘泉之清野	Entrusts himself to the Sweet Springs in fresh countryside,
	御華殿於林光	Arrives at the ornate palace of the Forest Light,
	潛廣室之邃宇	Hides himself in the spacious chambers with a deep roof,
32	激寒流於下堂	Stirs cold currents under the halls.
	重屋百層	The tiered roof has a hundred layers,
	垂陰千廡	Casting shade to a thousand verandas.
	九闥洞開	The nine gates open one upon another,
36	周帷高舉	The curtains around are lifted high.
	堅冰常奠	Hard ice is offered regularly,
	寒饌代敍	Cold viands are served in succession.
	[雄風颯然兮	The male wind whooshes by,
40	時動帷帳之纖羅]	Sometimes stirring the curtains of delicate gauze.

It is questionable whether the Sweet Springs complex still stood intact in 216, which is about when the Cao court poets must have composed their rhapsodies on summer heat. Emperor Cheng of Han 漢成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE) had attempted to move sacrifices back to the capital suburbs, and after Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE–23 CE) argued for the capital suburbs in 5 CE, the sacrifices to Heaven seemed to have never been restored in the Sweet Springs complex. The complex could have been left unattended since.[46] In addition to its dubious existence, the Sweet Springs complex was also known for its murals of Heaven, Earth, and Grand Unity. Upon hearing that "the divine beings would not arrive if the palace is not furnished in a way that resembles [the dwellings of] the divine," Emperor Wu called for the murals to be

45 For an introduction to the Sweet Springs Palace, see *Wen xuan or Selections*, 2:16–17.

46 For the sacrificial site's changes of location, see *Han shu*, 25b.1253–265; *Hou Han shu*, *zhi* 7.3157–59; *Sanfu huangtu jiaoshi*, 5.321–23. Also see *Wen xuan or Selections*, 2:16nn3–4; Yao, *Ganquan gong zhi*, 19–21.

painted.[47] When the Cao court poets read Wang Can's rhapsody, they must have enjoyed finding the parallel between their colleague's furnished poem and Emperor Wu's furnished palace.

The last two lines of Wang Can's rhapsody (lines 39–40), like the last rhyme group of Cao Zhi's rhapsody, are separated from the other extant lines for their distinct source, rhyme, and context. The "male wind" (*xiongfeng* 雄風) in line 39, in particular, adds another sovereign to the summer resort. It is an allusion to the "Rhapsody on the Wind" (Feng fu 風賦) attributed to Song Yu, in which King Qingxiang of Chu 楚頃襄王 (r. 298–263 BCE) has a conversation on the wind with the court poet Song Yu while enjoying himself in another touring palace: the Magnolia Terrace (Lan tai 蘭臺). For his king, Song Yu identifies the cool, pleasant wind as "male wind of His Majesty," whereas the hot, harmful "female wind" (*cifeng* 雌風) belongs to poor commoners. Admonition is subtly presented, and the king is forced to view his pleasures from another perspective. When a cool wind whooshes by and stirs the curtains of delicate gauze, Wang Can's readers find themselves joining a long-gone sovereign, who sometimes appears to be Emperor Wu, other times King Qingxiang. Modelling himself after Song Yu, Wang Can expresses subtle admonition with unmistakable self-deprecation to the sovereign soul: How do I even have the privilege to enjoy this "male wind of His Majesty"?

Cao Zhi does not specify which "great man" is nourishing his own spirit in the imperial dwelling. Zhao Youwen believes it refers to Cao Zhi's powerful father Cao Cao. While Zhao Youwen's reading is possible, I would also like to acknowledge a poetic antecedent: Sima Xiangru's "Rhapsody on the Great Man" (Daren fu 大人賦). The rhapsody was presented to none other than Emperor Wu, who reputedly felt like he was floating in the air upon hearing about a transcendental journey (see Chapter 1). Now that Cao Zhi uses the same enticing title of "great man" for the sovereign, he and his readers are more likely to find Emperor Wu on his transcendental flight from the dangerous summer heat.

It was summer, when there were few court events that required service to the warlord Cao Cao. Together the young lord and his fellow poets turned to the strange and the long-gone: Cao Zhi enumerated divine beings of summer and found the "great man" in his legendary touring palace; Wang Can cleverly contrasted the sweltering wind with the "male wind of His Majesty" to express his self-deprecation; Po Qin, Liu Zhen, and Chen Lin, likewise, referred to a feast in their "Rhapsodies on the Great Summer Heat." Only

47 *Shi ji*, 28.1387–88. Also see Zheng, "Concerning the Viewers," 105.

Yang Xiu failed to submit his work, and chose instead to applaud his young lord on this carefree summer day.

Token of Friendship

I have referred to the "Summoning the Soul" several times in my discussion above. Here I would like to bring those observations together and answer these questions: In what sense can we read the Cao court's remembrance as an early medieval variation of the ancient soul-summoning poetry? And how does this help us understand the role that summer plays in the collective memory of the Cao court? The key is the presence of a fond memory exclusive to—and thus serving as a token of friendship for—a certain community, as the finale of the "Summoning the Soul" reads.

The finale describes the speaker's solitary journey and a reenactment of a night hunt, both of which take place in the springtime Southland, in parallel to the summertime at the Cao court. When he travels in the south of the Yangtze River basin, there is at first no one else but luxuriant vegetation around. Yet suddenly, as if getting lost in memory,[48] he finds a team of horses followed by a thousand chariots. In the flickering torchlight, moreover, he sees shadowed faces,[49] including those of himself and his king who galloped in the marshland and startled wild water-buffalos. The sudden transition from reality to memory reads:[50]

路貫廬江兮左長薄	The road passes the Lu River, with Changbo on my left;
倚沼畦瀛兮遙望博	Pausing by the ponds and marshes, I gaze afar at the vast plain.
青驪結駟兮齊千乘	Jet horses made a team of four— in step with a thousand chariots;
懸火延起兮玄顏蒸	The hung fires flickered skyward— our shadowed faces rose along.

48 Wang Yi 王逸 (fl. 114–120) believes Qu Yuan went hunting with his king in the same place, suggesting that the hunting scenes are in memory; Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1070–1135) believes the hunt is an enticement that helps summon the soul. See Qu et al., *Chu ci buzhu*, 9.339n2. I follow Wang Yi in this case.

49 Wang Yi reads *xuanyan* 玄顏 as the sky being darkened by the smoke, whereas David Hawkes translates it as "a pall" (i.e., a dark cloud) of smoke. See Qu et al., *Chu ci buzhu*, 9.339n3; Qu et al., *The Songs of the South*, 230. I take *yan* 顏 literally as "face," and *xuanyan* 玄顏 as shadowed faces (by the flickering torchlight).

50 Qu et al., *Chu ci buzhu*, 9.339.

But soon the sun (in reality) rises, replacing the night (in memory). The path is covered by thoroughwort and immersed in water. It is again a vast plain without anyone but the traveller (the soul and/or the shaman following the soul into the Southland), who laments: "My vision penetrates one thousand *li*—it wounds this heart of spring" (目極千里兮傷春心). Then we hear the shaman calling one last time: "O Soul—return, return! Lamentable is the Southland" (魂兮歸來哀江南). To Han-time poets of the sevens (*qi* 七, see Chapter 1), a hunt is a transient pleasure, inferior to a sagely rule. But to the speaker in the ancient soul-summoning poetry, the memory of a spring night's hunt with his king represents more than a sensual pleasure: Exclusive to him and his king, it is a token of their close relationship.[51] The speaker is lost not only because his king sends him away, but also because he cannot let go of the token. It is from this dead-end remembrance that the shaman summons his soul.

To Cao Pi and Cao Zhi, their brilliant summer is like the ancient spring hunt, an exclusive memory and a token of friendship no longer kept intact. Afflicted by the epidemic and sibling rivalry, Cao Pi has only Wu Zhi 吳質 (178–230) left to relate the good old days to. Cao Zhi is in an even worse situation, as his "Memorial on Requesting Permission to Meet with Kin" (Qiu tong qinqin biao 求通親親表) reads:[52]

> Whenever it is the time for seasonal gathering, I dwell alone in total isolation. To my left and right there are only servants and slaves; who I face is only my wife and children. When I give a lofty talk, I have no one to display it to; when I put forward an argument, I have no one to show it to. Whenever listening to the music and looking at the kylixes, I invariably pat my heart and heave a sigh.
>
> 每四節之會，塊然獨處，左右唯僕隸，所對惟妻子，高談無所與陳，發義無所與展，未嘗不聞樂而撫心，臨觴而歎息也。

At this point, the collective memory of this community has broken into shards. No matter how hard Cao Pi and Cao Zhi summon their brilliant summer, how reluctantly they let go of the token of friendship, there is only a vast plain without anyone but the lonely travellers.

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51 For a discussion of how the genre of sevens differs from its predecessors in the *Chu ci*, see Chu, *Han fu shilue xinzheng*, 120, 137–38.

52 *Wen xuan*, 37.1685–89. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 3.436–38; *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1590. The memorial is dated to 231 during the reign of his nephew Cao Rui 曹叡 (204–239, r. 226–239). For the date, see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1589.

Chapter 4

CONVERSING IN *LINGUA MORTUA*

IN THE POEMS we have discussed so far, conversations between those who are gone and those who survive may be reconstructed intertextually, but have never heard intratextually. Those who are gone because of frustration or death may be called, but they do not respond, as we have noticed in Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187–226) "Rhapsody on the Widow" (Guafu fu 寡婦賦). Even when the frustrated and the dead try to reach out, they cannot be heard, as we will see in Ruan Yu's 阮瑀 (d. 212) "Sevenfold Sadness" (Qi ai 七哀). Once they departed, they hardly returned. How is a conversation with them possible?

Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232) makes such a conversation possible, by speaking the language of the departed in his poems. This reminds us of a note Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) makes on the "catacombs" movement of his piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition*: "cum mortuis in lingua mortua" (Latin for "with the dead in a dead language"). The suite, as a musical representation of Mussorgsky's visit to an exhibition in memory of his friend, Viktor Hartmann (1834–1873), begins with a leisure-walk theme and proceeds to depict the exhibited pictures. When it comes to the picture-movement of catacombs, the stand-alone leisure-walk theme magically blends in and alternates between high and low keys as if Mussorgsky and his late friend find each other and engage in a conversation *within the picture*. It is here that Mussorgsky makes the note: "cum mortuis in lingua mortua."

Mussorgsky and his late friend converse in musical notes; what does *lingua mortua* sound like in Cao Zhi's poetic conversations *cum mortuis*? While the picture of catacombs connects to the European art of *memento mori* (Latin for "remember that you are mortal"), what connections are there between Cao Zhi's *lingua mortua* and the concurrent poetic conventions that address frustration and death? By listening to Cao Zhi engaging in poetic conversations with the departed, we will develop a proficiency in their language in this chapter.

Frustration Parodied

Let us begin by listening to the poetic conversation between Cao Zhi's "Presented to Wang Can" (Zeng Wang Can 贈王粲) and one of Wang Can's 王粲 (177–217) "Miscellaneous Poems" (Za shi 雜詩). Scholars have found similarities between these two poems, but while Wu Qi 吳淇 (fl. 1658) believes Wang Can writes in response to Cao Zhi, Huang Jie 黃節 (1873–1935) thinks it is the other way around.[1] A nuance is pointed out by Huang Jie: There are two concluding couplets in Cao Zhi's poem. The first is lines 13–14 in imitation of Wang Can's concluding couplet, and the second is lines 15–16, which constitute *the* concluding couplet of Cao Zhi's poem.

To visualize Huang Jie's observation, I align Cao Zhi's and Wang Can's mtaching couplets in the translation below. Indeed, Wang Can's concluding lines 15–16 are matched by Cao Zhi's lines 13–14, but Cao Zhi's concluding lines 15–16 are not matched by any couplets in Wang Can's poem. It is reasonable to say that Cao Zhi's first fourteen lines, loaded with sorrow in the first person (see *wo* 我 in lines 7 and 11), assume the voice of Wang Can, whereas the final two lines, in second-person point of view (see *jun* 君 in line 15), assume a didactic voice to address Wang Can's worries. To distinguish those two voices, I place Cao Zhi's first fourteen lines in quotation marks:

	Cao Zhi, "Presented to Wang Can"[2]		**Wang Can, "Miscellaneous Poem"**[3]
	端坐苦愁思		日暮遊西園
	"Sitting upright, suffering from sorrowful thoughts,		At sunset I roam in the West Garden,
	攬衣起西游		冀寫憂思情
	I gather up my robe and rise, roaming west.		Hoping to relieve my worried thoughts.
	樹木發春華		曲池揚素波
	Trees send forth spring blossoms,		The winding pond raises white waves,
4	清池激長流	4	列樹敷丹榮
	The cold pond stirs long currents.		Rows of trees display cinnabar florescence.

1 Wu, *Liuchao Xuan shi dinglun*, 137–38; Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 55n12.

2 *Wen xuan*, 24.1120–21. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.29, which differs in the last line as discussed later.

3 *Wen xuan*, 29.1359.

中有孤鴛鴦
In the midst there is a lone mandarin duck,

哀鳴求匹儔
Calling sadly, seeking its mate.

我願執此鳥
I hope to get hold of this bird—

8 惜哉無輕舟
What a pity that there is no light boat.

欲歸忘故道
Wishing to go back, I forgot the way I came;

顧望但懷愁
Gazing around, I only feel sorrow.

悲風鳴我側
A sorrowful wind calls by my side,

12 羲和逝不留
Xihe [the sun charioteer] leaves without lingering.

重陰潤萬物
Double *yin* moistens myriad things,

何懼澤不周
Why fear its favour is not all-encompassing?"

誰令君多念
Who causes you, Milord, to think so much?

16 自使懷百憂
You make yourself bear these hundred worries.

上有特棲鳥
Up there is a bird roosting alone,

懷春向我鳴
Stirred by springtime, calling to me.

褰裙欲從之
Holding up my robe, I wish to follow it—

8 路嶮不得征
The road is perilous. I cannot go.

徘徊不能去
Lingering to and fro, I cannot bring myself to leave;

佇立望爾形
Standing for a long time, I gaze at your form.

風飇揚塵起
A gust of wind rises, raising dust;

12 白日忽已冥
The blazing sun, all of a sudden, has turned dark.

迴身入空房
Turning back, I enter the empty room;

託夢通精誠
Through a dream, I communicate my sincerity.

人欲天不違
Heaven does not go against human desire,

16 何懼不合幷
Why fear not being united?

Since Wang Can mentions that he takes a walk in the West Garden (Xiyuan 西園) in the very first line, he must have written the poem after the winter of 210 when the construction of the terrace-garden complex was launched and, most likely, after 208 when he joined Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220). The poem writes about a walk on a spring day, starting with unnamed worries, continuing when a bird calls to him, and coming to an end upon nightfall. The bird (*que* 雀) serves as a pun for a rank of nobility (*jue* 爵), both pronounced as *tsjak* in middle Chinese and commonly associated with one another in bas-reliefs and murals in Han-time tombs.[4] The pursuit of a bird, therefore, can be read as Wang Can's pursuit of a noble rank. He is so eager to approach the bird/rank, and so reluctant to let it go, that he calls out to it using the second-person pronoun "you" (*er* 爾, in line 10).

It is interesting to see how Cao Zhi adapts Wang Can's voice: Instead of looking *up* at the trees, the speaker looks *around* at the pond. Instead of finding a "bird roosting alone," he finds a "lone mandarin duck" that *needs* and *is* a loyal mate. And he is not submissively following (*cong* 從) the bird, but actively getting hold of (*zhi* 執) it. Moreover, the bird/rank does not disappear in the hours of "darkness," for "double *yin*" (*chong yin* 重陰, which refers to Cao Cao, the most powerful subject or *chen* 臣) moistens myriad things. In his parody of Wang Can's frustration, we see how Cao Zhi suggests an alternative way for Wang Can to perceive his career and relationship with Cao Cao.

Without quotation marks in the classical Chinese text to distinguish one voice from another, there has been a tendency to read the entire poem as the author's self-expression. Accordingly, the first-person speaker in Cao Zhi's poem has been read as Cao Zhi himself. Some *Wen xuan* 文選 commentators, for example, believe that Cao Zhi uses the image of getting hold of a bird to express his hope to meet Wang Can.[5] Similarly, Wu Qi reads Cao Zhi as a recruiter eager to "ensnare the various talents to be his own feathers and wings."[6] Despite their common acceptance of such a recruiter voice of Cao Zhi, modern scholars reach different conclusions. Yu Shaochu 俞紹初 believes that these poems were written in response to one another (*changhe* 唱和) after the poets roamed together in the West Garden. The images of birds were used by them to refer to one another and show mutual admi-

4 For a discussion of the bird/rank association, see Hsing, "Handai huaxiang zhong de 'she jue she hou tu,'" 1–66.

5 言願執鳥而無輕舟，以喻己之思粲而無良會也 in *Wen xuan*, 24.1120.

6 子建有羅致群彥，以為羽翼之意 in Wu, *Liuchao Xuan shi dinglun*, 122.

ration.[7] Xiaofei Tian, on the other hand, finds "getting hold of" (*zhi* 執) a forceful action. In her interpretation, this is evidence of the political power manipulated by the Cao court.[8]

Huang Jie counters the above arguments by reading the poem *only partially* as Cao Zhi's self-expression. When there is a first-person pronoun *wo* 我 in Cao Zhi's poem, he hears the impersonated Wang Can; when there are words of consolation, he distinguish those in Wang Can's voice from those in Cao Zhi's voice.[9] Here arises a structural question: Wouldn't the poem sound unbalanced, with fourteen lines in someone else's voice and two lines in one's own? Interestingly, Huang Jie finds three poems sharing a similar structure: Cao Zhi's "Miscellaneous Poem" (No. 2), Cao Pi's "Miscellaneous Poem" (No. 2), and an anonymous song verse titled "Yan ge xing" 豔歌行. The major part of each poem tells how someone—the tumbleweed and a soldier in Cao Zhi's poem, a towering cloud in Cao Pi's poem, and a sojourner in the anonymous song verse—is forced to leave their native place. When it comes to the concluding couplet of each poem, the rhyme changes. The rhyming pattern also switches from odd-numbered lines only, to both odd-numbered and even-numbered lines.[10] The concluding couplet of Cao Zhi's "Miscellaneous Poem" (No. 2) reads:

去去莫復道　　Away, away, let us say no more!
沈憂令人老　　Deep worries make people old.

The concluding couplet of Cao Pi's "Miscellaneous Poem" (No. 2) reads:

棄置勿復陳　　Drop it, state no more!
客子常畏人　　Strangers always dread people.

And the concluding couplet of the anonymous song verse titled "Yan ge xing" reads:

石見何纍纍　　Rocks show—how those mass and stack!
遠行不如歸　　Better return than travel afar.

The sudden changes in rhyme and rhyming pattern must have been obvious to the audience of a musical performance. Upon hearing such changes, the audience knew the performance had come to an end. Readers today can

7 Yu, "Jian'an qizi nianpu," 476.

8 Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 155–56.

9 Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 55n12.

10 Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 23n7.

easily miss the auditory signals, but Huang Jie probably memorizes all the rhyme words and captures all the signals for us.

With the auditory signals in mind, we find ourselves among an audience listening to a musical performance. In this context of musical performance, it is not an issue to have fourteen lines in someone else's voice and two lines in the performer's voice. It is expected, after all, for the performer to play a role other than their own. It is also imaginable that the performer does not speak directly to the audience until the end, as we "hear" in the concluding lines of another song verse titled "Yuan ge xing" 怨歌行. Having sung about the Duke of Zhou 周公 (fl. 1042–1035 BCE), the performer bids the audience farewell:[11]

	吾欲竟此曲	I wish to complete this song,
20	此曲悲且長	But this song is sad and long.
	今日樂相樂	Today, enjoy what you enjoy,
	別後莫相忘	After parting, do not forget me.

Cao Zhi's "Presented to Wang Can" adopts a similar structure. In his poem, the "performance" starts as soon as Wang Can's words and gestures are parodied: "Sitting upright, suffering from sorrowful thoughts, / I gather up my robe and rise, roaming west." It is this impersonated Wang Can who looks around, finds a lone mandarin duck, and hopes to get hold of it. It is also this impersonated Wang Can who assures himself that even in the hours of darkness, Cao Cao is the double *yin* force that takes care of all with his moistening favour. When the "performance" comes to an end, Cao Zhi resumes a performer's voice, addressing Wang Can by the honorific second-person pronoun "Milord" (*jun* 君) and suggesting that Wang Can put aside unnecessary worries:

	誰令君多念	Who causes you, Milord, to think so much,
16	遂使懷百憂	Thereupon make you bear these hundred worries?

In the *Wen xuan* version, Cao Zhi in a performer's voice simply answers his own rhetorical question, pointing out the worries are self-inflicted:

	誰令君多念	Who causes you, Milord, to think so much?
16	自使懷百憂	You make yourself bear these hundred worries.

11 *Yiwen leiju*, 41.746; *Yuefu shiji*, 42.616–17. For a note on various attributions, see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 3.362.

Wang Can is portrayed as a lost soul in Cao Zhi's "performance": "Wishing to go back, I forgot the way I came; / Gazing around, I only feel sorrow" (lines 9–10). We may say it refers to Wang Can's past experience of south sojourn,[12] but we may also say that Wang Can, having returned to the north, is still struggling to feel home. To direct this lost soul from the endless search for home, Cao Zhi not only integrates Wang Can's poem and parodies his *lingua mortua*, but also leaves a provoking question: Who causes you, Milord, to think so much?

Murmurs Heard

While most of the "presentation and reply" (*zengda* 贈答) poems in the sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* are made in the context of sending someone off and bidding them farewell—Cao Zhi's poem series "Presented to Biao, Prince of Baima" (Zeng Baimawang Biao 贈白馬王彪) is an example—a few poems in the same category are sent to those who are already far away. Cao Zhi's poem "Presented to Wang Can" is of the latter type: Although serving at the same court, Cao Zhi senses Wang Can's frustration and detachment.

A similar mental distance can be observed in Cao Zhi's other four poems of presentation, which bear the titles in the *Wen xuan* of "Presented to Xu Gan" (Zeng Xu Gan 贈徐幹), "Presented to Ding Yí" (Zeng Ding Yí 贈丁儀), "Presented Again to Ding Yí and Wang Can" (You zeng Ding Yí Wang Can 又贈丁儀王粲), and "Presented to Ding Yì" (Zeng Ding Yì 贈丁翼). Among the addressees, Xu Gan 徐幹 (171–218) perhaps kept the furthest mental distance from the court. He retired in his forties on the grounds of illness. According to the preface to Xu Gan's *Balanced Discourses* (Zhong lun 中論), he enjoyed his life of retirement despite the poverty.[13] How did Cao Zhi write a poem to bring a colleague like Xu Gan, who retired in his prime, back to the court? How did he present his poems of sympathy to the many others who were contemplating their careers going forward, and assure them of his unflagging support?

Part 1. City, Army, and Feast

Cao Zhi begins every poem by describing the sounds, sights, and feels of a locale, which can be a grand city, a kingly army, or a convivial feast. In the poem to Xu Gan, the opening lines are about a starry spring night in the Ye 鄴 city (present-day Linzhang 臨漳, Hebei), capital of Cao Cao's kingdom.

12 Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 55n12.

13 Xu, *Zhong lun jiegu*, 393–95. Also see Xu, *Balanced Discourses*, xxxiv–xxxv.

At night, senses become sharp and memories become clear. While people are still busy with their end-of-day work, the speaker leads his target audience Xu Gan to revisit the twin gate-towers, the Cultural Splendour Palace, and the Breeze Greeting Lodge. On their way, they hear spring doves cooing and stray gusts buffeting the porch:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Xu Gan" (part 1, lines 1–12)[14]

	驚風飄白日	A startling wind blasts the blazing sun,
	忽然歸西山	Which suddenly returns to the west mountains.
	圓景光未滿	Before the moonlight comes full,
4	衆星粲以繁	A multitude of stars shine brightly and profusely.
	志士營世業	Men with aspirations build works for their time,
	小人亦不閑	Lesser men, too, are not idle.
	聊且夜行遊	For the moment I go roaming in the night,
8	遊彼雙闕間	Roaming between the twin gate-towers.
	文昌鬱雲興	The Cultural Splendour Palace rises like a thick cloud,
	迎風高中天	The Breeze Greeting Lodge is as high as the Mid-sky Terrace.
	春鳩鳴飛棟	Spring doves coo among the flying ridgepoles,
12	流飆激櫺軒	Stray gusts buffet the lattice railing.

In the poem to Ding Yí 丁儀 (d. 220), the spring scenes turn into autumn ones with falling leaves. While ascending a towering building, one sees crystals of frost at the jade-white steps and feels the flows of breezes in the soaring gallery:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yí" (part 1, lines 1–4)[15]

	初秋涼氣發	In early autumn, cool air emerges;
	庭樹微銷落	From the courtyard trees, leaves have slightly fallen.
	凝霜依玉除	Frost, crystalized, rests on jade-white steps;
4	清風飄飛閣	Breezes, in cool flow, buffet the soaring gallery.

In the poem to both Ding Yí and Wang Can, the opening lines turn to Chang'an, the western capital of the Han empire. Cao Cao and his followers passed this old capital on two military expeditions, one in 211 against Ma Chao 馬超 (176–222) and the other in 215 against Zhang Lu 張魯 (d. 216). Since the poem celebrates the warlord's choice of making peace, the expedi-

14 *Wen xuan*, 24.1117–18. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.42.

15 *Wen xuan*, 24.1119–20. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.129.

tion in 215, which ended in making peace with Zhang Lu, is more likely the backdrop. But, as evidence suggests, Cao Zhi did not follow Cao Cao on the expedition in 215.[16] Cao Cao's kingly army and the marvellous mountains, rivers, and buildings in and around Chang'an, therefore, are not seen by Cao Zhi in person, but visualized by him to situate a poetic conversation with his target audience, Ding Yí and Wang Can:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yí and Wang Can" (part 1, lines 1–12)[17]

從軍度函谷　Accompanying the army, we crossed Hangu;
驅馬過西京　Spurring our horses, we passed the western capital.
山岑高無極　Mountains and peaks tower, in their infinite height;
涇渭揚濁清　The Jing and Wei Rivers surge, with turbid and clear waves.
壯哉帝王居　How grand is this dwelling of emperors and kings!
佳麗殊百城　The fine beauty distinguishes itself from a hundred cities:
員闕出浮雲　The Round Gate-towers soar beyond drifting clouds,
承露槩泰清　The Dew Collector scrapes overflows from Grand Purity [the sky].
皇佐揚天惠　With the imperial assistant to spread celestial favour,
四海無交兵　Within the Four Seas there is no clash of arms.
權家雖愛勝　Although a military tactician loves victory,
全國為令名　Taking a state in one piece makes a good name.

Finally, in the poem to Ding Yì 丁廙 (d. 220) we find a convivial feast. With music, food, and drink, the feast provides the fullest pleasure:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yì" (part 1, lines 1–8)[18]

嘉賓填城闕　Fine guests clog the city-gate,
豐膳出中廚　Bountiful viands come out of the kitchen,
吾與二三子　But I, with two or three people,
曲宴此城隅　Feast privately in a nook of the city-wall:
秦箏發西氣　A Qin cither emits a western air,
齊瑟揚東謳　A Qi zithern sends forth an eastern song,
肴來不虛歸　Delicacies come and never go back untouched,
觴至反無餘　Kylixes arrive and return without a drop left.

16 Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 58–59n21.

17 *Wen xuan*, 24.1121–22. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.133.

18 *Wen xuan*, 1126–27. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.141.

Part 2. Murmurs

In the midst of the excitement, the speaker hears someone murmuring frustration. That someone is Ding Yì, in the last poem, who seems to envy those who feast on the other side of the city. Surprised by such envious thoughts, Cao Zhi reassures Ding Yì what he means to him while admitting the existence of many talented men:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yì" (part 2, lines 9–12)

	我豈狎異人	Why would I mingle with strangers?
	朋友與我俱	Friends are together with me.
	大國多良材	A great state has many talented men,
12	譬海出明珠	Just as the sea produces bright pearls.

But more murmurs are heard in the penultimate poem. Cao Zhi is disappointed to find neither Ding Yí nor Wang Can excited about the grand city of Chang'an or the kingly army of Cao Cao. Instead, they murmur of personal loss and gain:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yí and Wang Can" (part 2, lines 13–16)

	君子在末位	As gentlemen, though in low-ranking positions,
	不能歌德聲	You do not strive to extol his virtuous reputation:
	丁生怨在朝	Mr. Ding is resentful at court,
16	王子歡自營	Master Wang enjoys making his own plans.

Cao Zhi sounds more sympathetic in the poem to Ding Yí. When he looks out from a soaring gallery in early autumn, he sees flooded fields and hears flooding complaints from those who prepared the harvest. The complaints may be made on behalf of Ding Yí against Cao Pi, for the latter ruined the former's chance to marry Cao Cao's daughter.[19] But we can read it more generally as murmurs of frustration, which are noticed by a compassionate young lord:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yí" (part 2, lines 5–12)

	朝雲不歸山	As morning clouds are not returning to the mountains,
	霖雨成川澤	Incessant rains create rivers and marshes.
	黍稷委疇隴	When millet, broomcorn and foxtail, lies rotting in the fields,
8	農夫安所獲	What are the farmers going to harvest?
	在貴多忘賤	"As a noble you mostly forget the lowly—
	為恩誰能博	In bestowing favour, who can extend it to all?

19 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1564.

狐白足禦冬　With white fox furs warm enough to stave off winter,
12 焉念無衣客　When would you ever think of men who lack clothes?"

In contrast to those nobles accused of being inconsiderate, Cao Zhi thinks of Xu Gan. While enjoying spring breezes, the young lord turns around and finds the retired scholar shivering.[20] The latter lacks food and clothes in his thatched hut. All he has is a sorrowful heart for—and writings on—the prevailing wrongdoing of the world:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Xu Gan" (part 2, lines 13–18)

顧念蓬室士　I turn around and think of the thatched-hut scholar,
貧賤誠足憐　Poor and humble, truly worth pitying:
薇藿弗充虛　Wild beans and leaves of those do not allay his hunger,
16 皮褐猶不全　His leather homespun is still incomplete.
忼慨有悲心　Impassioned, he has a sorrowful heart;
興文自成篇　Putting words down, he completes chapters of his own accord.

Part 3. Moral Lessons

Upon hearing the murmurs of frustration, Cao Zhi responds as he does in the poem to Wang Can. He is not content with a brief response, nevertheless, in the poem to Xu Gan. There are five couplets in the concluding part that give moral lessons on trust and patience: You are like jade in a rock to be recognized and presented by Mr. He 和氏 (dates unknown), and you should be like Gong Yu 貢禹 (124–44 BCE), who was so sure about his friend's recommendation that he flicked the dust off his cap and was ready to serve.[21] If you trust me, you will see your harvest and your jade-like virtue recognized:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Xu Gan" (part 3, lines 19–28)

寶棄怨何人　If a gem is discarded, who is to blame?
20 和氏有其愆　Mr. He is at fault.
彈冠俟知己　If you flick the dust off your cap and await those who know you—
知己誰不然　Whoever knows you would not approve of [your trust]?
良田無晚歲　In a good field there is no late harvest,
24 膏澤多豐年　Its fertility and moisture will yield many bumper crops.
亮懷瑣璠美　When one truly harbours the beauty of jade,
積久德逾宣　Amassed over time, his virtue stands out all the more.

20 Chu, "Cao Zijian shi zhuoluo ju yu," 184.

21 Han, *Han Feizi jijie*, 4.95; *Han shu*, 72.3066.

親交義在敦　Close friends pledge fierce loyalty—
28 申章復何言　Having presented this verse, what more can I say?

He gives a similar moral lesson to Ding Yí by referring to Ji Zha 季札 (fl. 547–485 BCE), who kept his promise and left his sword for his friend despite their separation by death.[22] The final two couplets of the poem read:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yí" (part 3, lines 13–16)

思慕延陵子　I admire Yanlingzi [Ji Zha],
寶劍非所惜　Who did not begrudge his precious sword.
子其寧爾心　You may set your mind at rest—
16 親交義不薄　Close friends pledge unswerving loyalty.

While loyalty between friends is emphasized in the previous poems, a true gentleman is called for in Cao Zhi's concluding lines of the other two poems:

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yí and Wang Can" (part 3, lines 17–18)

歡怨非貞則　Enjoyment and resentment do not conform to the norm,
中和誠可經　Moderation truly can serve as a guiding principle.

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yì" (part 3, lines 13–20)

君子義休偫　A gentleman adheres to high principles,
小人德無儲　A lesser man does nothing virtuous.
積善有餘慶　By amassing good deeds, one will have a surfeit of blessings;
16 榮枯立可須　Winning or losing honour, one can quickly find out.
滔蕩固大節　Being magnanimous certainly is the major principle;
世俗多所拘　The ordinary and customary are pedantic.
君子通大道　A gentleman comprehends the Great Way,
20 無願為世儒　Without desire to be an ordinary scholar.

Wang Can's sons and all the male members of the Ding family were executed in the political struggles.[23] Xu Gan did not escape the 217–218 epidemic, but at least he kept his life, family, and name intact from politics. In retrospect, Wang Can and the Ding brothers should have not listened to Cao Zhi but followed Xu Gan to retire early, become a revered scholar, and never return to the court. But who, except for Xu Gan, could have resisted such a stimulating picture Cao Zhi evoked in the Ye city on a spring night: "The moon's light is

22 Liu, *Xin xu jiaoshi*, 7/6 (867–69).

23 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 21.1651, 19.1564.

not yet full, / The multitudinous stars are bright and serried. / Men with aspirations build works for their time, / Lesser men, too, are not idle." Upon receiving this poem, what did Xu Gan feel? Did he respond to Cao Zhi? And how did he respond besides remaining aloof from the Cao court? No relevant material is left to answer the questions.

Perspective Shifted

By reminding us that "coffin-carrying songs" were commonly sung at merry gatherings, the Ming-dynasty scholar Zhu Jiazheng 朱嘉徵 (1602–1684) explains why Cao Zhi turns sharply from celebrating a feast to lamenting death in the middle of his song verse "Harp Lay" (Konghou yin 箜篌引, also known as Yetian huangque xing 野田黃雀行, as noted in the *Song shu*; see Chapter 1). A close examination of the entire song verse reveals that Cao Zhi is holding not only a physical feast in a high hall, but also an allegorical feast of life: from its convivial moment to separation, and from its prime to end. The changes may be abrupt, but a "princely man" (*junzi* 君子) is there offering support and solace:[24]

	置酒高殿上	I set out wine in a high hall,
	親友從我游	Kins and friends join me in pleasure.
	中廚辦豐膳	The kitchen prepares bountiful viands:
4	烹羊宰肥牛	It boils a sheep and slays a fatted calf.
	秦箏何慷慨	The Qin cither—how impassioned it is!
	齊瑟和且柔	The Qi zithern is gentle and soft. (一解 section 1)
	陽阿奏奇舞	Yang'e performs a marvellous dance,
8	京洛出名謳	From the capital Luo come famous songs.
	樂飲過三爵	Happily drinking, we exceed the three-beaker limit;
	緩帶傾庶羞	Loosening our belts, we empty out the many delicacies.
	主稱千金壽	The host wishes all a long life with a thousand in gold,
12	賓奉萬年酬	The guests propose a toast for his myriad-year life. (二解 section 2)
	久要不可忘	Old friends may not be forgotten—
	薄終義所尤	Ending up in betrayal is what loyalty condemns.
	謙謙君子德	Modesty is the virtue of a princely man,

24 *Song shu*, 21.620; *Wen xuan*, 27.1286. These two versions differ in the sequence of lines 17–20. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 3.459–60, which follows the *Wen xuan* version. For Cutter's translation of *junzi* 君子 as a "princely man" in this context (as opposed to a "gentleman" in previous poems), see Cao, *The Poetry of Cao Zhi*, 217.

16	磬折欲何求	Who bows humbly but seeks nothing.
	盛時不可再	The prime of life does not come twice,
	百年忽我遒	A hundred years, all of a sudden, have come to an end. (三解 section 3)
	驚風飄白日	A startling wind blasts the blazing sun,
20	光景馳西流	Daylight speeds on its westerly course.
	生存華屋處	Living an existence, we have ornate homes to rest;
	零落歸山丘	Withering and wasting, we return to hilly graves.
	先民誰不死	Among those prior to us, who did not die?
24	知命復何憂	Knowing fate, why worry anymore? (四解 section 4)

What Cao Zhi does not address in this poem is our afterlife: whether there is one, what it is like, and if the princely man is still there. Interestingly, the literary compendium *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 addresses an afterlife by juxtaposing Cao Pi's "*Shi* on the Widow" (Guafu shi 寡婦詩), which is written in the voice of Ruan Yu's widow (see Chapter 2), with a "Sevenfold Sadness" poem attributed to Ruan Yu, which seems to respond to the widow from the graveyard. The dead in the latter poem tells of his losses: wealth, fame, body, breath, and energy. He is offered food and drink but can enjoy none. He misses home but all he can see is weeds. This juxtaposition of Cao Pi's and Ruan Yu's poems could have appealed to an audience in Tang times when the *Yiwen leiju* was compiled. Without such a context Ruan Yu's poem can also put an unmistakable message across a feasting audience: Seize the day! Don't wait until you cannot eat or drink![25]

	丁年難再遇	The prime of life is hard to encounter twice,
	富貴不重來	Wealth and fame do not come a second time.
	良時忽一過	Once the finest moment passes, all of a sudden,
4	身體為土灰	The body becomes dirt and ash.
	冥冥九泉室	Doom and gloom is the chamber under the Nine Springs,
	漫漫長夜臺	On and on goes the terrace of the Long-lasting Night.
	身盡氣力索	As body is gone, breath and energy spent,
8	精魂靡所能	There is absolutely nothing the spirit and soul can do.
	嘉肴設不御	Fine delicacies are set out but I can enjoy none,
	旨酒盈觴杯	Tasty wine brims the kylixes and cups.
	出壙望故鄉	Going out of the vault to gaze at home,
12	但見蒿與萊	I see nothing but wormwood and goosefoot.

25 *Yiwen leiju*, 34.596.

This poem attributed to Ruan Yu marks another turning point in the concurrent poetic art: The speakers shift their perspective from that of the living to that of the dead. Originally, such songs were likely to have been sung by coffin-carriers along the road to the cemetery.[26] Proceeding in steady steps, they repeatedly sang a short yet rhythmic song like the "Dew on the Shallot" (Xie lu 薤露), which laments the brevity of life and the finality of death:[27]

	薤上露	On the shallot the dew—
	何易晞	How easily it dries!
	露晞明朝更復落	The dew dries but next dawn, they will drop once more;
4	人死一去何時歸	Human beings die but once gone, when will they come back?

Another coffin-carrying song titled "Wormwood Village" (Hao li 蒿里), which refers to the graveyard, could have been sung in a similar way to psalmody: A solo voice posed a question by singing the first pentasyllabic line, and then the choir/congregation responded by singing the remaining heptasyllabic lines:[28]

	蒿里誰家地	Wormwood Village—whose land is this?
	聚斂魂魄無賢愚	Teeming souls without exceptions for wise or fool.
	鬼伯一何相催促	How the lord of ghosts hurries them along!
4	人命不得少踟躕	Human fate does not allow any shilly-shally.

While the anonymous songs above approach death from the perspective of the living, the "Sevenfold Sadness" attributed to Ruan Yu adopts the perspective of the dead and "translate" the same word of "wormwood" into *lingua mortua*:

	出壙望故鄉	Going out of the vault to gaze at home,
12	但見蒿與萊	I see nothing but wormwood and goosefoot.

A similar shift in perspective took place in all the three coffin-carrying songs included in the early medieval anthology *Wen xuan*, respectively attributed to Miu Xi 繆襲 (186–245), Lu Ji 陸機 (177–217), and Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (ca. 365–427). When Bao Zhao 鮑照 (ca. 414–466) composed "In Place of the 'Wormwood Village'" (Dai Hao li xing 代蒿里行) and "In Place of the 'Coffin-Carrying Songs'" (Dai Wan ge 代挽歌), the perspective remained that

26 Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 75

27 *Yuefu shiji*, 27.396. Also see *Wen xuan*, 28.1333, under 聽我薤露詩.

28 *Yuefu shiji*, 27.398. Also see *Wen xuan*, 28.1333, under 聽我薤露詩.

of the dead. This trend did not grow without controversy. Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–591), for example, raised objections. He believed that coffin-carrying songs were meant to express grief on behalf of the living rather than the dead. To him, Lu Ji's verses in the voice of the dead simply deviated from the original purpose of this genre.[29] That Lu Ji was targeted by Yan Zhitui is most likely due to the former's influence. Chronologically, the "Sevenfold Sadness" attributed to Ruan Yu is among the earliest song verses that assume the voice of the dead, and the "Coffin-Carrying Song Verse" (Wan ge shi 挽歌詩) attributed to Miu Xi is among the earliest funeral songs that "deviate" the original purpose of the genre. Besides Lu Ji's fame, his songs are also the strongest in emotions. Miu Xi's speaker sounds rather calm, viewing death as a norm and relating decomposition in an objective voice:[30]

	生時遊國都	When alive, one roams in the capital;
	死沒弃中野	Passing away, one is discarded in the wilds:
	朝發高堂上	Setting out from a tall hall in the morning,
4	暮宿黃泉下	Spending the night under the Yellow Springs in the evening.
	白日入虞淵	Once the blazing sun enters the Yu Pool,
	懸車息駟馬	It ties up its chariot and rests its team of four horses.
	造化雖神明	Although the Fashioner of Change is divinely luminous,
8	安能復存我	How can it restore me to life?
	形容稍歇滅	My form and looks have slightly faded away,
	齒髮行當墮	My teeth and hair are about to fall.
	自古皆有然	Since ancient time it has been like this—
12	誰能離此者	Who can avoid this matter?

Considering that Miu Xi was a member of the Cao court, we wonder: Has Cao Zhi ever heard this indifferent statement? If he has, how does he offer solace and support as a princely man?

A Skull Revisited

In the "Ultimate Joy" (Zhi le 至樂) chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, Master Zhuang came across a skull and spoke with it. Its "discourse on death" (*si zhi shuo* 死之說) went:[31]

29 Yan, *Yan shi jiaxun*, 1.41b.

30 *Wen xuan*, 28.1332.

31 *Xinyi Zhuangzi duben*, 233.

> In death, I have neither lord to serve nor vassals to serve me, and there are no more season-to-season chores to do. At my ease, I take heaven and earth [i.e., the universe] as my springs and autumns [i.e., lifespan]. The joy that a king feels on his south-facing throne is not greater than mine.
>
> 死，無君於上，無臣於下，亦無四時之事，從然以天地為春秋，雖南面王樂，不能過也。

When Master Zhuang proposed to return life to the skull, together with its flesh and bones, family and friends, the skull frowned and said: "How could I abandon the joy of a king on his south-facing throne for the toil of a human existence?" The story stops here and the skull's discourse on death is supported with other stories in the *Zhuangzi* chapter.

In his 2014 book *The Resurrected Skeleton*, Wilt L. Idema researches how Master Zhuang's encounter with a skull is adapted throughout time. He notices that in the adaptations attributed to the Han-Wei poets Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139), Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), and Lü An 呂安 (d. 263), all the *dramatis personae* "[took] care to bury the skull, which would be superfluous action if they had been convinced by its voice."[32] For example, the concluding lines of "Rhapsody on a Skull" (Dulou fu 髑髏賦) attributed to Zhang Heng read:[33]

於是言卒響絕	Thereupon, its words ended, its voice dropped,
神光除滅	The numinous light faded away.
顧時發軫	On the verge of starting my carriage,
乃命僕夫	I therefore commanded my groom
假之以縞巾	To pad the skull with a white kerchief,
衾之以玄塵	To blanket it with black earth.
為之傷涕	Grieving and weeping for the master,
酹於路濱	I poured a libation on the roadside.

Despite the joy that the skull (which, interestingly, is that of Master Zhuang) claimed to have found, Master Ping (Pingzi 平子, which is Zhang Heng's style name as well as the *dramatis persona* representing Zhang Heng) buried it, wept, and performed a ritual gesture of offering. Idema comments that "one can only wonder whether he does so because Master Zhuang has died or because he pities him for his delusion."[34] In other words, Idema believes Master Ping did so because he was not convinced by the dead's argument

32 Idema, *The Resurrected Skeleton*, 270.

33 *Guwen yuan*, 5.12b–14a.

34 Idema, *The Resurrected Skeleton*, 270.

in favour of death. Internal evidence, on the other hand, shows that he did so for a more personal reason. Let us first return to the the *Zhuangzi* chapter and examine how the story begins. Master Zhuang was jocular, playfully striking the skull with his horsewhip and assuming the dead had done something foolish:

> When Master Zhuang went to Chu, he saw a hollow skull laid bare with its clear form. He struck it with his horsewhip and asked: "Did you end up like this because you made a mistake in your desire for life? Or perhaps your state fell and you were executed by axe? Or perhaps you committed some foul crime, causing some scandal you were ashamed to leave your father and mother, wife and children? Or perhaps you suffered from cold and hunger? Or perhaps you met the end of your springs and autumns [i.e., lifespan]?"
>
> 莊子之楚，見空髑髏，髐然有形，撽以馬捶，因而問之，曰：夫子貪生失理，而為此乎？將子有亡國之事，斧鉞之誅，而為此乎？將子有不善之行，愧遺父母妻子之醜，而為此乎？將子有凍餒之患，而為此乎？將子之春秋故及此乎？

The "Rhapsody on a Skull" attributed to Zhang Heng, by contrast, begins with a roamer who cared why a skull was left unburied on the roadside: Was the dead like Zuo Botao 左伯桃 (dates unknown), who sacrificed for his travel companion (lines 20–21)?[35] Or like Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE), who was banished and unable to die in his homeland (lines 22–23)? Both echo the *dramatis persona* of a roamer in the opening lines:

	張平子將遊目于九野	Master Ping surnamed Zhang was about to feast his eyes on the Nine Wilds,
	觀化乎八方	Observe transformations in the Eight Regions,
	星回日運	So he turned like the stars and travelled like the sun,
4	鳳舉龍驤	Took flight like phoenixes and pranced like dragons.
	南遊赤野	Southwards he visited the Red Field,
	北陟幽鄉	Northwards he ascended the Dark Lands,
	西經昧谷	Westwards he passed through the Dim Valley,
8	東極扶桑	Eastwards he reached the Fusang tree.
	於是季秋之辰	Thereupon, in the last month of autumn,
	微風起凉	A gentle breeze brought a chill.
	聊回軒駕	For the moment he turned his railed carriage around—
12	左翔右昂	The left horse soared and the right reared.

35 For a discussion of this allusion, see Lien, "Zhang Heng, Eastern Han Polymath," 285–86n18.

	步馬于疇阜	Walking them between the fields and mounds,
	逍遙乎陵岡	Roaming freely about ridges and hills,
	顧見髑髏	He looked around and saw a skull
16	委於路旁	That had been cast on the roadside.
	下居淤壤	At the bottom of it was damp earth,
	上有玄霜	On top of it was dark-cast frost.
	張平子悵然而問之曰	Master Ping surnamed Zhang, at a loss, asked it:
20	子將并糧推命	"Did you perhaps offer provisions and yield life to your friend
	以夭逝乎	And thus passed away prematurely?
	本喪此土	Did you die as a native to this land,
	流遷來乎	Or come here because of banishment?
24	為是上智	Were you someone with the highest intelligence,
	為是下愚	Or someone with the lowest stupidity?
	為是女人	Were you a woman,
	為是丈夫	Or a man?"

The skull turned out to be that of Master Zhuang, who then shared his extraordinary understanding of death (as the anonymous skull in the *Zhuangzi* story had shared with him). Note how he related his understanding of death to travel: "I go not, yet I arrive; I hasten not, yet I am swift" (不行而至，不疾而速).[36] What moved Master Ping to tears, we realize, was an intimate connection between him and the dead: The dead had been a roamer like him, and he would be embarking on the final road like the dead. In other words, what he buried was none other than someone like him, roaming away from home and eventually to "go not, yet arrive; hasten not, yet are swift."

In the "Discourse of a Skull" (Dulou shuo 髑髏說) attributed to Cao Zhi, Master Cao (Caozi 曹子, the *dramatis persona* representing Cao Zhi) also took care to bury the skull, but in an entirely different context. The skull is described as "dwelling alone in total isolation" (塊然獨居) like a recluse. And just as a court representative went into the wilds to summon a recluse, so did Master Cao go into the wilds to summon the spirit of the skull. The summon began as soon as he asked the skull questions. By referring first and foremost to Zilu 子路 (542–480 BCE), who re-tied his cap-strings before

36 For the translation and a discussion, see Lien, "Zhang Heng, Eastern Han Polymath," 293–95.

sacrificing his life for the lord of the state, he revealed what he considered worth dying for. The opening part (lines 1–19) reads:[37]

	曹子遊乎陂塘之濱	Master Cao roamed on the banks of tanks and ponds,
	步乎蓁穢之藪	Paced through the swamps with thickets and weeds.
	蕭條潛虛	Among the desolate and decaying, submerged and depleted,
4	經幽踐阻	While passing through the dark and scaling the steep,
	顧見髑髏	He looked around and saw a skull
	塊然獨居	That dwells alone in total isolation.
	於是伏軾而問之曰	Thereupon, he leaned on his carriage handlebar and asked it:
8	子將結纓首劍	"Did you perhaps, with your cap-strings tied and a sword in hand,
	殉國君乎	Sacrifice your life for the lord of the state?
	將被堅執銳	Or perhaps you, dressed in armour and holding a weapon,
	斃三軍乎	Dropped dead in battle?
12	將嬰茲固疾	Or perhaps you suffered from certain stubborn illness,
	命殞傾乎	Falling away and gone?
	將壽終數極	Or perhaps you met the end of your lifespan,
	歸幽冥乎	Returning to darkness and gloom?"
16	叩遺骸而歎息	He knocked on the remains and heaved a sigh,
	哀白骨之無靈	Lamenting the white bone for its lack of a soul,
	慕嚴周之適楚	But thinking of Yan Zhou [i.e., Zhuang Zhou] on his trip to Chu—
	儻託夢以通情	It might come to his dream to communicate its thoughts.

The spirit of the dead showed up. When defending himself, he was much more active and much firmer than the recluse in Cao Zhi's "Seven Enlightenments" (Qi qi 七啓). While the recluse was passively presented with enticements and persuaded by the revival of a sagely rule (see Chapter 1), the dead actively presented his "discourse on death and life" (*si sheng zhi shuo* 死生之說), as the second part of Cao Zhi's "Discourse of a Skull" (lines 20–53) reads:

37 *Yiwen leiju*, 17.322. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 3.524–25.

Thereupon, with a thump something seemed to arrive, and vaguely something seemed to be present. With its shadow seen and its looks hidden, it spoke in a sharp voice: "Where are you from, the princely man there? Having taken the trouble to visit me and pitied my decay, you did not grudge words to utter but comforted me with laments. You surely are eloquent, but you have neither come to comprehend the matter of darkness and gloom, nor known of the discourse on death and life. However you look at it, the word 'death' means returning. As for returning, it is to return to the Way. As for the Way,

於是俘若有來，怳若有存，影見容隱，厲響而言曰：「子何國之君子乎？既枉輿駕，愍其枯朽，不惜咳唾之音，慰以苦言。子則辯於辭矣，然未達幽冥之情，識死生之說也。夫死之為言歸也，歸也者，歸於道也；道也者，

身以無形為主 Regard it most important to have no form for your body,
故能與化推移 Therefore you can move and shift with Transformation.
陰陽不能更 *Yin* and *yang* cannot effect any change,
四節不能虧 The four seasons cannot cause any harm.

是故洞於纖微之域 And therefore you go deeply into the realm of the infinitesimal,
通於恍惚之庭 All the way through the courtyard of the unfathomable.
望之不見其象 Gazing at you, none can see your form;
聽之不聞其聲 Listening to you, none can hear your sound.
挹之不沖 Scooping from you, none can empty you;
滿之不盈 Pouring into you, none can overfill you.
吹之不凋 No strong storm can make you wither,
噓之不榮 No soft breeze can make you flourish.
激之不流 No forceful stream can make you flow,
凝之不停 No freezing coldness can make you stop.

寥落冥漠 Fading faraway, faintly aloof,
與道相拘 You are coterminous with the Way.
偃然長寢 Comfortably you take a good long rest—
樂莫是踰 No joy is greater than this!"

Then, in the third part (lines 54–70), Master Cao offered to revive the dead. The dead refused, considering such an offer senseless:

曹子曰 Master Cao said,
予將請之上帝 "I will request the highest god's permission,
求諸神靈 Ask deities a favour,

使司命輟籍　To let the Master of Fate remove you from his register,
反子骸形　Return a corporal form to you."

Thereupon, the skull moaned and dilated its eye sockets, saying: "How come you are *so* obtuse? Long ago, the master of Great Plainness was unkind. Without any reason, I was burdened with a form and tortured with life. Now that I had the good fortune to die, I have returned to my true self. Why are you so in love with weary toil, whereas I am so in love with untrammeled ease? Please leave, and I will return to the Great Void."

於是髑髏長呻廓眥曰：「甚矣，何子之難語也。昔太素氏不仁，無故勞我以形，苦我以生。今也幸變而之死，是反吾眞也。何子之好勞，而我之好逸？子則行矣，余將歸於太虛。」

Since the dead chose to rest in peace, Master Cao seemed to have no choice but to leave the dead alone. Nevertheless, he covered the skull with objects that showed his passion for life: cinnabar earth (which was black in Master Ping's hands) and green branches (which Master Ping seemed to miss), whose colours were brilliant and materials represented longevity and life. Finally, he referred to Confucian ideas to dismiss the dead's discourse. The concluding part (lines 71–83) reads:

於是言卒響絕　Thereupon, its words ended and its voice dropped,
神光霧除　The numinous light faded as a mist.
顧將旋軫　On the verge of turning my carriage,
74 乃命僕夫　I therefore commanded my groom

拂以玄塵　To dust the skull with a black fly-whisk,
覆以縞巾　To cover it with a white kerchief,
爰將藏彼路濱　And then, when concealing it on the roadside,
78 壅以丹土　To make a mound with cinnabar earth,
翳以綠榛　To screen it with green branches.
夫存亡之異勢　That the living and the deceased follow different courses
乃宣尼之所陳　Is what Xuanni [i.e., Confucius] has affirmed.
82 何神憑之虛對　How come the spirit, through a medium, gave a false response,
云死生之必均　Claiming death and life are definitely equal?

Philip J. Ivanhoe contrasts Confucius (551–479 BCE, referred to as Kongzi below) with Zhuangzi 莊子 (i.e., Master Zhuang, but not as a *dramatis personae* but a thinker of the Warring States period) as follows:[38]

38 Ivanhoe, "Death and Dying in the *Analects*," 144.

> While both Kongzi and Zhuangzi sought to end their lives by taking their proper place within the universal pattern of the Dao, for Kongzi this place is in the arms of his disciples, his proper position within the human social order. For Zhuangzi, the proper place is anywhere within the broad bosom of Nature; his community is the vast, unbounded realm of the natural. This open-ended acceptance of things leaves him at home everywhere in the wide world, but he is without Kongzi's special sense of belonging within the deep and precious relationships of human community.

Ivanhoe makes another comparison, this time between the Confucian Dao and the belief in a better otherworld. With this latter comparison in mind, we understand why Master Cao did not envy the skull:[39]

> According to Kongzi, even if one finds oneself living in a severely disordered age, one's work and attention are to be focused on the tasks at hand, not on some future utopia or reward. The Confucian Dao is precious only as it is fulfilled and realized in the course of actual human lives. This is how I understand *Analects* 15.29: "Human beings can fill out [i.e., fulfill] the Way. The Way cannot fill out human beings."

We may apply Ivanhoe's insights as follows: When obligating himself to bury the skull, Cao Zhi was recreating a "special sense of belonging within the deep and precious relationships of human community." When dismissing the skull's discourse to be false, Cao Zhi indeed bore in mind the meaningful "tasks at hand." The dead might feel content in the broad bosom of Nature, but Confucius and his followers push on.

The next extant adaptation is attributed to Lü An, an unconventional figure of the third century. After Lü An, there seemed to be a declining interest in adapting this *Zhuangzi* story. Not until the twelfth century during Song times, Idema observes, would the skull be "resurrected."[40] But in the meanwhile, coffin-carrying songs from the perspective of the dead continued to be composed by some, frowned on by others, and considered by the sixth-century *Wen xuan* compilers as a subgenre of the *shi* poetry. Speaking *in lingua mortua* seemed more popular than conversing *cum mortuis*. How did this take place? Lü An's "Rhapsody on a Skull" (Dulou fu 髑髏賦), though fragmented, gives us some clues. In the following lines, we hear the skull lamenting for the first time. The way it lamented its losses reminds us of the dead in the proto-coffin-carrying song attributed to Ruan Yu:[41]

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39 Ivanhoe, "Death and Dying in the *Analects*," 146. The note in brackets is Ivanhoe's.

40 Idema, *The Resurrected Skeleton*, 13–14.

41 *Yiwen leiju*, 17.322.

昔以無良	Long ago, because I lacked virtue,
行違皇乾	I transgressed against August Heaven.
來遊此土	When I came visiting this place,
天奪我年	Heaven robbed me of my years,
令我全膚消滅	Making all my skin dissolve,
白骨連翩	My white bones scatter,
四支摧藏於草莽	My four limbs disintegrate and hide in the weedy thickets,
孤魂悲悼乎黃泉	My lonely soul lament under the Yellow Springs.

Even when a less mournful voice was resumed, the skull sounded just like the speaker in Miu Xi's coffin-carrying song. We cannot help but wonder if Lü An's "Rhapsody on a Skull" marks a point from which on the poetic conversations *cum mortuis* merged with and dissolved in the poetic speeches *in lingua mortua*:[42]

生則歸化	Every living returns to Transformation,
明則反昏	Every brightness reverts to dusk.
格于上下	If we research this up above and here below,
何物不然	Which being is not like this?

The dead in Lü An's adaptation could have been Cao Zhi. In my wishful reading, Lü An housed Cao Zhi in the solid earth so that the prince found rest. But here the *Yiwen leiju* compilers make another special arrangement (besides having Ruan Yu respond from the graveyard to his widow): concluding the entry of "the skull" (*dulou* 髑髏) with Cao Zhi's uplifting adaptation, instead of chronologically with Lü An's. This can be explained, of course, by the fact that the adaptations attributed to Zhang Heng and Lü An are located in the "rhapsodies" (*fu* 賦) section, which precedes the "discourse" (*shuo* 說) section where Cao Zhi's adaptation is located. Nevertheless, such an arrangement makes us feel that whoever came to the end of their life, even after Cao Zhi (like Lü An), the princely man would be there offering cinnabar earth and green branches, restating the Confucian Dao, before pushing on toward his own end.

42 *Chuxue ji*, 14.359.

Chapter 5

EMULATING CAO CAO IN A WORLD UNDONE

THE PARENT–CHILD RELATIONSHIP prescribed in the *Analects* is so unique, and the grief for parents is so distinct from any other kind, that one who upholds the tradition may say, as Amy Olberding concludes: "In my parents, the world is made, and in their deaths, it comes undone."[1] Through this lens, I will observe how Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226, r. 220–226), Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), and Cao Rui 曹叡 (204–239, r. 226–239) sustain themselves and their community through poetry in the death of their father or (in Cao Rui's case) grandfather, Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220).

I will examine the poems in which the bereaved directly refer to Cao Cao by the posthumous appellation *kao* 考 "deceased father," *xianwang/di* 先王/帝 'late king/emperor,' or *huangzu* 皇祖 "august grandfather," especially Cao Pi's "Short Song" (Duan ge xing 短歌行), Cao Zhi's "Rattle-Drum Dance" (Piwu ge 鼙舞歌), and Cao Rui's "Suffering in the Cold" (Ku han xing 苦寒行). Traces of emulation are evident in some, obscure in others.[2] I ask in this final chapter: How does emulation work during this time "out of joint" (in Hamlet's words, muttered after he encountered his father's ghost)? How does it work differently for those who accede to the throne and those who do not?

By "emulation" I refer to what Thomas Crow discusses in his 2006 book *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France*. But while Crow likens the studio of the artist Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) to a family,[3] I liken the Cao family to David's art studio: Cao Cao is the "master" who demonstrates composition of poetry for his children and occasionally delegates poetic tasks to them; Cao Pi, Cao Zhi, and Cao Rui are the "pupils" who emulate their father/grandfather's poetic style and establish

1 Olberding, "I Know Not 'Seems': Grief for Parents," 172.

2 I narrow down my target poems to those with direct reference to Cao Cao as their late father/grandfather, rather than those with traces of emulation. The tumbleweed image in Cao Zhi's poems, for example, resembles that in Cao Cao's "Returning through the East and West Gates" (Que Dongximen xing 卻東西門行), but Cao Zhi's poems could have been written in emulation of Cao Cao's either *before* or *after* his death.

3 Crow, *Emulation*, 13.

their own, in his life as well as in his death. While tracing the divergent poetic paths that Cao Pi, Cao Zhi, and Cao Rui take into a world that has come undone in Cao Cao's death, I will also conclude my exploration of the poetry of loss at his court.

Deer and Fawn

The contrast between public and private voices in mourning, as discussed in Chapter 2, is also found between Cao Pi's lament for Cao Cao and his "Short Song."[4] The lament, whose extant text is titled "Imperial Lament for Emperor Wu" (Wudi aice wen 武帝哀策文) in the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, refers to ritual vessels such as tripods (*ding* 鼎) and meat-trays (*zu* 俎) and adopts an archaic language from the classic hymn "Pity Me, Your Child" (Min yu xiaozi 閔予小子, *Mao shi* 毛詩 286). The ritual images in the first rhyme group, hymnic dictions in the second, and formulaic expressions in the remaining lines together constitute Cao Pi's public speech to his father (as the second-person pronoun *nai* 乃 "your" indicates):[5]

痛神曜之幽潛　It pains me that your numinous splendour
submerges into darkness,
哀鼎俎之虛置　It grieves me that the tripods and meat-trays
are set out untouched.
舒皇德而詠思　Expanding on your august virtue, intoning my yearnings,
4 遂腷臆以蒞事　Thereupon, crestfallen, I take on the duty.

矧乃小子　Moreover, your little child
夙遭不造　Suffered misfortune early.
煢煢在疚　All alone in the ritual mourning—
8 嗚呼皇考　O woe, my august father!
產我曷晚　Why did you beget me so late?
弃我曷早　Why did you leave me so soon?

羣臣子輔　Vassals and officials, mentors of the heir designate,
12 奪我哀願　Robbed me off my desire to lament.

4 For a discussion of the *aice* 哀策 genre, which I translate here as "imperial lament," see Ho, "Guanyu *Wen xuan* aice wenti," 129–59. This lament, despite its imperial title, was more likely written for Cao Cao's funeral when he was titled "King Wu of Wei," and not yet "Emperor Wu of Wei." For a discussion of the title of this lament, see Yi Jianxian's 易健賢 note in Cao, *Wei Wendi ji quanyi*, 282.

5 *Yiwen leiju*, 13.242.

猥抑奔墓　Retraining myself from hastening to the tomb,
俯就權變　I have attended to what is expedient to do.

卜葬既從　With the divination for burial followed,
大隧既通　A wide underground passage excavated,
漫漫長夜　On and on goes the long-lasting night,
窈窈玄宮　Sombre and subtle is the dark palace.
有晦無明　With only dimness, no brightness—
曷有所窮　When will this come to an end?

鹵簿既整　With the escort of honour put in order,
三官駢羅　The three offices are arrayed side by side.
前驅建旗　Those who press ahead carry banners,
方相執戈　Those who see in all directions hold dagger-axes.
弃此宮庭　Having left this palace hall,
陟彼山阿　You will ascend to that mountain slope.

Cao Pi's "Short Song," by contrast, begins with a private quarter and continues with the trope of "everything remains the same except for the person." There are curtains and screens (*weimu* 帷幕), a low table and a sitting-mat (*jiyan* 几筵), together making a private space for seating and resting. Cao Zhi sits in front of it, only to find his father is perpetually absent. He is left all alone, or in the words of the classic ode "Tall Tansy Mustard" (Lu e 蓼莪, *Mao shi* 202), "without anyone to look up to, anyone to rely on" (靡瞻靡恃):[6]

仰瞻帷幕　Looking up I gaze at the curtains and screens,
俯察几筵　Looking down I examine the table and mat.
其物如故　The objects remain as they were,
其人不存　The person has ceased to exist.　(一解 section 1)
神靈倏忽　The numinous spirit, in haste and hurry,
棄我遐遷　Has left me and moved afar.
靡瞻靡恃　Without anyone to look up to, anyone to rely on,
泣涕連連　I weep streams of tears.　(二解 section 2)

Then we find a familiar line, which is quoted by Cao Cao in his own "Short Song" from the classic ode "Call the Deer" (Lu ming 鹿鳴, *Mao shi* 161) to evoke a feast scene (on the right; also see Chapter 1). The same deer turns into a caring parent from Cao Pi's perspective (on the left). It is not only

6 *Song shu*, 21.609.

feasting on the cudweed but also feeding its fawn; the bird, too, is not only enjoying its flight but also taking its child home. To a bereaved son, the nature images no longer evoke a charismatic host and his fine guests, but a child left all alone. The emulation works in two opposite ways. On the one hand, it continues the master-father's poetry as if he were present. On the other hand, it unavoidably deviates from the master-father's poetry and reveals his absence all the more clearly. Only a pupil-child can feel the existence and the loss at once. Cao Pi thus sighs in the next two sections that "No one can understand me" (莫我能知):

呦呦游鹿　　呦呦鹿鳴
ʔjiou-ʔjiou roams the deer,　　*ʔjiou-ʔjiou* call the deer,
銜草鳴麑　　食野之芊
Holding grass in mouth, calling its fawn;　　Eating cudweed in the field.
翩翩飛鳥
Lightly and airily flutters the bird,
挾子巢棲
Holding its child close, resting in their nest.　　(三解 section 3)

我獨孤煢　　我有嘉賓
I alone am left fatherless,　　I have fine guests—
懷此百離　　鼓瑟吹笙
Bearing this hundred-fold mishap.　　Strum the zitherns!
Blow the reed organs!
憂心孔疚
My worried heart is in deep mourning,
莫我能知
No one can understand me.　　(四解 section 4)

Cao Pi refers to a formulaic expression of performers in the final rhyme group. But while performers signal an end to their performance with such an expression, "Let us say no more! / Deep worries make people old" (see Chapter 4), Cao Pi continues his performance. He also goes against what he states in another poem, "Short song, softly intonated, cannot last long" (短歌微吟不能長),[7] by making "long-lasting intonation and ever-extending sigh":

7 This line is from Cao Pi's "Song of Yan" (Yan ge xing 燕歌行). See *Song shu*, 21.609; *Wen xuan*, 27.1284.

人亦有言 Others, for their part, have this saying:
憂令人老 "Worries make people old."
嗟我白髮 Alas, my white hair!
20 生一何早 Why did it grow so early? (五解 section 5)
長吟永歎 In my long-lasting intonation and ever-extending sigh,
懷我聖考 I yearn for my sage father.
曰仁者壽 They say the benevolent enjoys a long life,
24 胡不是保 Why did he not survive? (六解 section 6)

According to the fifth-century calligrapher and music expert Wang Sengqian 王僧虔, this song verse was composed for the musical performance under Cao Cao's deathbed command.[8] Cao Pi not only composed the song verse but also played cither himself as accompaniment (自撫箏和歌). On this account, he might not have sung the song verse himself, but intonated it along and prolonged it with his sighs. "The song sounds most beautiful, but the verse cannot be used in feast music" (此曲聲制最美，辭不可入宴樂). This comment from Wang Sengqian reminds us again how Cao Pi emulates Cao Cao's feast song and deviates from it.

In Wang Sengqian's very brief summary, at his deathbed Cao Cao "requested musical performance on every seasonal interval and the fifteenth day every month" (使節朔奏樂). More commands are included in Lu Ji's 陸機 (261–303) "Mourning Emperor Wu of Wei" (Diao Wei Wu wen 弔魏武帝文), the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, and the *Song shu* 宋書.[9] His commands—to simplify the funeral, to remove mourning attire right after the funeral, to keep the garrisons and offices running as usual, to have his female entertainers perform music on the first and fifteenth days every month, and to ascend the Bronze Bird Terrace (Tongque tai 銅爵臺) from time to time for a gaze at his tomb on the West Mound (Xiling 西陵)—led in one direction: return to the normal pace as soon as possible. Cao Cao did not address Cao Pi directly, but referred to his sons in general as "brothers" (*xiongdi* 兄弟) and instructed them how to take care of his vestments. He prescribed new routines for his sons to settle in, but Cao Pi opted to relive the moment of loss whenever he played cither as accompaniment to the "Short Song." And instead of ascending the Bronze Bird Terrace in Ye 鄴 (present-day Linzhang 臨漳, Hebei) for

8 *Yuefu shiji*, 30.446–47.

9 For Cao Cao's deathbed commands in Lu Ji's "Mourning Emperor Wu of Wei," see *Wen xuan*, 60.2594–601. For his other deathbed commands, see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 1.215, 217n4; *Song shu*, 15.388.

a gaze at Cao Cao's tomb, Cao Pi privately offered sacrifices to his late father in his palace in Luoyang 洛陽 (present-day Luoyang, Henan).[10]

Note that Wang Senqian, who considered Cao Pi's song verse unfit for a feast, was also the one who identified the Bronze Bird Terrace (Tongque 銅雀, variant of 銅爵, referring to both the physical venue and the court poetry) as the origin of the *qingshang* 清商 song verses performed at the Liu-Song court. In a way, he recognized Cao Pi's achievements in sustaining his master-father's legacy with the following comment. The fatherless fawn, nevertheless, could have never heard this recognition:[11]

> Today's *qingshang* song verses are the very legacy from the Bronze Bird Terrace. Stylishly cultivated, the Three Rulers of Wei [i.e., Cao Cao, Cao Pi, and Cao Rui] are memorable.
>
> 今之清商，實由銅雀，魏氏三祖，風流可懷。

Becoming an Associate

Cao Cao passed away in Luoyang in the first month of the last year of the Jian'an reign (220 CE), and was buried in Ye in the second month of the same year. Cao Zhi, according to Chu Hsiao-Hai's 朱曉海 study of this period of his life, was among those who brought Cao Cao from Luoyang back to Ye (whereas Cao Pi was in Ye when Cao Cao died).[12] In his dirge, titled "Dirge for Emperor Wu" (Wudi lei 武帝誄) and placed beside Cao Pi's lament in the *Yiwen leiju*, Cao Cao was not yet given the posthumous title "Emperor Wu" (Wudi 武帝), but was still referred to as "my king" (*wo wang* 我王, read as a second-person pronoun in a dirge; also see Chapter 2). The concluding part of the dirge reads:[13]

旣次西陵	After a multiple-night stay on the West Mound,
幽闥啓路	The way to the dark chamber is cleared.
羣臣奉迎	Received respectively by vassals and officials,
我王安厝	My king [Cao Cao] settles down in the burial home.
窈窈玄宇	Sombre and subtle is the dark dwelling,
三光不入	Where the sun, moon, and stars do not pour in.

10 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 2.297. For a discussion of Cao Cao's tablet locations, see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 3.357n8.

11 *Song shu*, 19.553.

12 Chu, "Jian'an erwu nian zhi Huangchu san nian" 161–63.

13 *Yiwen leiju*, 13.242.

潛闥一扃	Once the underground chamber door is barred,
尊靈永蟄	Your honoured spirit will forever hibernate.
聖上臨穴	His Sagely Highness [Cao Pi] arrives at the coffin pit,[14]
哀號靡及	Mournfully crying out but to no avail.
羣臣陪臨	Vassals and officials come to his side,
佇立以泣	Standing there in tears.
去此昭昭	Away from this brightness and light,
於彼冥冥	To that darkness and gloom,
永弃兆民	Forever leaving your million people behind,
下君百靈	You will rule the hundred spirits below.
千代萬葉	A thousand generations, ten thousand eons—
曷時復形	When will you take form again?

Ritual offerings to Cao Cao soon became exclusive to his successor Cao Pi; that is, inaccessible to his non-inheriting sons, in particular Cao Zhi. Having been sent away from Ye to his fief, Cao Zhi was now located by the North River (Beihe 北河, the north course of the Yellow River at the time) and planned to offer sacrifices to Cao Cao on the upcoming summer solstice (in the fifth month).[15] Respectfully addressing his king, who is now Cao Pi, as "Your Exalted Majesty" (*Bixia* 陛下),[16] Cao Zhi requested his permission as follows:[17]

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14 Zhao Youwen believes "His Sagely Highness" (*Shengshang* 聖上) refers to Emperor Xian of Han 漢獻帝 (r. 189–220), whereas "my king" (*wo wang* 我王) refers to Cao Pi in the preceding rhyme group. See Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.206n98. I suspect "His Sagely Highness" refers to Cao Pi, comparable to "Your Exalted Majesty" (*Bixia* 陛下) in Cao Zhi's "Memorial on Requesting Permission to Offer Sacrifices to the Late King" (Qiu ji Xianwang biao 求祭先王表). See my translation and discussion of the memorial later. As to "my king," I believe it refers to Cao Cao throughout the dirge.

15 Some scholars believe Cao Zhi was in Juancheng 鄄城 (present-day Juancheng, Shandong). See Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.208n14; Cao and Shen, *Zhonggu wenxue shiliao congkao*, 40–41. Other scholars believe he was in Linzi 臨淄 (present-day Zibo, Shandong). See Chu, "Jian'an erwu nian zhi Huangchu san nian," 164–65.

16 Cao Pi was then a king, not yet an emperor, so theoretically Cao Zhi should have addressed him as "Your Royal Highness" (*Dianxia* 殿下) rather than "Your Exalted Highness" (*Bixia* 陛下). But like Cao Zhi, officials changed their way of addressing Cao Pi, from *Dianxia* to *Bixia*, in their memorials when they urged him to accede to the imperial throne. See their memorials in *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 2.246–61; also see Lu Bi's 盧弼 (1876–1967) reminder about the title transition in *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 2.271n88.

17 *Taiping yulan*, 526.7a–b (2390); for the variants, see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 207–8; *Taiping yulan*, 389.6b (1799), 938.6b (4169), 970.7b (4302), 978.9b (4336).

> Although I, your servant, earlier paid my respects with a memorial, since its delivery there have been more than ten days and the month has come to an end. As the summer solstice is arriving, I feel a deep pang of sorrow. The late king's father [Cao Song] passed away on the summer solstice, and thus our family usually does not offer sacrifices on the summer solstice. As to the late king [Cao Cao], it sure is permissible to offer sacrifices at this time. Although I am despicable, my body is endowed by the late king; despite the fact that I am poverty-stricken, thanks to Your Exalted Majesty's [Cao Pi] generous bestowal, I have more than enough to prepare for a grand sacrifice. I wish to offer sacrifices to the late king by the North River. I can prepare sheep, pig, and ox myself, and there are apricots in the *xian* of my fief. The late king liked abalone. I previously presented a memorial and obtained two hundred pieces of abalone from Zang Ba in Xuzhou, enough to carry out the work on my own. I humbly request five sponge gourds and twenty white crab-apples. Since the late king passed away, there has not been half a year. I sincerely wish to show my deference and fully express my sadness.
>
> 臣雖比拜表，自計違遠(已)[以]來，(以)[已]踰旬，(日)[月]垂竟。夏節方到，臣悲感有念。先王公以夏至日終，是以家俗不以夏日祭。至於先王，自可以今辰告祠。臣雖卑鄙，實稟體於先王。自臣雖貧窶，蒙陛下厚賜，足供太牢之具。臣欲祭先王於北河之上，羊豬牛臣自能辦，杏者臣縣自有。先王喜鰒，臣前以表，得徐州臧霸(二鰒百)[鰒二百]枚，足自供事。[乞]請水瓜五枚，[白柰二十枚]。計先王崩來，未能半歲。臣實欲告敬，且欲復盡哀。

In retrospect, it was politically incorrect for Cao Zhi to claim his close connections with Cao Cao and Zang Ba 臧霸 (164–231), for the former represented legitimacy and the latter, as a general who had followed Cao Cao for years, represented military power. What's worse, Cao Zhi claimed such close connections with them through his exclusive knowledge of Cao Cao's personal taste and his ability to use Zang Ba as a source. Naturally, Cao Pi refused Cao Zhi's request. On the grounds of ritual regulations, which ascribed mourning rituals to the male heir and excluded non-inheriting offspring from it, Cao Pi became the only bereaved son who had access to the ritual performance on every seasonal interval and the fifteenth day every month, whereas Cao Zhi had no ritual rhythm to cope with his loss.[18]

Drastic changes continued. In the tenth month, Emperor Xian of Han 漢獻帝 (r. 189–220) abdicated as the last emperor of Han and Cao Pi acceded to the throne as the Emperor of Wei.[19] Cao Zhi began to be supervised by

18 For Cao Pi's refusal, see *Taiping yulan*, 526.7b (2390).

19 The *Sanguo zhi* records the imperial abdication and accession in detail, but is incorrect in some dates. For its records of the imperial abdication, the subsequent

imperial envoys, accused of offences from time to time, and transferred from one place to another as a result. In the third year of his imperial reign (222 CE), Cao Pi issued a command to level down all the architectural structures on top of Cao Cao's tomb and to put the vestments and carriages—presumably Cao Cao's—back to the city. Cao Pi claimed to do so to follow the ancient tradition that avoided grave-site worship and to succeed Cao Cao's virtue of frugality. But to Cao Zhi, what he lost was not only a ritual rhythm but also a ritual space at the grave site.[20]

Disconnected from his late father in ritual, Cao Zhi turned to other masters for poetic emulation. In the fourth year of Cao Pi's reign (223 CE), Cao Zhi and his brothers were summoned for an imperial audience in Luoyang. To submit to Cao Pi's rule, Cao Zhi presented twin *shi* 詩 poems and a confessional memorial. In the first poem titled "Chastising Myself" (Ze gong 責躬), Cao Zhi emulates Wei Meng 韋孟 (fl. 201 BCE), who served as a tutor to a prince and authored a *shi* poem titled "Moral Suasion" (Fengjian 諷諫).[21] Placed closely to Wei Meng's "Moral Suasion" in the sixth-century anthology *Wen xuan* 文選, Cao Zhi's "Chastising Myself" reads like a third-century-CE response to the third-century-BCE chastisement. Wei Meng begins his poem with the ancestry of the Wei family in the southern land; Cao Zhi also begins his poem with his own ancestry (lines 1–4 on the left), but in a similar language to Wei Meng's lines on Liu Bang's conquests (lines 33–36 on the right). Then, Wei Meng relates his prince's grandfather being enfeoffed with the southern land as a younger brother of Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 206–202 BCE) and Wei Meng himself being assigned as a tutor (lines 37–40 on the right); Cao Zhi also relates himself being enfeoffed by Cao Pi with the eastern land (lines 17–20 on the left).[22] The same royal status as a younger brother of the emperor can be a coincidence, but the comparably archaic language from the classic *Shang shu* 尚書 is evidence of emulation:

corrections of the dates, and a study of the abdication process, see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 2.244–62, 244–45n1, and Knechtges, "The Rhetoric of Imperial Abdication and Accession," 3–35.

20 For Cao Pi's edict, see *Song shu*, 16.445.

21 Wu Qi 吳淇 (fl. 1658) has a short comment on this. See Wu, *Liuchao Xuan shi dinglun*, 108.

22 Although Cao Zhi had been enfeoffed in the eastern land in 214 by the emperor of Han, he was re-enfeoffed by Cao Pi, the emperor of Wei, as indicated in lines 17–20 on the left. See Chu, "Jian'an erwu nian zhi Huangchu san nian," 165.

Cao Zhi, "Chastising Myself" (excerpts)[23]

於穆顯考
O majestic, our illustrious father!

時惟武皇
He is the Martial Emperor.

受命于天
Receiving the mandate from Heaven,

寧濟四方
He pacified and assisted
the Four Quarters.

[...]

帝曰爾侯
The emperor said, "You, Marquis,

君茲青土
Rule this eastern land of Qingzhou,

奄有海濱
Which completely covers the sea shore,

方周于魯
Just the way the Zhou house
was to the Lu state."

Wei Meng, "Moral Suasion" (excerpt)[24]

於赫有漢
O splendid, the Han!

四方是征
Toward the Four Quarters
its founder marched.

靡適不懷
Wherever he arrived,
he brought solace;

萬國攸平
Myriad states thus
were pacified.

乃命厥弟
He thereupon commanded
his younger brother

建侯于楚
To build a marquisate in
the southern land of Chu,

俾我小臣
And made me, a lesser servant,

惟傅是輔
Assist the marquis as his tutor.

As a loyal subject and a dutiful tutor, Wei Meng chastises his Han-time prince for not closely following in his late grandfather's footsteps (lines 53–56 on the right). As if presenting a belated response to the tutor, the Wei-dynasty prince Cao Zhi chastises himself for not behaving himself; in shame, he can neither live on to meet his brother Cao Pi at court, nor commit suicide to meet his late father Cao Cao in the tomb (lines 69–72 on the left):

23 *Wen xuan*, 19.929, 930.

24 *Wen xuan*, 19.917.

Cao Zhi, "Chastising Myself" (excerpt)[25]

咨我小子
Ah, I, a little child,

頑凶是嬰
By stubbornness and wickedness
I am enmeshed.

逝慙陵墓
To die, I am ashamed to see him
in the tumulus;

72 存愧闕庭
To live on, I am ashamed
before the imperial court.

Wei Meng, "Moral Suasion" (excerpt)[26]

如何我王
How come my king

不思守保
Does not think of protecting
the heritage,

不惟履冰
Does not consider taking careful
steps on ice,

56 以繼祖考
To succeed your grandfather
and father?

For the second poem titled "Responding to the Edict" (Ying zhao 應詔), Cao Zhi finds another master to emulate: his brother Cao Pi. This is a sensible choice considering the facts that Cao Pi is now the head of the Cao house and that the poem is responding to Cao Pi's edict. This is also a sentimental choice, for Cao Zhi emulates Cao Pi's "Short Song" composed in memory of Cao Cao. While Cao Pi sadly looks up at the curtains that surround an empty seat (on the right), Cao Zhi anxiously looks up at a city gate that keeps him away from the court (on the left):

Cao Zhi, "Responding to the Edict" (conclusion)[27]

仰瞻城闕
Looking up I gaze at the city gate,

俯惟闕庭
Looking down I think of the imperial
court.

長懷永慕
Always yearning, forever longing,

48 憂心如酲
My worried heart aches
as if from a hangover.

Cao Pi, "Short Song" (opening)[28]

仰瞻帷幕
Looking up I gaze at the curtains
and screens,

俯察几筵
Looking down I examine the table
and mat.

其物如故
The objects remain as they were,

4 其人不存
The person has ceased to exist.

25 *Wen xuan*, 19.932.

26 *Wen xuan*, 19.917.

27 *Wen xuan*, 19.935.

28 *Song shu*, 21.609.

Cao Zhi strives to keep this delicate balance between memories of his late father Cao Cao and the power of his brother Cao Pi in another set of poems titled "Rattle-Drum Dance," which is extant through the "Monograph on Music" (Yue zhi 樂志) of the *Song shu*. According to the monograph, a *pi* 鞞/鼙 is a bigger version of *tao* 鞉/鞀, which is a kind of drum equipped with a handle. While a *gu* 鼓 drum uses drumsticks to make sound, a *tao* 鞀 drum is hand-rattled. Supposedly easy to be carried and sounded by a mounted soldier as well as a dancer, the *pi* drum is thus defined as a horseback drum (*ji gu* 騎鼓) by the Han-time philologist 許慎 (100–121) and associated with a type of dance by Cao Zhi. The rattle-drum dance is such a professional skill, Cao Zhi notes in his preface, that since the political upheavals of Chang'an there is only someone called Li Jian 李堅 (fl. 168–189) who can do it. By composing a new suite of "Rattle-Drum Dance" in memory of Cao Cao and in submission to Cao Pi, Cao Zhi strives to repair not only a broken tradition but also a broken relationship in the Cao family:[29]

> Among Emperor Ling's [r. 168–189] West Garden drummers and pipers, there was a Li Jian who could do the "Rattle-Drum Dance." During the upheavals, he accompanied Duan Wei westwards. Hearing that he formerly possessed the skill, the late emperor [Cao Cao] summoned him. Not only has Jian ceased to perform it for a long time, but also are there many errors in the old songs. It is not necessary, either, to follow in the traces of previous generations. I therefore have reworked former songs and made five new ones. I dare not have those serve at the imperial court, but here in my humble vassaldom I can set those to our provincial music.
>
> 漢靈帝西園(故事)[鼓吹]，有李堅者，能鞞舞。遭亂，西隨段煨。先帝聞其舊有技，召之。堅既中廢，兼古曲多謬誤，異代之文，未必相襲，故依前曲改作新哥五篇，不敢充之黃門，近以成下國之陋樂焉。

The suite consists of five song verses, each titled after its first phrase and composed as a variation of (*dang* 當) an old song verse:

1. "Sage Emperor" (Shenghuang pian 聖皇篇), a variation of the Han-time "In the Second Year of the Zhanghe Reign" (Zhanghe er nian zhong 章和二年中)
2. "Numinous Fungus" (Lingzhi pian 靈芝篇), a variation of the Han-time "In Front of the Palace Grows a Cinnamon Tree" (Dian qian sheng guishu 殿前生桂樹)

29 *Song shu*, 19.551, 555; for the variant, see 19.561n18.

3. "Great Wei" (Da Wei pian 大魏篇), a variation of the Han-time "The Han Is Auspicious and Prosperous" (Han jichang 漢吉昌)
4. "Essential Subtlety" (Jingwei pian 精微篇), a variation of the Han-time "East of the Pass There Was a Worthy Daughter" (Guandong you xiannü 關東有賢女)
5. "Onset of Winter" (Mengdong pian 孟冬篇), a variation of the Han-time "Wily Rabbit" (Jiaotu 狡兔)

The old song verses are not extant; only the titles survive. And instead of the above sequence, the Han-time suite begins with 4) "East of the Pass There Was a Worthy Daughter" and continues with 1) "In the Second Year of the Zhanghe Reign," 3) "The Han Is Auspicious and Prosperous" (alternatively titled "The Joy Lasts Long" [Le jiuchang 樂久長]), 4) "Wily Rabbit" (alternatively titled "The Sovereign of the Four Quarters" [Sifang huang 四方皇]), and 2) "In Front of the Palace Grows a Cinnamon Tree."[30] Despite the sequential difference and the loss of old song verses, Yanagawa Junko 柳川順子 finds a striking parallel between Cao Zhi's "Sage Emperor" and the Han-time title "In the Second Year of the Zhanghe Reign."[31] In the year indicated in the title (88 CE), Emperor Zhang of Han 漢章帝 (r. 76–88) passed away and Emperor He 和帝 (r. 88–106) acceded to the throne. According to the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, "not until then did Prince Xian of Chen, Prince Gong of Pengcheng, Prince Dang of Lecheng, Prince Yan of Xiapei, and Prince Chang of Liang go to their fiefs" (陳王羨，彭城王恭，樂成王黨，下邳王衍，梁王暢始就國).[32] Similarly, Cao Zhi was not sent to his fief until his father passed away and his brother acceded to the throne. Such an experience is exactly what he relates in the first song verse.

In addition to the historical parallel, Yanagawa observes, Cao Zhi also integrates the Han-time titles to his song verses. The first couplet of the second song verse "Numinous Fungus"—"Numinous fungus grows at the jade land, / Vermilion herb blankets the Luo riverbank" (靈芝生玉地，朱草被洛濱)—reads similar to its corresponding Han-time title "In Front

30 For the alignment of the titles and alternative titles, see Yanagawa, "Kandai heibu kaji kou," 13n9.

31 Yanagawa, "Kandai heibu kaji kou," 4–5.

32 *Hou Han shu*, 4.167. This historical reference conflicts with the traditional attribution of the Han-time "Rattle-Drum Dance" to Emperor Zhang, who passed away in the second year of the Zhanghe reign (88 CE). Kevin A. Jensen suspects this is a mistake for the second year of the Yuanhe 元和 reign (85 CE). See Jensen, "Wei-Jin Sacrificial Ballets," 153n138.

of the Palace Grows a Cinnamon Tree." The remaining three song verses "Great Wei," "Essential Subtlety," and "Onset of Winter" contain words and phrases from their corresponding Han-time titles, such as "auspicious" (*ji* 吉), "prosperous" (*chang* 昌), "East of the Pass there was a worthy daughter" (關東有賢女), and "wily rabbit" (*jiaotu* 狡兔).[33]

What remains challenging to modern readers is why Cao Zhi's second and fourth song verses tell stories about filial piety and why his last song verse describes violent acts in an imperial hunt. Indeed, as Yanagawa points out, storytelling and acting may speak to the performative nature of the "Rattle-Drum Dance." But I wonder: Why do most of the stories share the theme of filial piety? And how do the even-numbered song verses about filial piety relate to the odd-numbered song verses about princes leaving for their fiefs, officials paying homage to the emperor, and the emperor going on a hunt?

When investigating stories about filial daughters avenging their fathers, I come across a pictorial counterpart of Cao Zhi's suite: a set of bas-reliefs on the walls of a shrine-like structure, found on top of Chulan 褚蘭 Tomb 2 (in present-day Su 宿 *xian*, Anhui) dated to 171.[34] In this set of bas-reliefs, an homage scene is depicted on the north wall, directly facing the entrance in the south; a scene of "seven daughters avenging their father" is depicted on the west wall, falling to the left of a visitor's sight.[35] In Cao Zhi's suite of song verses, an homage scene is described in the third song verse, also in the middle of the five-part suite; stories about filial daughters avenging their fathers are told in the next song verse, also to the left if read in a traditional manner. It seems to be a great leap from a pictorial art to a performative one, but considering the fact that both follow the ritual sequence of cardinal directions, it is not surprising to find parallels between the two mediums.

Cao Zhi's song verses bear another resemblance to the bas-reliefs on Chulan shrine walls: being surrounded by a carriage procession.[36] The pictorial one is depicted on the wall bases; the performative one appears at the beginning and the end of the suite, carrying Cao Zhi and other princes to their fiefs and the emperor to the hunting ground. Note that the princes had left for their fiefs before Cao Pi acceded to the imperial throne, but here

33 Yanagawa, "Kandai heibu kaji kou," 7.

34 Wang, "Anhui Suxian Chulan Han huaxiangshi mu," 515–49, 567–70.

35 Hsing, "Getao, bangti, wenxian yu huaxiang jieshi," 204–6.

36 For discussions of bas-reliefs of carriage processions on funerary structures, see Shi, "Rolling between Burial and Shrine," 437–46; Hsing, "Handai huaxiang Hu Han zhanzheng tu," 95–107.

in the first song verse Cao Pi was already a "sage emperor" (*shenghuang* 聖皇) and the Cao brothers' mother Lady Bian 卞夫人 (159 or 161–230) was already the "August Mother" (*Huangmu* 皇母) as a result of retrospection, romanticization, and of course, eulogization. The suite thus begins:[37]

聖皇應曆數　Our sage emperor accorded with the ordained succession—
正康帝道休　His regime is prosperous, his imperial way is beneficent.
九州咸賓服　The Nine Provinces all submit and obey,
威德洞八幽　His awesome virtue penetrates the Eight Remotenesses.
三公奏諸公　The Three Excellencies memorialized about the vassal lords,
不得久淹留　Who were not to tarry long at court.
蕃位任至重　A vassal position means extremely heavy burdens,
舊章咸率由　Former regulations are all to be followed.

侍臣省文奏　While attendant officials scrutinized the written memorial,
陛下體仁慈　Your Exalted Majesty embodied kindness and compassion.
沈吟有愛戀　Sunk in musing, with love and fondness,
不忍聽可之　You could not bear to heed and approve it.
迫有官典憲　Compelled by the governmental norms and laws,
不得顧恩私　You could not regard affection and personal feelings.
諸王當就國　All the princes were to go to their fiefs—
璽綬何纍縗　How clustered and commingled their seals and ribbons are!

便時舍外殿　We forthwith lodged in outer halls,
宮省寂無人　The palace precincts were quiet, with no one around.
主上增顧念　Your Highness increased cares and thoughts,
皇母懷苦辛　August Mother bore pains and agonies.
何以為贈賜　What did you use as bestowals and gifts?
傾府竭寶珍　You emptied out the treasury, exhausted its precious objects—
文錢百億萬　Inscribed coins in hundreds of millions,
采帛若煙雲　Particoloured silks comparable to mists and clouds.
乘輿服御物　Your carriage garbed with imperial objects,
錦羅與金銀　Brocades and gauzes, gold and silver.
龍旗垂九旒　Dragon flags trailing nine streamers,
羽蓋參班輪　Plumed canopies with painted wheels.

37 *Song shu*, 22.626–29; for variants, see 22.667nn1–3.

諸王自計念　All the princes reckoned and pondered:
無功荷厚德　Although lacking merit, we received generous favours.
思一效筋力　We wished to devote our strength soon,
32 糜軀以報國　Sacrificing ourselves to repay the state.

鴻臚擁節衛　The grand herald holds a verge to act as an escort,
副使隨經營　His assistant envoys follow along to make arrangements.
貴戚並出送　Side by side, noble relatives come out to see us off;
36 夾道交輜軿　One after another, on the roadsides line up curtained vehicles.
車服齊整設　Our carriages and vestments are orderly arrayed,
韡曄燿天精　Brightly shining, more brilliant than the sun in the sky.
武騎衛前後　Military riders escort us front and rear,
40 鼓吹簫笳聲　Drummers and pipers have the panpipes and reed pipes sound.
祖道魏東門　We sacrifice to the road at Wei's east gate,
淚下霑冠纓　Tears fall and wet our cap-strings.
扳蓋因內顧　Climbing onto my carriage, I then look around from inside;
44 俛仰慕同生　Looking up and down, I instantly long for my born brothers.
行行將日莫　Travelling on and on, it is almost dusk;
何時還闕庭　When will I return to the imperial court?
車輪為裴回　The carriage wheels hence go round and about,
48 四馬躊躇鳴　The four horses falter and neigh.
路人尚酸鼻　Even passers-by feel like weeping,
何況骨肉情　How much more do we, who have a flesh-and-blood bond!

While we leave the capital with the princes and wonder if we have come to a dead end, a numinous fungus (*lingzhi* 靈芝) marks a transitioning point to the next song verse (which is therefore titled "Numinous Fungus"). A numinous fungus plays the role of reversal: from death to life, thus traditionally associated with longevity; and from ruins to collaborative survival, especially in the case of matsutake mushroom in atomic-bombed Hiroshima.[38] With it, Cao Zhi is able to tell stories of filial sons (lines 5–28) and express his own sadness of losing his "august father" (*huangkao* 皇考, honorific epithet for one's deceased father; line 30). In the finale marked with *luan yue* 亂曰 (as the summary goes), moreover, the world that has come undone in parents' deaths is redone under the court's "virtuous influence" (*dejiao* 德教, line 38). A filial household no longer suffers from all kinds of pains as before. The song verse reads:

38 Chinn, "The Jade Casket," 52–56; Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 3–4.

靈芝生玉(地)[池] Numinous fungus grows at the Jade Pond,
朱草被洛濱 Vermilion herb blankets the Luo riverbank
榮華相晃燿 In luxuriant florescence, those dazzle one another;
4 光采曄若神 With bright colours, those shine as though divine.
古時有虞舜 In ancient times there was Yu Shun,
父母頑且闇 His parents were stupid and deceitful.
盡孝於田隴 Doing all the work in the field to fulfill his filial duty,
8 烝烝不違仁 He was filially pious, not astray from humaneness.
伯瑜年七十 When Bo Yu was seventy,
采衣以娛親 He wore particoloured clothes to delight his parents.
慈母笞不痛 When he felt no pain from his loving mother's whip,
12 歔欷涕沾巾 He sobbed and sighed, with tears wetting his kerchief.

丁蘭少失母 Ding Lan, while young, having lost his mother,
自傷蚤孤煢 Grieved for his early fatherlessness and orphanage.
刻木當嚴親 Carving wood to represent his parents,
16 朝夕致三牲 Day and night he brought them the three sacrificial animals.
暴子見陵侮 When a ruffian abused and insulted them,
犯罪以亡形 He committed a crime, disregarding punishment.
丈人為泣血 As the old ones wept tears of blood for him,
20 免戾全其名 He was exonerated and preserved his reputation.

董永遭家貧 Dong Yong encountered family poverty—
父老財無遺 His father was elderly and no property remained.
舉假以供養 Borrowing to provide support,
24 傭作致甘肥 He worked for pay to bring his father savoury foods.
責家填門至 When creditors came clogging his door,
不知何用歸 He did not know how to pay them back.
天靈感至德 As heavenly spirits were moved by his perfect virtue,
28 神女為秉機 A goddess employed a loom for him.

歲月不安居 The years and months do not remain at rest—
烏乎我皇考 O woe, my august father!
生我既已晚 When you begot me, it was already late;
32 棄我何其蚤 Why did you leave me so soon?
蓼莪誰所興 Who composed "Tall Tansy Mustard" [*Mao shi* 202]?
念之令人老 Thinking of it makes a man old.
退詠南風詩 Retreating I will intonate the "South Wind" poem [*Mao shi* 32],
36 灑淚滿褘抱 Shedding tears that fill up the space between my apron and arms.

	亂曰	As the summary goes,
	聖皇君四海	Our sage emperor rules the Four Seas,
	德教朝夕宣	His virtuous influence spreads day and night.
	萬國咸禮讓	Myriad states all are courteous and deferential,
40	百姓家肅虔	Common people have a reverent and respectful family.
	庠序不失儀	District and hamlet schools do not breach etiquette,
	孝悌處中田	The filial and brotherly work in the fields.
	戶有曾閔子	Households have sons like Zengzi and Min Ziqian,
44	比屋皆仁賢	Every home is benevolent and worthy.
	髫齔無夭齒	Young children have no premature death,
	黃髮盡其年	The hoary-headed fulfill their years.
	陛下三萬歲	Your Exalted Majesty, three cheers of "Myriad-year life!" for you;
48	慈母亦復然	Our loving mother, too, will be so.

The numinous fungus further grows into a nine-petal canopy (芝蓋樹九華, line 20) in the third song verse "Great Wei." Considering the presence of such auspicious signs and divine beings, Xiaofei Tian believes the "Great Wei" represents an ideal feast rather than any specific one.[39] Similarly, when approaching the homage scene at the visual focus of the Wu Liang Shrine 武梁祠 (dated to 151 in present-day Jiaxiang 嘉祥, Shandong), Wu Hung interprets its central figure as "an idealized ruler of the empire," whereas other scholars see in the scene the deceased's glorious past, a ritual present—in which the deceased enjoys a reunion with the bereaved—or an ideal afterlife.[40]

I propose to view this song verse of Cao Zhi's "Rattle-Drum Dance" suite through another lens: Amy Olberding's conclusion, "In my parents, the world is made, and in their deaths, it comes undone," as we read in her study of the parent–child relationship prescribed in the *Analects*. Regardless of when the homage and feast take place, the scene reflects a child's wish to redo what has come undone in the death of a parent. Just as the parent enjoys a full lifespan in a filial household in the finale of the previous song verse, so is the classic poem "Call the Deer"—which was quoted by Cao Cao to evoke a feast scene and emulated by Cao Pi to evoke his fatherlessness—sung harmoniously once again at a feast in this song verse (lines 29–30). What solaces Cao Zhi, moreover, is that his "Rattle-Drum Dance" debuts next to the "Call the Deer" and wins a thunderous round of applause (lines 31–32). He may not

39 Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 90–94.

40 Wu, *Monumentality*, 235. Jian, "Iconography of the 'Homage Scene,'" 162–79.

be able to play cither for his late father on every seasonal interval and the fifteenth day every month like his brother, but he may sound a rattle-drum for his imperial family in a world redone:

大魏應靈符 The great Wei responded to numinous signs,
天祿方甫始 Its heaven-sent blessings are just beginning.
聖德致泰和 The emperor's sagely virtue brings great peace,
神明為驅使 Deities and spirits serve at his beck and call.
左右宜供養 To his left and right are those fit for attendants,
中殿宜皇子 In the palace are those fit for imperial sons.
陛下長壽考 "May Your Exalted Majesty live a long life!"
羣臣拜賀咸說喜 Vassals and officials offer congratulations, all joyful and happy.

積善有餘慶 By amassing good deeds, one will have a surfeit of blessings;
榮祿固天常 Winning honour and fortune certainly conforms to Heaven's norm.
衆善塡門至 As a multitude of good deeds come clogging the gates,
臣子蒙福祥 The officials are blessed with good luck.

無患及陽遂 "May you find no harm but success,[41]
輔翼我聖皇 Aid and assist our sage emperor!"
衆吉咸集會 As a multitude of auspiciousness all assemble and gather,
凶邪姦惡並滅亡 The evil, malefic, treacherous, and hateful are altogether destroyed.

黃鵠游殿前 A yellow swan roams in front of your palace,
神鼎周四阿 Divine tripods surround it in the four corners.
玉馬充乘輿 Jade horses pull your carriage,
芝蓋樹九華 The numinous fungus erects a nine-petal canopy.
白虎戲西除 A white tiger plays on the west steps,
舍利從辟邪 The fish-dragon *sheli* follows the evil-expeller *bixie*,[42]
騏驎躡足舞 A unicorn taps its feet and dances,
鳳凰拊翼歌 A phoenix claps its wings and sings.

41 This line has confused scholars. See Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 91, and Cutter's comment in Cao, *The Poetry of Cao Zhi*, 385, additional notes on 5.44, line 13. I follow Tsinghua University's research on Han-time mirrors here, reading 陽遂 in this line as an expression of good wishes. See Tsinghua, *Han jing wenhua yanjiu*, 989.

42 For the fish-dragon *sheli*, see *Wen xuan or Selections*, 1:232 (line 719); for the evil-expeller *bixie*, see Cao, *The Poetry of Cao Zhi*, 303n1.

豐年大置酒 In a year of bumper crops a great feast is set up,
玉尊列廣庭 Jade goblets are arrayed in the spacious courtyard.
樂飲過三爵 Happily drinking, we exceed the three-beaker limit;
28 朱顏暴已形 Flushed faces show and give us away.
式宴不違禮 Feasting but not violating etiquette,
君臣歌鹿鳴 The ruler and officials sing "Call the Deer" [*Mao shi* 161].
樂人舞鼙鼓 The musicians perform the rattle-drum dance,
32 百官雷抃贊若驚 A hundred officials thunderously clap and cheer as though amazed.

儲禮如江海 Your courteous deeds are accumulated like rivers and seas,
積善若陵山 Your good deeds are amassed like hills and mountains.
皇嗣繁且熾 Your imperial descendants grow profuse and splendid,
36 孫子列曾玄 Your grandsons add great- and great-great-grandsons to your line.
羣臣咸稱萬歲 Vassals and officials all cheer "Myriad-year life!
陛下長樂壽年 May Your Exalted Majesty have lasting joy and a long life!"

御酒停未飲 You pause the imperial wine, not yet drink it,
40 貴戚跪東廂 As noble kin kneel in the east wing.
侍人承顏色 Your attendants comply with your expression,
奉進金玉觴 Presenting golden and jade kylixes.
此酒亦眞酒 This wine is indeed the True Wine,
44 福祿當聖皇 A blessing fit for our sage emperor.
陛下臨軒笑 Your Exalted Majesty smiles down from the railed platform,
左右咸歡康 Those to his left and right are all joyful and at ease.
杯來一何遲 How slowly the cups come!
48 羣僚以次行 Ministers are served in order.
賞賜累千億 You bestow gifts worth billions,
百官並富昌 A hundred officials are altogether wealthy and prosperous.

Cao Zhi adopts a storyteller's voice again in the fourth song verse "Essential Subtlety." It is in this song verse that Cao Zhi tells stories about filial daughters avenging their fathers. When approaching such a story, Li Bo 李白 (701–762) is fascinated by the female assassin and tells another story about a wife avenging her husband in the "By the East Sea There Was a Brave Wife" (Donghai you yongfu 東海有勇婦);[43] Yanagawa highlights the dra-

43 *Yuefu shiji*, 53.780.

matic nature of such a story and equates it with other popular ones such as "Jing Ke 荊軻 (d. 227 BCE) assassinating the King of Qin" and "Yan Ying 晏嬰 (578–500 BCE) killing three warriors with two peaches."[44] Neither of them addresses the theme of filial piety, however, not to mention the conflict between revenge and law as problematized in the finale of this song verse.

Since filial piety was essential to the recommendation system of the Han empire, which advanced the "filial and incorruptible" (*xiaolian* 孝廉) to the court, it is imaginable why stories of filial sons and daughters populate the walls of tombs and shrines as well as Cao Zhi's suite in which he laments the death of his father.[45] But here Cao Zhi faces a dilemma: Should he prioritize filial piety (*xiao* 孝) or loyalty (*zhong* 忠)? When acts of revenge go against the law, should he celebrate children avenging their parents as the old song title "East of the Pass There Was a Worthy Daughter" and the bas-relief on a Chulan shrine wall do? In fact, Cao Pi posed such a dilemma when he was still the heir apparent: If your lord and your father fall ill at the same time and there is a pill of medicine that can save only one of them, would you save your lord or father? As an esteemed scholar holding the highest position on Cao Pi's staff, Bing Yuan 邴原 (ca. 158–ca. 208) dared to confront his young lord by siding with his own father.[46] Now that Cao Pi has acceded to the imperial throne, Cao Zhi cannot choose his father over the emperor. Moreover, Cao Pi makes private revenge strictly unlawful. Those who seek revenge by means of assassination will have their kin extirpated.[47] As a solution, Cao Zhi first follows the Han-time tradition to tell the moving stories of Su Laiqing 蘇來卿 (lines 9–12) and Daughter Xiu 女休 (lines 13–16), who avenged their fathers, as well as of Tiying 緹縈 (lines 17–32) and Daughter Juan 女娟 (lines 33–56), who pleaded for mercy on their fathers; then, Cao Zhi shifts the focus back to the court's "virtuous influence" (*dejiao* 德教, line 58), concluding that an aggrieved daughter would find justice done before she takes any action. All the grievances, therefore, belong to the past:

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44 Yanagawa, "Kandai heibu kaji kou," 11–12.

45 In addition to shrines, tombs were also open for public viewing before being sealed. For a discussion of such a practice, see Zheng, "Concerning the Viewers," 104.

46 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 11.1108.

47 Both Cao Cao and Cao Pi issued revenge-prohibiting commands, respectively titled "Command on Pardoning Accomplices of the Yuan family, and on Prohibiting Revenge and Lavish Funeral" (She Yuan shi tong'e ji jin fuchou houzang ling 赦袁氏同惡及禁復讎厚葬令) and "Edit on Prohibiting Private Revenge" (Jin fu sichou zhao 禁復私讎詔) in *Quan Sanguo wen*, 2.3a, 5.7b–8a. For a discussion of the conflicts between revenge and law, see Lee, "Liang Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao fuchou," 39–78.

精微爛金石　Essential subtlety can melt metal and stone,
至心動神明　The sincerest heart can move deities and spirits
杞妻哭死夫　Qi Liang's wife cried for her dead husband,
4 梁山為之傾　The Liang Mountain toppled for her.
子丹西質秦　Dan the Heir Designate of Yan went west as a hostage in Qin,
烏白馬角生　Crows turned white and horses grew horns.
鄒羨囚燕市　Zou Xian [i.e., Zou Yan 鄒衍] was imprisoned in a town in Yan,
8 繁霜為夏零　Profuse frost fell in summer for him.
關東有賢女　East of the Pass there was a worthy daughter,
自字蘇來卿　Styling herself Su Laiqing.
壯年報父仇　In her prime she avenged her father,
12 身沒垂功名　Her body perished but she left behind merit and reputation.
女休逢赦書　When Daughter Xiu received a pardon letter,
白刃幾在頸　A naked blade nearly fell on her neck.
俱上列仙籍　Both were on the register of ranked transcendents,
16 去死獨就生　The latter staved off death and alone got to live.

太倉令有罪　The Prefect of the Great Granary, having committed a crime,
遠徵當就拘　Was summoned from afar and to be arrested.
自悲居無男　He lamented that since his household had no sons,
20 禍至無與俱　Once calamity came, there was no one to accompany him.
緹縈痛父言　Tiying, pained by her father's words,
荷擔西上書　Undertook to go west and present a memorial.
槃桓北闕下　She circled around beneath the north gate-tower,
24 泣淚何漣如　Weeping tears—how those streamed down!
乞得幷姊弟　She begged to have both her and her siblings
沒身贖父軀　Relinquish themselves to redeem her father's physique.
漢文感其義　Emperor Wen of Han was moved by her devotion to her parent,
28 肉刑法用除　Mutilating punishments were thus abolished by law.
其父得以免　Her father managed to be exonerated,
辨義在列圖　Her eloquence and devotion are in the *Exemplary Women* pictures.
多男亦何為　Why in that case have many sons?
32 一女足成居　One daughter is enough to keep a family together.

簡子南渡河　When Jianzi headed south and crossed the Yellow River,
津吏廢舟船　The ford functionary delayed the boats.
執法將加刑　As law-enforcing officers were about to apply the punishment,

女娟擁櫂前 Daughter Juan pulled on an oar and moved forward:
妾父聞君來 "My father heard you, Milord, was coming,
將涉不測淵 About to cross the unfathomable depths.
畏懼風波起 Dreaded that wind and waves would arise,
禱祝祭名川 He offered prayers and sacrifices to the famous river.
備禮饗神祇 Preparing gifts to offer to the deities,
為君求福先 For you he sought blessings in advance.
不勝釃祀誠 Unequal to his sincerity in draining the libations,
至令犯罰艱 He caused himself the adversity of crime and punishment.
君必欲加誅 If you are definitely going to execute him,
乞使知罪曇 I beg you, let him be conscious of his offence.
妾願以身代 I am willing to substitute my body for his—
至誠感蒼天 May my absolute sincerity move azure Heaven."
國君高其義 The lord held her devotion to her parent in high regard,
其父用赦原 Her father was thus pardoned and absolved.
河激奏中流 When "The River Roils" was performed mid-stream,
簡子知其賢 Jianzi grasped her worthiness.
歸娉為夫人 On returning he took her to be his wife,
榮寵超後先 Bestowing honour and favour that surpassed any before or since.
辯女解父命 If an eloquent daughter may save her father's life,
何況健少年 How much more might a robust lad!

黃初發和氣 The Huangchu reign has produced a harmonious *qi*,
明堂德教施 From the Bright Hall the virtuous influence spreads.
治道致太平 The way of good governing has brought great peace,
禮樂風俗移 By rites and music, local customs are altered.
刑錯民無枉 Punishments are set aside, yet the people are not crooked—
怨女復何為 What would an aggrieved daughter do anymore?
聖皇長壽考 May our sage emperor live a long life,
景福常來儀 Great blessings always come and make an appearance.

The suite reaches its high point in the last song verse. The carriage procession that carried Cao Zhi and other princes to their fiefs in the first song verse—and acquired auspicious jade horses in the third song verse—is now carrying the emperor to the hunting ground, "in the onset of winter, the tenth month" (孟冬十月, line 1). This seasonal expression is ordinary in almanac calendars and poems, but it reminds us of Cao Cao's "Striding Out of

the Spacious Gate" (Bu chu xiamen xing 步出夏門行, see Chapter 1), whose section 2 begins with exactly the same line. The tranquil winter scene in Cao Cao's descriptions, nevertheless, turns into a fierce winter hunt in Cao Zhi's "Onset of Winter." In fact, except for the first two lines, one can hardly associate the former with the latter. It is no longer Cao Cao's celebration of a mortal life, but Cao Zhi's navigation through a life post Cao Cao. When following the courtly tradition of rhapsodic composition—that is, to glorify imperial power through hyperbolic descriptions of the violent acts while passing on moral advice such as releasing baby preys (lines 55–56)—Cao Zhi becomes an "associate" of the imperial "business." In the carriage procession that carries everyone to the next stop, he is vanishing into a distant fief while Cao Pi is heading for an imperial hunt:

	孟冬十月	In the onset of winter, the tenth month,
	陰氣厲清	The *yin* air is keen and cold.
	武官誡田	Military officials ordered the hunt,
4	講旅統兵	To exercise the troops and train the army.
	元龜襲吉	The great tortoise repeated auspicious results,
	元光著明	A great comet brought forth its brightness.
	蚩尤蹕路	The warrior Chiyou cleared the road,
8	風弭雨停	Wind abated, rain ceased.
	乘輿啓行	Your carriage begins to move,
	鸞鳴幽軋	Simurgh-bells clank and clash.
	虎賁采騎	Your Rapid-as-Tiger guards ride colourfully-clad horses,
12	飛象珥鶡	Your fast ivory carriage is capped with pheasant feathers.
	鍾鼓鏗鏘	Bells and drums clang and crash,
	簫管嘈喝	Pipes and flutes bellow and bawl.
	萬騎齊鑣	Ten thousand riders keep their bits in line,
16	千乘等蓋	A thousand chariots keep their canopies even.
	夷山填谷	They flatten mountains and clog valleys,
	平林滌藪	Level forests and sweep away swamps,
	張羅萬里	Spread nets for myriad *li*,
20	盡其飛走	Take all that flies or runs.
	翟翟狡兔	Leaping and hopping the wily rabbit,
	揚白跳翰	Flashes its white fur, bobs its long hair.
	獵以青骹	They hunt it with the blue-legged goshawk,
24	掩以修竿	Ambush it with long bamboo poles.

韓盧宋鵲　The black hounds of Han, white hounds of Song
呈才騁足　Show their skill, sprint fleet of foot.
噬不盡緤　Biting before their leashes run out,
28 牽麋掎鹿　They drag down elaphure, pull down sika deer.

魏氏發機　Mr. Wei pulls the crossbow trigger,
養基撫弦　Yang Youji plucks the bowstring.
都盧尋高　Climbers from Dulu track high,
32 搜索猴猨　Searching for macaques and gibbons.
慶忌孟賁　Qing Ji and Meng Ben
蹈谷超巒　Tread valleys, cross ridges,
張目決眥　With eyes wide-open, sockets split,
36 髮怒穿冠　Hair standing in anger, poking through their caps.

頓熊扼虎　They knock down bears, seize tigers,
蹴豹搏貙　Trample leopards, wrestle leopard-cats.
氣有餘勢　As their energy has strength to spare,
40 負象而趨　They bear an elephant and hurry forward.

獲車既盈　With the game carts filled,
日側樂終　The sun slants, the festivities come to an end.
罷役解徒　Dismissing the conscripts, releasing the labourer,
44 大饗離宮　They hold a great banquet in a detached palace.

亂曰　As the summary goes,
聖皇臨飛軒　Our sage emperor, looking down from the railed platform,
論功校獵徒　Appraises merit and evaluates the hunters.
死禽積如京　Dead beasts are piled like hills,
48 流血成溝渠　With streaming blood that forms races and rivulets.
明詔大勞賜　Under the perceptive order that bestows grand rewards,
大官供有無　The Grand Provisioner furnishes everything.
走馬行酒醴　Horses race to move wine and ale,
52 驅車布肉魚　Carts speed to distribute meat and fish.
鳴鼓舉觴爵　When drums are sounded, they raise kylixes and beakers;
(鍾擊位)[擊鐘釂]無餘　When bells are struck, they drain those without a drop left.
絕網縱麟麑　Loose the net, free the unicorn fawns;
56 弛罩出鳳雛　Remove the lid, let out the phoenix chicks.

收功在羽校　Achieving success in the plumed battalion,
威靈振鬼區　The formidable power shakes the farthest lands.
陛下長歡樂　May Your Exalted Majesty always be joyful and happy,
永世合天符　Forever accord with Heaven's token of approbation.

Despite all the disconnections from his late father, memories came flooding back when Cao Zhi went hunting in a place called Nanze 南澤 (literally, 'south marsh,' east of present-day Lankao 蘭考, Henan) and saw his father's former encampment *en route*. When he strolled around the ramparts and recognized where the flags had been placed, Cao Zhi felt like he returned to the old days. Such a touching moment is related in his "Rhapsody on Yearning for a Parent" (Huai qin fu 懷親賦). It also relates a hunt in a marshland as the ancient poem "Summoning the Soul" (Zhao hun 招魂) does in its finale (see Chapter 3). But while the ancient poet found himself on a dead-end journey with his path covered by thoroughwort and immersed in water, Cao Zhi galloped on and became "his own memory and guide."[48] The *Yiwen leiju* quotes the rhapsody, along with a preface, in the entry of "filial piety" (*xiao* 孝) as follows:[49]

> In Nanze of Jiyang there is a former encampment of the late emperor [Cao Cao]. I thereupon reined in my horses and halted my carriage, making this rhapsody on it.
>
> 濟陽南澤，有先帝故營，遂停馬住駕，造斯賦焉。

獵平原而南騖　Hunting on the plains and galloping south,
覩先帝之舊營　I behold the late emperor's former encampment.
步壁壘之常制　Strolling the ramparts in customary arrangement,
識旌麾之所停　I recognize where the flags were placed.
(在)[存]官曹之典列　Thinking back to when he held office in a standard rank,
心髣髴於平生　My mind seems somewhat to be in the old days.

迴驥首而永逝　Turning my steed's head, going on an endless roam,
赴脩塗以尋遠　I pursue a long trail coursing afar.
情眷眷而顧懷　With feelings of fond affection, I look around with yearning;
魂須臾而九反　My soul, in only an instant, returns nine times.

48 Olberding, "I Know Not 'Seems': Grief for Parents," 169.

49 *Yiwen leiju*, 20.372; for the variant, see *Chuxue ji*, 17.422.

His World Redone

Cao Pi passed away in 226 and Cao Zhi in 232. I thought this book would end here until a poem by Cao Rui caught my attention. It is a song verse by the title of "Suffering in the Cold," relating another former encampment of Cao Cao. Huang Jie 黃節 (1873–1935) notes that the encampment, located in Mopi 摩陂 (present-day Jia 郟 *xian*, Henan), was also the last one where Cao Cao stayed. Cao Rui visited it in 233 when a green dragon was said to appear there. Accordingly, he changed his reign title to Qinglong 青龍 "Green Dragon" and the place name to Longpi 龍陂. He visited it again in the following year when he went on a military expedition against Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252).[50] Finding the encampment still in good condition, Cao Rui naturally fell into the conventional trope of "everything remains the same except for the person." But his song verse goes beyond the trope. By juxtaposing his "Suffering in the Cold" with Cao Cao's "Excellent!" (Shanzai xing 善哉行), the very song verse in which Cao Cao laments the death of his father Cao Song 曹嵩 (d. 194),[51] we find a unique connection between the bereaved grandson and his late grandfather.

In his poem and career, Cao Cao has a longer and more convoluted beginning. In a total number of three sections, he laments the lack of care and support during his early years. Losing both parents—respectively referred to by *san xi* 三徙 "[Mencius' mother] moving three times [for a good environment for her son]" and *guo ting* 過庭 "[Confucius giving his son instructions while the latter] hurried across the courtyard"—he had to fight alone for survival. But thanks to the foundation he laid, his grandson Cao Rui has a much easier beginning. The latter sets out from an imperial capital, is attended by troops, and finds a place to encamp, as he relates in the first section:

Cao Rui, "Suffering in the Cold"[52]	**Cao Cao, "Excellent!" (the second by the title)**[53]
悠悠發洛都	自惜身薄祜
Away and afar, setting out from the Luo capital,	I pity myself for lacking blessings,

50 Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 294n4. Also see *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 3.381, 397.

51 For a discussion of Cao Song's death, see Cao and Shen, *Zhonggu wenxue shiliao congkao*, 29–30.

52 *Song shu*, 21.613; for another variant of 芊, see Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 294n1.

53 *Song shu*, 21.615.

(幷)[并]我征東行
Altogether we launched an eastward expedition.

征行彌二旬
Having been on expedition for twenty days,

4 屯吹龍陂城 (一解 section 1)
The troops are garrisoned in the Longpi citadel.

夙賤罹孤苦
While young I was deprived and left as an orphan.

旣無三徙教
Neither were there teachings from a mother,

4 不聞過庭語 (一解 section 1)
Nor was there a way to hear words from a father.

其窮如抽裂
Depleted as if my viscera were pulled out and cracked open,

自以思所怙
I longed for my parents, whom to depend on.

雖懷一介志
Although I had a petty aspiration,

8 是時其能與 (二解 section 2)
At the time how could it be achieved?

守窮者貧賤
I, a depleted person, was impoverished and deprived;

惋歎淚如雨
While I heaved sighs, my tears fell like rain.

泣涕於悲夫
Weeping tears—O, woe was me!

12 乞活安能覩 (三解 section 3)
Wishing for survival—
But how could they see?

Then comes another sharp contrast between the grandfather and grandson. From Cao Cao's perspective, Langye 琅邪 (present-day Zhucheng 諸城, Shandong) figuratively inclined eastwards (*qing ce zuo* 傾側左) into the sea because his father was murdered there. The world was not merely "undone" in his father's death, but "broken" in its most devastating way. Nevertheless, the broken world was redone by Cao Cao himself, leaving his grandson Cao Rui with a very different view. The slanting image of Langye is replaced with an encampment in Longpi, whose ramparts and houses stand without a sideways incline (*wu xieqing* 無邪傾) even years after Cao Cao's death:

顧觀故壘處
I look around at where the old ramparts are—

皇祖之所營
It is where my august grandfather encamped.

屋室若平昔
Houses and chambers remain as those were,

8 棟宇無邪傾 (二解 section 2)
Ridgepoles and roofs stand without a sideways incline.

我願於天窮
My wishes—O, Heaven!—were depleted,

瑯邪傾側左
Langye inclined eastwards [into the sea].

雖欲竭忠誠
Although wishing to pledge my loyalty to the emperor,

16 欣公歸其楚 (四解 section 4)
I was glad he returned like Lord Xiang of Lu from Chu.

Cao Rui continues to pay tribute to his late grandfather by revamping the latter's lament. While Cao Cao laments his inability to perform any illustrious (*xian* 顯) deeds, Cao Rui considers his late grandfather an sagely embodiment of virtue although he is submerged (*qian* 潛) and hidden (*yin* 隱) like the Mopi dragon. And while Cao Cao feels ashamed to face the august ancestors (line 23 on the right), Cao Rui believes his late grandfather glorifies the ancestors with his virtuous influence on the realm and an army that sustains it (lines 13–18 on the left). His tears are now mine, but the world has become a better place because of him:

快人曰為歎
Pleased as people were, I sighed for missing him—

抱情不得敘
The loyalty I had could not be expressed.

奈何我皇祖
Why is my august grandfather,

潛德隱聖形
The sagely embodiment of virtue, submerged and hidden?

雖沒而不朽
Although deceased, he does not perish;

12 書貴垂休名 (三解 section 3)
In writing surely will his good name be handed down.

顯行天教人
Illustrious deeds are what Heaven expects of us,

20 誰知莫不緒 (五解 section 5)
Who knew that everything was left unfinished?

我願何時隨
When will my wishes be fulfilled?

此歎亦難處
This sigh, too, is hard to cease.

光光我皇祖
Illustrious is my august grandfather,

軒燿同其榮
The Xuanyuan star is comparable to his splendour.

遺化布四海
His influence spreads the Four Seas,

16 八表以肅清 (四解 section 4)
The Eight Borders are thus put in order.

雖有吳蜀寇
Although there were Wu and Shu raiding the borders,

春秋足燿兵
In spring and autumn we are able to show our power.

徒悲我皇祖
I only lament that my august grandfather

20 不永享百齡
Did not fully enjoy his hundred years.

賦詩以寫懷
Having composed this poem to express my yearning,

伏軾淚霑纓 (五解 section 5)
I lean on my carriage handlebar, tears wetting my cap-strings.

今我將何照於光耀
Now how am I going to face the glorious ones?

24 釋銜不如雨 (六解 section 6)
Those thoughts do not let up as rain does.

When Cao Rui was only a few years old, Cao Cao was already so impressed by this grandson that he said to him: "My foundation will now last three generations through you" (我基於爾三世矣).[54] Cao Rui attended his grandfather from court feasts to military expeditions just as his father Cao Pi and his uncle Cao Zhi did. When Cao Cao passed away, he was seventeen *sui*, old enough to remember his time with his late grandfather. His troubled relationship with his father, as a result of his mother falling out of favour

54 *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 3.349.

and being executed, only deepened his affection for Cao Cao. Therefore, we are not surprised to find that upon his victorious return from the military expedition against Sun Quan in 234, Cao Rui reported to none other than Cao Cao as the founding father of Wei as well as his beloved grandfather. His first song verse by the title of "Excellent!" concludes: "Turning our banners around, taking our way home, I report back to my august grandfather" (反旆言歸，告入皇祖).[55] What surprises us is rather how Cao Cao's lament for his father's death is turned into Cao Rui's celebration of his grandfather's life. Through this poetry, the world that has come undone in a parent's death is redone, and the grandparent–grandchild relationship is forged beyond the years they shared.

55 *Song shu*, 21.615.

EPILOGUE

SIX DECADES AGO, Hans H. Frankel proposed that the melancholy tone in Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192–232) poetry should be read as an artistic and noble mode of lyric poetry. The biographical approach that had been reducing everything to sibling rivalry was, accordingly, questioned and cast aside. This book demonstrates that poetry and biography are not either-or choices. Our understanding can be nuanced by cross-referencing the prefaces that the poets provided for their own poems, especially for their rhapsodies, and by reconstructing a cross-generic network of courtly texts. In this network, we can read the tumbleweed image in Cao Zhi's "*Shi* on the North Wind" (Shuofeng shi 朔風詩) not only as a poetic contrast to the vermilion blossoms in and out the poem, but also as a biographical contrast to a brilliant summer that he once enjoyed with his fellow poets, including his brother Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226).

On close examination, we find that Cao Zhi's frustration in sibling rivalry and Cao Pi's remembrance of their good old days have been more readily accepted because both fit the stereotype of a frustrated scholar-official. Like the ancient exile Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE), Cao Pi and Cao Zhi at the post-epidemic court were both deprived of the conviviality of recognition, community, and life in the "centre" while experiencing the sorrow of frustration, solitude, and death at the "marginal." Cao Pi's nostalgic memories and Cao Zhi's melancholy expressions are two sides of the same coin. As discussed in Chapter 3, both are early medieval variations on ancient soul-summoning poetry, which is traditionally said to summon none other than the frustrated soul of Qu Yuan.

But by adopting a multidirectional approach, we can go beyond the traditional framework and uncover new inter-and-intra textual elements with which the poets negotiated between sorrow and community. In Chapter 1 they experienced aging, with a younger generation gone prematurely and the arts of transcendence out of reach. But by blending multiple poetic elements into his song verses, Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) encouraged his fellow mortals to value their limited yet meaningful life. In Chapter 2 they experienced the death of a friend. The time of ritual mourning had already passed, but through their impersonation of the widow, Cao Pi and his fellow poets not only made the point that the pain of loss stayed with them as

it did with the bereaved woman, but also forged a bond among those who continued to remember the departed. In Chapter 4 we hear Cao Zhi, who was a frustrated scholar in Chapter 3, conversing with his frustrated friends in the role of a sympathetic prince. The marginal ones had long expected no listeners but their later readers, yet now their words of frustration were heard and addressed by a young lord. Finally in Chapter 5, while the world came undone for Cao Pi, Cao Zhi, and Cao Rui 曹叡 (204–239, r. 226–239) in their father/grandfather Cao Cao's death, the bereaved—whether they were inheriting offspring or not—sustained themselves and their community through poetry of emulation. A moment of loss is not necessarily a moment of isolation. By delving deeply into their poetry of loss, we see how writers at the Cao court employed their poetic art to establish, develop, and sustain a community in each difficult moment of their intertwined lives.

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