

## 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> 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."<sup>4</sup> 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):<sup>5</sup>

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 遂膺臆以蒞事	Thereupon, crestfallen, I take on the duty.
矧乃小子	Moreover, your little child
夙遭不造	Suffered misfortune early.
茕茕在疚	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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> *Yiwen leiju*, 13.242.

- 猥抑奔墓  
俯就權變
- 卜葬既從
- 16 大隧既通  
漫漫長夜  
窈窕玄宮  
有晦無明
- 20 曷有所窮
- 鹵簿既整  
三官駢羅  
前驅建旗
- 24 方相執戈  
弃此宮庭  
陟彼山阿
- Retraining myself from hastening to the tomb,  
I have attended to what is expedient to do.
- With the divination for burial followed,  
A wide underground passage excavated,  
On and on goes the long-lasting night,  
Sombre and subtle is the dark palace.  
With only dimness, no brightness—  
When will this come to an end?
- With the escort of honour put in order,  
The three offices are arrayed side by side.  
Those who press ahead carry banners,  
Those who see in all directions hold dagger-axes.  
Having left this palace hall,  
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):<sup>6</sup>

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

<sup>6</sup> *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):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>呦呦游鹿<br/> <i>?jiou-?jiou</i> roams the deer,<br/>         銜草鳴麋<br/>         Holding grass in mouth, calling its fawn;<br/>         翩翩飛鳥<br/>         Lightly and airily flutters the bird,</p> | <p>呦呦鹿鳴<br/> <i>?jiou-?jiou</i> call the deer,<br/>         食野之苹<br/>         Eating cudweed in the field.</p> |
| <p>12 挾子巢棲<br/>         Holding its child close, resting in their nest. (三解 section 3)</p>  |  |
| <p>我獨孤斃<br/>         I alone am left fatherless,<br/>         懷此百離<br/>         Bearing this hundred-fold mishap.</p>   | <p>我有嘉賓<br/>         I have fine guests—</p>   |
| <p>16 莫我能知<br/>         No one can understand me. (四解 section 4)</p>  |  |

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),<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> Cao Pi not only composed the song verse but also played either 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 either as accompaniment to the “Short Song.” And instead of ascending the Bronze Bird Terrace in Ye 鄴 (present-day Linzhang 臨漳, Hebei) for

<sup>8</sup> *Yuefu shiji*, 30.446–47.

<sup>9</sup> 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).<sup>10</sup>

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:<sup>11</sup>

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).<sup>12</sup> 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:<sup>13</sup>

既次西陵	After a multiple-night stay on the West Mound,
幽闈啓路	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.
窈窕玄宇	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.

潛闔一扃	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, <sup>14</sup>
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,
永棄兆民	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).<sup>15</sup> Respectfully addressing his king, who is now Cao Pi, as “Your Exalted Majesty” (*Bixia* 陛下),<sup>16</sup> Cao Zhi requested his permission as follows:<sup>17</sup>

**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 鄆城 (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。先王喜鰾，臣前以表，得徐州臧霸(二鰾百)[鰾二百]枚，足自供事。[乞]請水瓜五枚，[白棗二十枚]。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.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

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).<sup>21</sup> 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).<sup>22</sup> 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:

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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)<sup>23</sup>

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,

## 4 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,

## 20 方周于魯

Just the way the Zhou house  
was to the Lu state.”**Wei Meng, “Moral Suasion”**(excerpt)<sup>24</sup>

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;

## 36 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 marquissate in  
the southern land of Chu,

俾我小臣

And made me, a lesser servant,

## 40 惟傳是輔

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)<sup>25</sup>

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)<sup>26</sup>

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)<sup>27</sup>

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 憂心如醒

My worried heart aches  
as if from a hangover.**Cao Pi, “Short Song”**(opening)<sup>28</sup>

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/鞞 is a bigger version of *tao* 鞞/鞞, which is a kind of drum equipped with a handle. While a *gu* 鼓 drum uses drumsticks to make sound, a *tao* 鞞 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.<sup>29</sup>

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, 西隨段熲。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)

<sup>29</sup> *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.”<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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).<sup>32</sup> 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).<sup>33</sup>

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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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:<sup>37</sup>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>聖皇應曆數<br/>正康帝道休<br/>九州咸賓服</p> <p>4 威德洞八幽<br/>三公奏諸公<br/>不得久淹留<br/>蕃位任至重</p> <p>8 舊章咸率由</p> <p>侍臣省文奏<br/>陛下體仁慈<br/>沈吟有愛戀</p> <p>12 不忍聽可之<br/>迫有官典憲<br/>不得顧恩私<br/>諸王當就國</p> <p>16 璽綬何纒纒</p> <p>便時舍外殿<br/>宮省寂無人<br/>主上增顧念</p> <p>20 皇母懷苦辛<br/>何以為贈賜<br/>傾府竭寶珍<br/>文錢百億萬</p> <p>24 采帛若煙雲<br/>乘輿服御物<br/>錦羅與金銀<br/>龍旗垂九旒</p> <p>28 羽蓋參班輪</p> | <p>Our sage emperor accorded with the ordained succession—<br/>His regime is prosperous, his imperial way is beneficent.<br/>The Nine Provinces all submit and obey,<br/>His awesome virtue penetrates the Eight Remotenesses.<br/>The Three Excellencies memorialized about the vassal lords,<br/>Who were not to tarry long at court.<br/>A vassal position means extremely heavy burdens,<br/>Former regulations are all to be followed.</p> <p>While attendant officials scrutinized the written memorial,<br/>Your Exalted Majesty embodied kindness and compassion.<br/>Sunk in musing, with love and fondness,<br/>You could not bear to heed and approve it.<br/>Compelled by the governmental norms and laws,<br/>You could not regard affection and personal feelings.<br/>All the princes were to go to their fiefs—<br/>How clustered and commingled their seals and ribbons are!</p> <p>We forthwith lodged in outer halls,<br/>The palace precincts were quiet, with no one around.<br/>Your Highness increased cares and thoughts,<br/>August Mother bore pains and agonies.<br/>What did you use as bestowals and gifts?<br/>You emptied out the treasury, exhausted its precious objects—<br/>Inscribed coins in hundreds of millions,<br/>Particoloured silks comparable to mists and clouds.<br/>Your carriage garbed with imperial objects,<br/>Brocades and gauzes, gold and silver.<br/>Dragon flags trailing nine streamers,<br/>Plumed canopies with painted wheels.</p> |
|--|--|

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

- 諸王自計念  
無功荷厚德  
思一效筋力  
32 糜軀以報國
- 鴻臚擁節衛  
副使隨經營  
貴戚並出送  
36 夾道交輜輶  
車服齊整設  
鞞曄耀天精  
武騎衛前後  
40 鼓吹簫笳聲  
祖道魏東門  
淚下霑冠纓  
扳蓋因內顧  
44 俛仰慕同生  
行行將日莫  
何時還闕庭  
車輪為裴回  
48 四馬躑躅鳴  
路人尚酸鼻  
何況骨肉情
- All the princes reckoned and pondered:  
Although lacking merit, we received generous favours.  
We wished to devote our strength soon,  
Sacrificing ourselves to repay the state.
- The grand herald holds a verge to act as an escort,  
His assistant envoys follow along to make arrangements.  
Side by side, noble relatives come out to see us off;  
One after another, on the roadsides line up curtained vehicles.  
Our carriages and vestments are orderly arrayed,  
Brightly shining, more brilliant than the sun in the sky.  
Military riders escort us front and rear,  
Drummers and pipers have the panpipes and reed pipes sound.  
We sacrifice to the road at Wei's east gate,  
Tears fall and wet our cap-strings.  
Climbing onto my carriage, I then look around from inside;  
Looking up and down, I instantly long for my born brothers.  
Travelling on and on, it is almost dusk;  
When will I return to the imperial court?  
The carriage wheels hence go round and about,  
The four horses falter and neigh.  
Even passers-by feel like weeping,  
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.<sup>38</sup> 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  
 榮華相晃耀 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,  
 父母頑且嚚 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.  
 慈母答不痛 When he felt no pain from his loving mother's whip,  
 12 歔歔涕沾巾 He sobbed and sighed, with tears wetting his kerchief.  
 丁蘭少失母 Ding Lan, while young, having lost his mother,  
 自傷蚤孤茆 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 灑淚滿裋袍 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.                               |
| 髻鬣無夭齒    | 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.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, when approaching the homage scene at the visual focus of the Wu Liang Shrine 武梁祠 (dated to 151 in present-day Jiexiang 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.<sup>40</sup>

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

<sup>39</sup> Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, 90–94.

<sup>40</sup> 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,                                     |
| 4  | 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!"  |
| 8  | 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.                     |
|    | 衆善填門至   | As a multitude of good deeds come clogging the gates,                               |
| 12 | 臣子蒙福祥   | The officials are blessed with good luck.   |
|    | 無患及陽遂   | "May you find no harm but success, <sup>41</sup>                                    |
|    | 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,                           |
| 16 | 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,   |
| 20 | 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 <i>sheli</i> follows the evil-expeller <i>bixie</i> , <sup>42</sup> |
|    | 騏驎躡足舞   | A unicorn taps its feet and dances,   |
| 24 | 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);<sup>43</sup> 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.”<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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 女媧 (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:

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  
至心動神明  
杞妻哭死夫  
4 梁山為之傾  
子丹西質秦  
烏白馬角生  
鄒羨囚燕市  
8 繁霜為夏零  
關東有賢女  
自字蘇來卿  
壯年報父仇  
12 身沒垂功名  
女休逢赦書  
白刃幾在頸  
俱上列仙籍  
16 去死獨就生  
太倉令有罪  
遠徵當就拘  
自悲居無男  
20 禍至無與俱  
緹縈痛父言  
荷擔西上晝  
繫桓北闕下  
24 泣淚何漣如  
乞得并姊弟  
沒身贖父軀  
漢文感其義  
28 肉刑法用除  
其父得以免  
辨義在列圖  
多男亦何為  
32 一女足成居  
簡子南渡河  
津吏廢舟船  
執法將加刑
- Essential subtlety can melt metal and stone,  
The sincerest heart can move deities and spirits  
Qi Liang's wife cried for her dead husband,  
The Liang Mountain toppled for her.  
Dan the Heir Designate of Yan went west as a hostage in Qin,  
Crows turned white and horses grew horns.  
Zou Xian [i.e., Zou Yan 鄒衍] was imprisoned in a town in Yan,  
Profuse frost fell in summer for him.  
East of the Pass there was a worthy daughter,  
Styling herself Su Laiqing.  
In her prime she avenged her father,  
Her body perished but she left behind merit and reputation.  
When Daughter Xiu received a pardon letter,  
A naked blade nearly fell on her neck.  
Both were on the register of ranked transcendents,  
The latter staved off death and alone got to live.  
The Prefect of the Great Granary, having committed a crime,  
Was summoned from afar and to be arrested.  
He lamented that since his household had no sons,  
Once calamity came, there was no one to accompany him.  
Tiyang, pained by her father's words,  
Undertook to go west and present a memorial.  
She circled around beneath the north gate-tower,  
Weeping tears—how those streamed down!  
She begged to have both her and her siblings  
Relinquish themselves to redeem her father's physique.  
Emperor Wen of Han was moved by her devotion to her parent,  
Mutilating punishments were thus abolished by law.  
Her father managed to be exonerated,  
Her eloquence and devotion are in  
the *Exemplary Women* pictures.  
Why in that case have many sons?  
One daughter is enough to keep a family together.  
When Jianzi headed south and crossed the Yellow River,  
The ford functionary delayed the boats.  
As law-enforcing officers were about to apply the punishment,

- 36 女娟擁櫂前  
妾父聞君來  
將涉不測淵  
畏懼風波起  
Daughter Juan pulled on an oar and moved forward:  
“My father heard you, Milord, was coming,  
About to cross the unfathomable depths.  
Dreaded that wind and waves would arise,
- 40 禱祝祭名川  
備禮饗神祇  
為君求福先  
不勝酬祀誠  
He offered prayers and sacrifices to the famous river.  
Preparing gifts to offer to the deities,  
For you he sought blessings in advance.  
Unequal to his sincerity in draining the libations,
- 44 至今犯罰艱  
君必欲加誅  
乞使知罪讞  
妾願以身代  
He caused himself the adversity of crime and punishment.  
If you are definitely going to execute him,  
I beg you, let him be conscious of his offence.  
I am willing to substitute my body for his—
- 48 至誠感蒼天  
國君高其義  
其父用赦原  
河激奏中流  
May my absolute sincerity move azure Heaven.”  
The lord held her devotion to her parent in high regard,  
Her father was thus pardoned and absolved.  
When “The River Roils” was performed mid-stream,
- 52 簡子知其賢  
歸媵為夫人  
榮寵超後先  
Jianzi grasped her worthiness.  
On returning he took her to be his wife,  
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,  
How much more might a robust lad!
- 56 何況健少年  
黃初發和氣  
明堂德教施  
治道致太平  
The Huangchu reign has produced a harmonious *qi*,  
From the Bright Hall the virtuous influence spreads.  
The way of good governing has brought great peace,  
By rites and music, local customs are altered.
- 60 禮樂風俗移  
刑錯民無枉  
怨女復何為  
聖皇長壽考  
Punishments are set aside, yet the people are not crooked—  
What would an aggrieved daughter do anymore?  
May our sage emperor live a long life,  
Great blessings always come and make an appearance.
- 64 景福常來儀

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 <i>yin</i> 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 | 飛象珥鶖 | 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 <i>li</i> ,                         |
| 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.                 |
|    | 獵以青駮 | They hunt it with the blue-legged goshawk,                 |
| 24 | 掩以修竿 | Ambush it with long bamboo poles.                          |

- 韓盧宋鵠      The black hounds of Han, white hounds of Song  
 呈才騁足      Show their skill, sprint fleet of foot.  
 噬不盡縶      Biting before their leashes run out,  
 28 牽麋倚鹿      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 搜索猴猿      Searching for macaques and gibbons.  
 慶忌孟賁      Qing Ji and Meng Ben  
 蹈谷超巒      Tread valleys, cross ridges,  
 張目決眚      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,  
 蹴豹搏狸      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)[擊鐘醕]無餘      When bells are struck, they drain those without a drop left.  
 絕網縱麟麕      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,
60 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."<sup>48</sup> The *Yiwen leiju* quotes the rhapsody, along with a preface, in the entry of "filial piety" (*xiao* 孝) as follows:<sup>49</sup>

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。

獵平原而南驚	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,
4 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,
8 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.

<sup>48</sup> Olberding, "I Know Not 'Seems': Grief for Parents," 169.

<sup>49</sup> *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 邲 *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).<sup>50</sup> 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),<sup>51</sup> 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”<sup>52</sup>**

悠悠發洛都

Away and afar, setting out  
from the Luo capital,

**Cao Cao, “Excellent!”  
(the second by the title)<sup>53</sup>**

自惜身薄祿

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 莽, see Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 294n1.

**53** *Song shu*, 21.615.

- (莽)[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.
- 既無三徒教  
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 瑯邪 (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 side-ways incline (*wu xieqing* 無邪傾) even years after Cao Cao's death:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>顧觀故壘處<br/>I look around at where the old<br/>ramparts are—</p> <p>皇祖之所營<br/>It is where my august grandfather<br/>encamped.</p> <p>屋室若平昔<br/>Houses and chambers remain as<br/>those were,</p> | <p>我願於天窮<br/>My wishes—O, Heaven!—<br/>were depleted,</p> <p>瑯邪傾側左<br/>Langye inclined eastwards<br/>[into the sea].</p> <p>雖欲竭忠誠<br/>Although wishing to pledge my<br/>loyalty to the emperor,</p> |
| <p>8 棟宇無邪傾 (二解 section 2)<br/>Ridgepoles and roofs stand<br/>without a sideways incline.</p>  | <p>16 欣公歸其楚 (四解 section 4)<br/>I was glad he returned like<br/>Lord Xiang of Lu from Chu.</p>   |

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:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>奈何我皇祖<br/>Why is my august grandfather,</p> <p>潛德隱聖形<br/>The sagely embodiment of virtue,<br/>submerged and hidden?</p> <p>雖沒而不朽<br/>Although deceased, he does not<br/>perish;</p> | <p>快人曰為歎<br/>Pleased as people were,<br/>I sighed for missing him—</p> <p>抱情不得敘<br/>The loyalty I had could not be<br/>expressed.</p> <p>顯行天教人<br/>Illustrious deeds are what<br/>Heaven expects of us,</p> |
| <p>12 書貴垂休名 (三解 section 3)<br/>In writing surely will his good<br/>name be handed down.</p>  | <p>20 誰知莫不緒 (五解 section 5)<br/>Who knew that everything<br/>was left unfinished?</p> <p>我願何時隨<br/>When will my wishes be<br/>fulfilled?</p> <p>此歎亦難處<br/>This sigh, too, is hard to cease.</p>              |

光光我皇祖  
Illustrious is my august  
grandfather,

軒耀同其榮  
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,

春秋足耀兵  
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).<sup>54</sup> 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).<sup>55</sup> 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.

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55 *Song shu*, 21.615.

