

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。謂百年已分，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，化為冀壤，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，至通夜不眠，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

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 神飈接丹轂 | A prodigious gust catches the cinnabar wheel-hubs, |
| 12 輕輦隨風移 | Our light carriages move with the wind. |
| 飄飄放志意 | 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. |
| 神飈接丹轂 | A prodigious gust catches the cinnabar wheel-hubs, |
| 12 輕輦隨風移 | Our light carriages move with the wind. |
| 飄飄放志意 | 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 載離寒暄	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, obviously, 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。謂百年已分，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.

是以對鵲而辭，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 associated³³—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.

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，騰蛇蟠蚪而遶轅). 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:

- 遂乃溫風赫曦 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 潛鼃浮岸 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.
 機女絕綜 Weavers leave their heddles behind,
 農夫釋耜 Farmers abandon their weeding work.
 背暑者不羣而齊跡 Those fleeing the heat are not gathering
 24 向陰者不會而成羣 but have the same pace,
 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* 溫風)—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 <i>linzhong</i> pitch, |
| 重陽積而上昇 | Double <i>yang</i> accumulates and rises. |
| (喜)[烹]潤土之溽暑 | It bakes the moist earth, makes humid heat, |
| 4 扇溫風而至興 | Fans the warm wind until it gets vigorous. |
| [或赫熾以瘴炎 | 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 midday³⁹—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, |
| 8 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, |
| 12 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, |
| 處者困於門堂 | 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, |
| 16 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 猶沸溼而不涼 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,
 宴戲渺歡 Feasting and playing lack joy.

Liu Zhen celebrates iced beverages:⁴¹

- 實冰漿於玉醕 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 步八閭而為宇 | 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 九嶺). 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)[嶮]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. |
| 九闔洞開 | 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.

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.