

Chapter 4

CONVERSING IN *LINGUA MORTUA*

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

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

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

Frustration Parodied

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

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

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

¹ Wu, *Liuchao Xuan shi dinglun*, 137–38; Cao et al., *Cao Zijian shi zhu (wai san zhong)*, 55n12.
² *Wen xuan*, 24.1120–21. Also see Cao, *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, 1.29, which differs in the last line as discussed later.
³ *Wen xuan*, 29.1359.

中有孤鴛鴦

In the midst there is a lone
mandarin duck,

哀鳴求匹儔

Calling sadly, seeking its mate.

我願執此鳥

I hope to get hold of this bird—

8 惜哉無輕舟

What a pity that there is no light boat.

欲歸忘故道

Wishing to go back, I forgot the
way I came;

顧望但懷愁

Gazing around, I only feel sorrow.

悲風鳴我側

A sorrowful wind calls by my side,

12 羲和逝不留

Xihe [the sun charioteer] leaves
without lingering.

重陰潤萬物

Double *yin* moistens myriad things,

何懼澤不周

Why fear its favour is not all-
encompassing?"

誰令君多念

Who causes you, Milord, to think so
much?

16 自使懷百憂

You make yourself bear these
hundred worries.

上有特棲鳥

Up there is a bird roosting alone,

懷春向我鳴

Stirred by springtime, calling to me.

褰袵欲從之

Holding up my robe, I wish to follow it—

8 路嶮不得征

The road is perilous. I cannot go.

徘徊不能去

Lingering to and fro, I cannot bring
myself to leave;

佇立望爾形

Standing for a long time, I gaze at your
form.

風飈揚塵起

A gust of wind rises, raising dust;

12 白日忽已冥

The blazing sun, all of a sudden, has
turned dark.

迴身入空房

Turning back, I enter the empty room;

託夢通精誠

Through a dream, I communicate my
sincerity.

人欲天不違

Heaven does not go against human desire,

16 何懼不合并

Why fear not being united?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The concluding couplet of Cao Pi’s “Miscellaneous Poem” (No. 2) reads:

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

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

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

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

7 Yu, “Jian’an qizi nianpu,” 476.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Murmurs Heard

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

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

Part I. City, Army, and Feast

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

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

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

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

Cao Zhi, “Presented to Xu Gan” (part 1, lines 1–12)¹⁴

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

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

Cao Zhi, “Presented to Ding Yí” (part 1, lines 1–4)¹⁵

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

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

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

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

tion in 215, which ended in making peace with Zhang Lu, is more likely the backdrop. But, as evidence suggests, Cao Zhi did not follow Cao Cao on the expedition in 215.¹⁶ Cao Cao's kingly army and the marvellous mountains, rivers, and buildings in and around Chang'an, therefore, are not seen by Cao Zhi in person, but visualized by him to situate a poetic conversation with his target audience, Ding Yi and Wang Can:

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

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

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

Cao Zhi, "Presented to Ding Yi" (part 1, lines 1–8)¹⁸

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

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

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

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

Part 2. Murmurs

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

Cao Zhi, “Presented to Ding Yi” (part 2, lines 9–12)

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

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

Cao Zhi, “Presented to Ding Yi and Wang Can” (part 2, lines 13–16)

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

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

Cao Zhi, “Presented to Ding Yi” (part 2, lines 5–12)

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

¹⁹ *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 19.1564.

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

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

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

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

Part 3. Moral Lessons

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cao Zhi, “Presented to Ding Yí” (part 3, lines 13–20)

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

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

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

²³ *Sanguo zhi jijie*, 21.1651, 19.1564.

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

Perspective Shifted

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶ Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads*, 75

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

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

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

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

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

A Skull Revisited

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

²⁹ Yan, *Yan shi jiaxun*, 1.41b.

³⁰ *Wen xuan*, 28.1332.

³¹ *Xinyi Zhuangzi duben*, 233.

In death, I have neither lord to serve nor vassals to serve me, and there are no more season-to-season chores to do. At my ease, I take heaven and earth [i.e., the universe] as my springs and autumns [i.e., lifespan]. The joy that a king feels on his south-facing throne is not greater than mine.

死，無君於上，無臣於下，亦無四時之事，從然以天地為春秋，雖南面王樂，不能過也。

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

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

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

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

³² Idema, *The Resurrected Skeleton*, 270.

³³ Guwen yuan, 5.12b–14a.

³⁴ Idema, *The Resurrected Skeleton*, 270.

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

When Master Zhuang went to Chu, he saw a hollow skull laid bare with its clear form. He struck it with his horsewhip and asked: “Did you end up like this because you made a mistake in your desire for life? Or perhaps your state fell and you were executed by axe? Or perhaps you committed some foul crime, causing some scandal you were ashamed to leave your father and mother, wife and children? Or perhaps you suffered from cold and hunger? Or perhaps you met the end of your springs and autumns [i.e., lifespan]?”

莊子之楚，見空髑髏，髑髏有形，擻以馬捶，因而問之，曰：夫子貪生失理，而為此乎？將子有亡國之事，斧鉞之誅，而為此乎？將子有不善之行，愧遺父母妻子之醜，而為此乎？將子有凍餒之患，而為此乎？將子之春秋故及此乎？

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- | | |
|---|---|
| 曹子遊乎陂塘之濱
步乎蓁穢之藪
蕭條潛虛 | Master Cao roamed on the banks of tanks and ponds,
Paced through the swamps with thickets and weeds.
Among the desolate and decaying,
submerged and depleted, |
| 4 經幽踐阻
顧見觸髅
塊然獨居 | While passing through the dark and scaling the steep,
He looked around and saw a skull
That dwells alone in total isolation. |
| 於是伏軾而問之曰 | Thereupon, he leaned on his carriage handlebar
and asked it: |
| 8 子將結纓首劍

殉國君乎
將被堅執銳

斃三軍乎 | “Did you perhaps, with your cap-strings tied
and a sword in hand,
Sacrifice your life for the lord of the state?
Or perhaps you, dressed in armour
and holding a weapon,
Dropped dead in battle? |
| 12 將嬰茲固疾

命殞傾乎
將壽終數極
歸幽冥乎 | Or perhaps you suffered from certain
stubborn illness,
Falling away and gone?
Or perhaps you met the end of your lifespan,
Returning to darkness and gloom?” |
| 16 叩遺骸而歎息
哀白骨之無靈
慕嚴周之適楚

儻託夢以通情 | He knocked on the remains and heaved a sigh,
Lamenting the white bone for its lack of a soul,
But thinking of Yan Zhou [i.e., Zhuang Zhou]
on his trip to Chu—
It might come to his dream to communicate
its thoughts. |

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

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

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

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

- 36 身以無形為主 Regard it most important to have no form for your body,
 故能與化推移 Therefore you can move and shift with Transformation.
 陰陽不能更 *Yin and yang* cannot effect any change,
 四節不能虧 The four seasons cannot cause any harm.
- 40 是故洞於纖微之域 And therefore you go deeply into the realm of the infinitesimal,
 通於恍惚之庭 All the way through the courtyard of the unfathomable.
 望之不見其象 Gazing at you, none can see your form;
 聽之不聞其聲 Listening to you, none can hear your sound.
- 44 挹之不汴 Scooping from you, none can empty you;
 滿之不盈 Pouring into you, none can overfill you.
 吹之不凋 No strong storm can make you wither,
 噓之不榮 No soft breeze can make you flourish.
- 48 激之不流 No forceful stream can make you flow,
 凝之不停 No freezing coldness can make you stop.
- 寥落冥漠 Fading faraway, faintly aloof,
 與道相拘 You are coterminous with the Way.
- 52 偃然長寢 Comfortably you take a good long rest—
 樂莫是踰 No joy is greater than this!"

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

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

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

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

於是觸髅長呻廓皆曰：「甚矣，何子之難語也。昔太素氏不仁，無故勞我以形，苦我以生。今也幸變而之死，是反吾真也。何子之好勞，而我之好逸？子則行矣，余將歸於太虛。」

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

於是言卒響絕	Thereupon, its words ended and its voice dropped,
神光霧除	The numinous light faded as a mist.
顧將旋軫	On the verge of turning my carriage,
74 乃命僕夫	I therefore commanded my groom
拂以玄塵	To dust the skull with a black fly-whisk,
覆以縞巾	To cover it with a white kerchief,
爰將藏彼路濱	And then, when concealing it on the roadside,
78 壅以丹土	To make a mound with cinnabar earth,
翳以綠榛	To screen it with green branches.
夫存亡之異勢	That the living and the deceased follow different courses
乃宣尼之所陳	Is what Xuanni [i.e., Confucius] has affirmed.
82 何神憑之虛對	How come the spirit, through a medium, gave a false response,
云死生之必均	Claiming death and life are definitely equal?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴¹ *Yiwen leiju*, 17.322.

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

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

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

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

42 *Chuxue ji*, 14.359.