

TRANSLATING THE AFTERLIVES OF QU YUAN

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a history of interpretation and interlinear commentary translation of the “Li Sao,” an allegorical poem attributed to the late Warring States (475-221 BCE) poet Qu Yuan. I argue that the significance of the poem is an historically constituted and changing interpretation produced in a sequence of editions, and that insofar as translation is the necessary tool of Sinology, our scholarship and teaching should rest on a translation practice that visibly reflects the particularly Chinese material and reception histories of our texts. I analyze the rhetorical strategies by which specific interpreters, including Sima Qian, Wang Yi, Hong Xingzu, Zhu Xi, and Guo Moruo, “translate” the “Li Sao” through history, constructing personas of Qu Yuan that speak to the politics of their own respective eras. The last chapter is a new translation of the “Li Sao” based on my investigation of the poem’s history. It contains multiple English renderings and diverse selections of historical commentary, presented in interlinear form, in order to facilitate historically critical understanding of the “Li Sao” and demonstrate the breadth of interpretation that it is possible to derive from the text. The translation offers not a single interpretation of the poem but rather an image of the historical dialogue that has produced and disputed it in interpretations from the Han dynasty to the present.

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Dedicated to my mother, Dr. McLellan.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The work of Chinese literature scholars in an English-language academic environment is predicated on translation: books, articles, lectures, and classroom dialogues depend upon the possibility of successful translation. In the case of literary texts, to translate is not a straightforward activity, and yet the standard form of academic and popular-press translations of Chinese literary works effects an erasure of translation's twisty path. Furthermore, Sinological translations are much like translations from any other language, although the discipline presupposes the specific difference of Chinese materials. This dissertation takes up the question of how Chinese literature can be translated differently through the investigation of Chinese textual materiality, reception, and hermeneutics. While contributing an historical analysis of literary interpretation to the study of the early text "Li Sao" 離騷, I critique the translation practices of the discipline, theorize a new method of translation, and produce a new form of translation that is rooted in the uniqueness of Chinese texts and literary history.

As the masterwork of Qu Yuan 屈原, the ancient poet who today is often called the greatest representative of Chinese nationalism, the "Li Sao" is a critical text for teachers of Chinese literature in American universities; for most students it will be taught in translation. This project originates from the observation of alienation that most students experience in reading pre-modern texts, and the desire for a translation of the "Li Sao" that helps overcome alienation by facilitating historically critical understanding.

The literary and historical speculations of the philosopher Walter Benjamin suggested a methodology for this undertaking. In Benjamin's thinking, to understand any literary work, we enter an encounter with its historical "afterlife." This dissertation presents the afterlife of the "Li Sao" as a dialogue in which the interlocutors, readers who transmitted the text of the "Li Sao" along with their interpretations of it, construct an "original" again and again through their activity of re-interpretation and re-inscription. They typically have understood the original as a true representation of Qu Yuan, the poet, and their own interpretation as the first true recognition of Qu Yuan's original self. The general concept of afterlife and the particular mode of understanding the "Li Sao" that have been inscribed in the poem's textual record suggest a different kind of translation than has been previously undertaken: syntactically literal, thick, poly-vocal, and open to questions. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I both defend and perform that kind of translation. I will conclude with a brief discussion of a digital platform for the translation that will facilitate teaching both classical Chinese literature and critical skills of digital literacy.

This dissertation aims to open a discussion on the problem of the "original" text in Translation Studies as well as Chinese literary studies. Lawrence Venuti has argued for a hermeneutic concept of translation, trenchantly demonstrating that every act of translation inscribes an interpretation according to particular local contingencies, and, contrary to the long-standing and still popular conception of translation as equivalence, does not transfer any invariant feature of the source text.¹ Venuti's proposals for literary translation practice are accordingly oriented toward the target language and receiving society. His idea of enriching the target language is focused on the aesthetic and ethical

¹ Most recently, see *Translation Changes Everything*, especially the Introduction and Chapter 11, "The Poet's Version; Or, an Ethics of Translation."

effect of translated texts; his aim is to inscribe difference in the translated text by writing against the hegemonic norms of the receiving context. I argue that Venuti's turn toward the receiving culture is also a turn away from the original that thus elides the important question of what exactly the translator is translating. If the source text has no invariant, what is it that appears to the translator as "the source text"? On what does the translator rely to decide how to inscribe a particularized difference in this particular instance? What *is* the original text of translation?

In this chapter I offer a new reading of Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" as a renewal of the question of the original. This dissertation will demonstrate that the "original" text may exist only through the intervention of secondary language, only in and as translation. The reading of the "Task" offered here reveals, through the mediation of translation, related texts by Benjamin, and secondary criticism, that "translatability" is the unfinished historical project of understanding, and that the "original" is not the beginning but the product of that historical project. I therefore present the "Task" as an example of a translatable original—an "original" text of Translation Studies—as well as a thematic description of translatability. The concept of translatability opens a clear path of inquiry for the translator to follow in producing an interpretation. It clarifies the nature of the investigation that necessarily precedes, and ought to consciously and conscientiously precede, the inscription of a translation; that is, the labor of understanding that produces the invariant-less source text of Venuti's hermeneutic model. For the study of Chinese Literature in English, the implication of a translatable original is that the conventional practice of providing a version that appears to transparently represent the original text in a one-to-one exchange is problematic for the

discipline and requires critical reflection and methodological innovation. The last chapter of this dissertation is an experiment in critical translation methodology for Chinese Literature.

The Poem and the Poet

The “Li Sao”² is a political lyric attributed to the nobleman Qu Yuan (ca. 343-278 B.C.E.) of the kingdom of Chu in late Warring States (475-221 B.C.E.). With 372 lines of around six words each, it is one of the longest lyrics in the Chinese tradition. It was first anthologized in the Han dynasty *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu), which includes poems formally and thematically related to the “Li Sao” and other poems attributed to Qu Yuan; it is usually printed at the head of that collection. Its form is aesthetically unique, quite unlike the laconic poetry of the other, orthodox early poetry anthology, the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes). Historically, the *Shijing* contains the poetry of the north, the cradle of Han Chinese civilization; as a fundamental text of Confucian moral education until the modern era, it has been considered representative of sober Confucian propriety. In contrast, the *Chuci* contains the poetry of the colonized barbarian south. Its poetry is said to express wild, unrestrained, uncivilized (un-Han-ified), and unorthodox sentiments, and to be dangerously excessive in its aesthetic ornamentation and emotional force. But the *Chuci*, not the *Shijing*, was the source of a long tradition of imitation, and it even gave rise to a special form of poetry called *saoti* 騷體 (Sao-style). The “Li Sao” has a rich performance tradition and has been a deeply influential model of poetic practice up to the

² I have chosen to transliterate rather than translate the title of the poem throughout my discussion both because the title is too ambiguous to afford a single English rendering (see Chapter VI) and as a way of foregrounding its cultural and linguistic otherness.

modern era. However, whether or not it belongs in the orthodox canon has been debated across the centuries; usually that question has been answered with reference to the exemplarity (or failure) of Qu Yuan himself.

The discontinuous narrative of the “Li Sao” relates the speaker’s divine origins, self-beautification and cultivation of herbs and flowers, encounters with diviners and sages, cosmic journeys, and pursuit of goddess-lovers. Throughout there are references to jealousy, slander, and separation. In the end, the speaker announces a resolution to leave this country and go to the place of (an) ancient exemplar(s).³ It offers clues that the allegorical significance of the images relates to a narrative of court politics. The speaker, who appears as both a spiritually powerful shaman-like celestial voyager and a worldly political advisor with deep knowledge of statecraft, has been since the earliest times identified as a figurative but essentially true representation of Qu Yuan.

The story of Qu Yuan’s jealous treatment, defamation, and exile has resonated with countless Chinese courtiers and civil servants, who perhaps thought of themselves as also virtuous, talented, and well-intentioned, but nevertheless found themselves obstructed or severely punished due to corrupt political circumstances. The stories these courtiers and officials, in their turn, have written about Qu Yuan are apologetic. Assuming that all the archaic and strange images of the “Li Sao” are intentionally and deeply significant, they translated the “Li Sao” into their respective ideologies, reconstituting its original meaning in the process. The radical difference and diversity of their interpretations reveal that the “Li Sao” is far from a stable, self-identical text.

³ Whether the *Peng Xian* 彭咸 of the text is the ancient exemplars “Peng and Xian” or one “Peng Xian” is grammatically undeterminable and has been the crux of one of the most important interpretive debates.

Although, in classically allegorical mode, it suggests that its true meaning is singular and fixed, the permutations of its allegorical readings reveal an essential arbitrariness.

The stabilizing signifier for almost all interpretations is the figure (both rhetorical and historical) of Qu Yuan himself. According to the earliest extant biography, composed by the Western Han historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 135-86 B.C.E.), Qu Yuan was a nobleman and a powerful official at the court of King Huai of Chu; he was virtuous and talented but a victim of jealous slander; he was exiled and committed suicide by drowning himself in the Miluo River. While the details of his life and its significance have been variously reconstructed at different points in history—the chronology of his compositions, the specific principles of his virtue, and the exemplarity of his poesis and suicide have proven particularly open to debate—the essential components of the biography were transmitted with relatively little doubt about their facticity until the end of the Qing empire and the beginning of the modern era. Then, in the mindset of scientific skepticism and positivism, radical modernizing scholars such as Hu Shi questioned the historical existence of Qu Yuan, asserting that he may have been no more than a legend constructed after the poetry. Today, however, the official cultural arbiters of the People’s Republic of China laud Qu Yuan as the preeminent poet of Chinese nationalism and praise his suicide as an act of patriotic self-sacrifice. In the discussion below I will describe the reasons for the importance of stories about Qu Yuan’s personality and real existence to Chinese readers and the Chinese state, and propose his relevance to the English translation of the “Li Sao.”

Afterlife as Historical Understanding

Walter Benjamin developed his theory of afterlife in Europe between the first and second world wars, a moment of acute historical crisis. Although that particular moment has passed, for many contemporary thinkers, the great crisis of modernity is not resolved; one aspect of it is the experience that has been called alienation. This has bearing on pedagogy and the translation of traditional texts. In the prefatory note to his translations of some of the *Chuci* poems included in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, Stephen Owen notes that most of his readers are likely to be much more familiar with brand names than with flower names.⁴ The poems seem to belong to another world. In spite of their desire to understand Chinese culture, contemporary Anglophone readers are likely to feel profoundly alienated from the world of the “Li Sao,” and the fact that the poem comes from China may be, in today’s multicultural classroom, the least significant factor in their alienation. They are likely to experience the same alienation reading Homer or Milton; the problem is essentially historical.

An attitude toward traditional works characteristic of alienation is that of passive contemplation. What Hans-Georg Gadamer saw developing in the 19th century, when “the spiritual creations of the past, art and history, no longer belong self-evidently to the present; rather, they are given up to research, they are data or givens from which a past

⁴ “As the natural history of North America differs from that of Europe, so that of China differs from either. An American writing in English is in a rather bizarre situation. Much of our received literary language of flora and fauna is English and European—things and creatures with rich literary associations that the American has never or hardly ever seen... To take this already European-specific language to translate Chinese flora and fauna is a double hardship for American readers. In addition, we have become, by and large, city dwellers, and we know brand names with more precision than plant names, not having the variations of species and their signifiers available to us. I suspect that the majority of American readers can more readily distinguish a Coke from a Pepsi than a duckweed from a waterlily...” (*An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, p. xlvii.).

can be made present,”⁵ is even more true of the 21st century. This disinterested contemplation is what Benjamin calls the historicist view, in reference to the blend of Hegelian historicism and positivist historicism that typified the historiography of his time and continues to dominate in ours. Its counterpart is the uncritical assumption that the past is only the source of reified traditions and has little spiritual, philosophical, or political relevance for the present.

In this kind of historicist reading the “Li Sao” is seen as a museum artifact of a past China, documentary evidence of an outdated, “traditional” culture, and has no meaningful relation to the modern life of the university student. For most students, this historicist view is assumed. The task of the translator, then, is to open the poem to a dialogic engagement, to put the text into “play,” in Gadamer’s sense of the term, between its presence in an American classroom and its life in Chinese history. Understanding is not to be sought in a simulacrum of the past, but in the encounter between a past and a present, in a “fusion of horizons.”

A simulacrum of the past is, however, exactly what most translations offer: they claim to offer an accurate representation of the original. There are many problems with this claim, especially in regards to poetry, which have been brought to discussion in the growing discipline of translation studies.⁶ For the moment, I would like to emphasize that the claim of accurate representation of the original implies the historicist view of the ancient text as a dead traditional thing. For the teacher or translator who hopes to help

⁵ *Truth and Method*, p. 56.

⁶ E.g., Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel”; Nida, “Principles of Correspondence,” Spivak, “The Politics of Translation,” Appiah, “Thick Translation,” and Venuti, “Translation, Community Utopia,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*; Venuti, “The Poet’s Version; Or, an Ethics of Translation” in *Translation Changes Everything*.

students enter a meaningful engagement with an ancient text, and for Walter Benjamin, the historicist view is inadequate. Benjamin's critical historiography, intimately related to his translation theory,⁷ offers a way to realize a fusion of horizons: "Historicism presents the eternal image of the past, whereas historical materialism presents a given experience with the past—an experience that is unique."⁸ Benjamin's experience of the past is more politically charged than Gadamer's fusion of horizons, but it derives from the same impulse to overcome alienation and put the cultural productions of the past into play.

Benjamin's theory of history is developed from an anti-historicist perspective. In his Marxist phase Benjamin wrote passionately against the contemplative historicism of modernity and in favor of a dialectical encounter with the past.⁹

If the concept of culture is problematic for historical materialism, it cannot conceive of the disintegration of culture into goods which become objects of possession for mankind. Historical materialism sees the work of the past as still uncompleted. It perceives no epoch in which that work could, even in part, drop conveniently, thing-like, into mankind's lap.¹⁰

Because cultural history is not separable from class struggle, for Benjamin, it is not simply an inventory of preserved cultural objects. To understand it as such has dangerous

⁷ "Benjamin's historiography is "modeled after the translation process"; in fact, his "reflections on history and historiography are especially interesting because they often seem to be displaced and transfigured versions of Benjamin's early writings on language and translation" (Niranjana , p. 141).

⁸ "Eduard Fuchs, Collector and Historian," in *Selected Writings* vol. 3, trans. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, p. 262.

⁹ The following is a particularly resonant context, especially as it is framed within a criticism of Hegel: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

¹⁰ "Eduard Fuchs," *ibid.*, p. 267.

political consequences: it negates the political content of the cultural products of the past and turns them over to the ruling class. Instead, the way to conceive of the past and its works as integrated, ongoing, and relevant is to look for how they are, although past, yet alive: to seek for afterlives.

“Afterlife” is a concept that allows us to think critically about both the past and its works; it bridges historiography and art criticism—and translation. While the theory of afterlife appears in Benjamin’s writing long before his interest in Marxism, I follow Tejaswini Niranjana in viewing afterlife as a response to the same problem of cultural history that concerned Benjamin throughout his life. The concept is mentioned in his early essay “The Task of the Translator” and developed throughout his oeuvre until the untimely end of his life.¹¹ It was central to his thinking about time, historical materialism, and cultural tradition as well as translation.

In Benjamin’s writings, afterlife is how the significance of an historical phenomenon is constituted in its temporal unfolding: “Historical materialism conceives historical understanding as an afterlife of that which has been understood and whose pulse can be felt in the present.”¹² Essential to this statement is the realization that “that which has been understood” is not the final understanding. Rather, the presence of that

¹¹ Under the influence of personality-oriented traditional Chinese scholarship, I am inclined to point out that the simple facts of exile and suicide during times of massive historical crisis might support comparison of Benjamin and Qu Yuan, just as Wang Guowei and Qu Yuan are often compared. The pairing of a Warring States nobleman-poet and a 20th-century Marxist Jew is further suggested by several factors. Benjamin and one of his most important critics, Paul de Man, made helpful investigations of two related but often antagonistic concepts frequently attributed to the “Li Sao,” namely Romanticism and allegory. The quasi-canonical status of the “Li Sao” and its legacy of politicized interpretations is amenable to Benjamin’s critique of the transmission of culture. Finally, both Qu Yuan and Benjamin demonstrated a strong affinity for the abstruse, the ironic, the fragmentary, and the anachronistic.

¹² “Eduard Fuchs,” *ibid.*, p. 262.

cultural phenomenon in our gaze is conditioned by the past that we share with it; but as the present has changed, understanding must begin anew.

In the case of a work of art, significance is produced (albeit only fragmentarily) in an uneven process of understanding anew in different eras.

For the dialectical historian concerned with works of art, these works integrate their fore-history as well as their after-history; and it is by virtue of their after-history that their fore-history is recognizable as involved in a continuous process of change. Works of art teach him how their function outlives their creator and how the artists's intentions are left behind. They demonstrate how the reception of a work by its contemporaries is part of the effect that the work of art has on us today. They further show that this effect depends on an encounter not just with the work of art alone but with the history which has allowed the work to come down to our own age.¹³

Without a history of reception, an artwork has no significance; like *Beowulf* during its long hibernation, it is meaningful to no one. In so far as any text is significant, its significance is realized in its transmission, and for Benjamin, transmission is a process of change. An artwork becomes significant when it is incorporated in a tradition, which is a process of reception and transmission, each encounter involving a moment of transformation. He refers to this changeability of cultural tradition in "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility": "The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being embedded in the fabric of tradition. Of course, this tradition

¹³ "Eduard Fuchs," *ibid.*, pp. 261-2.

itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable.”¹⁴ Afterlife is the reappearance of a work, inseparable from a changing historical context, as essentially different from itself.

Afterlife as Translation

The specifically linguistic nature of poetic artworks involves a special kind of change in transmission, and that is translation. In “The Task of the Translator” the afterlife of literary works is discussed in terms of the development of language itself as a fragmented system of meaning. Benjamin has a hermeneutic rather than instrumental concept of language; in his thinking translation is fundamental to understanding. And language, integral to culture, also changes. As the meaning of a text is constituted in its linguistic form, so the meaning changes in transmission. That is to say, the original itself is subject to historical change.

Benjamin asserts that due to the historicity of languages final similarity with the original in translation is not achievable.

For in its continuing life, which could not be so called if it were not the transformation and renewal of a living thing, the original is changed.

Established words also have their after-ripening. What might have been the tendency of an author’s poetic language in his own time may later be exhausted, and immanent tendencies can arise anew out of the formed work... [and] just as the tone and significance of great literary works are

¹⁴ In *Selected Writings* vol. 4, trans. Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott, p. 256.

completely transformed over the centuries, the translator's native language is also transformed.¹⁵

Due to the historicity of languages, the transmission of literary works always entails a process of renewed translation, even to native readers. Inter-linguistic translation is a more radical transformation and renewal, as it involves the historicity of two languages. In translation two languages encounter each other, and because both are still always changing, the encounter is absolutely unique and does not yield a fixed relation.

This pattern is apparent in the history of the “Li Sao.” The material history of the “Li Sao”—its transmission as manuscripts and printed editions—manifests the linguistic afterlife of the poem as interpretive re-inscription: annotation, commentary, and translation. Since our earliest record of it the “Li Sao” has always demanded some degree of translation. In the course of a few hundred years between Qu Yuan and his readers in the Han dynasty, the Chinese language and culture changed, and so the language of the “Li Sao” became archaic, its dialect-inflected idiolect and mythical references became difficult to recognize. Interpreters responded by glossing or translating some of its words into their own language-moment: “苗，胤也。裔，末也” (*Miao* is posterity. *Yi* is the last.)¹⁶ The proto-translation undertaken by the transmitters of the “Li Sao” has appeared in the form of interlinear commentary, beginning most prominently with Wang Yi of the Eastern Han. But Wang Yi's edition was not the last; later interpreters found his version to be itself archaic, and so on. Now modern Chinese editions of the poem provide

¹⁵ Here and throughout I use Steven Rendall's translation of “The Translator's Task,” which has significant differences from the Zohn translation. P. 155.

¹⁶ This is from the comment to the first line of the “Li Sao” in Wang Yi's commentary. To fully illustrate the continuing effects of this phenomenon I might translate it into English as follows: “*Miao* [I would translate this as “sprout,” but Wang Yi's readers must have been unsure about it] is posterity [one of many words that could be selected in English now]. *Yi* [again—descendant?] is the last one [or the end].” Quotations of Wang Yi are from Hong Xingzu's *Chuci buzhu*.

vernacular translations. English translations made over the course of the past century and a half, as different from each other as those by Lim Boon Keng and Stephen Owen, demonstrate the change of the English language and its poetic conventions as well.

The linguistic afterlife of works emerges from their translatability. Translatability is the special capacity of certain artworks for continued reception, interpretation, translation, and transmission; that is, their capacity to continue to generate knowledge. Samuel Weber defines translatability, criticizability, and reproducibility in Benjamin's thought as "quasi-transcendental, structuring possibilities": characteristics that exist as immanent potential even if not realized in fact. Hence, the translatability of a work does not depend on the relation of the original to a particular audience but is an "intrinsic trait" of that work.¹⁷ For Benjamin, a translatable work is an attempt to intend an idea within the "pure" language of theological/philosophical truth; it is "a reference to a thought in the mind of God"¹⁸ (Samuel Weber glosses this phrase as "the commemoration of God"). Benjamin writes in "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" that any language of man is only one transformation of the totality of all human language whose pervasive translatability is ultimately guaranteed by God, and that translation between languages is necessary for humankind to gradually attain higher—philosophical or divine—knowledge.¹⁹ As an attempt formed in an imperfect language of fallen humanity, a linguistic work necessarily fails to attain the status of doctrine, but a good poem succeeds in manifesting an intention. If that manifestation is intrinsically characterized by

¹⁷ *Benjamin's -abilities*, p. 59.

¹⁸ "Task," p. 152.

¹⁹ In *Selected Writings* vol. 1, trans. Jephcott; pp. 69-71.

translatability, it expresses “the great longing for the completion of language”²⁰ and thus has the potential to be legible in and *for* other languages as they transform through time, and to participate in unfolding the word of God ever more clearly.²¹

Weber sees in Benjamin’s translation theory a shift in emphasis “from the ostensibly self-contained work to a relational dynamic that is precisely not self-identical but perpetually in the process of alteration, transformation, becoming-other.”²² Later generations respond to the translatability of a work by attempting (again) to reveal the idea intended. Their efforts take the form of translating the original, to a greater or lesser degree, into the system of meaning of their own historical moment. That the work has the capacity for these transformations is its essential nature.

If the call for translation is in some sense rooted in the structure of the works themselves, then these can no longer be considered self-sufficient, independent, autonomous, or self-contained. The paradox resides in the fact that the work can only *be itself* insofar as it is *transported elsewhere*, altered, transformed—in short, *translated*... the original work can only survive insofar as it is able to take leave of itself and become something else... its being converges with its being-translated.²³

What makes a text such as the “Li Sao” translatable is that its words permit of translation, its meaning can be transformed through time; and in fact it has survived precisely because its meaning has been and is always being transformed through time.

²⁰ “Task,” pp. 161-2.

²¹ “On Language as Such,” *ibid.*, p. 74.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²³ Weber, *ibid.*, p. 62.

The response to translatability is a fundamentally allegorical manoeuvre; it is to “speak otherwise.” The anachronistic words of the original are interpreted into the language of here and now in a new attempt to articulate the intention of the original within a more perfect language of theological/philosophical truth. The original is made to speak of something else; at the same time, it is broken open so that something else is released from its language.

The language of any historical moment can be assured continuing life, and can be “translated” upward toward the realm of pure language, only by violently ripping it out of the mythical web of determination that entraps it, and displaying it in a different context. For Benjamin, quotation and translation, along with the “allegorical” criticism he practices in his studies of Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* and German tragic drama, are the modes in which the deliverance of the word may be realized.²⁴

While the original changes through time as its native language changes, the effect of its translatability is also to change the native language. In the new context of translation the original adds to what the language can say; its words become freer. This transformation enables a development of language and of philosophical discourse.

Translatability is an intrinsic capacity of the original, and how the original has actually been understood/translated is its afterlife. The activity of translation begins because the translatability of the original has not yet been fully realized in the text’s afterlife. For Benjamin, the immediate intention of translation in the strict sense, as a mode of afterlife involving two distinct and changing languages, is to effect the development of the receiving language: “The translator’s task consists in this: to find the

²⁴ Rendall, 173.

intention toward the language into which the work is to be translated, on the basis of which an echo of the original can be awakened in it.”²⁵ If the ultimate purpose of translation is that it refines and perfects language itself, adding knowledge to the sum of human languages,²⁶ then the work’s intention toward the target language is the knowledge of a previously unthinkable thought. This knowledge becomes speakable in the target language, and the philosophical capacity of all language is enriched.

The afterlife of the “Li Sao” is unique; although it is amenable to general description in Benjamin’s terms, it is in fact constituted in a particularly Chinese way.²⁷ This is not to fall at last into a historicist reading, in which the right way to understand the “Li Sao” is the traditional Chinese way. Rather, this unique encounter with the “Li Sao,” undertaken with the pedagogy of Chinese literature in mind, is an encounter with the particularly Chinese afterlife of the “Li Sao,” and the potential English translation of the “Li Sao” begins from but is not limited to that understanding. To undertake translation in this mode, based on an understanding of afterlife, the translator does not seek to present the eternal image of the original “Li Sao” of Warring States Chu.²⁸ Instead, she will present a unique encounter with the dynamic and ongoing afterlife of the “Li Sao.” It is a poem whose pulse can be felt in the present in surprising ways, so the

²⁵ “Task,” p. 159.

²⁶ “On Language as Such,” p. 70.

²⁷ More precisely, the afterlife that this translator is currently concerned with is the afterlife that has unfolded within Chinese imperial and national culture; although I am also aware of Korean, Japanese, and various European afterlives of the “Li Sao,” the primary subject of the present study and translation is the “Li Sao” in China and the reception of the Chinese “Li Sao” in the Anglophone West.

²⁸ That is, however, the task of Gopal Sukhu in *The Shaman and the Heresiarch*. His translation aggressively explicitates an interpretation that he claims is cleansed of all transmitted interpretation, especially the idea that the poem refers to Qu Yuan. In the end, he still refers his interpretation to a person named Qu Yuan, but he has radically reimagined Qu Yuan according to an historicist reconstruction of Chu culture.

translation should offer a living legacy rather than a museum piece. The practical ramifications of this view will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

Afterlife as a Tradition of Reading

Given the above, we can understand the original text of translation as something that originates, as an origin always reconstituted as such in its historical transmission. Indeed, afterlife is the realization of what Benjamin calls “origin”: in Samuel Weber’s words, “origin” is “the insistent but unachievable attempt to restore an anterior state.”²⁹ The question for the translator, then, is not “what is the original “Li Sao,” but rather, “what is the origin of the “Li Sao,” or—in other words—“how does the “Li Sao” originate?” We may find an answer in its history of reception. Since the earliest records we have, the “Li Sao” has most typically been read with reference to Qu Yuan’s character. If ever his character has been criticized—and Ban Gu’s sharp accusation of “露才揚己” (vainglorious self-aggrandizement), especially, has been remembered all along—then scholarly dedication to his work has been even more vigorously defended and justified. Other Chinese works have been divorced from claims of authorship in the course of their histories; the *Shijing* poems are a good example. And yet, although Zhu Xi’s view that many of the *Shijing* poems were anonymous folk songs had become orthodox by the late Song dynasty, in China the possibility that the author of the “Li Sao” is unknowable remains heretical to this day. It may be that there is something essential to the “Li Sao” itself that within the Chinese hermeneutic originates this intensity of admiration and directs it forcefully toward its author.

²⁹ “A Touch of Translation: On Walter Benjamin’s ‘Task of the Translator’” in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (Bermann, ed.), p. 73.

In examining the “Li Sao” as a text with afterlife, as a text already in translation, a pattern emerges. It has most typically been understood with reference to the personality of Qu Yuan. The speaker of the text claims that his true worth is not recognized in his time: “國無人莫我知兮...” (In the kingdom not a man knows me——...) ³⁰ and so on. The text has outlived him and continues to present that claim. In later generations, many have responded. A response to that claim is implicit in Sima Qian’s desire to “見其為人” (see what kind of a man he was) and Liu Xie’s assertion that “不有屈原，豈見離騷” (without Qu Yuan, [a work as significant as] the ‘Li Sao’ could never have appeared; or, without Qu Yuan, how could we see the ‘Li Sao’?). Zhu Xi strongly repeats the claim of the poem for his own interpretive work in the preface to his *Chuci Jizhu* 楚辭集註. After summarizing the transmission of the “Li Sao” and the accomplishments of his predecessors, he writes:

至其大義，則又皆未嘗沈潛反復，嗟歎咏歌，以尋其文詞指意之所出，而遽欲取喻立說，旁引曲證，以強附於其事之已然，是以或以迂滯而遠於性情，或以迫切而害於義理，使原之所為壹鬱而不得申於當年者，又晦昧而不見白於後世。予於是益有感焉，疾病呻吟之暇，聊據舊編，粗加櫟括，定為集注八卷。庶幾讀者得以見古人於千載之上，而死者可作，又足以知千載之下有知我者，而不恨於來者之不聞也。嗚呼悽矣，是豈易與俗人言哉！ When it comes to its great principles, none of them appreciated its depth and complexity and gave it serious consideration through singing and chanting in order to seek out the

³⁰ I use the long dash to translate *xi* 兮, the characteristic particle of the *Chuci* and Sao-style poetry.

poet's intentions behind its diction, but rather made swift comparisons and explanations according to their own desires. They make wide-ranging citations and complicated demonstrations, strongly attributing [strained interpretations] according to pre-existing [ideas]. In this way [they] are either abstruse and far from human nature, or are over-eager and wreak damage on moral principles, making what [Qu] Yuan anxiously suppressed and could not express in his own time to be again obscurely hidden and unapparent in later generations. I am especially moved by this situation; in the leisurely moments when I was sick, relying on old texts, I have put my comments together into a book and divided them into eight scrolls, hoping that the reader might gain sight of an ancient man from beyond a thousand years, and that if the dead can arise or come back to life, it would be sufficient for him to know that even after a thousand years, there was one who knew him, without regretting that he has been unheard-of in latter days. Alas! How could this be easy to speak of with common men!³¹

This is a paradigmatic moment in the afterlife of the “Li Sao” which takes the form of a personal response to Qu Yuan. Zhu Xi asserts that all those before him did not recognize Qu Yuan’s true intention, and anticipates that his own intention, his true recognition of

³¹ *Chuci jizhu*, p. 2. In literary criticism the first person pronoun 我 is often used in reference to the poet/literary speaker under discussion, but it is also quite possible that Zhu Xi is using 我 to refer to himself as author of the *Jizhu*. I have placed the former reading above because it is within the long tradition of editors identifying themselves with Confucius, who famously asserted that he “述而不作” (transmitted but did not write). The latter reading, on the other hand, suggests this translation: “Perhaps the reader might gain sight of an ancient man from beyond a thousand generations, and then the dead can write; and it will be enough to know that within a thousand generations, there will be one who knows me, and then I will not lament that I am unheard-of among those of the future.” In fact, whether 我 immediately refers to Qu Yuan or to Zhu Xi, the language identifies them strongly with one another.

Qu Yuan, might be unrecognized in his own time. He is the true knower of Qu Yuan, the revealer of Qu Yuan's true intention, and himself a latter-day Qu Yuan. But as an agent in Qu Yuan's transformation and transmission, he is also a translator of Qu Yuan.

The characteristically Chinese afterlife of the "Li Sao" takes form most vividly in personifications of the author. For many Han dynasty readers, the "Li Sao" sang of Qu Yuan, a spiritually transcendent aristocrat; somehow, two millennia later, for modern readers of the revolutionary period, the same "Li Sao" sang of Qu Yuan, the People's Poet. Zhu Xi's interpretation of Qu Yuan is no longer completely current, but the spirit of loyal patriotism (the 愛國 of 忠君愛國) he saw in the "Li Sao" is a pulse that can be felt in the present, for in his latest unfolding Qu Yuan is nothing less than the greatest representative of Chinese nationalism (愛國主義). While there is no objective original Qu Yuan in this constellation, what is common to these Qu Yuans is the irreducible text that must be the foundation of any claim to knowledge of the author. I propose that what Benjamin calls translatability is manifested in the history of Qu Yuans that the "Li Sao" has originated: its afterlives of Qu Yuan.

The emphasis on Qu Yuan's personality persists and is maintained in the afterlife of the "Li Sao" today. Recent scholarship on the *Chuci* coming from mainland China has a common theme that came as a surprise to me, an American-educated reader: its emphatic assertion of and continual reference to the incomparable person of Qu Yuan.³²

³² While researching this dissertation at Hunan University in fall 2011 I audited a course on the *Chuci* offered by Guo Jianxun, whose writings and personal assistance have been essential to the completion of this dissertation. In his lectures he frequently made statements such as "谁也比不上他" (No one could ever surpass him) or "只有屈原这个人才能..." (Only Qu Yuan, this one person, could possibly...) Other writers, he asserted as simple fact, could not write anything as fantastically excessive in praise of themselves because their characters were not worthy of such praise. And we know that Qu Yuan alone could be worthy of such fantastic praise because no one else did write anything as marvelous as the "Li Sao." In this vein of scholarship, any thesis can be rejected outright on the grounds that the scholar who

The necessity of reading the *Chuci* with this view in mind is evident in the great amount of work published in the past fifty years that stridently rejects the thesis (most famously asserted by Hu Shi) that Qu Yuan was not a historical person or not the author of the “Li Sao.” The dogmatic nature of the assertion of Qu Yuan’s real historical personhood in recent scholarship may demonstrate the degree to which mainland scholars are unable to speak outside of politically sanctioned views: recall that Mao Zedong, Guo Moruo, and other politically correct figures held up Qu Yuan’s character and works as an example to writers and intellectuals, and even in 2008, in the sunset of Mao Zedong Thought, the Party declared Duanwu (the Dragon Boat Festival) an annual public holiday in honor of Qu Yuan’s suicide.³³ In some modern Western scholarship this equation of author and speaker has been described as unscientific and theoretically backward.³⁴ But to take the mainland scholars’ approach to heart presents the foreign scholar with a fruitful line of inquiry. It leads us back into the tradition according to which the “Li Sao” has been understood, and out into the contemporary situation in which national politics are a powerful condition of understanding.

Stephen Owen, in *Readings In Chinese Literary Thought* and in *Remembrances*, has beautifully and persuasively discussed the Chinese tradition as one in which literature

wrote it “不理解屈原” (did not understand Qu Yuan)—which often means that the scholar wrote something other than unqualified praise of Qu Yuan. Cf. Li & Zhu, Yi Chonglian, Huang Zhongmo, and any pocket edition of the *Chuci* published in the People’s Republic.

³³ For a detailed analysis of how Duanwu became associated with Qu Yuan, see Schneider, *A Madman of Chu*, Chapter 4.

³⁴ Arthur Waley’s translations of the *Shijing* are an early and influential example of the critical Western response to author-oriented Chinese interpretation; see also Hightower, “Ch’u Yuan Studies.” Gopal Sukhu represents this approach more recently in *The Shaman and the Heresiarch*; he asserts that the only “coherent” reading of the “Li Sao” is a reading that eliminates the myth of Qu Yuan altogether, and that all received scholarship from the Han to the end of the Qing as well as all contemporary scholarship that continues the tradition of received scholarship has been a series of failures to overcome Wang Yi’s biographical misinterpretations (Introduction).

was “understood essentially as a way of knowing persons.”³⁵ He traces this understanding of literature back to Confucius and the very earliest statements on interpretation and writing. Owen calls on English-language readers to understand traditional Chinese poetry as poetic in distinctly Chinese terms, as a poetry of personal recognition. The “Li Sao” was transmitted to us completely embedded in the tradition of reading for the poet, and that tradition is alive in the current dominant interpretation of the “Li Sao.”

However, to *only* read traditionally (and that is not ultimately what Owen argues for), is uncritically historicist and blind to the political dimension of cultural transmission. It reads the ancient text as if everything there is to know about it has already been known, which offers little to the contemporary reader except a textual example of how it was in China. Moreover, it effectively suppresses the issue of Qu Yuan’s status in the present. It does not attend to the current afterlife of Qu Yuan, the Qu Yuan who wrote the “Li Sao” to express the righteousness of his patriotic principles and committed suicide to sacrifice himself for the great nation of China. To read traditionally is to confirm the deadness of the past; to read while ignoring the present is to forget the power of the state in conditioning the horizon of understanding.

And yet, even if it were possible to read the poem stripped of all transmitted interpretation and interpretive conventions and beyond the gaze of the Party, it might still be that the poem sings of Qu Yuan.³⁶ Although the name and the biographical facts are

³⁵ *Readings*, p. 30.

³⁶ The following statement is particularly appropriate to the “Li Sao,” the first poem in the tradition to so forcefully assert an individual voice: “A dialectical movement between assertion of the self and reintegration into the great family of the world runs throughout Chinese classical literature. Here death’s solitude is the supreme solitude, and the written hope of being remembered restores the relation to others. Thus the written ‘I am’ of the literary text is both the assertion of identity and the hope of remembrance, of always being recognized. In literature one chooses the course that the sage has renounced and forgotten: one devotes oneself single-mindedly to inscribing an eternal ‘I am’” (Owen, *Remembrances*, pp. 132-3).

strictly speaking unverifiable and possibly largely constructed according to the poetry, the plea for recognition that it presents to posterity is undeniable. And the myth that has become entwined with the poem in its transmission through sympathetic acts of re-inscription, the myth of lyric poetry's former, ideal, lost political effectiveness, which is the same as the myth of Qu Yuan's failed act of lyric remonstrance, lends a tragic irony to the situation of contemporary scholars in the People's Republic. Emphasis on the personhood of Qu Yuan can therefore be seen as an attention to the unity of form and content, given the historically changing nature of both.

Previous Western scholars have translated the "Li Sao" from the implicit perspective of autonomous art, leaving the authorial Qu Yuan as much out of the picture as possible.³⁷ But if to encounter the afterlife of the "Li Sao" is unavoidably to encounter responses to the particular self-defining intention of Qu Yuan,³⁸ then to translate the afterlife of the "Li Sao" into English is necessarily to engage in a dialectic of Eastern and Western reading practices. Walter Benjamin's concept of translatable writing as, ultimately, writing that intends "the commemoration of God" seems at first glance to have an antithetical relation to traditional Chinese criticism in which the poem is seen as a reference to the personhood of the poet and his intention is to be commemorated by other men. Benjamin's thinking is as necessarily Western (with Judeo-Christian and Neo-

³⁷ The translation of Hsien-Yi and Gladys Yang is a notable example of an English translation that refers itself strongly to the authorial Qu Yuan, and it is a version in Romantic style. The Western translators of the "Li Sao" whose work is most widely available today, namely David Hawkes, Burton Watson, and Stephen Owen, all translate with an implicitly New Critical attitude. This is especially evident in the editorial apparatus of the respective versions.

³⁸ Even readers who encounter only a translation are also, perhaps unknowingly, encountering the *suppressed* Chinese afterlife, for without it the text would be irrelevant to translators and practical translation would be impossible. Even the hypothetical translator who used only dictionaries and no commentaries would find herself relying on dictionary definitions that had been constructed from *Chuci* commentaries written in response to Qu Yuan.

Kantian elements) as Qu Yuan's early readers' thinking was necessarily Chinese, but we must not fall into the historicist view of China as a world with no thought of transcendence.³⁹ In fact, the poem is translatable: its human translators have always been commemorating the "Li Sao," and while the historicity of their translations reveals that Qu Yuan's intention might ultimately be realizable only in the pure language of truth, "in the mind of God," his translators have intended to attain precisely that trueness of language. To translate with this dialectic in mind will require an innovative method.

An Afterlife of the "Li Sao"

We can see how the "Li Sao" is embedded in Chinese language and culture, and how language/culture is not static but fundamentally historical. The significance of the "Li Sao" has been different at different times for different people and will be different for us. Our understanding of the text depends upon the tradition of the "Li Sao" in China, which has maintained the life of its archaic language and made it legible in the present, but our understanding will also be conditioned by our own age, and our concerns may be different than our predecessors' concerns. The critical aspect of Benjamin's theory of afterlife is that readers have agency: although a given work appears to the present in a form conditioned by history, history does not prescribe the present act of reading.

As an example of how the pulse of the "Li Sao" can be felt in the present, and how present readers and writers can actively engage its continuing life, I will briefly discuss a recent text that exemplifies the political stakes of interpretation for many Chinese nationals. During the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in

³⁹ Cf. the rigorous discussions of this problem in Haun Saussy, *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, especially the first and last chapters, and Zhang Longxi, *Allegoresis*.

November, 2012, a student of Beijing University posted a humorous essay on *Renren*, a PRC social network, that quickly went viral. It is a complaint against the government disguised as an account of “going shopping with my girlfriend for the 18th time.”⁴⁰ It begins:

Today is the eighteenth time I have accompanied my girlfriend to go shopping. Whenever my girlfriend goes shopping, she tends to get overly serious and way more than just fidgety about the whole thing. It always interferes with my usual pace of life. Anyway, she calls the shots at home, so can't complain. As my girlfriend stipulates, when it approaches her shopping date, I can only make working plans for up to three days, and if I go on a business trip, I need to get her approval first. These past few days I've been sitting on pins and needles, praying to God that I don't do anything wrong to ruin her good shopping mood.⁴¹

The number eighteen is the key to the allegory: when “十八大” (The 18th Great [National Congress]) was dominating all media, Chinese readers would be likely to notice the hint, and the references to common complaints of Congress season such as work and travel restrictions would confirm their reading. This is a textbook example of allegory in its classical form: saying “girlfriend” but meaning “CCP government,” extending the metaphor into a narrative, and using double-entendres and allusions to contemporary events to incite the reader to complete the significance of the literal images with a commentary about life under CCP rule. While on the surface it complains of a tyrannical

⁴⁰ The full text can be found in the Appendix.

⁴¹ Sic. English translation from Xiaoying Zhou, “A Hilarious Coded Riff on China’s Government: Going Shopping for the 18th Time,” in *Tea Leaf Nation*, 14 Nov., 2012 (web; accessed 23 Nov. 2012).

romantic partner, its allegorical exegesis complains of an oppressive government; it is indirect complaint as political criticism.

“Going Shopping” is an example of a particularly Chinese lineage of political rhetoric, and its distant ancestor is the “Li Sao.” Like the “Li Sao,” it is *fengjian* 諷諫 (satirical remonstrance), perhaps the second most ancient of Chinese poetic functions, after praise.⁴² At least since the composition of the *Zuozhuan* and the Mao exegeses of the *Shijing*, poetry that complains indirectly has been considered an exemplary mode of political criticism. The metaphor of the relationship between ruler and subject as romance is also an ancient one. When the ruler can’t be criticized directly, he may be represented as something other than a ruler; from very early in the Chinese tradition the relationship of courting lovers has been used to represent the intimately entangled and passionate relationship of unequal participants in political governance. The “Li Sao” is the earliest and most famous poem unequivocally written on the trope of romance as politics, and the title “Li Sao” has even been glossed as “Complaint.”⁴³ In the past, Qu Yuan has at times been seen as shopping around for a worthy lover-ruler; now the writer is following the tyrant-lover around while she goes shopping. That this modern reincarnation uses shopping as the allegorical vehicle for political participation, rather than older vehicles such as spirit-journeys and floral lore, is an expression of its contemporariness. It is a perfectly apt reflection of the current ideology in which progress is necessarily progress towards consumer capitalism, just as the shamanic discourse of the “Li Sao” reflects the decline of the aristocratic religious-political order in the Warring States period. Finally,

⁴² Both forms appear in the *Shijing*, but the praiseful *song* 頌 (hymns) are older than the purportedly ironic and remonstrative *bianya* 變雅 and *bianfeng* 變風 (changed odes).

⁴³ For example, by the Qing commentator Dai Zhen 戴震 (1723-1777).

like the “Li Sao,” it is rhetorically indirect of necessity, having been written under conditions in which it is impossible to express one’s thought straightforwardly. Although it is blackly humorous, its double-speaking form draws attention to itself to state: this kind of speech is still necessary.

The national high school curriculum in contemporary China holds up the “Li Sao” as an exemplary text of Chinese nationalism because it is supposed to express Qu Yuan’s righteously patriotic intention to sacrifice his life for his nation. But “Going Shopping” reveals that in its ongoing life the “Li Sao” is not only an exemplary text of loyal nationalism; the indirect rhetoric of the “Li Sao” is here used *against* the state, and reminds us that a primary function of the “Li Sao” since the earliest times has been, of course, political complaint. Many historical commentators have resolved the contradiction of loyalty and complaint by asserting that righteous complaint is the highest duty of a loyal minister. To legitimize Qu Yuan’s loyal complaint they have demonstrated the propriety of the rhetoric of the “Li Sao,” but their demonstrations involve fundamentally changed notions of the mode of signification that is inherent to the “original.” It has changed from an allegory of cosmological correspondences (see Chapter III of this dissertation) to an allegory of metaphysical principles (Chapter IV) to an anti-allegory of Romantic imagination (Chapter V), with alternative and contradictory allegorical originals also co-existing alongside the dominant interpretations (Chapters II and VI). The CCP posits a certain “original” “Li Sao”; the Beijing University student writes “Going Shopping” in the tradition of the “Li Sao” and yet against the grain of the state’s version of it. While the official “Li Sao” is Qu Yuan’s statement of loyalty to the state unto death, the “Li Sao” that is alive in “Going Shopping” is a perennial source of

criticism of the state. But the indirect rhetoric of “Going Shopping” emphasizes that real and effective remonstrance is no more possible under current political conditions than it was for Qu Yuan; the author of “Going Shopping” can only complain about the Party indirectly to internet-using peers and cannot openly address his complaint to the Party itself.

If we place “Going Shopping”—or Cultural Revolution tracts that make use of *Chuci* allegorical flower and weed imagery, or some of the work of recent Nobel laureate Mo Yan⁴⁴—into our constellation with the “Li Sao,” it is apparent that the “Li Sao” is not yet finished speaking. We can begin to read the poem as open and translatable rather than simply informative. Then to translate the “Li Sao” into English might add new knowledge to language. One area of knowledge that can be enriched by the translation of the “Li Sao,” suggested above, is the concept of allegory. This appears to the mind of this translator perhaps because, in the delay before translation occurs when the Chinese text is held alongside English with no bridge yet built between them, in the moment that Stanley Corngold designates the special time of Comparative Literature,⁴⁵ there is an aporia, and the question of allegory also appears. In their critiques of Western theories of allegory in application to Chinese texts, Haun Saussy and Zhang Longxi observe that the Neo-Platonic and Christian models of allegory according to which a material thing figures or prefigures a spiritual ideal are ethically problematic for both Chinese-English translation and the discipline of Comparative Literature, but are ultimately non-essential to a

⁴⁴ Mo Yan provides an allegorical interpretation of one of his poems and discusses the real political consequences of allegorical writing in “Noble Laureate Mo Yan: I am Guilty” (*Spiegel Online*. Feb. 26, 2013. Web. Accessed Mar. 19, 2013). See also Zhang Longxi, the conclusion to *Allegoresis*, on the political significance of allegory; especially page 231 on the Cultural Revolution and page 232 on allegory under authoritarianism.

⁴⁵ See Stanley Corngold, “Comparative Literature: The Delay in Translation,” in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (Bermann, ed).

comparative theory of allegory.⁴⁶ Purified of its particularly Western metaphysical connotations, the basic rhetorical structure of allegory—saying this and meaning that—is applicable East and West, as in the above reading of “Going Shopping.” Indeed, Saussy ultimately resolves the problem of translating Chinese poetry by bracketing the possibility of reference, so that language is the allegory of other language.⁴⁷ To conceive of allegory as purely rhetorical, purely linguistic, seems to elevate the name of allegory into a Benjaminian realm; and yet, doesn’t it also negate the historicity of the particular instances that, in Benjamin’s thinking, are the points in the constellation that constitutes the concept? Doesn’t it run the risk of negating the philosophical dimension of allegory that makes it such a potent critical concept in the work of (for example) Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul de Man, Joel Fineman, Angus Fletcher, Gordon Teskey, or, of course, Walter Benjamin? Perhaps the “Li Sao” in dialogue with its descendant “Going Shopping” intends for English to further perfect the trans-linguistic concept of allegory to accommodate the historicity of the form. Bringing the “Li Sao” as an “original” text of translation (an allegory that has come into being *after* reading “Going Shopping” and remembering Qu Yuan’s changing love/hate for his state) into the constellation of allegory allows us to think of the concept differently. Rhetorically speaking, the “Li Sao” has been read allegorically at every moment of its afterlife, and yet the allegorical structure attributed to it (or revealed in it) through those readings has changed fundamentally. From this perspective the history of allegory in Chinese seems comparable to the conceptually dynamic history of Western allegory that Zhang and Saussy had to negate to make “allegory” apply to Chinese texts. A translation of the “Li

⁴⁶ *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, Chapters 1 and 2, and *Allegoresis*, Introduction and Chapter 1.

⁴⁷ E.g., see p. 43.

Sao” that holds the language of the English version open to its otherness and remembered changes can also open a pathway for the critically intensive path of inquiry that this comparability suggests. The translated “Li Sao” thus opens a way toward a knowledge of allegory that attends to the significance of both composition and interpretation, is neither predominantly Western nor eternal in essence, and is still politically conscious and philosophically rich. This is only one of many paths of inquiry that opens out of the translation of the “Li Sao.”

Practical Translation

To respond to the particular translatability of a text, to redeem the unrealized dream of perfect understanding, is Benjamin’s task of the translator. It is a hermeneutic but also a political task. It is to translate in order to expose and undermine the hegemonic order of history and translation that has simultaneously transmitted and delimited the original. The aim is to present a text that both does justice to the past and foreign afterlife of the original and offers the possibility of awakening to readers of the here and now—to recognize conditioning contexts and to tear the text free, to liberate the poem and its readers.

Tejaswini Niranjana writes of hegemonic translation practice that, “In creating coherent and transparent texts and subjects, translation participates—across a range of discourses—in the *fixing* of colonized cultures, making them seem static and unchanging rather than historically constructed. Translation functions as a transparent presentation of something that already exists, although the ‘original’ is already brought into being

through translation.”⁴⁸ Ancient and contemporary China maybe an inappropriate or at least atypical subject for post-colonial critique, according to the Chinese story of China as the Middle Kingdom—the celestial empire, a great colonizer, and a nation with increasingly global economic ambitions. Nevertheless, as Haun Saussy discusses in the final chapter of *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*, the historicist Hegel represented China as natural rather than historical, and an implicit Hegelian historiography continues to dominate the mainstream Western understanding of other cultures. Chinese cultural productions in the Western gaze are quite frequently taken to represent *natural* China. For Benjamin, on the other hand, “translation, or critical historiography, show up the arbitrariness and ‘constructed’ nature of what is presented as natural.”⁴⁹ Through a reading of texts by Benjamin and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Niranjana proposes to “bring history to legibility” in translation and “to use the critique of representation as a strategy for a practice of translation that is a ‘transactive reading’” in order to restore historicity to colonial subjects.⁵⁰

I will return to Niranjana’s reading of Benjamin and how she proposes to liberate the reader as well as the text’s culture, but first I will discuss how a form of translation derived from the particular afterlife of the “Li Sao” has the potential to restore historicity to Chinese subjects. Afterlife is not a linear progressive process but a constellation of encounters occurring at particularly conditioned moments. As readers of the “Li Sao” in the present, we encounter Guo Moruo of the People’s Republic encountering Zhu Xi of the Southern Song dynasty encountering Wang Yi of the Eastern Han encountering Qu

⁴⁸ P. 3.

⁴⁹ Niranjana, p. 153.

⁵⁰ Pp. 86, 140.

Yuan of Warring States Chu, with many other voices cutting in. This returns us to Gadamer's concept of the hermeneutic dialogue. The afterlife of the poem is a dialogue between the text and participants in its culture. Translation is an encounter between the received afterlife and English. My task is to open the dialogue to American students.

A translation can open the dialogue of the "Li Sao" afterlife by literally representing it, by offering the original (the text that originates) and some voices that respond to it on the same page. This proposition takes inspiration from the concluding statement of "The Task of the Translator": "For to some degree all great writings, but above all holy scripture, contain their virtual translation between the lines. The interlinear version of the holy scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation."⁵¹ The "Li Sao," traditionally accorded the hermeneutic treatment of scripture and sometimes even called *jing* 經 (classic, scripture), has been transmitted in the form of primary texts with interlinear commentaries. The poem is the topic of an always historically particularized debate as to the true significance of Qu Yuan's intention; interlinear commentaries such as the *Chuci zhangju* and *Chuci jizhu* materially manifest and transmit that debate. Commentators often cite previous interpretations, even if only to refute them in favor of new interpretations. And, although interlinear commentary functions very much like a translation, restating the meaning in more familiar words, it is different in that the original, despite its illegibility, remains visible on the page. In this way the commentary is both rigorously faithful to the original and yet is not an "accurate representation." The original is also present, asserting its otherness and its translatability; the commentary

⁵¹ "Task," p. 165.

cannot replace it but must relate to it. The interlinear commentary is analogous to, and an extension of, Benjamin's ideal model of translation.⁵²

The engagement with the primary text that this traditional form of transmission offers is fundamentally different than that offered by contemporary standard English translations, including all of the translations I have found of the "Li Sao." In these versions the original language does not appear, the translating language implicitly claims to represent rather than to respond to the original, the given interpretation is presented as definitive rather than historical, interpretative helps are moved away to footnotes or endnotes, and (with the exception of David Hawkes' translation) annotation is minimized to the extreme. Translation scholars such as Anthony Kwame Appiah have strongly criticized the context-free appearance of modern English translations of literature particularly in regard to their pedagogical value.⁵³ For example, consider Stephen Owen's translation in the textbook *Anthology of Chinese Literature*: while Owen's English version is philologically rigorous and formally elegant, a very good translation indeed according to most standards, it presents only an English version and a few explanations of some historical and mythological allusions in minimal footnotes. This mode of presentation presumes that the text is relatively autonomous (it is to be understood as more artistic than political, and its author and its history are non-essential) and it does not give students many hints as to how they might make the "Li Sao" meaningful. It does not suggest how the translation is related to the original text; presumably, it is an "accurate representation" of a Chinese artifact.

⁵² According to Steven Rendall, the bilingual format may be close to Benjamin's goal in "Task of the Translator," if we judge from the translations it prefaces. See "Translation, Quotation, Iterability."

⁵³ See "Thick Translation" in *The Translation Studies Reader* (Venuti, ed).

Appiah proposes to counter this hegemonic form of translation with “thick translation,” by which he means heavy annotation providing in-depth cultural, historical, and linguistic context. In the case of the “Li Sao,” it could be “thick translation” that engages the poem’s particularly Chinese afterlife in interlinear commentary. A translation made in the image of the material afterlife of the “Li Sao” would embody both the form and the content of Chinese tradition in English. By offering the Chinese text, the translation, and a dialogue of quotations of historical commentators, the translation can show how the “Li Sao” exists as part of China’s changing historical/linguistic culture. A translation of the “Li Sao” that includes many voices restores historicity to Chinese subjects by example of Qu Yuan and his readers.

No amount of context, however, will relieve the translator of the task of rendering the text in English, and in fact, the profusion of context in the interlinear commentary format should remind us that the translator’s task is also to redeem the text and its readers from historical determinations.

The physical dominance of such ponderous commentaries on the page signals the control of meaning as well as its illumination, the strategic deployment of philological and interpretive skills to make the text align with the needs and demands of the times. When the social and historical conditions have changed and readers come to the text with a different attitude and new ideas, commentaries from the past may become irrelevant or erroneous, obstacles to be removed for a new way of reading and interpretation.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Zhang Longxi, p. 149.

The translator comes to the task because the text is still translatable; something remains to be said. She must break the text out of the old commentaries to let it say this other thing. This is to break open the dialogue of the past to include a new interpretation. But the old voices are never completely silenced, because any new interpretation is necessarily an encounter with the text's afterlife, with the original as it has been received from other hands. Therefore, rather than remove the commentaries, we should find a way to open the dialogue through the translation proper, the English rendering of the words.⁵⁵

The English rendering can gesture toward the original, rather than replace it, as a transparently incomplete and open version. Niranjana writes that translation (in the strict sense) can undertake a deconstruction of the original, which has the effect of opening the instability of the original to its readers. "Translators can intervene to inscribe heterogeneity [...] Translation, far from being a 'containing' force, is transformed into a disruptive, a disseminating one."⁵⁶ While presenting a poly-vocal dialogue is one way to inscribe heterogeneity,⁵⁷ another way is to resist the urge to make the English cohere.

⁵⁵ Another bourgeois ideology that can be disenchanted in the mode of translation proposed is that of the autonomy of art. In the convolute of the *Arcades* on Marx, Benjamin quotes Adorno's essay on Wagner: "The property appertaining to the commodity as its fetish character attaches as well to the commodity-producing society—not as it is in itself, to be sure, but more as it represents itself and thinks to understand itself whenever it abstracts from the fact that it produces precisely commodities. The image that it produces of itself in this way, and that it customarily labels as its culture, corresponds to the concept of phantasmagoria." The note also quotes another passage from the essay, apparently as commentary, concluding: "The autonomy of art has its origin in the concealment of labor" (X, pp. 669-70). The editors appended a note which speaks precisely to my goal in creating a dialogic translation of the "Li Sao": "It might be said that the method of citation in *The Arcades Project*, the polyphony of the text, works precisely to counter the phantasmagoria Adorno speaks of" (Notes, p. 1001). To present the labor of translation as such, and as communal, historically conditioned labor, is my intention in providing an extensive interlinear commentary of diverse quotations.

⁵⁶ P. 186.

⁵⁷ "Benjamin makes much the same claim for quotation that he makes for translation in 'The Task of the Translator.' Like translation, quotation 'transplants' a text into a new context, and in so doing it both destroys and saves it. It 'destroys' the text by wrenching it out of its former context, turning it away from its previous intention and meaning, and at the same time 'saves' it by revealing in it an authentic truth that was obscured by its former context. In this way both translation and quotation ultimately reveal the nature

This second way disrupts the original by *not* representing it as a natural and already-understood whole, and it invites the reader to do the constructive work of feeling for the pulse.

Spivak discusses the gesture toward the original in terms of “intimacy,” drawing a contrast with the notion of accuracy. Starting from the observation that “the politics of translation takes on a massive life of its own if you see language as the process of meaning construction,” Spivak asserts that “the translator must be able to discriminate on the terrain of the original.”⁵⁸ If language is not the vehicle or tool of meaning but itself the essential content of thought, then the translator must strive to become intimate with the way the original language constructs meaning in order to discern the utterly unique way that the particular text constructs meaning in and against this linguistic-cultural process. At the same time, the translator is writing into “the process of meaning construction” that is the target language, and should be critical of this act.

If Qu Yuan’s thought is inseparable from the original words, then it cannot be accurately restated.⁵⁹ The translator should therefore renounce the attempt to represent the meaning of the original, and instead should strive for intimacy with the words themselves. The translation practice suggested by Spivak’s ideal of intimacy as well as by the ideal of interlinear scripture is one of literalness; that is, to render the words, not to represent Qu Yuan’s thought. Benjamin assigns a determining function to syntax over semantics because the particular instances of words in the original work exist in a

of language as such: the iterability of the word manifests the origin of language beyond the determination of any context” (Rendall, p. 171).

⁵⁸ “The Politics of Translation,” pp. 179, 189.

⁵⁹ That a translation should not claim to be or appear to be an accurate restatement of content is the basic position of Lawrence Venuti.

“multidimensional network” of which the significance is not any univocal meaning but rather the way the words are combined to lead away from their habitual meanings. Therefore, “what translation does is not communicate meaning but point to—signify—the movement of symbolization itself, as it is at work already in the original, and the more obviously between the original and its displacement, repetition, and dislocation by and as translation.”⁶⁰ Literalness is an ascetic practice of rendering each word and renouncing as much as possible the desire to present an integrated, harmonized semantic whole.

To renounce coherence absolutely would be madness, and while that madness has a certain appeal to the purist (as Benjamin was well aware), it is perhaps not the most skillful practice for undergraduate pedagogy. To this end I would like to moderate and specify the practice of literalness in terms of syntactic proximity and fidelity to ambiguity. The fact of the Chinese words positioned close above the interlinear English suggests, even insists upon syntactic proximity; the fact that syntax is the basic principle of Chinese grammar (classical Chinese has no morphology and word classes are loose) further supports this methodology.⁶¹ As to fidelity to ambiguity, the English rendering should strive to be open to all the diverse interpretations to which the Chinese original has opened, and it should be true to the poem’s intrinsic translatability, that it may open further to contemporary interpretation.

⁶⁰ Samuel Weber in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (Bermann, ed.), p. 75.

⁶¹ Karen Emmerich has pointed out to me that emulating the syntax of the Chinese original is facilitated by the happy coincidence that typical Chinese syntax is not extremely different from English; it is much less different, for example, than Japanese or Greek syntax. The translation methodology I propose here would need to be reconsidered for application to texts in other languages—but that itself is part of my intention with regard to Translation Studies, which has a tendency to assume its theories are applicable to all languages alike.

The opening of the text through literalness is a relative practice, as there can be no absolute equivalents for words. But I believe that, however partial, an effort of literalness—a gesture toward the original—will facilitate the philosophical enrichment of language that Benjamin claimed translation can undertake. Literalness minimizes, to the extent possible, the imposition of ideological allegoresis on the text, and also offers readers more space for reading and making meaning. Put another way, “There always seems to be a correlation between the emancipation from dogma and the acknowledgement of the literal sense for the validity of understanding.”⁶² That is, literalness liberates words from their conventional integration in coherent contexts, and makes them available for new ways of understanding. It acknowledges the validity of readers’ understanding, their ways of making sense out of the literal.

Drawing from my experience of the afterlife of the “Li Sao,” I propose three specific ways to open a dialogue in the practice of translation: 1) emphasize the importance accorded to the personality of Qu Yuan and the diversity of perspectives on Qu Yuan; 2) maintain the original Chinese text and render word-to-word for syntactic proximity and fidelity to ambiguity; 3) substantially represent the poem’s interpretative history in the form of an English interlinear commentary of quotations. Doing so will present the “Li Sao” in particularly Chinese terms, and, I hope, restore the historicity of the original. Moreover, translating literally while literally re-presenting a sample of the “Li Sao” dialogue should make it clear that the English translation is only one voice in an

⁶² Zhang Longxi, p. 153.

ongoing conversation that is open to the reader's participation.⁶³ The result will be a text that inscribes difference in the translating language, and indeed, as Venuti proposes, against the grain of hegemonic English translation norms, but the difference inscribed is specifically derived from an encounter with the "original" "Li Sao" as the afterlife of a translatable text.

The result of this montage-like⁶⁴ thick translation practice would be a diverse and non-progressive history, rather than a definitive representation of the poem; it would be a historical narrative that is not resolved in the telling. The afterlife of the "Li Sao" is not a linear progress of enlightenment, although many modern interpreters have constructed just that. It is a dialogue, in which the participants have spoken of returning to the origin and of rejecting received interpretations, in which some voices have been heard only long after their time and others continue to speak although they are marginalized, in which many voices have been lost to us entirely, in which Qu Yuan's fame has produced many antagonistic but simultaneously persistent Qu Yuans. Liu An spoke for the Qu Yuan he heard, a transcendent spiritual adept. Sima Qian spoke for the Qu Yuan he heard, a statesman whose political skills were thrown away in a premature death. Wang Yuan spoke for the Qu Yuan he heard, a humble hermit-scholar who followed Confucius. The modern populist and nationalist that Guo Moruo found in the "Li Sao" could not possibly have been visible to Wang Yi, and yet for Guo Moruo, Qu Yuan had always been a populist, he had just never met his *zhiyin* 知音 (voice-hearer, the one who truly knows

⁶³ Although his goals were very different, the ideal result of this project would be visually very similar to You Guoen's monumental study *Li Sao zuanyi*, with the commentary translated into English and the addition of historical context for the interpretations.

⁶⁴ "For Benjamin, the historical materialist (the critical historiographer) quotes without quotation marks in a method akin to montage. It is one way of revealing the constellation a past age forms with the present without submitting to a simple historical continuum, to an order to origin and *telos*" (Niranjana, p. 45).

him). The CCP speaks for the Qu Yuan it hears, an exemplary, masculine, self-sacrificing nationalist. Guo's emphasis on nationalism persists now because nationalism is a pulse that can be felt in the present; perhaps other aspects of Qu Yuan's intention await future dream-interpreters. All along, interpretation has been collisions and constellations, of which this present one is only the present one. Ideally, it will be the special kind of encounter in which "the player, sculptor, or viewer is never simply swept away into a strange world of magic, of intoxication, of dream; rather, it is always his own world, and he comes to belong to it more fully by recognizing himself more profoundly in it."⁶⁵

Chapter Summaries

In this introductory chapter I have described the "Li Sao" and some of its important characteristics, and theorized a translation practice that will facilitate historically critical understanding of the "Li Sao" for English-speaking college students. My theory in general is intended to realize a way to overcome historical alienation in a "fusion of horizons," as posited by Hans-Georg Gadamer, and in its particulars is largely derived from readings of Walter Benjamin and some of his critics. I have focused especially on Benjamin's concept of afterlife as a bridge between the historical and the linguistic aspects of understanding, and discussed my interpretation of afterlife with reference to the historicity of the "Li Sao." I applied my findings to propose specific practices for a pedagogical translation of the "Li Sao."

Chapter II is an overarching narrative of the afterlife of the "Li Sao." It is, *inter alia*, a sketch for a genealogy of Chinese allegory. To articulate the historicity of the "Li

⁶⁵ "... There remains a continuity of meaning which links the work of art with the existing world and from which even the alienated consciousness of a cultured society never quite detaches itself" (*Truth and Method* p. 129).

Sao” and its allegorical permutations, I describe the material, institutional, and social conditions of reading at each historical juncture. Like Tejaswini Niranjana,

I take *historicity* to mean—although not unproblematically, effective history (Nietzsche’s *Wirkliche Historie* or Gadamer’s *Wirkungsgeschichte*), or that part of the past that is still operative in the present. [...] The term *historicity* thus incorporates questions about how the translation/re-translation worked/works, why the text was/is translated, and who did/does the translating.⁶⁶

In contrast to the dominant historiography of the “Li Sao,” which constructs a linear progress of understanding culminating in the definitively corrected knowledge of the original, I narrate with an emphasis on moments of discontinuity and disruption, moments when the original has appeared in new conditions and unexpectedly released new significance. I relate a history of encounters in constellations; that is, I show how past interpreters of the “Li Sao,” from ancient to recent times, were conditioned by their historical circumstances but nevertheless exercised political agency in ascribing original meaning to the text.

The commentaries discussed in Chapters III through V represent historically situated interpretations of the “Li Sao” and important moments in Qu Yuan’s afterlife. I focus on particular commentators from the early era of manuscript transmission, from the transitional mid-imperial era of developing print culture, and from the modern era, and emphasize how they engaged in dialogues with their predecessors to give Qu Yuan new lives in history. Any present effort at understanding the archaic “Li Sao,” even the kind of reading that most resolutely seeks only the “original meaning,” necessarily works

⁶⁶ P. 37.

through the understandings that have been transmitted to the present.⁶⁷ Any present translation will be in its turn another voice in the poem's dialogue, another transformation of its afterlife, and I propose that making that conditioned engagement and dialogue explicit in the translation can facilitate historical understanding.

Chapter III is a discussion of the foundational interpretations of the great Western Han historian Sima Qian, Qu Yuan's biographer, and Wang Yi, the Eastern Han composer of the earliest extant commentary. They constructed radically different Qu Yuans—a this-worldly statesman in sharp contrast to the earlier spiritual transcendent whom the biography subsumes and negates, and a cosmic Confucian sage, respectively—and their differences have constituted primary points in the constellation between which later interpreters debate the true meaning of the “Li Sao” and the true personality of Qu Yuan. Sima Qian's biography is explored in particular depth, as it illustrates the dialogic nature of interpretation through its incorporation of multiple contradictory sources and furnishes the essential basis for most personality-oriented readings throughout history.

In Chapter IV, I discuss the interpretation of the “Li Sao” contained in the revised *Chuci* anthology of Zhu Xi of the Southern Song dynasty. Zhu Xi's interpretation fits into his overall rationalization of Confucianism, and he remakes Qu Yuan as an exemplar of the Neo-Confucian value of individual authenticity. His emphasis on the rhetorical rationality of the “Li Sao” marks a turning point between the cosmological allegoresis of the early era and the imaginative Romantic interpretation of the modern era. Zhu Xi's historicism, rationalism, and his use of the word “愛國” (patriot) have proven to be persistent facets of Qu Yuan's afterlife.

⁶⁷ Gopal Sukhu's 2012 book on the “Li Sao,” *The Shaman and the Heresiarch*, illustrates this principle: the author attempts to reconstruct the original meaning of the text, and his methodology is unavoidably archeological, working backward through the layers of transmitted interpretation.

Chapter V is a discussion of Guo Moruo's modern, populist, Romantic, and Maoist representation of Qu Yuan and his vernacular translation of the "Li Sao." His translation leaps out of imperial allegory and into imaginative populist literalism, and transports Qu Yuan from a realm fraught with the dangerous relationships of aristocratic loyalty and decorum to the world of passionate freedom and republican individualism. Although Guo was instrumental in apotheosizing Qu Yuan as a CCP political saint, his work simultaneously opened the "Li Sao" to the subversive questioning it meets in the present.

In the sixth chapter of this dissertation, I present a new extensive translation of the "Li Sao" based on the investigation of Qu Yuan's afterlife. In addition to an English rendering, it contains many diverse selections of historical commentary in order to both substantially transmit and break open the tradition of the "Li Sao." I hope in this way to help students overcome the experience of alienation and to facilitate historically critical understanding of Chinese culture through an encounter with the "Li Sao." The conclusion discusses how this poly-vocal translation could be presented in digital media, and proposes that an open-source text with a comment function, distributed to Chinese literature teachers for limited sharing, would be an ideal platform for teaching the "Li Sao" in university classes. The digital platform is envisioned as site for building classroom community and dialogue through the application of skills that media scholar Howard Rheingold calls "digital literacies." The final gesture of this dissertation is thus to point out the translatability of the "Li Sao" into the new textuality of Digital Humanities.

CHAPTER II
A HISTORY OF THE “LI SAO”

In the dialectical image, what has been within a particular epoch is always, simultaneously, ‘what has been from time immemorial.’ As such, however, it is manifest, on each occasion, only to a quite specific epoch—namely, the one in which humanity, rubbing its eyes, recognizes just this particular dream image as such. It is at this moment that the historian takes up, with regard to that image, the task of dream interpretation.

Arcades, Convolute N4,1

Historiography

Throughout its history commentators have attempted to reinstate the original “Li Sao,” usually by presenting their version of the “Li Sao” as the original voice of Qu Yuan. But the origin of the “Li Sao” is lost; its world is past beyond them and us. This loss of origin is apparent in the problems of interpretive indeterminacy that the commentators have attempted to resolve, such as the gender identities of characters, the figurality of flower ornaments and cosmic journeys, and the question of address. What interpreters have reinstated, then, is the “Li Sao” as it speaks to them in their moments. This chapter is a general chronological history of their interpretations and texts of the “Li Sao”: a narrative afterlife. It is not meant to comprehensively describe the history of the “Li Sao” but rather to suggest its complexity and broach some of the issues that frame the following chapters, in which certain moments of historical interpretation will be discussed in greater detail.

The interpretive problems of the “Li Sao” have not been resolved, and there is no linear progress of correct understanding to be found in the history of the “Li Sao”—unless one uncritically subscribes to the dominant interpretation. Instead there is a sequence of changes in what Angus Fletcher calls the interpretive “court of appeal.”¹ The history of the “Li Sao” begins in the quite literal courts of princes and emperors, and, as it is an explicitly political poem, the rituals of interpretation applied to it have been conducted with the political hierarchy foremost in mind. But the social-political order, its interpreters’ ultimate court of appeal, has always been changing, and so the ways they attempted to resolve textual problems, and even their perceptions of what the important problems were, have also changed. This narrative of the “Li Sao” is constructed according to large-scale changes in its court of appeal. I have categorized the chronology into three periods: early imperial (from the Han dynasty to the early Song dynasty, the era of manuscript transmission), mid-late imperial (from the Song dynasty to the late Qing dynasty, the era of print culture), and modern (Chinese nationhood, mass literacy movements, and globalization).² This chapter will also briefly discuss the contemporary digital afterlife of the “Li Sao.” The lost origin is pre-imperial; I will address in terms of the interpretative questions that its loss opened up.

Two aspects of the changes in China’s social, economic, and political conditions are particularly relevant to this narrative: 1) the material form of and concrete practices applied to the text, and 2) the nature of its readership, especially the position of the text’s

¹ “Allegory without Ideas,” p. 80.

² This is the same periodization that Li Zhonghua and Zhu Bingxiang use in *Chuci xueshi* 楚辭學史 (The History of Chuci Studies), which has been a foundational source for this chapter; however, Li and Zhu define their chronology by intellectual developments rather than material culture and society. I will build on Li and Zhu’s work in intellectual history by theorizing the material cultural forces that underlie and condition the history of hermeneutics.

transmitted interpreters in the social-political order. On the material level, the technologies of inscription—bamboo and silk, paper-making, wood-block printing, movable type printing, mass industrial printing, digitization—condition different kinds of readerships and different reading experiences; from the level of the social superstructure, teaching institutions, the structures of the state and society, and changing ideologies conditioned readers' perspectives and their interpretive horizons. The interpretations transmitted to the present bear the marks of their writers' social worlds. The early imperial interpretations reflect the concerns of elite courtiers in the central court of the ruler, and demonstrate the specialized and statist nature of reading and writing in that period. In the mid-late imperial period more individualized perspectives emerge, which reflect the increasing distance of the literati from the supreme head of state and the increasing availability of text to private readers. In the modern era there is an explosion of novel interpretations and an emphasis on Chinese nationality, concurrent with the globalization of scholarship and politics, and the production of mass-produced texts including intralingual and interlingual translations. Literary historians Li Zhonghua and Zhu Bingxiang generalize the methodological trends of the early imperial, mid-late imperial, and modern eras respectively as “章句训释” (exegesis by stanza and line), “义理探寻” (pursuit of significant principles), and “整体研究” (holistic research), each of which dialectically transcends the earlier methodology. These trends correspond to the changing material, institutional, and ideological conditions of the interpretations transmitted from each era.

The narrative that follows emphasizes the technological reproducibility and class politics of the poem, and one might discern in it a process akin to what Benjamin called

the liberation of art from cult. I would like to summarize “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” as follows: the mass reproduction of works has the potential to liberate art from the sacred mystifications of the dominating hierarchy for politically mobilizing evaluation by the masses. To restate the conclusion of the previous chapter in terms of the “Reproducibility” argument, the task of restoring historicity is not the restoration of the mystifying aura but the opening of the text to political practice: to redeem, not the past, but the unrealized utopian dreams of the past. Benjamin reads and writes the past attending to the way the ruling class has constructed histories for the people, how ruling class history is presented as the people’s history, and how dreams of political outcomes not realized in the present can nevertheless be discerned within the historical record. In this chapter I will demonstrate how the interpreters of the “Li Sao,” as it became an increasingly available text, gave voice through Qu Yuan to their own political dreams. They have tried to accomplish the transformation of particular audiences with their versions of the text, be it the unenlightened emperor or the frustrated literati or the uneducated citizens. Their versions were only thinkable given the material-cultural and social-political conditions of their time, and yet, the changes they have attempted to effect demonstrate their critical agency. These commentators’ and translators’ efforts mark the real and wished-for transformations of Chinese society from the lost origin of the “Li Sao” in the aristocratic proto-empire of Warring States Chu to its presence in the globalizing, not-quite-utopian nations of the People’s Republic and the world. It is a narrative of increasing reproducibility, of interpretation broadening to become the activity of and for a wider spectrum of society, and of the text itself opening to a wider range of possible understandings.

Origins

The kingdom of Chu, which gives its name to the *Chuci*, was a southern colony of the Shang dynasty and maintained both local and colonizing cultural traits into the Zhou period.³ During the early Zhou, the government of Chu derived its authority from its affiliation with the Zhou confederation and the shared deified ancestry of Zhou rulers. The king of Chu was a kinsmen of the Son of Heaven, ruled by his grace, and owed him allegiance. The ruling family group negotiated and implemented policy together within the hierarchy-affirming forms of ritual propriety. Internal governance of the kingdom of Chu was similarly structured according to the hierarchy of kinship and allegiance; however, local elites simultaneously maintained older cultural forms rooted in the Shang dynasty, including reliance on *xi* 覡 and *wu* 巫 (male and female shamans). This order gradually fragmented, and by the Warring States period, the Zhou polity had split into independent and competing kingdoms. Kings of Chu no longer served the Zhou, although they maintained the Zhou rhetoric of political and spiritual legitimacy in reference to their own rule. As the Warring States era continued, the rulers of Chu expanded their territory southward far beyond the Zhou cultural heartland. Meanwhile, the administration of Chu became increasingly consolidated in the capital, attaining “a degree of political centralization unknown elsewhere in ancient China until the mid-fourth century” and prefiguring the true bureaucratic empires of the Qin and Han.⁴

Inscriptions on bronzes and ritual implements record how the rulers of Chu gradually usurped the ritual role of the Son of Heaven for themselves, and how ritual

³ Hawkes, *Songs*, pp. 20-24.

⁴ See *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China* (Cook, ed.) pp. 66-76.

specialists in turn took over the officiating role in the rituals. By the latter Zhou, the rituals of receiving political authority from the gods and ancestors and bestowing it upon the descendants of the ruler in Chu had taken the form of spectacular feasts for the king and high officials while official shamans managed the communication with the spirits:⁵ “The king and his descendants no longer mediated communication between the spirits and the people. Instead, as with later Han emperors, their spiritual matters were managed by a bureaucracy of officials.”⁶ While the spiritual administration of governmental matters—the Mandate of Heaven—gradually devolved from the person of the Son of Heaven over the course of the late Zhou and Warring States, the ideology of spiritual grace authorizing participation in governance through ritual communication was largely maintained. And the practical administration of government matters was likewise gradually centralized politically and extended geographically through delegation to *shi* 士 (men of service, the elite) rather than to descendants, while the *guaren* 寡人 (one man) remained at least in theory the supreme head of state.

These changes had important consequences for the writers and readers of texts. Mark Edward Lewis has demonstrated that over the course of the Warring States governance was increasingly managed through the mediation of a text-based bureaucratic double, and, even more significantly, the form of the state was maintained through “a text-based dream of empire” shared by the literate elite.⁷ As the administration of the state passed from a few kinsmen of the ruler to many trained employees, the number of literate men dramatically increased, while the distance between most officers and the

⁵ *Defining Chu* (Cook, ed.), pp. 68-70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷ *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 4.

person of the ruler also increased. Most men in government service had little chance of ever addressing, let alone influencing, the ruler. While the ruler was entirely dependent on his ranks of officers to carry out his policies, and was sometimes in fact only a figurehead while a few top officials made actual policy decisions, the majority of officers had become functionaries of rather than participants in governance. Their relation to the state was defined by skill—and particularly by “wit,” skill with words—rather than entitlement.⁸ This state of affairs gave rise to two powerful fictions: 1) the emperor’s power is absolute, but, 2) cleverly indirect speech or action can transform the emperor. According to David Schaberg, the importance of indirect remonstrance as a function of literature dates from this transitional era;⁹ its value as a powerful legitimizing fiction would persist throughout the imperial age. Tales of indirect remonstrance do not relate historical reality, but they express the wish of their writers to speak to and transform the ruler, the one maker of policy.

This wish was imagined as allegory. In tales of indirect remonstrance, ritual breach in word or gesture functions as the narrative discontinuity that alerts the reader to the presence of another intended meaning.¹⁰ The “Li Sao” is an allegorical work both in terms of its rhetorical structure and its historical nature.¹¹ In the early Chinese context, both of these aspects relate to ritual. The “Li Sao” is an explicitly political and critical text, it evaluates the present in terms of the past, and it expresses its intent in words that signify disparately. Its layers of indirection refer its interpretation to a past world of

⁸ Schaberg in *Text and Ritual in Early China* (Kern, ed.), p. 215.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 194, 216.

¹⁰ Schaberg, *ibid.*, p. 197; this is structurally analogous to Maureen Quilligan’s generic theory of allegory.

¹¹ Cf. Joel Fineman’s discussion in “The Structure of Allegorical Desire”; also see Chapter I of this dissertation.

strictly hierarchical power relations, when address required ritually mediated speech and behavior. But at the time of its composition the ritual order of the past was changing, and the “Li Sao” registers this change as double loss, as a conservative hoarding of fragments of the old way and as a loss of the historical context that would stabilize the interpretation of those images.¹² It also registers in the historicity of language itself, for in the new order concepts such as *de* 德 (virtue) and *huang* 皇 (god, divine) were losing their old place in a system of entitlement and obligation and taking on new meaning for ambitious, independent, self-interested men.¹³ The interpretive indeterminacies thus created opened the text to two millennia of allegorical reading.

The “Li Sao” records a wish for “美政” (fair governance), and expresses evident despair that fair governance is not realizable in its moment. What is the fair governance of which it dreams? It must be different than the real historical conditions in which it was written. Attempting to interpret the dream of the poem with a reading of the poem gives rise to more questions. Is it the record of a performative utterance, composed as a direct address to the king, or is it a mimetic commemoration of another, perhaps imagined attempt to communicate with the king? How does its figurality map onto discourses of ritual propriety and political morality? How figural is it? Does the opening invocation of the ancestor-gods of Chu narrate the author’s aristocratic lineage or only figure the speaker’s poetic authority? Do the ambiguities of and possible changes in gender and/or

¹² A comprehensive discussion of allegory would be too great a digression from the purpose of this chapter, but I would like to note that my understanding of allegory is much indebted to the interpretations of Walter Benjamin’s method put forward by Susan Buck-Morss (*The Dialectics of Seeing*) and Samuel Weber (*Benjamin’s –abilities*, especially chapter 10), and to Haun Saussy’s *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*.

¹³ The resonance of the word *de* (virtue) shifted from, approximately, “effective power” to “moral righteousness” over the classical period. The word *huang* (god, divine) in the Zhou period was used in the names of divinities, but at the end of the Warring States Qin Shihuang used it to name himself: Emperor.

sexual orientation mark significant breaches in ritual decorum? If so, what is the intent of such breaches? If not, how do the gendered and/or sexually oriented characters in the poem fit into ideologies of ritually appropriate social and political relations? The poem uses an archaic discourse of herbal spiritual cultivation, but in which instances and to what extent are the plant names in the poem figurative—do they represent plants, plant-wearing people (synecdoche), plant-like virtues (metaphor), or people with plant-like virtues (metalepsis), or do they stand for a different kind cultivation that is only structurally analogous to plant cultivation (catachresis)? What are the virtues of these plants, or to what specific concepts of virtue are they compared? In at least one case the poem seems to use a plant name as a person's name—is this a reference to a historical person by way of plant-like qualities (periphrasis), or a reference to a literary character with plant-like attributes (metonymy), or a personification of the virtues of the plant, or simply a reference to a historical person or literary character whose name is a plant's name? Are the shamanic imagery and narrative elements mimetic or tropic language—is shamanism the speaker's primary reference or part of the author's palette of figures? Do the journey narratives reflect natural geography, political territory, spiritual cosmology, or all three? Do the erotic, botanical, and spiritual elements signify nostalgia for an age when the gods dominated kings through shamans' rites, or do they signify the author's knowledge of and power over the dying discourse of the past, which he has reconfigured to bring forth a radically new political intention? Which questions most need answering to clarify the poem's concluding wish for "fair governance"? The text itself does not answer these questions. Readers answer these questions with recourse to the ways of understanding that are relevant in their historical conditions.

In late Warring States Chu, the unity of spiritual virtue and political authority and the divine assurance of ancestral right to power, pillars of the old Zhou order, were crumbling. Ancient Shang cultural forms persisted, and at the same time a new political order of technical skill and bureaucratic administration was rising. This maelstrom of becoming, to paraphrase Benjamin, is the origin of the “Li Sao.” As it receded into the past, readers brought the “Li Sao” into the conditions and concerns of their own ages, and answered its questions with new points of reference.

The Early Imperial Period

The first transmitted texts and interpretations of the “Li Sao” and other *Chuci* date from the Han dynasty, several hundred years after the probable composition of the “Li Sao” and other early works. The first *Chuci* anthology was probably created by the imperial bibliographer Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BCE), but Wang Yi’s 王逸 (c. 89-158) later revised anthology is the only edition that has been transmitted from the earliest times up to the Song. The transmitted interpretations from the early period, represented in Wang Yi’s commentary and a few other texts, tend to resolve the indeterminate language of the “Li Sao” with recourse to cosmological correspondences and the related notion of the ritual propriety of the imperial court.

In the early Han, literary texts were written on scrolls of bamboo or silk. Texts were heavy, arduous to produce and transport, and required a great deal of space for storage. It was still the era of scribal culture, in which writing was a specialized skill and the production of large manuscripts was a task for experts. After the Han, an increasing availability of paper, which was invented in the early second century, gradually

transformed texts into more easily producible, mobile, and widely available objects. Because hand-written bamboo, silk, and paper texts are unique and perishable, very few have been inherited or recovered in archeological sites. Although there is evidence that many other *Chuci*-related texts were produced in the early period, only the few texts that were transmitted to later generations by re-copying are available in complete form today. These include the *Shiji* biography of Qu Yuan, which contains a poem about Qu Yuan by Jia Yi and the complete texts of a few *Chuci* poems (not including the “Li Sao”), an imitation poem about Qu Yuan by Yang Xiong 揚雄, the biographies of Qu Yuan by Liu Xiang and Ban Gu 班固, Wang Yi’s anthology with its prefaces and interlinear commentary, Liu Xie’s 劉勰 treatise on Sao poetry in the *Wen xin diao long* 文心雕龍, and the commentaries to the “Li Sao” that were included in Tang editions of the *Wenxuan* 文選. In addition, a large fragment of a “Li Sao” commentary by a Sui dynasty monk Daoqian 道騫 (or Zhiqian 智騫) were recovered from the Dunhuang caves. These texts and others include fragmentary quotations of earlier discourse and references to material since lost. There is evidence of many lost works in transmitted bibliographies and in references in the *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注, and a small body of fragments of Sui and Tang texts that have been preserved in later works.¹⁴

In the early Han, the “Li Sao” was probably most commonly understood through oral performance and was presented live as court entertainment. Its primary audience was the emperor and the members of his court. This hierarchical political orientation persisted throughout imperial history and is reflected in many of the written scholarly interpretations that have been transmitted. Writers and editors were subordinate to and

¹⁴ Yi, p. 165.

dependent upon their ruler; a cosmology that justified imperial omnipotence by glorifying it was the ideological context of government service and hence literary interpretation. The early imperial period saw a free blending and gradual differentiation of what later came to be called Daoism and Confucianism, with a cosmological and scholastic Confucianism ultimately adopted as official state ideology in the latter Han. This orthodox Han Confucianism was the standard according to which Wang Yi evaluated Qu Yuan, creating an influential model of both hermeneutic method and Qu Yuan's personality for posterity. Wang Yi's interpretation into Han cosmological Confucianism is discussed in Chapter III.

During the period of political disunity after the Han, the fragmentation of the state is reflected in a diversity of approaches to the "Li Sao," and the central role of the state in transmitting interpretation is reflected in the fragmentary nature of the material available from this period. While the Confucianism of the Han, which had exalted the great all-corresponding unity of the world as empire, fell from influence along with the massive state that had given rise to it, alternatives to Confucianism prospered, and Buddhism and *Xuanxue* 玄学 (Mysterious Learning) rose to prominence and official approval in some states. Literary studies emerged as a discipline distinct from political-moral philosophy in this period of disunity, opening a new gateway to *Chuci* interpretation. Perhaps the commentators of the period of disunity, living in a time more similar to Qu Yuan's—their work supported by regional courts rather than dominated by the singular power of the Han Emperor—were able to read the "Li Sao" with a wider eye, with no imperative to make it speak for the glory of the unified empire. In addition, diverse schools of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, in their pre-divisive early stages of diverse

mixing and development, were available as interpretive guides. This ideological blending is exemplified in the commentary of the monk Daoqian and the treatise of the Confucius-dreaming monastery-dwelling Liu Xie, both writing on what later would be debated as *either* a Daoist or a Confucian or a Legalist text.

Philosophical and literary study gained new political importance and ideological coherence in the re-unified empire during the Sui, when civil service examinations were widely instituted (however, during the Sui and Tang family rank and personal recommendation were still the more important means to power). The examinations of the Sui and Tang emphasized memorization and recitation of classics as well as literary composition, but did not test candidates' skill in interpretation. Predecessors to the late imperial examinations, the early exams had the effect of mandating great ideological uniformity among the class of government officials and aspirants. In the Tang, a multicultural empire with state-sponsored Daoism as well as a reformed scholastic Confucianism, emperor-centric cosmology was again dominant. The exegetical methods and approaches practiced on the "Li Sao" in the Tang continued in the track of the Han, as is reflected in the *Wenxuan* commentaries transmitted from that time.

During the transition of China's territory and population from massive empire to divided states to massive empire, a corresponding shift is apparent from ruler-centric interpretive orthodoxy, to a plurality of views and division of approaches (most unfortunately not maintained in regards to the "Li Sao"), to again a unified ruler-centered ideology. Texts likely to be preserved from this early period were those approving of and so approved by the dominant class of kings and courtiers: produced by their scholars, copied by their scribes, and housed in their archives. Only orthodox interpretations (or

interpretations that became orthodox) are likely to be transmitted from this era, although traces of other views have been preserved in secondary texts, in quoted fragments, or in rediscovered archeological finds. The historical dialogue of “Li Sao” interpretation that we can participate in today is partial indeed, but a glimpse of the leopard through a tube, as the saying goes.

Throughout the early imperial period, the activity of inscribing and transmitting interpretation was the activity of a privileged few; written interpretation (at least that which has been preserved) took place in the physical space of and under the auspices of elite ruling-class institutions. These institutional conditions are reflected in the specialist orientation of the transmitted commentaries and their overwhelming emphasis on the vertical relationship of courtier and ruler. The scholarly methodology applied is derived from the method of interpreting classics or scripture; it manifests a reverential attitude and conservative impulse toward the interpreted text.¹⁵

Most of the transmitted interpretations of the early imperial era present the “Li Sao” with a focus on political performance. The poem was transmitted inseparably from the commemoration of its poet Qu Yuan, who was understood primarily in relation to his ruler, King Huai of Chu. Most interpretations of the early period represent the views of elite men under imperial authoritarianism with a nostalgic emphasis on the rightful authority and influence of ministers such as Qu Yuan, which is to say they betray the wish (as the poem does) that elite servants of the ruler were accorded more recognition and honor. This interpretive orientation is especially apparent in the *Shiji* biography. Within this framework, Qu Yuan’s political performance as expressed in the “Li Sao” either passes or fails the standard of moral righteousness depending on the current

¹⁵ Cf. Henderson on scriptural commentary.

standard of appropriate service to one's ruler. For Yang Xiong and Ban Gu, Qu Yuan failed to submit to his allotted role and overstepped the bounds of ritual propriety; for Liu An 劉安 and Wang Yi, Qu Yuan's sage-like spiritual perfection entitled him to speak across the worldly boundary between courtier and king. The different evaluations of Qu Yuan's political performance were derived from variations in the allegorical interpretation of poetic imagery and narrative, differing views of the biographical information used to contextualize the poetry, and from historical changes within the dominant ideology itself.

In the early period there were certainly other approaches to the "Li Sao" besides state-approved and transmitted written interpretations. For example, while the scholarly texts transmitted to the present are concerned with exegesis for proper moral-political understanding, the text of *Chuci yin* 楚辭音 (The Sound of *Chuci*) attributed to the Sui monk Daoqian,¹⁶ discovered at Dunhuang in the early 20th century, is primarily dedicated to the aesthetic performance of the "Li Sao." This text is mentioned with praise in Hong Xingzu's 洪興祖 Song dynasty anthology preface, demonstrating that its usefulness lasted well beyond its own time, but it either did not survive the devastating transition from Northern to Southern Song or was not preserved in the changed cultural climate of the latter Song and after.

In the *Suishu* 隋書 (History of Sui), editions of the *Chuci* are included in the bibliography section on Daoist and Buddhist sutras; many of the texts including Daoqian's bear titles that refer to sound and pronunciation. It represents a very different mode of scholarship than Wang Yi, a direction apparently not much valued by print

¹⁶ Its authorship was identified by Wang Chongmin and this attribution is widely accepted. Cf. Wen Yiduo, "Dunhuang jiuchao Chuci yin canjuan ba: Fu jiaokan ji."

culture. Unlike Wang Yi's line-by-line commentary, the *Chuci yin* annotates every word with a pronunciation guide, except for the recurring particle *xi* 兮 which it leaves out. Using the *fanqie* method to describe pronunciation, it represents the standard pronunciation of its time, not Chu dialect.¹⁷ The manuscript also contains a selection of exegetical comments by Wang Yi, Daoqian, and others. Many of the commentaries quoted, such as Guo Pu's 郭璞, have since been lost, so its recovery was a major contribution to the historical record. The exegeses also cross-reference the "Li Sao" to other texts such as the Mao edition of the *Shijing*, the *Shuowen* 說文, and the *Guangya* 廣雅. Daoqian's text represents a different way of maintaining the "Li Sao": unlike Han dynasty interpreters' emphasis on correct appreciation of the author's intention, the *Chuci yin* guides the reader in correct maintenance of the poem's aesthetic, sensible presence and performance. This particular approach was perhaps related to the contemporary form of the civil service examinations, which required recitation but not elucidation, and related to the development of regulated verse with its attention to the sonorous aspect of poetry. It may also be significant that Daoqian was a Buddhist monk; like the mantras included in many Buddhist scriptures, which were rendered from Sanskrit phonetically rather than translated for discursive significance, Daoqian's way of reading the "Li Sao" values its sensuous aural qualities even more than its interpreted meaning. This could be another way, quite different than Wang Yi's, of treating the "Li Sao" as scripture: to recite

¹⁷ According to Yi Chonglian (see p. 162). However, according to Hong Xingzu, Daoqian did know the Chu pronunciation, clarifying the rhymes (*Buzhu*, p. 1).

it as a quasi-religious invocation, for the experience of *ganran* 感染 (influence or inspiration).¹⁸

An investigation of the details makes it difficult to generalize a dominant trend of interpretation of the early imperial era, but all the early interpretations available to us do share a certain scholarly perspective: written from the very top layers of a hierarchically stratified society and transmitted according to the ideological conditions of the state, they reflect a conservative impulse toward the original text, either as a record of Qu Yuan's political performance and/or as a script for an aesthetic performance, and most demonstrate a profound investment in the legitimizing ideology of the aristocratic ruling class. The available interpretations of the early period are few enough to be listed here. Sima Qian's biography, in dialogue with Liu An and Jia Yi 賈誼, depicts Qu Yuan as a pragmatic this-worldly statesman. Yang Xiong's "Fan Li Sao" 反離騷 (Anti-Li Sao), responding to Qu Yuan in imitative verse, criticizes the poet according to a comparison with Confucius. Ban Gu bequeathed both sympathetic and negative evaluations of Qu Yuan in two prefaces, but it is his accusation of arrogant impropriety that has proven most memorable to later interpreters. Wang Yi's interlinear commentary describes Qu Yuan as a glorious exemplar of late Han Confucian orthodoxy. Liu Xie's treatise methodically compares Qu Yuan's works to the standard of the Confucian canon, providing the first true disciplinary perspective on the *Chuci* as literature. The *Wenxuan* also presents the "Li Sao" as literature—as a more than only political text—and as a generative phenomenon in literary history. Daoqian, and presumably the other Sui scholars who wrote phonological editions, treated the "Li Sao" as a sensuous aural

¹⁸ Hu Sui 胡遂 of Hunan University suggested this possibility in a personal interview on Jan. 2, 2012.

artifact. The Tang 五臣 (Five Ministers) commentary to the *Wenxuan* reinstates the laudatory interpretation of Wang Yi, though its particular exegeses are simplified and somewhat more whimsical. Lu Shanjing's 陸善經 *Wenxuan* commentary continues in the same vein but with greater philological rigor. The "Qu Yuan waizhuan" 屈原外傳 (Unofficial Biography of Qu Yuan), attributed to Shen Yazhi 沈亞之 of the Tang, collects anecdotes and folklore about Qu Yuan's life after politics and (literal) afterlife, presenting him as a magical figure and the "Li Sao" as a supernaturally affective text.¹⁹ Finally, the high cultural status accorded to Qu Yuan and the "Li Sao" during the Tang is apparent in the many references, allusions, and imitations of Tang poetry. The writings of Sima Qian and Wang Yi have been the primary touchstones for almost all later interpreters of the "Li Sao."

The Mid-Late Imperial Period

Printing technology was developed in China by the early eighth century (Tang dynasty), but was not widely employed beyond the dissemination of Buddhist sutras until the eleventh century (Northern Song). The earliest printed books were reproduced from carved full-page woodblocks; later movable type was invented but woodblock printing remained widespread until the nineteenth century due to its suitability for Chinese characters. Printed paper books were smaller, lighter, and significantly more portable than bamboo and silk scrolls. Print technology makes identical texts available to multiple readers simultaneously, and in addition it may make a large number of texts available to a single reader. The activity of reading a shared, publicly available text may take place in a

¹⁹ I have translated this text in Chapter VI.

private setting such as a personal library, and, relative to the situation of manuscript reading, readers of print may read extensively rather than (or as well as) intensively. The wide reproduction of texts helped spread literacy and vice versa. Reading became a less privileged, writing a less technical activity; however, literary and philosophical texts were still largely still limited to the ruling class of literati-bureaucrats. Printing and teaching were differentiated and maintained in separate lineages, with the significant effect that textual reproduction and interpretation were no longer a mutual act: interpreting became a secondary activity to a pre-existing text. While the ancient practices of reciting orally and copying text by hand continued through the imperial period, after the rise of print technology private reading and annotating also became popular textual performances.²⁰ In addition, records of *Chuci* illustrations and musicology studies begin to appear dating from the Song.

In the Tang dynasty the imperial government periodically sponsored stone engravings of the orthodox canon. The authoritative text was singular, monumental, and seemingly permanent. Print technology and its eventual widespread use in disseminating the canon radically transformed the material nature of text and opened new possibilities for interpretation.

At the outset of the Song, textual authority in the Confucian classics was monopolized by the imperial government, which claimed to be the most faithful custodian of the authorial texts, a claim confirmed by a long history of orthodox transmission. The bond between the imperial sponsor and the canonical author seemed indissoluble. Against this combination, the authority of the individual reader was comparatively weak. This

²⁰ Cf. Brokaw and Tsien Tsuen-hsuei on book history.

relationship was transformed by attacks on the credibility of the imperial versions. The effect was to separate imperially sponsored textual authority from author-based authority, creating the opportunity for potent new alliances between individual readers and canonical authors, through which readers assumed a more active trusteeship of authorial texts. No matter that many of the textual changes proposed by readers never won general or lasting acceptance: implanting the idea that imperial authority and textual authority were not necessarily one and the same was sufficient to promote the destabilization of the received texts. The texts were now in play. The determination of authority in texts became far more ambiguous, because it was more equally shared among the hugely increased number of referees concerned.²¹

In the Song, the government shifted from carving the canon to printing the canon, which allowed for the wide distribution of and criticism of imperfect texts as well as the possibility of easily re-printing corrected editions (inevitably, with more errors). “The association of government printing with impermanent and endlessly revisable canonical texts was a new idea with productive consequences for classical scholarship, which thrived on the freedom afforded by fluid imprints”²²; furthermore, the commodification of text in competing printing houses brought about the beginning of the widespread quest for novelty in interpretation. “The commercialization of printing, which transformed books into commodities, gave new ideas tangible worth. It encouraged their

²¹ Cherniak, p. 27.

²² Cherniak, p. 61.

production.”²³ Cherniack, Van Zoeren, and Henderson all relate printing to the expression of independent criticism and a diversity of interpretations.²⁴

Cherniack notes that while destabilized texts lost their authority, a systematic method for determining the authentic text was not developed until the rise of *kaozheng* 考證 (empirical philology or evidential research) in the Qing dynasty. Instead, Song scholars relied on idiosyncratic methods, some of which had roots in the traditions of manuscript transmission and some of which were themselves wholly new. One such technique was *lijiao* 理校 (rational collation or “conjectural emendation”).²⁵

Song conjectural emendation is undergirt with a basic confidence in the competence of individuals to discern verbal truth. For Song editors, truth is fundamentally ahistorical; conjectural emendation is credible because cultivated scholar-editors can know the constant norms of human nature, can tap into the same universal sources of inspiration as did the authors whose works they edit, and can thus recognize textual falsifications with unerring accuracy. The critic’s ability to apprehend the *yili* 義理, the meaning or inherent principle in a work, remains the surest guide in determining textual authenticity.²⁶

Rational collation privileged reader intuition, and in particular reader intuition of authorial intention, over textual and institutional authority.

²³ Cherniack, p. 79-80.

²⁴ Cherniack, p. 30; Van Zoeren, p. 156; Henderson, p. 201.

²⁵ Cherniack, pp. 85-88.

²⁶ Cherniack, p. 87.

Between the Tang and the end of the Song the social position of *Chuci* interpreters and their understanding of their cultural role also changed dramatically. The culturally dominant class transformed from an aristocracy to a literati elite, and their self-identity shifted from prioritizing “cultural learning” to “ethical concerns.”²⁷ In the Song dynasty the civil service examinations were greatly expanded, and in the Song, Ming, and Qing they became the most important path to status, wealth, and power. The classical literacy needed for the examinations was transmitted in lineage schools, which were mostly restricted to members of particular clans. Although the examinations were theoretically universal and meritocratic, in fact knowledge of classical Chinese was a barrier to all but the elites who attended and operated the schools. Men of the literati class, whether or not they succeeded in passing the examinations and attaining an official post, were for the most part very distant from the emperor, both geographically and in terms of their actual work and duties. In addition, the mid-late imperial era saw several periods of rapid growth in commerce and the private economy, which meant that unlike the aristocratic families of the early imperial era the new elite was less dependent on the beneficence of the court for its well-being. However, the ideology of the emperor’s absolute power persisted, and state censorship, the literary inquisition, and the use of literary writings as evidence of misconduct or treason (for example, as in the Crow Terrace Poetry Case) demonstrate that reading and writing were often still intimately linked to political performance and the state.

Concurrently with the major material and social transformations of the mid-late imperial period, scholarly methodology was transformed by the development of Neo-Confucianism and alternative schools of thought. Neo-Confucianism undertook an

²⁷ Bol, *This Culture of Ours*, Chapter 2.

hermeneutic shift from the exegesis and annotation of textual particulars to the elucidation of a text's *dayi* 大義 (great significance) or *yili* 義理 (moral principles). Like the Han Confucianism it reinterpreted, Neo-Confucianism framed reading as an activity to produce correct social-political understanding and moral participation in the state-centered Chinese universe. But unlike Han Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism asserted that moral righteousness and (to some extent) worldly power are attained by effort rather than given by heaven, and thus opened the possibility that members of the literati class could, through learning, become morally superior to their ruler. Neo-Confucianism was further developed toward idealism and subjectivism by Wang Yangming of the Ming dynasty. Meanwhile other schools of thought defied Neo-Confucian didacticism, such as the cult of *qing* 情 (passion) that flourished in the late Ming. Under the Manchu rulers of the Qing, a conservative revival of Han Learning flourished among the literati class, restoring an emphasis on minute textual details and historical evidence. Many ethnically Han scholars under the Qing, blocked from political advancement, turned to objective philology and the relatively uncontroversial accumulation of historical data. But other late imperial works also maintain the Neo-Confucian approach or are entirely eccentric; the great number of texts preserved from the late imperial period contains a rich diversity of viewpoints and methods.

Neo-Confucianism is metaphysical rather than cosmological, which effected dramatic changes in the allegorical interpretation of *Chuci* imagery and narrative elements. Zhu Xi 朱熹 and other Neo-Confucian commentators typically interpret images in terms of their rational expression of moral principles rather than in terms of cosmic correspondences. And in step with the social changes of the time, interpretation was

increasingly imagined in terms of individual integrity in service to a powerful but distant ruler or to the state in more general terms. Other interpretive frames commonly employed in the mid-late imperial period were subjective or emotional biography (e.g., Wang Yuan's 汪瑗 commentary), philosophical syncretism (e.g., Qian Chengzhi's 錢澄之 commentary), artistic integrity (e.g., Wang Bangcai's 王邦采 commentary) Daoist self-cultivation (e.g., Wang Fuzhi's 王夫之 commentary), and historical empiricism (e.g., Jiang Ji's 蔣驥 commentary). Overall, in comparison to the early period of scholarship, mid-late imperial interpretations of the *Chuci* demonstrate a general tendency to rationalize the images, narrative, and rhetoric in terms of historical/biographical context or moral principles. More explicit attention is accorded to the intuited significance of the overall narrative and less significance is drawn from the exegesis of particular textual details.

During the mid to late imperial period there was an exponential growth in the production of *Chuci*-related texts.²⁸ As they are too many to summarize here, I will instead look at how some interpreters responded to a particular textual example to draw a general contrast with the early imperial period.

忽反顧以流涕兮

哀高丘之無女

Suddenly [I] turn [my] head with flowing tears ——

Grieve for the high hill's lack of women

²⁸ For example, see Yi, pp. 453-5. for an extensive list of Qing commentaries and editions.

There is much debate as to whether the courted female deities in the following sequence represent possible kings, possible courtier-ministers, or possible consorts for the king. Some internal factors that inform commentators' interpretative decisions about these lines include: whether the speaker is assumed to have the same gender orientation throughout the poem, or could change according to the context; the speaker's presumed gender orientation at this point—a man seeking a woman to be his lover, a man seeking a woman to be his lord's lover, or a woman seeking other women to be her companions; what or who has been determined to be the true (figured) object of the speaker's courtship. Some contextual factors that may have bearing on the interpreters' conclusions include the following:

1) In most eras of Chinese history women have been considered socially subordinate to men, and all people were subordinate to the king. However, in the feudal era of Qu Yuan and his ancestors, the enfeoffed clansmen of the king may have been almost as powerful as the king himself (and Qu Yuan does, after all, present himself as heir to the very gods), and the ideological status of women may have been much higher.²⁹ Within Neo-Confucianism, on the other hand, scholars cultivated themselves to become sages, and could even consider themselves as morally superior to the king, who inherited his power but did not necessarily merit it.

2) In Qu Yuan's time China was divided and there were several kings. The king of Chu was certainly the closest to Qu Yuan by blood, but the ties of lineage were weakening in Qu Yuan's time as the class of skilled courtiers rose to power and the class of landed blood aristocrats weakened. A man of means who found his talents unappreciated in the court of one ruler could offer his services to another ruler (this was

²⁹ Cf. Raphals on the changing ideological and social position of women in early China.

the way of Confucius). And, according to the texts of that time, it was hoped that kings for their part would actively seek out and attract talented men. Just as in the feudal times of Europe, the process of entering a royal court was not unlike courting a woman: it involved go-betweens, ritualized introductions, exchanges of gifts, and a great deal of social finesse. While the social order generally changed to favor certification over courtship, there were revivals of feudal politics during each of China's mid-late imperial dynasties.

3) The women of the inner palace could be considered as powerful as the men of the outer court, but their influence was hidden; their power was exercised through private persuasion rather than public presentation.

4) In much Chinese poetry, a man who is estranged from his ruler may be figured as a woman languishing for an absent husband.

5) The primary wife of a king or a rich man could be responsible for finding him suitable secondary consorts in order to ensure his pleasure and a great number of children to carry on the family line.

6) According to the Chinese cosmology developed in the Han, women, concubines, and ministers are *yin*, while men, husbands, and rulers are *yang*. Yin-yang cosmology was less influential under Neo-Confucianism, which envisioned the universe in terms of one ultimate principle and diverse phenomena.

7) In many cultures, shamans, male or female, obtain their spiritual power from the ritual courtship of deities. There are many records of respected and politically powerful shamans in early China, and shamans remained prominent in the southern

regions longer than in the north, but under orthodox Confucianism shamanism was strongly discouraged.³⁰

Commentary selections:

王逸：楚有高丘之山。女以喻臣。 Wang Yi: Chu has a High Hill mountain. Women are metaphors for ministers.

朱熹：女，神女，蓋以比賢君也。 Zhu Xi: [These] women are goddesses; they must be comparisons for a worthy lord.

汪瑗：言使楚有女，則已不至此也。 Wang Yuan: This says that if Chu had women [whom Wang interprets as goddesses/worthy lords], then I would not have come to this.

屈復：高丘，楚地名。楚國盡爲朋黨，丈夫中無可語者。女中或有，亦未可知。

Qu Fu: The High Hill is the name of a place in Chu. The kingdom of Chu is completely formed into cliques, [so that] among [all] the men there is not one to speak with [me].

Among the women perhaps there is one, but I can't yet be sure.

奚祿詒：高丘之無女，斷指君說，懷王留秦未返也。下面宓妃有娥二姚皆帝室之女，

皆喻懷王。 Xi Luyi: "The high hill is without a woman" definitely indicates his lord, to

explain that King Huai stayed in Qin and has not returned. Below, Fufei and the Two Yao of Yousong all are women of the [divine] Emperors, all metaphors for King Huai.

張象津：高邱喻宮中尊位。若懷王正后有若姜后之脫簪，鄧曼之諫王者，王必不能

如此之惑。 Zhang Xiangjin: The high hill is a metaphor for the place of honor within the inner palace. If the wife of King Huai was like Consort Jiang who removed her

³⁰ See David Hawkes, Rémi Mathieu, and Gopal Sukhu on the gradual exclusion of shamanism from orthodox discourse.

ornaments, or like Deng Man who remonstrated with the king, then the king certainly could not have become so confused like this.

The way these commentators interpret the lines reveals the questions that frame their reading: is the speaker looking for a companion for himself (figuring fellow ministers or a male or female friend), a helpmeet for himself (figuring retainers), a companion for the king (figuring ministers or consorts), or an ideal lover for himself (figuring a true king)? Their answers are related to the ideological conditions in which they read and wrote. Wang Yi, in the latter Han, viewed women and ministers as *yin* elements necessarily bound in cosmological correspondence; that cosmology legitimated a political order in which courtiers courted each other in and as service to the emperor. Zhu Xi of the Southern Song, in contrast, understood the poem as rationally figured historical content within a metaphysics of heaven and earth; in the changed society of his time it was conceivable that a cultivated individual man could be more virtuous than his ruler and wish for a different, more perfect ruler. Wang Yuan of the Ming emphasizes Qu Yuan's subjective experience; overall, his commentary treats the "Li Sao" as an allegory of emotions more than of statesmanship. In the Qing dynasty commentaries (Qu Fu, Xi Luyi, Zhang Xiangjin), there is more of an emphasis on Qu Yuan's historical context and cross-referencing with other historical sources. The commentaries selected here are representative of major trends but do not do justice to the great diversity of mid-late imperial interpretations. Especially in the period after the Opium War, the influence of Western thought and rise of capitalism brought about a quest for novelty and

change in *Chuci* interpretation, as exemplified in the work of Wang Kaiyun 王闖運, Liao Ping 廖平, and Liang Qichao 梁啟超.

Huang Wenhuan 黃文煥 (Ming, fl. 1625) may serve as an example of individualistic reading in the mid-late imperial period. A scholar of early poetry who lived during the Ming-Qing transition, he was inspired to write *Chuci tingzhi* 楚辭听直 (Correctly Understood Chuci) while in prison for being implicated in criticism of imperial policy, and later witnessed the Manchu conquest of China and the end of the Ming dynasty. He believed that his experience of these misfortunes provided him personal insight into Qu Yuan's poetry and thought.³¹ His commentary passionately critiques court politics, blaming slanderers, petty wrangling, and meddling women for the downfall of dynasties, and champions absolute loyalty to the king. Huang goes so far as to suggest that Qu Yuan was not loyal enough, and had to commit suicide because he had not prevented King Huai's death in Qin (a calamity he might have averted if he had killed himself in protest *before* the king departed). He rejected Zhu Xi's preface to the *Chuci*, arguing against Zhu Xi's assertions to insist that Qu Yuan was not at all excessive but in accord with his circumstances, and was moreover a direct and orthodox representative of Northern Confucian thought.³² While his elevation of Qu Yuan is far from unusual, the kind of Qu Yuan he upholds is quite unique in his apparent intemperance and self-indulgence. To the lines “保厥美以驕傲兮日康娛以淫遊” (Depending on/guarding her/one's beauty in arrogance/with pride — Daily revels in wanton roaming/wandering travel), Huang Wenhuan appends a comment that is much against the grain of earlier and

³¹ Li & Zhu, p. 152.

³² Zhu Xi's preface is discussed in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

later interpretation of these lines. Most have seen these as a description of Fufei's frivolous conduct, but Huang refers it to Qu Yuan:

驕傲淫遊原之自道也。宓妃不我許，吾自保吾之內美而已。雖哀無女，豈肯喪志，未嘗不高自命也，未嘗不靜自樂也。保厥美以驕傲，日康娛以淫遊，姑玩世肆志焉可乎。“Pride” and “wandering” are [Qu] Yuan speaking of himself. Fufei does not accept me, so I just guard my inner beauty to myself. Although I mourn that there is no woman, how could I be willing to bury my aspiration? I never could consider myself unlofty, never could silence the joy I find in myself. Guarding one's beauty with pride, daily delighting in wandering travel—for now I can play in the world with easeful aspiration!³³

Li Zhonghua and Zhu Bingxiang accuse Huang Wenhuan of subjectivism and selfish individualism³⁴, although self-centered individualism is something Huang Wenhuan claims for Qu Yuan with a positive connotation.

I will conclude this sketch of the mid-late imperial era with a speculative note on cultural transmission. Narratives of *Chuci* studies in the imperial era implicitly raise the question of ethnocentrism in the transmission of scholarship. To study the “Li Sao” is often seen as an affirmation of the Han central plains values of antiquity³⁵ even though the “Li Sao” is not necessarily a Han text, or only became a Han text through the application of interpretative effort and ingenuity. The non-Han Liao (Khitan), Western Xia (Tangut), Jin (Jurchen), and Yuan (Mongol) dynasties have been typically

³³ Quoted in You Guoen, *Li Sao zuanyi*, p. 315.

³⁴ P. 159.

³⁵ See Guo, *Xiantang cifu yanjiu*, p. 41.

represented as culturally backward in regards to literary studies (and may hardly be mentioned at all in reference to *Chuci* studies),³⁶ while the Qing is often discussed with an emphasis on how non-Chinese rulership either suppressed creativity or forced the Han literati to take up unproductive methods.³⁷ In fact, little *Chuci* scholarship has been transmitted from the Liao, Western Xia, Jin, and Yuan dynasties, but it is not clear whether this is because no material was produced or because subsequent Han dynasties did not transmit it. A number of *Chuci* illustrations and references to Qu Yuan and *Chuci* in poetry and drama demonstrate that the *Chuci* were maintained during the Yuan, and it is well known that the *Chuci* were also highly regarded in Korea and Japan. The absence of non-Han voices in the interpretive dialogue of the “Li Sao” as it is currently maintained in mainland China demonstrates the importance of social-political dominance in the retrospective transmission of cultural life.

The Modern Period

Modernization in China brought the establishment of industrial publishing houses, an increased volume of cheaply produced texts, and a wider availability and variety of texts; in turn, mass literacy was a mobilizing effort of China’s modernization movement. The creation of vernacular translations in addition to new interlinear commentaries and other annotated formats popularized classical texts and allowed for new kinds of readership. Literature, in turn, was reimagined in terms of the Chinese nation: China as the imagined community of the people who share Chinese culture, not the territory of the king or the administration of the empire.

³⁶ Cf. Yi Chonglian, Li & Zhu.

³⁷ E.g., Yi, 451-52.

The modern era is characterized by the end of imperial orthodoxy and feudal class divisions. Social revolution was the most transformative cause of 20th century China, whether its particular practice was named Republicanism or Communism. Efforts toward universal literacy and access to texts were directly connected to the construction of a national polity of culturally and linguistically Chinese citizens. Interpretation in this era was diverse and often highly politicized. The *Chuci* became the object of many different kinds of scholarship, from literary formalism to folklore studies. Qu Yuan was popularized and idealized in terms of revolutionary politics, and simultaneously, by others, attacked for his politics; even his historical existence was denied. Interpretations were produced for the reading of the citizenry or masses, understood as the Chinese people sharing a national language and culture that included the *Chuci*; at the same time, these interpretations participated in the creation of a national Chinese culture, understood as a shared essence transcending the elite literati tradition.

After the establishment of modern national infrastructure including uniform schools and mass textbook production, reading traditional texts often has taken place in an academic setting as part of a culture-instilling educational curriculum. But *literary* education is no longer a path to wealth, fame, and power, nor is it a path to moral righteousness; rather, it inculcates national culture and values, it is part of an examination and certification process that paves the way toward career success, and, for some, it is a personal or scholarly individual passion. Due to this set of conditions, the modern era is characterized by both the massive reproduction of many cheap editions of the dominant, state-approved interpretation, and a great variety of co-existing editions expressing variant or alternative interpretations in a variety of formats.

Translation in the narrow sense became essential to *Chuci* transmission for the new popular audience. Many vernacular translations have been produced for modern Chinese readers: Xiang Qin has compiled a list of more than 140 vernacular Chinese translations published in mainland China in the first decade of the 21st century alone.³⁸ In addition, the “Li Sao” has also been translated for non-Chinese readers, both by Chinese interpreters interested in sharing and promoting Chinese culture abroad (in English by Lim Boon Keng, Xianyi Yang, Sun Dayu, Fusheng Wu) and by non-Chinese interpreters interested in understanding and representing Chinese culture for their home audience (in English by E. H. Parker, James Legge, Arthur Waley, Geoffrey Waters, David Hawkes, Burton Watson, Stephen Owen, Gopal Sukhu).

Novel, previously unthinkable interpretations were brought about in the modern era by new methodologies and interests, but at the same time the traditional biographical approach was maintained as the dominant interpretation. The scholarship of the time of social equalization brought attention to the poem’s folk culture and vernacular elements and sought for traces of Qu Yuan’s popular affiliation and revolutionary politics. New terms of analysis were introduced, nationalism or patriotism, Romanticism, and shamanism being of particular importance. In the dominant interpretation, the one taught in national schools, Qu Yuan is presented as a lesson about participation in Chinese national culture, and the “Li Sao” as an expression of universal human experience particularized in terms of Chinese political history.

Modern interpretations are diverse in both their methods and their conclusions. One of the most notable interpreters of the modern era is Hu Shi, who critiqued the historical reliability of the *Shiji* biography of Qu Yuan and declared that Qu Yuan was

³⁸ Xiang Qin. *Pujixing Chuci duben*. Hunan University, 2011. Unpublished manuscript.

probably a legend generated from the poems attributed to him; his position set off a decades-long debate between the deniers of Qu Yuan and the defenders of Qu Yuan, which took on nationalistic tones when a number of Japanese scholars took up the anti-Qu Yuan position in the 1980s.³⁹ An early interpretation that has gained renewed relevance for the gay rights movement in recent years is that of Sun Cizhou, who in 1944, in the era of rejecting of traditional idols, asserted that Qu Yuan was a court entertainer, the pleasure companion and homosexual lover of the king. Particularly emblematic of the scholarship of the modern era is Wen Yiduo, who analyzed the *Chuci* poems from the perspective of local cultural context, mythology, folklore, and religion, rather than from the traditional perspective of ruling-class culture. For a critical summary of other significant scholarship in the first half of the twentieth century, I refer to the reader to James Hightower's analysis.⁴⁰ After the founding of the People's Republic, the now dominant interpretation of Qu Yuan as revolutionary Romantic, socialist realist, and self-sacrificing national patriot was established by Guo Moruo as a matter of national policy and articulated in scholarly works by Ma Maoyuan, You Guoen, and others.⁴¹ In 2009 the Chinese government declared the Duanwu Festival to be an official national holiday in celebration of Qu Yuan.

The modern era is also the era of globalization; China's coming to be as modern nation was simultaneous with a new view of international co-existence (rather than imperial tribute relations). In the modern era the poems were translated into many Eastern and European languages. The first Western-language translations were produced in the

³⁹ See Huang Zhongmo for a summary of the debate.

⁴⁰ In *Sōritsu Nijūgo Shūnen Kinen Ronbunshū* (Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun Kagaku Kenkyusyo).

⁴¹ See Chapter V of this dissertation.

context of the development of Western imperialism and the development of Sinology as a discipline. Translations were made into German by A. Pfizmaier in 1852,⁴² into French by Le Marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Denys in 1870, and into English by E. H. Parker in 1878, followed by James Legge's English version in 1895. In 1935 Lim Boon Keng produced a bilingual translation in English blank verse with the poeticizing diction of British Romanticism. In his prefaces he describes Qu Yuan as a Confucian, monotheist, Romantic hero, and modern superman who represents the best of Chinese tradition in spite of China's contemporary plight:

To the Chinese who have received a Western education, Qu Yuan must appear to be refreshingly modern in his strong assertion of individualism, his fiery intolerance of fools, rogues, humbugs, and thieves, however highly placed in society, and in this perfervid patriotism—qualities so lacking in the decaying China under the old régime now fortunately rapidly passing away. In the regeneration, may China learn something solid from the life of this hero of righteousness, which exalts the nation.⁴³

Lim's translation, like that of Gladys and Hsien-I Yang produced two decades later, is similar to the thematically nationalizing and formally internationalizing interpretation of Guo Moruo and other prominent Chinese scholars; it foregrounds the Chinese particularity of the poem's content while rendering the form in the conventions of English Romanticism. Two other noteworthy English translations are those of David Hawkes (1959, 1985) and Stephen Owen. Hawkes' translation is elegant and rigorous with extensive endnotes and textual criticism, while Owen's lightly footnoted version

⁴² Noted by Herbert Giles in Lim, p. xxi.

⁴³ P. 36.

constructs a novel formal analogy to Old English syllabic verse and European floral vocabulary. The most recent English translation published is that of Gopal Sukhu, which aggressively explicates an interpretation in which the primary reference is to the shaman-centered cultural life of ancient Chu.⁴⁴

In the modern era, mass literacy movements, the rise of vernacular writing, and republican, democratic, and collectivist ideals turned interpretation into an activity of the people, for the people—but also, still, the state plays a significant role in determining, transmitting, and limiting interpretation. The “Li Sao” of this era is no longer the privileged, status-affirming entertainment of the emperor and his court, nor the consolation of disgruntled literati and bureaucrats, but an edifying, nationalizing text for the masses. Interpretation of the “Li Sao” in the modern era interrogates the past and values facticity and scientific methodology over traditionally transmitted knowledge, but at the same time, traditional hermeneutic frameworks such as author-oriented reading and traditional understanding as articulated in transmitted texts have persisted as powerful interpretive horizons. A clear indicator of the continuity of tradition in modern Chinese scholarship is the recent emphasis on Qu Yuan’s personality and individual spirit.⁴⁵ Beyond China, in English, the “Li Sao” has been imagined as, simultaneously, an artifact of traditional China and a text of Chinese national culture.

⁴⁴ See Knechtges, *Ancient and Early Chinese Literature*, 147, for a list of translations in Western languages.

⁴⁵ Li & Zhu, pp. 323-24.

The Digital Era

Digital technology has broad-ranging consequences for the afterlife of the “Li Sao.” What follows is based on personal observation and speculation; I mean to address the most general observable conditions of digital reading in China in order to frame a discussion of a recent digital response to the “Li Sao” and introduce my own intention to produce a digital platform for teaching the “Li Sao” in translation.

Digital technology transforms the material conditions of producing and transmitting text, but it also maintains some essential similarities to earlier periods. As in manuscript culture, inscribing the text and editing or annotating the text may be a single activity and may be directed toward a highly particular audience (one’s peers on a social network, the readers of a poetry blog, or the users of a classical text database, for example). As in print culture, reading may be undertaken individually and privately. As in industrial modernity, the reproducibility of the text is rapidly increased, even theoretically infinite. However, unless internet access is universal, the ability to read and manipulate digital texts is limited to the affluent members of a society. In China, computers are increasingly accessible but personal computer ownership is still far more common among urban and relatively wealthy families, as was the case for books and libraries in former times. In the United States, computer ownership has almost become an institutional imperative for college students.

The institutional conditions of interpretation and transmission are also different, yet still marked by the intervention of the state. Censorship and government management of digital content limits the writing of and public availability of certain kinds of texts—again, not unlike the state’s involvement in the dissemination of texts in imperial times.

The dominant ideology is in part maintained and propagated through the state's new digital presence, even including the rumored existence of internet users who produce pro-government digital content on the Party's dime (*wumaodang* 五毛党). In regards to the "Li Sao," the national education institution is the main vehicle of the dominant interpretation, with conditioning forces ranging from research funding to publishing opportunities to Party cadres in academic departments. Perhaps the most important institutional constraint on interpretation is, as in late imperial times, the examination system, a matter of life-long social success or failure for Chinese students. High school students are obligated to write essays in which they explain that Qu Yuan's suicide was an exemplary act of patriotic self-sacrifice. While official textbooks and unofficial pocket study editions present the "Li Sao" as a foundational text of Chinese nationalism, many students now go to the internet searching for the "right" answer to essay questions on Qu Yuan in preparation for the examinations. But the internet also makes counter-interpretations and negotiations possible for those who have internet access; it opens the possibility of speaking back to the "right" answer. Today the internet has become a site for negotiating the dominant interpretation. While the audience for the winning essay is, ultimately, the state, the audience for such acts of counter-interpretation is one's peers.

To illustrate the institutional forces at work in the digital afterlife of Qu Yuan, Figure 1 is a screen shot of a search on Baidu, the most popular search engine of the PRC, for "屈原爱国吗" (Qu Yuan patriot?).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ March 11, 2014.



Figure 1. Screen shot of a search in Baidu.

The first results are for study help forums and essay databases that either provide model answers to essay topics, such as “试论屈原的爱国主义” (A Discussion of Qu Yuan’s Patriotism), or emphatically respond in the negative, “屈原与爱国无关!!!” (Qu Yuan Has Nothing To Do with Patriotism!!!). The latter popular essay asserts that “patriotism” is a label applied by the government to deceive the people into feudal obedience under a different name.⁴⁷ In contrast, on the right of the screen, an image of Qu Yuan appears under the heading “有气节的人物” (Personages of Moral Courage). The image is a link to a new search headed by the Baidu Encyclopedia entry on “Qu Yuan,” which begins, “屈原，中国东周战国时期伟大的爱国诗人，汉族” (Qu Yuan, a great patriot poet of

⁴⁷ Wang Sixiang. “Qu Yuan yu aiguo wuguan.” *Wang Sixiang*. Fenghuang bobao. 13 June 2010. Blog. Accessed 11 March 2014. The original blog post has been viewed 34,968 times and has been copied and shared extensively on other websites.

China's Eastern Zhou period; Han ethnicity).⁴⁸ This is the dominant representation of Qu Yuan against which the anti-patriotic Qu Yuan is addressed.

Under the present conditions of digitally-mediated interpretation, there is widespread reproduction of the dominant, state-approved interpretation of the “Li Sao” as Qu Yuan’s expression of ideal patriotism. But the internet opens a space for anonymously public debate about that interpretation. In recent years digital media have enabled a renewal of Sun Cizhou’s 1944 homosexuality thesis in the context of the gay rights movement,⁴⁹ and debates about Qu Yuan’s nationalism, patriotism, and status as culture hero have been taken up online in terms of emergent youth values such as individuality, romantic love, nostalgic neo-Maoism, and so on.

For example, some may read the poem’s reception history against the grain and insist that the “Li Sao” is exclusively a love poem. Digital textuality and internet access enable some people, such as the person who writes under the screen name “解放先生” (Mr. Liberation), to publicly criticize the official interpretation. In Figure 2, a screenshot of a *weibo* (blog) post from June, 2013, Mr. Liberation asks, “Was Qu Yuan gay?”⁵⁰ His answer: “屈原之死是一段忠贞不渝的爱情故事，而不是一个愚民洗脑的爱国主义教材” (Qu Yuan’s death is part of a story of unwaveringly loyal love, and not a teaching tool for brainwashing the ignorant masses with nationalism). He then invokes Wenyi Duo’s defense of Sun Cizhou’s thesis that Qu Yuan was the king’s favorite and

⁴⁸ “Qu Yuan.” *Baidu baike*. Baidu. 5 March 2014. Web. Accessed 11 March 2014.

⁴⁹ Song Geng analyzes Sun’s thesis in chapter two of *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*. Sun’s thesis is popular among those who would like to claim Qu Yuan for the gay rights movement: for example, see <http://shanghaiist.com/2012/06/23/duanwu-festival-gay-valentines.php> and <http://news.sina.com.tw/article/20120621/7121349.html>.

⁵⁰ Jiefang Xiansheng. “Qu Yuan shi GAY?” *Yishujiaxiaojie*. Xinlang weibo. 12 June, 2013. Blog. Accessed 12 June, 2013.

homosexual lover to subvert the official, government-sponsored interpretation of the poetry attributed to Qu Yuan that is propagated through the national high school curriculum.



Figure 2. Screen shot of *weibo* post: “Was Qu Yuan gay?”

The thesis that Mr. Liberation asserts against the orthodoxy is telling—it implicates not only China’s current hot topic of homosexuality, but also manifests the general shift of Chinese youth toward valuing individual identity that is part of contemporary mainland China’s transformation to economic and social liberalism. Qu Yuan has become a site for debating national values. The internet makes it possible for people like Mr. Liberation to

take ownership of a poem whose interpretation has traditionally been the activity of the publishing literati. Mr. Liberation's interpretation may be no more appropriate to the poem itself than the state's interpretation, but it exposes the ideological mystification that is at the heart of the dominant version, and thereby opens the poem to a fresh reading.

Summary

Above I have discussed the reception history of the "Li Sao" in three periods. The dominant interpretation received from the early period is characterized by cosmological exegesis and a concern with the poet's personal service to his king. The cosmological hermeneutic and the orientation toward the ruler reflects the feudal-imperial government of the time and the elite status of those who could participate in the production and transmission of hand-copied manuscripts of the text. The original "Li Sao" in the early period was a dream of remonstrance addressed from a courtier to his ruler, couched in an allegory of cosmic correspondences that ensured the propriety of the courtier's complaint. The second period covers the middle to late imperial era, when the abundance of printed texts dramatically transformed the activity of reading and the nature of government service. The number of people who could participate in producing and transmitting interpretations increased, and the variety of transmitted interpretations increased as well. The dominant class, while still a landowning minority, ruled through participation in the theoretically meritocratic imperial examination system or through involvement in their local communities. Members of the elite obtained power and esteem not by being born into a certain position in the cosmos, but through demonstrating the mastery of texts and the ethical principles contained therein. The major hermeneutic frames of this time are

metaphysical and historical; the metaphysical “Li Sao” is a statement of principled moral conduct that suits the moral-philosophical scholarship requirements of the literati class; the historical “Li Sao” is an allegory of concrete historical affairs that reflects the rationalizing turn in intellectual history. The third era is modernity, in which interpretation may be imagined as a radical departure from the transmitted teachings of the past and yet is often deeply rooted in premodern interpretation. The mass production of texts and the production of a national mass audience through government literacy campaigns make the “Li Sao” a text available to the people, but while anyone can interpret the “Li Sao,” state institutions dominate the mass production and circulation of texts. Prevalent concerns of this time are the poet’s orientation toward the people and the nation. The poem is interpreted in terms of ideology and historical context; cosmological correspondences and metaphysical principles may still appear but they are seen as manifestations of the poet’s false consciousness, not inherent truths of the poem. Its truth inheres, rather, in its unique aesthetic form, in its artful articulation of nationalist values, in its historical influence in the Chinese cultural tradition, or in its authentic representation of historical, cultural, and philosophical content. Interpretation may be highly individualized; novel interpretations flourish and there is moreover an emphasis on the individuality of the poet: his choices, his psyche, his identity, his sexual orientation, his ideological affiliation, and so on. Especially with the advent of digitally-mediated interpretation and transmission, non-scholars can promulgate their views, and Qu Yuan and the “Li Sao” may be grasped as both elements of popular culture and as counter-cultural representations.

The dominant traditional interpretations that were inscribed and transmitted to the present articulate ways of participating in Chinese society and culture. They articulate their visions not as mirrors but as dreams, expressing the desires of their authors that things might be otherwise, whether that be more perfectly governed by a more perfect autocrat or more conducive to individual freedom, opportunity, and political participation. What, then, does the “Li Sao” have to say in translation? Does an interlingual translation of the “Li Sao” articulate a way of participating in globalization? Can a translation articulate an ethical way of participating in world culture?

Utopian Reading

Facilitating truly popular and transnational ownership of the poem—the liberation of the work of art from cult—along with teaching skills of digital literacy and critical reading, are the goals of the digital text of the “Li Sao” proposed in the conclusion of this dissertation. The most essential feature of the digital reception of the poem, it seems to me, is the possibility of writing back to the authoritative institutions of cultural transmission. Digital text, in other words, might more fully realize the translatability of the original by opening it to popular re-inscription. The digital text proposed is designed to facilitate the composition of new commentaries as part of reading the “original”—the original as a generative text that exists always in dialogue, and is always opening to ongoing interpretation. The digital “Li Sao” is a text in search of new life, an afterlife both more universal through its bridging of languages and more particular in its incorporation of the individual reader.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY IMPERIAL ERA

This chapter will examine the earliest written interpretations of the “Li Sao” that are available to us today, those that were composed before the development of China’s print culture. Most of the principal attitudes, approaches, and problems of later interpreters are already discernable in these works. Although it is not a translation even by a very broad definition, Sima Qian’s biography of Qu Yuan in the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*) is the foundation of most extant interpretation and implies specific readings of certain rhetorical features of the “Li Sao.” Due to its origin in and poignant expression of one man’s suffering, its rhetorically complicated articulation of political and historical criticism, and its unprecedented formal innovations, the *Shiji* itself is known as “無韻之離騷” (the rhyme-less “Li Sao”); the names of Sima Qian and Qu Yuan are inseparable, and thus Sima Qian’s work is given particular attention in this chapter. The latter part of the chapter is primarily devoted to Wang Yi’s late Han work *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 (*Chuci by Stanza and Line*), the earliest extant interlinear commentary and first effort at historical translation.

The early interpreters’ mode of scholarship is summed up in a concluding statement of Liu Xie’s “Bian Sao” 辨騷 (Distinguishing the Sao): “不有屈原，豈見離騷” (If not for Qu Yuan, how could the ‘Li Sao’ have appeared? [or, Without Qu Yuan, how

could one see the ‘Li Sao’?).¹ They ground their hermeneutics in the personhood of Qu Yuan, and direct their interpretation toward the revelation of his intention. Yet they each reveal and transmit Qu Yuan’s intention by showing him to be a man of their own time. Sima Qian’s account cites earlier versions of Qu Yuan as transcendent spiritual adept or unrealized Daoist recluse, but tends to suppress these Qu Yuans in favor of a strictly this-worldly Qu Yuan. Wang Yi’s commentary glorifies Qu Yuan as the perfection of Han Confucian gentlemanliness. They thereby allegorize some of the most Warring States Chu-specific features of the “Li Sao” to affirm, respectively, a realist, other-than-Emperor Wu political policy, and the comprehensive ruler-centered and male-dominated cosmology of the late Han. Preserving the historical and cultural difference of Chu in their interpretations was not a priority for these early interpreters. They translate aspects of Chu culture that appear in the poem into the particular discourse, material world, and ideology of their own time and place. Thus, as the essential foundational interpretations come to us from the Han dynasty, and just as “Han” is to this day a word for “Chinese,” we can call this early translation process the “Hanification” of Qu Yuan.

This chapter first describes the historical context of poetic practice and scholarly hermeneutics within which the *Shiji* account of Qu Yuan was composed. Then it proceeds through a close reading of the *Shiji* account, arguing that the composite narrative suppresses some competing early views of Qu Yuan to foreground a representation of the poet whose politically critical stance reflects Sima Qian’s status in the court of Emperor Wu. The nostalgic hermeneutic the *Shiji* applies to the “Li Sao” through its dialogic arrangement of sources functions as contemporary political criticism and presents the

¹ The full text of Liu Xie’s treatise is included in Hong Xingzu’s *Chuci buzhu*. The quoted lines appear on page 53.

poem as like political criticism, although the account is ambivalent as to the actual effectiveness of such critique. The last section of the chapter discusses some early criticisms of Qu Yuan's politics and Wang Yi's response to them in his late Han commentary, the *Chuci zhangju*. Like Sima Qian, Wang Yi provides a perennial voice in the historical dialogue of "Li Sao" interpretation; while the *Shiji* provides the dominant hermeneutic framework of biographical reading, the *Chuci zhangju* provides a lasting and influential image of Qu Yuan as a Confucian martyr.

The *Shiji*

All our evidence of early interpretation has been transmitted under the changing conditions of the state and filtered by the changing values of historical scholars, and so the "Li Sao" itself only comes to us as preserved by Han scholarship, hundreds of years after its probable composition in the late Warring States. To date, no contemporary record of Qu Yuan, of the "Li Sao," or of any other poem in the *Chuci* has come to light. It has been proposed that all pertinent historical and literary records were lost in Qin Shihuang's book-destroying campaign, or that Qu Yuan and his works were expunged from the records of his time due to his political stance.² Or perhaps Qu Yuan was a rather more minor figure than later history made him out to be, or even, as Hu Shi and some other modern scholars have proposed, not a historical figure at all but rather a legend attached to explain some poems with loosely interrelated content. Whatever the case may be, Qu Yuan does not appear in the textual record until several turnings of the historical wheel after his death, but the poems come to us already inseparable from the name of Qu Yuan.

² Guo Jianxun, p. 27.

Our earliest and most important source for “Li Sao” interpretation is the account of Qu Yuan composed by the Western Han historian Sima Qian (BCE 145 or 135—86?). Qu Yuan’s biography is treated together with the early Han poet Jia Yi in the 24th chapter of the *liezhuan* 列傳 (Arrayed Traditions)³ section of Sima Qian’s *Shiji*, which was written in the 2nd century AD during the reign of Han Emperor Wu and edited to an unknown extent during its manuscript transmission.⁴ Other historical information relevant to “Li Sao” interpretation can be found in the *Shiji*’s chronological charts and its records of the kingdom of Chu. The chapter “Qu Yuan Jia Sheng liezhuan” 屈原賈生列傳 (Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia) includes the full text of “Diao Qu Yuan fu” 弔屈原賦 (Lament for Qu Yuan) by Jia Yi, which provides the earliest instance of Qu Yuan’s name in the textual record and contains the earliest assertion that he committed suicide. The chapter also includes uncited fragments of a preface to the “Li Sao” composed by Sima Qian’s contemporary Liu An, the Prince of Huainan, the entirety of which has since been lost. It includes the full text of the *Chuci* works “Yufu” 漁父 (The Fisherman) and “Huai sha” 懷沙 (Embracing Sand), but does not, significantly, include the text of the “Li

³ The problem raised by pairing these similar but different and anachronous poets is addressed below.

⁴ In “The ‘Biography of Sima Xiangru’ and the Question of the *Fu* in Sima Qian’s *Shiji*,” Martin Kern argues that the Qu Yuan/Jia Yi chapter must be a later work copied into the *Shiji* because the political significance it accords the *fu* is incongruous with the rest of the *Shiji* (see pp. 305-7). But the incongruity Kern notes seems reasonable with regard to the Qu Yuan portion of the chapter given that the “Li Sao” was not a contemporary work but an already ancient text that according to Liu An and presumably Emperor Wu had scriptural status (Cf. Schimmelpfennig pp. 118-19). The Liu An preface was written in the time of Emperor Wu, and it accords the “Li Sao” a critical function, as does the historian’s statement for the Qu Yuan chapter in the “Self-Narration.” Even if the chapter is a hodge-podge compiled after the time of Emperor Wu, as Kern suggests, the imagined political significance that the narrative nostalgically ascribes to the “Li Sao” is best understood in terms of the actual practice of *fu* that reached its peak in Emperor Wu’s court (as Kern has persuasively described in “Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the *Fu*”). Thus, with due caution, the court of Emperor Wu can be taken as an appropriate context for analyzing the chapter.

Sao.” This chapter often refers to Qu Yuan as Qu Ping 屈平, which suggests that the historian relied on other sources that were not transmitted.

The primary ground of our history of interpretation, “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” establishes an attitude of human sympathy as the necessary approach to the “Li Sao” and gives us a biography as the indispensable key to its interpretation. This approach has early roots, exemplified for example in the *Wanzhang xia* 萬章下 chapter of Mencius, from which derive the hermeneutic standards of “知人論世” (understand the man in terms of his time) and “以意逆志” (use the meaning to trace the [author’s] aspiration). Sima Qian provides the (quasi-?) empirical grounds for the implementation of this approach in the instance of the “Li Sao.” The *Shiji* account constructs a narrative in which the “Li Sao” is an essential insight into its author’s personality and the author’s life story is the essential key to unlocking the poem’s significance. The *Shiji* presents the “Li Sao” as a reference to a particular historical event; Sima Qian read the “Li Sao” as the legacy of a historical deed, a speech act more than a literary artifact. This interpretation of the poem’s mode of being accords with the emergent hermeneutics of Sima Qian’s own time as reflected in the Han versions of the *Shijing*, especially the transmitted Mao version. This chapter will demonstrate that “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” constructs a politically engaged Mao-style Qu Yuan for the “Li Sao” through the deployment of its varied sources. The different subtexts are arranged in such a way as to revise the view of Qu Yuan one might have had with the early sources alone. While for Jia Yi, Qu Yuan was at least a should-have-been Daoist cultivator, and in Liu An’s words, Qu Yuan was indeed a spiritual transcendent, Sima Qian’s narrative presents a decidedly worldly and pragmatic Qu Yuan.

The *Shiji*'s construction of Qu Yuan is politically significant when read in terms of the context of the court of Han Emperor Wu. The explanatory statement for the chapter on Qu Yuan and Jia Yi in the “Taishigong zixu” 太史公自序 (Imperial Historian's Self-Narration) is entirely devoted to the “Li Sao,” which, it tells us, Qu Yuan composed for the purpose of *fengjian* 諷諫 (indirect remonstrance).⁵ This statement appears nostalgic when considered in light of what poetry was actually doing in the time when most of the *Shiji* was composed. Sima Qian lived at the end of the centralization of imperial power that began in the Warring States. In his time Emperor Wu exercised an unprecedented degree of power over a vast centralized empire, and most of the men in his administration were functionaries, not policy-makers. The idealized memory of the old way of powerful ministers and receptive rulers that underlies the “Li Sao”—the dream of the time when indirect remonstrance was truly effective⁶—is the most prominent voice in the *Shiji*'s poly-vocal account of Qu Yuan's life. The *Shiji* account of Qu Yuan implicitly criticizes the imperial order in terms of the nostalgic hermeneutic of literature-as-political-critique that was developing in the early Han.

The intellectual dream of literary interpretation was quite different than the literary and political reality of Emperor Wu's China. Emperor Wu was a patron of poetry and enjoyed elaborate spectacle. In the early Han Chu-style poetry in imitation of the “Li Sao” was being written at the feudal courts that covered the territory of the former kingdom of Chu.⁷ The Emperor's uncle Liu An, Prince of Huainan in the Chu region, introduced Chu-style poetry to his nephew, who then commissioned him to write a

⁵ P. 3314. Page number references are to the Zhonghua shuju edition of the *Shiji*.

⁶ Cf. Schaberg, *ibid.*

⁷ Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, p. 29.

preface to the “Li Sao” (fragments of the preface are preserved in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* 漢書). The *Jiu ge* 九歌 (Nine Songs) of the present *Chuci* were a musical performance probably composed for court entertainment,⁸ and the Simas as palace officials would very likely have seen them performed.⁹ The emperor’s interest in poetry included other related forms, particularly what we now call the grand *fu* 賦 (rhapsody) of such writers as Sima Xiangru. However, the Simas would not have called one *ci* and the other *fu*; the notion of generic distinctions had not yet been developed and the words could be used synonymously.¹⁰ All manner of verse was performed orally with some pomp. Thus the Simas would have encountered Chu-style poetry and related creations as texts but also, perhaps primarily, as contemporary cultural phenomena and live performances for the entertainment of the emperor and his court.

The Simas lived in the wake of a major transition in the role of verbal art, and the works of Qu Yuan and Jia Yi exemplify the change. According to David Hawkes, “The *Chuci* represents the cannibalization by a new, secular, literary tradition of an earlier, religious, oral one.”¹¹ The later pieces in the *Chuci*—the complaints of misunderstood courtiers and the empowering spiritual flights—were literary imitations of aspects of the “Li Sao,” which was itself an imitation of Chu shamanistic ritual. Many of these later imitations were in circulation and being actively composed during the Simas’ lifetime. The themes and styles of the Chu poetry were also incorporated into the great variety of literary productions that what would later become known as the *fu*. For example, the

⁸ Lewis, p. 185

⁹ *Songs of the South* p. 97.

¹⁰ Kern, “Han Aesthetics,” p. 399.

¹¹ *Songs of the South* p. 39.

journey of the shaman to the spirit world became the journey of the courtier away from corrupt society and the journey of the Great Man to transcendence. The *fu* also imitated political uses of speech, such as the rhetorical exposition and the debate. Broadly speaking, we could say that the “Li Sao” is near the beginning, and Jia Yi’s *Funiao fu* 鵬鳥賦 (Owl *fu*) near the end, of a shift from effective poesis to literary poesis, or from formal action to representation.

The grand *fu* is undoubtedly the form that best represents the imperial magnificence and might of Emperor Wu’s reign and the end of the transition from ritually or politically effective speech to mimetic literary speech. The *fu* rose to prominence and achieved great glory at the court of Emperor Wu, and although later writers such as Liu Xiang, Yang Xiong, and Ban Gu defined its purpose as indirect remonstrance, the identification of the *fu* with verbal remonstrance is an anachronistic designation of the late Han; “many if not most of the verbal presentations at the Emperor Wu court that were later subsumed under the category of *fu* served the purpose of entertainment.”¹² The early Han *fu* frequently represented events of verbal remonstrance but did not themselves perform it; or rather, they “performed” remonstrance in the theatrical sense.

From Warring States times onwards, at the latest, the perhaps originally religious significance of such [performative and self-referential] speech continued to exist parallel to, and separate from, its other functions— political persuasion, aesthetic pleasure, moral illustration... the difference between a genuine incantation and its literary representation (as in “Qi Fa”) or between an actual debate and its transformation into a textual

¹² Kern, “Han Aesthetics,” p. 406.

performance (as in “Da ke nan”) is one that separates the immediacy of political and religious action from self-conscious aesthetic creation.¹³

Thus for the *fu* scholar Gong Kechang, the grand *fu* is the first appearance in China of literature as an autonomous discipline. The autonomy of poetry emerged in an inverse correlation with its political relevance.

The prevalence of the “Li Sao” theme of the courtier’s complaint in the new literature of the Han reflects important institutional developments at the court of Emperor Wu. As Hellmut Wilhelm has suggested in “The Scholar’s Frustration,” the preoccupation with the relationship between the scholar and the ruler that is typical of the Han *fu* is related to the establishment of academic positions at court in 136 B.C. and the opening of the Academy in the capital soon after. Sima Qian himself wrote a *fu* that exemplifies the frustration of the ambitious and under-appreciated scholar. The complaining *Chuci* likewise deplore the degeneracy of leadership for failing to make use of virtuous men. But the literary representation of genuine resentment was itself imitated in the theatrical representation of literary resentment. Included among the *Chuci* are poems such as the *Qi jian* 七諫 (Seven Remonstrances) composed by a contemporary of the Simas, perhaps the jester Dongfang Shuo. The “Seven Remonstrances” is both explicitly an imitation of the solitary “Li Sao” persona and explicitly a diatribe, but Emperor Wu does not seem to have taken such complaints too seriously.¹⁴ How was it

¹³ Kern, *ibid.*, p. 419.

¹⁴ The *Shiji* “Traditions” chapter of the *fu* poet Sima Xiangru illustrates this point. The statement for the Sima Xiangru chapter in the “Self-Narration” and the conclusion of the chapter state that Xiangru’s poems were intended as reformative satire, and the narrative makes it very clear that Emperor Wu missed that point. The immediate effect of “Sir Fantasy” is to get Xiangru a position at court. The Emperor rejects the extravagant descriptions of the *fu* on the imperial hunt but discusses the final passage on the Emperor’s reformation, apparently accepting it as flattery, not heeding the advice, and a few pages later Sima Xiangru is himself out hunting with the Emperor. His “*Fu* on the Great Man” is calculated to please the Emperor

that “a kind of poetry which evolved as a medium for the allegorical expression of seditious thoughts could, with very little modification, be adapted for the flattery and delectation of princes”?¹⁵ According to Gong Kechang, the social status of the *fu* performer was quite low. “It was virtually impossible to write a purely monitory poem at a court where the *fu* had become a major form of entertainment. Some of the *fu* poets at Emperor Wu’s court were nothing more than glorified jesters.”¹⁶ Another explanation, suggested by the scope and form of the grand *fu*, is that the Emperor’s power simply encompassed everything, including criticism. “Western Han poetic rhetoric, by means of its dialogical settings, explicitly acknowledges a heritage of powerful speech that puts both gods and rulers under its spell. At the same time, through its self-conscious attention to aesthetic patterning, this delightful rhetoric also assumes a celebrative and eulogizing mode.”¹⁷ In playing the role of the entreated gods and rulers, the emperor affirms that he is the source of all power, and even complaint becomes praise. The representation of seditious thoughts for literary enjoyment was entirely a different matter than the expression of disagreement in a real political debate, as Sima Qian learned at great cost.

The adaptation of the spiritual flight theme also reflects institutional change. It had a counterpart in the Emperor’s expanding ritual circuit, which Hawkes proposes was

and dispenses with the moralizing closing passage. In his memorial on the Feng and Shan sacrifices, Xiangru succeeds at persuasion via flattery, and causes (so the abrupt narration suggests) the Emperor to undertake the sacrifices. The Sima Xiangru chapter is in part and perhaps entirely a later interpolation (Kern, “The Biography of Sima Xiangru”), but at the very least it illustrates posterity’s view of Emperor Wu as totally unresponsive to indirect remonstrance and of the grand *fu* as an utterly ineffective mode of persuasion. It seems unlikely that Sima Qian had much positive evidence for either the political efficacy of poetry or the sagely listening skills of Emperor Wu.

¹⁵ Hawkes, “Quest of the Goddess,” p. 62.

¹⁶ Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody*, p. 36.

¹⁷ Kern, “Han Aesthetics,” p. 423.

a demonstration of cosmological and spiritual as well as terrestrial conquest.¹⁸ This was represented in the grand *fu* of Sima Xiangru, where the flight became an empowering spiritual progress and the vehicle for eulogizing the Emperor's attainment of immortal sagehood. "As the Emperor within the text of the ['Taizi Youlie'] *fu* is transformed into a sage, so is the very same emperor to whom this text is presented and who is confronted with his poetic double. The rhetoric of performance embraces the imperial presence in ideal, and entirely panegyric, terms."¹⁹ The *Shiji*'s treatise on the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices attests that Emperor Wu, in an unwitting imitation of Qin Shihuang, carried out his ritual journeys in the interest of attaining immortality, and strongly suggests that his were not the ancient rituals but rather invented performances. By this account the Emperor's ritual processions were imitations—even "cannibalizations"—of earlier religious rituals in order to augment his cosmic power, just as his viewing of the jester's imitation of the "Li Sao" persona allowed him to consume the representation of complaint. The absorption of political speech and religious ritual into the realm of representation reflects the contemporaneous consolidation of imperial power.

For the Sima Qian, the poetry of Qu Yuan and Jia Yi was part of a value-laden transformation in the role of verbal art vis-à-vis imperial power. The difference between remonstrance, a political act that transforms the ruler, and entertainment, a theatrical act that diverts the ruler by drawing attention to itself, is acute. There is thus a radical disjunction between the role explicitly claimed for the "Li Sao" in the *Shiji* and the practical role of poetry during the time that statement was presumably written.

Furthermore, the monitory function that late Han writers ascribed to the early Han

¹⁸ *Songs of the South* p. 47.

¹⁹ Kern, "Han Aesthetics," p. 429.

presentations is precisely the same role that Sima Qian's statement attributes to the "Li Sao." Is it possible that Sima Qian, too, was anachronistically projecting a political, and in Confucian terms, moral, function for poetry onto the past? And if composing poetry could once but no longer claim political and moral effectiveness, what about writing history? By calling the "Li Sao" "indirect remonstrance," the *Shiji* articulates a dream of literature as effective political deed; although the "Li Sao" failed to transform King Huai, it survives in the *Shiji* presentation to pass judgment on a king whose failure to respond correctly to poetry had catastrophic results. The *Shiji* presents the "Li Sao" as an act of critical historical practice on behalf of a politically engaged poet, of which the legacy should serve as a warning to future rulers. It was a dream that could not be realized in the conditions of Emperor Wu's China any more than in King Huai's Chu, but it was made all the more compelling by the real impotence of state employees, who were the primary transmitters of literary interpretation during and after the Han dynasty.

Above I have discussed Sima Qian's contemporary climate of literary practice; now I will consider his world of interpreting and theorizing the texts of the past. Remarkably, the entire foregoing discussion of poetic practice did not once mention the most famous poetry of all, the *Shi* 詩 (Odes). But it is the Odes that have preserved for us a window on early Han hermeneutics and poetics, precisely because, in contrast to the active and evolving practice of composing and performing *ci* and *fu*, by the Han the Odes were already ancient and authoritative texts, objects of reverential study and interpretation. These and the commentaries that were related to such classics as the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals) provide insights to Sima Qian's hermeneutic world.

There was not one monolithic hermeneutic practice that dominated the interpretation of text in the early Han. The historical record tells us that there were the exponents of New Text at the imperial court and the devotees of Old Text at certain regional courts, and now archeological finds tell us that there were a great many other approaches to interpreting text that were perhaps less institutionalized yet widespread. But all of them were unified by the same necessity and the same problem: the need to preserve the authoritative teachings of the masters, and the vast silence of ruinous wars and the Qin bibliocaust that separated the masters' textual and contextual traditions from the Han.

In 136 B.C. Emperor Wu established five chairs for Academicians in the classics. Each specialized in an authoritative text: the *Yi* 易 (Changes), *Shi* 詩 (Odes), *Shu* 書 (Documents), *Li* 禮 (Rites), and *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn). During the Sima's time court scholarship was dominated by the New Text approach to the Classics, which relied on versions written in the new script and emphasized cosmology, philosophical syncretism, and pragmatic governance.²⁰ These early Academicians had very little political clout, but they shared what Michael Loewe calls the "Modernist" attitude of the time, which maintained many of the ritual, social, and economic policies of the Qin. Old Text scholarship was part of the "Reformist" movement that would not come to power until the Wang Mang interregnum, but it was also thriving during the Simas' time in private teaching institutions and regional courts. Old Text scholars sought out texts written in the ancient script and were more historically and philologically oriented. "Reformists" looked to the Zhou for their ritual, political, and philosophical precedents.

²⁰ Cf. Sarah Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon*, on the New Text Confucianism of Dong Zhongshu, and, for a revisionary account, Michael Nylan, "The 'Chin Wen/Ku Wen' Controversy in Han Times."

“We might say that in contrast to the self-confident and optimistic court or New Text Confucianism, Old Text scholarship was founded upon a sense that the continuity between past and present had been lost,” and was consequently concerned with recovering the exact wording of their texts; “This concern resulted not only in the collection of existing texts but also in the redaction and fixing of traditions that had hitherto existed largely as orally transmitted teachings or doctrines.”²¹ While New Text scholars dominated the intellectual discourse of the court where the Simas worked and wrote, a project such as the *Shiji* is in many ways methodologically aligned with Old Text scholarship.

Robert Hightower’s characterization of the New Text anthology “Outer Commentary on the Han Odes” as “Confucian moralizing of the usual sort,”²² betrays that in regards to the interpretation of the Odes, Old Text and New Text shared some essential similarities. A moralizing perspective was also common to interpretations that belonged to neither Old Text nor New Text. According to the hermeneutic implied by the exegeses of Odes recorded in the works of Xunzi and Liu An and in manuscripts unearthed from tombs of the late fourth to late second centuries BC, “what counts is not what the text says, but how an intelligent and perceptive listener is influenced by its performance.”²³ The emphasis on moral transformation was a natural outcome of the education setting in which these interpretations took form. Because the ancient masters, especially Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, referred favorably to the Odes and used them to illustrate points of doctrine, the Odes were thought to contain important moral truths

²¹ Van Zoeren, p. 84.

²² “The Han-Shih Wai-Chuan and the San Chia Shih,” p. 242.

²³ Kern, *ibid.*, p. 427.

and became revered texts in their own right. Teaching the Odes generated a variety of strategies for demonstrating their edifying truths, but all of these strategies aimed at the moral improvement of their students. Hence the Odes were in theory and practice texts for learning morality, and not primarily for aesthetic enjoyment.

The “Self-Narration” and the Grand Historian’s comments reflect an orientation that is particularly characteristic of Old Text scholarship on the Odes: praise and blame. This theory has its most complete expression in the Mao Prefaces to the Odes, in which the poems are interpreted in terms of their author’s original intentions (following Mencius) and their intentions are always (following Xunzi) “paradigmatically correct and normative.”²⁴ Deriving their interpretative values from political philosophers, the Mao exegetes understood the correct moral sentiments expressed in the Odes to be necessarily political in intent, always motivated by and intended for the king, praising him or blaming him. And the prerequisite for daring to judge the king, however tactfully or indirectly, is absolute moral rectitude.

According to the principle of governance by which the king is the wind and the people the grass, all positive or negative circumstances ultimately derive from the morals of the king. In this worldview, “expression is necessarily the expression of a state ethos,” and therefore the king must be the original reader and only theme of the Mao Odes.²⁵ The Preface to the poem “Guan ju” 關雎 (The Fishhawks’ Call) relates that in the dark days of the end of the Zhou, it was the state historians, with their knowledge of the pre-lapsarian moral order, who responded to their decadent times by composing appropriately ironic poems. “The authors of the Odes were thus able to transcend their environments

²⁴ Van Zoeren, p. 94.

²⁵ Saussy, p. 108.

because of the charismatic virtue of earlier, greater princes like King Wen; the influence of these paragons shaped and constituted the characters of the authors of the Odes.”²⁶

Poet and historian are literally one in this theory; they remember and remonstrate indirectly. This is what the Gongyang, Guliang, and Zuo traditions reveal about the Confucius who wrote the infinitely subtle *Spring and Autumn*; aligning himself with that critical Confucius in the “Self-Narration,” Sima Qian suggests his solidarity with this view of poesis. Hardly a scholar since has not read the *Shiji* accordingly, seeking Sima Qian’s coded judgments.

The theory of praise and blame is both a poetic and a hermeneutic. It posits that writing is a deed performed in relation to a king; consequently, texts need historical context to be correctly understood. Just as Sima Qian needs to explain himself in a “Self-Narration,” to report his terrible suffering and align himself with Confucius, the master critic, in order to ensure a correct reading of the *Shiji*, the Odes cannot in this view stand alone. As ironically coded critical deeds, their intentions can only be understood in relation to the authors who prospered or suffered under the king. Whether the words of a love song are to be understood as praise of the king’s choice of wife or a satire of his licentiousness depends entirely on the particular king for whom it was written. Poems need context; they need biographies. Generalized, this means the historian is the essential commentator on the texts of the past. The historian’s framing of texts in biographical narratives dictates the (correct, because originally intended) interpretation of those texts. In this view the “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” is originally an intervention, the assertion of an interpretation of the poems for which it provides context.

²⁶ Van Zoeren, p. 102.

According to the hermeneutic exemplified in the prefaces to the Mao version of the *Shijing*, poems evaluate history in order to influence its course, and their poets must be morally exemplary to perform that role.²⁷ Moral exemplarity is memory of the former golden age applied to political engagement: writing poetry is a political act, and a poem is a deed of words, a righteous act of encouragement or remonstrance. This intellectual universe of the Mao Odes was quite different than the literary and political reality of Emperor Wu's court. The sober moralizing of the world of textual interpretation contrasts starkly with the sensuous and entertaining performances of *ci* and *fu*. The politically engaged poet-historians the Mao exegetes posit as authors have one thing in common with the politically impotent entertainers who decorated the imperial court, and that is that the master signifier of their poetry is the king. The theory claims that the king is subject to the critical power of poetic deeds; the present reality is that poetry represents the all-encompassing power of the Emperor. Could a hermeneutic theory that assumes poets are necessarily virtuous men of deeds apply to the reality of Sima Qian's age? Is it possible that the exemplary virtue of the ancient poet-historians is a fantasy of idealizing writers, politically ineffective themselves, who wished that kings could listen?²⁸ This puzzle is played out in the historian's treatment of Qu Yuan and Jia Yi.

²⁷ "The Minor Prefaces represent a relatively systematic, even schematic, working out of several trends in late Warring States discussions of the Odes. First, as with Mencius, the Odes are discussed not in terms of their possible rhetorical use in quotation or recital but rather in terms of their original meaning as that was determined by the motivations of their authors. Second, as with Xunzi, all the sentiments expressed in the Odes are paradigmatically correct and normative" (Van Zoeren 94). Deriving their interpretative values from political philosophers, the Mao exegetes understood the correct moral sentiments expressed in the Odes to be necessarily political in intent, always motivated by and intended for the king, praising him or blaming him; and the prerequisite for daring to judge the king, however tactfully or indirectly, is absolute moral rectitude.

²⁸ Cf. Schaberg, *ibid.*

The “Traditions” narrative that frames Sima Qian’s reference to the “Li Sao” applies the Mao Odes hermeneutic, determining a morally edifying interpretation.

According to Mark Edward Lewis:

If a poem is understood as testimony to individual character, then an author is required in order that the poem can be read... The linking of the text to Qu Yuan also inserted the poem into a narrative structure and thereby performed the same function as assigning the Zhou odes to the reigns of different monarchs. If the odes were liable to diverse uses and dangerous readings, the dreamlike allegories of the “Li sao” were infinitely more so... moreover, the extravagant flights of language, the appeals to cults and religious practices that were increasingly rejected by literati, and the dangerous solipsism of a text that asserted the virtues of its speaker against the judgment of the world could, by assigning the poem to a biography, all be brought into the intellectual universe of the Mao commentary to the odes.²⁹

The *Shiji* played a crucial role in this development, giving the Qu Yuan of legend the authority of history in the particular form of a biography of political engagement.

In the “Self-Narration” to the *Shiji* Qu Yuan’s name appears three times. The first is in the list of famous men who immortalized their noble but frustrated intentions in writing. Further along in the “Preface” we find the contents of the *Shiji* and a brief summary or rationale for each chapter. In the statement for “Chu shijia” 楚世家 (Hereditary House of Chu) we read: “懷王客死，蘭咎屈原；好諛信讒，楚并於秦”

²⁹ Pp. 189-90.

(King Huai died abroad, Lan blamed Qu Yuan; preferring flatterers and trusting slanderers, Chu was annexed by Qin).³⁰ Although this suggests that the wrong treatment of Qu Yuan is the primary cause of the downfall of Chu, his name appears only once in the text of the “Hereditary House of Chu,” when he suddenly turns up to chastise King Huai for not meting out revenge on Zhang Yi. A slight variation of the Zhang Yi-King Huai incident including Qu Yuan’s brief cameo also appears in the “Traditions of Zhang Yi” chapter. In neither place is there a mention of writing or poetry, or for that matter any hint that this Qu Yuan is anything more than a loyal statesman of Chu. A little further along in the “Self-Narration” we find the statement for the “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia”: “作辭以諷諫，連類以爭義，離騷有之。作屈原賈生列傳第二十四” (Diction composed to remonstrate indirectly, categories connected to strive for right principles: such has the ‘Li Sao.’ [So I] composed number twenty-four, the Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia).³¹ Here the “Li Sao” takes the spotlight, but its purpose as rhetorically indirect remonstrance comes first, and Jia Yi’s half of the chapter is unexplained. In none of these references does Qu Yuan appear as a writer primarily concerned with the aesthetic quality of his work. This prepares the way for an understanding of Qu Yuan as a writer of deeds.

The biography proper in the “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” immediately presents Qu Yuan as a man of deeds in the same mold as the authors of the Mao version of the *Shijing*. The narrative begins, like the “Li Sao,” with an announcement of Qu Yuan’s noble ancestry; he belongs to one of the ruling clans of Chu, the mythic origins of which are further described in the “Hereditary House of Chu.” The narrative then states

³⁰ P. 3309.

³¹ P. 3314.

that Qu Yuan, or rather Qu Ping, as he is called here, is of broad learning and talent and an indispensable and trusted servant of the king. His abilities are first presented as more political than literary: his skill with words is put to use in writing laws and decrees.³²

This introduction is entirely consistent with the Mao vision of political historian-poets. Qu Yuan's virtue is his memory of the ancient way, and that is in his bloodstream as well as his literary allusions to the sages. Just as poet and historian are one in the Mao theory, they are also united for Qu Yuan in so far as memory and knowledge of the past are the Xunzian essence of his virtue:

The poet thus claims authority for his oppositional stance by reference to an ancient virtue he alone retains. Although at odds with the men of his time, he claims justification through appeals to a past defined by the texts that his references assume... just as the memory of the earlier sages preserved in their verse allowed the 'state historians' to write 'mutated odes' that preserved virtue by criticizing vice, so the speaker in the "Li Sao" sings his own virtue through the sagely precedents elaborated within the poem.³³

Just as the writers of the "mutated odes" remembered the virtue of the former kings and used poetry to tactfully remonstrate with kings who had forgotten, so Qu Yuan, living in the dangerous time of the late Warring States, resorts to poetry. As in the "Li Sao," the king's favor provokes jealousy. A slanderous story is concocted and reaches the ears of

³² P. 2481.

³³ Lewis, p. 188.

the king; he is angered and “疏屈平” (keeps Qu Yuan at a distance).³⁴ There follows a passage concerning the composition of the “Li Sao,” and then, with “屈平既絀” (Qu Yuan was dismissed),³⁵ a return to the narration of the political affairs of Chu.

At this point, the talented nobleman of the “Li Sao” and the talented nobleman of the “Traditions” part ways. The words “疏” and “絀” have been a topic of debate, but whether King Huai has at this point actually banished Qu Yuan, physically sending him beyond the borders, or only kept him at a distance in a more limited sense, not seeking his service or heeding his advice, this narrative sequence demands that we read the “Li Sao” ironically. Although the speaker in the poem has abandoned all hope of communicating with his king and rectifying the governance of the world, the author of the poem keeps involved even from a distance. The “Li Sao” finishes with the speaker’s resolution to follow Peng Xian; this has been taken to refer an intention to commit suicide by drowning following the pattern of a Shang Dynasty official named Peng Xian or to an intention to pursue the mystical path of the legendary shamans Peng and Xian.³⁶ But at this point in the *Shiji* narrative, Qu Yuan neither drowns himself nor withdraws from politics to seek the spirit world. Sima Qian interpreted it as irony; although Qu Yuan may declare that he intends to depart, according to Sima Qian he is still actively engaged in the politics of Chu. And so Qu Yuan is absent for a few paragraphs while Zhang Yi bamboozles King Huai, until he suddenly returns from Qi, where he has been

³⁴ P. 2481.

³⁵ P. 2483.

³⁶ The *Shiji* does not include biographies of or references to Peng Xian the Shang official, which considering Sima Qian’s sympathies and concerns we might well expect it to; it is entirely possible at this point that Sima Qian interpreted Peng and Xian as legendary shamans. For a discussion of the various early interpretations see Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, p. 84, and Huang Linggeng, pp. 176-8.

serving as an emissary, to personally chastise King Huai for heeding Zhang Yi's devious advice.³⁷

The passage that describes Qu Yuan's motive for writing the "Li Sao" begins on a significantly political note and does not suggest any rejection of service: "屈平疾王聽之不聽也，讒諂之蔽明也，邪曲之害公也，方正之不容也，故憂愁幽思而作離騷" (Qu Ping was pained that the king heard but did not understand, slander and flattery were blocking enlightened [knowledge], crookedness was harming the public good, the square and upright [way] was not accepted; thus with anxious concern and pent-up worry he composed the 'Li Sao').³⁸ Furthermore, the harmful consequences of the King's failure to distinguish true and slanderous speech are generalized; Qu Yuan is at this point not necessarily concerned about his personal status. This frames the reading of the "Li Sao" as an expression not of the poet's private self-pity but of his empathy for the land of Chu and concern for correct moral governance. The Qu Yuan of the "Traditions" must have written the "Li Sao" in an ironic mode. Although it seems to renounce the king, in fact it is a satire of renunciation.

Next the biography offers the earliest gloss translation of the poem's title: "離騷者猶離憂也" (As to 'Li Sao,' it is like *li you* [departing from/meeting with affliction]).³⁹ The words *li you* are also used in Jia Yia's "Lament for Qu Yuan," discussed below; this is probably not Sima Qian's original gloss. It poses a difficulty to re-translate into English, because the word *li* used in both the original title and the gloss could mean

³⁷ P. 2484.

³⁸ P. 2482.

³⁹ P. 2482.

“depart from” or “meet with” 罹, resulting in “departing from affliction” or “meeting with affliction.” However, if we allow the surrounding narrative to guide our interpretation, we will be inclined to favor “meeting with affliction”; the poet is not yet ready to depart. The immediately following passage, a digression from the main narrative expressing the historian’s (or perhaps Liu An’s) empathy, also favors “meeting” over “departing”:

夫天者，人之始也；父母者，人之本也。人窮則反本，故勞苦倦極，未嘗不呼天也；疾痛慘怛，未嘗不呼父母也。屈平正道直行，竭忠盡智以事其君，讒人閒之，可謂窮矣。信而見疑，忠而被謗，能無怨乎？屈平之作離騷，蓋自怨生也。 Now Heaven is the beginning of man[kind], and [one’s] father and mother are the root of a man. When a man reaches his limit he returns to his roots, such that when his toil and suffering are wearisome in the extreme, he can’t but cry to Heaven, and when his sickness and pain are lamentably distressing, he can’t but cry to his father and mother. Qu Ping followed the upright way and acted straightly, serving his lord with perfect loyalty and utmost wisdom, but slanderers divided them—he can surely be said to have reached the limit. Trustworthy and yet doubted, loyal and yet slandered; could [he] be without complaint? Qu Ping’s composition of the ‘Li Sao’ must have been to complain of his life.⁴⁰

This defines “Li Sao” by its purpose: it written to complain of his unfortunate life, but no mention is made of leaving misfortune or life behind.

⁴⁰ P. 2482.

The extended interpretation of the “Li Sao” that follows is quoted from Liu An’s Preface (a later interpolation, according to Tang Bingzheng and David Hawkes). It suggests a different idea of the purpose and value of the “Li Sao” by presenting Qu Yuan as a charismatic spiritual adept. But the *Shiji* biography (whether the historian himself included the Liu An fragment or not) effectively suppresses the apotheosizing, spiritual aspects of the earlier interpretation.

國風好色而不淫，小雅怨誹而不亂。若離騷者，可謂兼之矣。上稱帝
嚳，下道齊桓，中述湯武，以刺世事。明道德之廣崇，治亂之條貫，
靡不畢見。The “Airs of the States” love beauty and yet are not excessive;
the “Lesser Odes” complain and yet are not disorderly. As to the “Li Sao,”
both of these can be said of it. Above it names Di Ku, below it speaks of
Duke Huan of Qi, in the middle it narrates Tang and Wu, all in order to
criticize the affairs of its time. The illumination of the expansive breadth
and great height of the Way and its virtue, and the presentation of orderly
and disorderly governance, are all made completely apparent.⁴¹

This favorably compares the “Li Sao” to the canonical *Shijing*, according to the politically efficacious moral-emotional impact that Confucius attributed to the *Shijing* poems. By noting the use of historical examples to criticize the worldly affairs of his time, the preface brings the “Li Sao” into the fold of classical thinkers, who made heavy use of this rhetorical strategy. The preface is unreserved in its praise of the “Li Sao” as an expression of morally correct golden-age politics, and it draws attention to the poem’s literary qualities to legitimize its praise.

⁴¹ P. 2482.

The second part of Liu An's preface focuses more directly on the literary qualities of the poem, but in doing so it quickly blurs poem and poet. “其文約，其辭微，其志絜，其行廉” (Its literary pattern is restrained, its diction is fine; his aspiration is pure, his conduct maintains integrity).⁴² There is no clear distinction here between content and composer; following from the above, “其” (its/his) would seem to refer the qualities enumerated to the text of the poem, but with “志” (aspiration) and even more with “行” (conduct), it seems to refer to a human subject, the poet. Then follows a very early articulation of a theory of allegory in the history of Chinese literary criticism: “其稱文小而其指極大，舉類邇而見義遠” (Its literal words are small but it refers to the most great; selecting from categories near at hand it makes visible a far-reaching significance).⁴³ It goes on to provide an interpretative key to understanding the allegorical signs of the “Li Sao”: “其志絜，故其稱物芳。其行廉，故死而不容自疏” (His aspiration is pure; thus he names fragrant objects. His actions maintain integrity; thus he died and did not accept self-estrangement).⁴⁴ Here the poet is still the grammatical subject; the making of and interpretation of the poem's literary structure are referred back to him; as with the authors of the Mao poems, consideration of his moral exemplarity ensures the correct reading of his poetry.

So far, Liu An's preface puts the reader of the “Li Sao” in the same interpretative framework as the *Shiji* narrative. However, the last part of the fragment offers a view of Qu Yuan, the key determining element in said interpretative framework, that is quite

⁴² P. 2482.

⁴³ P. 2482.

⁴⁴ P. 2482.

different than the Qu Yuan of the rest of the biography. “濯淖汙泥之中，蟬蛻於濁穢，以浮游塵埃之外，不獲世之滋垢，皜然泥而不滓者也。推此志也，雖與日月爭光可也” (Cleansing himself of the the muck, coming free like a cicada of its dirty husk, to float beyond the dust: he did not receive any of the world’s dirt, and although enmired, shining purely, he remained undirtied. Judging from this aspiration [of his], I say he can vie for brilliance even with the sun and moon).⁴⁵ There is no language like this in Sima Qian’s portions of the biography; his narrative is decidedly realist. In contrast, Liu An paints Qu Yuan as a transcendent rather than an unfortunate man. In the Han cicada-shaped jade carvings were placed in the mouths of deceased nobility for preservation of the corpse. The way a mature cicada climbs out of its exoskeleton, flying away and leaving the appearance of a dry corpse stuck to a tree branch, suggested its use as a natural symbol of rebirth and longevity. Liu An’s preface also suggests that Qu Yuan committed suicide, but it offers only praise of this, and it brings to mind tales of Daoist masters ascending upon their merely physical deaths.

While we could read the figures of Liu An’s preface simply as empty metaphors of general praise, I am inclined to read the last line of Liu An’s preface very strongly and propose that it represents Qu Yuan as a Huang-Lao/Daoist saint.⁴⁶ Indeed, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, composed under Liu An’s patronage, contains passages on the transformation

⁴⁵ P. 2482.

⁴⁶ Some modern scholarship asserts that Liu An presents Qu Yuan as a classical Confucian gentleman (for example, see Li & Zhu, p. 42); however, this relies on the anachronistic assumption that any reference to the *Shijing* refers to the completely Confucianized *Shijing*, and also demonstrates the great force of the “Traditions” narrative in determining the reading of this passage. In fact in the early years of the Han Qu Yuan could have been imagined as both Huang-Lao/Daoist transcendent and “Confucian” at the same time; see Yi Chonglian for an example of this view (pp. 27-8).

into an immortal that may be derived directly from the language of the “Li Sao.”⁴⁷ Wang Yi also supports this reading with a statement in his *Chuci zhangju*. In his preface to Huainan Xiaoshan’s poem “Zhao yinshi” 招隱士 (Summoning the Recluse), we find a description of the circumstances of this poem’s composition:

小山之徒，閔傷屈原，又怪其文昇天乘雲，役使百神，似若仙者，雖身沈沒，名德顯聞，與隱處山澤無異，故作《招隱士》之賦，以章其志也。The disciples [of Liu An] felt pity for Qu Yuan, and thought his writings marvelous—ascending heaven and riding the clouds, employing hundreds of spirits, seeming like an immortal—although his body was sunken in the water, the virtue of his name was well-known, making him no different from the [recluses] of the wilds. Thus they made the composition “Summoning the Recluse,” in order to make manifest his aspiration.⁴⁸

Wang Yi’s interpretation of “Summoning the Recluse,” surely one of the *Chuci* poems with the least internal indication of an allegorical structure, as an allegory of Qu Yuan’s suicide is farfetched, but his slippage from riding the clouds to hiding in the hills demonstrates the intimate link between spiritual liberty and terrestrial reclusion that is characteristic of early Daoist discourse. Were this preface appended to “Yuan you” 遠遊 (Far Roaming) rather than “Summoning the Recluse” it would hardly be questionable; alternatively, David Hawkes’ preface to that poem could be appended to this one: “*Yuan you*” could be described as a Taoist’s answer to *Li sao*... The combination of Taoist

⁴⁷ Schimmelpfennig, pp. 121-22.

⁴⁸ Quotations of Wang Yi are from Hong Xingzu’s *Chuci buzhu*. P. 232.

mysticism with an enthusiasm for Chu poetry is the hallmark of the little group of poets and philosophers who, in the second half of the second century B.C., under the patronage of Liu An, Prince of Huainan, produced not only the Taoist ‘Book of Huainan,’ but also the earliest edition of *Chu ci*”; and “The heroes of the anonymous poet who wrote *Yuan you* are not great shamans like Wu Xian but Taoist Immortals like the Master of the Red Pine and Wang Qiao.”⁴⁹ Furthermore, Wang Yi’s statement is representative of a general trend in *Chuci* historiography: it asserts that aspects of Qu Yuan’s work were isolated and imitated—aspects of his “志” (aspiration) were “章” (made manifest)—to become sub-currents of the *Chuci* tradition. Given some of the currents that emerged in the *Chuci* tradition during the Han, including the topos of the spirit journey in *fu*, Wang Yi’s statement that Liu An and his disciples viewed Qu Yuan “like an immortal” seems quite reasonable.

Thus the “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” preserves the fragment of what may have been an earlier Qu Yuan: a Qu Yuan who attained immortality precisely through suicide, and whose purity may have had as much to do with consuming herbs as with bureaucratic rectitude. Liu An’s version of Qu Yuan leads to a different reading of the “Li Sao.” With this transcendent Qu Yuan as author, the terrestrial and cosmic quests of the speaker might be understood rather more literally, as representative of his spiritual experience (or of his spiritual experience-as-cultivation of political potency). And the poem’s conclusion can be taken quite literally, as a renunciation of governmental entanglements and an intention to pursue the path of spiritual attainment or the path of

⁴⁹ Pp. 191 and 193.

immortality through renunciation of the merely physical body. Interpreting according to Liu An's preface, we need not read the "Li Sao" coda as an ironic resolution.

The fragment of Liu An's preface is a digression in the *Shiji* biography's narrative, and the narrative is arranged in such a way as to de-emphasize the spiritual aspects of Liu An's interpretation. Although in Huainan's Daoist discourse, the transcendence of an insect's climbing from its shell brings to mind social withdraw, spiritual cultivation, and perhaps the ascendance of a physically deceased adept, the biography has established that Qu Yuan is not such a one; illustrious, but very much of this world. According to the *Shiji*, although the "Li Sao" seems to renounce the king and the world, it in fact expresses profound loyalty. If the historian himself included this fragment of Liu An's preface, it seems he did not necessarily endorse its interpretation.

The narrative's overall realist portrayal of Qu Yuan accords with Sima Qian's critical view of the mixing of religion and politics during Emperor Wu's reign. During the early Han the realms of discourse and experience that we now call religion and government were not fully separate; neither were political and spiritual power.⁵⁰ This is apparent in the ritual activities of the court, in Emperor Wu's love of spectacular sacrifices, his employment of *fangshi* 方士 (alchemists or sorcerers), his empowering imperial tours, and the kind of experience described for him in Sima Xiangru's "Da ren fu" 大人賦 (Rhapsody on the Great Man). It is also apparent in the *Huainanzi*, which links the ruler's cultivation of his spiritual person to governance. But particularly in the *Shiji*'s representation of Emperor Wu's clumsy attempt to perform the *Feng* and *Shan*

⁵⁰ The Han dynasty artifacts discovered at Mawangdui and on display at the Hunan Provincial Museum make this point with vivid clarity; representing the aristocratic culture of the region of the former Chu, they include many texts and implements related to occult science, life-preserving exercises, and spiritual practices that are difficult to describe with the vocabulary of a modern worldview.

sacrifices and his bamboozlement by spirit-mediums, the historian's preference for more rational governance is apparent. This preference comes through in the way the Liu An fragment is effectively rationalized by the surrounding narrative. By refusing to allow us to read certain passages of the "Li Sao" literally, the *Shiji* narrative muffles the reading of Qu Yuan as a spiritual transcendent and brings Qu Yuan in line with Sima Qian's political concerns. The *Shiji* demonstrates that the dialogue of "Li Sao" interpretation had begun even before the *Shiji*, our first record of such interpretation, and marks the beginning of the rationalizing strand of the poem's tradition.⁵¹

Turning from Liu An's interpretation, the "Traditions" returns to the highly worldly, un-spiritual Qu Yuan that it first introduced. Surprisingly, considering that the historian did not begrudge the labor of copying down even longer texts elsewhere in the *Shiji*, the text of the "Li Sao" is not included. It has been presented in terms of its social function, "怨" (to complain) or "刺" (to criticize), both active verbs, which without a text following strongly emphasizes the nature of the "Li Sao" as historical deed rather than aesthetic object.⁵² The narrative proper also continues to emphasize Qu Yuan's active political engagement even more than other versions of this moment found elsewhere in the *Shiji*. It informs us that although Qu Yuan was not restored to his original position, Qu Yuan returned from Qi to remonstrate with the king in person, and the king took the criticism to heart, although he failed to catch Zhang Yi. This part of the story appears in very similar form in the "Hereditary House of Chu," and in the "Traditions of Zhang Yi."

⁵¹ In regards to Liu An's rhetoric of praise for Qu Yuan, Ban Gu's preface to the "Li Sao" asserts that "斯論似過其真" (this assessment seems to exceed the truth of it), even more directly squelching any spiritually transcendent possibilities and thus resolving the imagery of the "Li Sao" into an allegory of strictly this-world history.

⁵² P. 2482.

Qu Yuan's next act in the "Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia" is to warn King Huai against traveling to Qin, "虎狼之國" (the country of tigers and wolves).⁵³ The Tang commentator Sima Zhen notes that Qu Yuan's warning is attributed to Zhao Sui in the "Hereditary House of Chu"; he concludes that no doubt "二人同諫王" (both men made the same remonstrance with the king).⁵⁴ That is possible, but it is also possible that the historian used his sources in such a way as to emphasize in the "Traditions" that Qu Yuan was personally, physically involved in the whole affair, not merely pondering it from a safe distance with his writing brush.

The word "諫" (remonstrance) is used to describe Qu Yuan's purpose in returning from Qi as well as the purpose of the "Li Sao" as given in the statement in the "Self-Narration." The chapter is constructed so as to suggest that Qu Yuan wrote the "Li Sao" with every intention for the king to hear it or perhaps read it. In the "Hereditary House of Chu" King Huai reads a letter of remonstrance from Qi, where Qu Yuan was serving as emissary;⁵⁵ such textually mediated remonstrance was clearly conceivable. This Qu Yuan is like the authors of the ironic Mao Odes and also like the diplomatic presenters of Odes in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳; other than Liu An's perhaps anachronistically interpolated fragment, there is nothing to suggest he is anything like Red Pine.

The main narrative emphasizes Qu Yuan's constant political engagement, whereas other passages suggest an author with different motivations. After King Huai's death in Qin, there is another sudden disruption in the narrative, which reverts to Qu

⁵³ P. 2484.

⁵⁴ P. 2484.

⁵⁵ Pp. 1725-26.

Yuan's time away. Tang Bingzheng asserts that this entire passage until the main narrative resumes is a later interpolation from a lost part of Liu An's preface, and the chapter certainly reads much more smoothly without it. It seems to assume a slightly different version of Qu Yuan's story, stating that Qu Yuan was “放流” (banished),⁵⁶ a stronger word than those used so far, “疏” (kept at a distance) or “絀” (dismissed), and that he wanted to return but in the end could not. According to this source, although Qu Yuan's writings repeatedly express his loyal intention (“其存君興國而欲反覆之，一篇之中三致志焉”),⁵⁷ he did not necessarily remonstrate with the king, either directly or indirectly by presenting the text of the “Li Sao.” The main narrative resumes with the King's younger son Zilan's great anger (it is unclear what exactly Zilan is angry about if the preceding passage is included) and his instigation of Qu Yuan's banishment (again, in the preceding passage he was already banished).

At this point the prose poem that is called “The Fisherman” in the *Chuci* is included in the narrative with no citation, as if it describes an actual historical event.⁵⁸ Martin Kern concludes that the author of this chapter “tried to integrate an existing literary piece into the biography to lend drama and authenticity to his narrative” because “whoever compiled the Qu Yuan biography appears to have found it possible and legitimate to transform a literary piece into the representation of an actual situation.”⁵⁹ The poem “Embracing Sand” that follows the exchange with the fisherman is also given as a representation of a real event of speech, following which the author embodies the

⁵⁶ P. 2485.

⁵⁷ P. 2485.

⁵⁸ P. 2486.

⁵⁹ Kern, “Han Aesthetics,” p. 402.

intention he has expressed and casts himself into the river. If the “Li Sao” is likewise the representation of a historical reality, what it represents when all the symbols and ironic gestures are properly decoded is the author’s act of indirect remonstrance. In this reading the emphasis is very much on the act, not its representation. Finally, prefaced by his statement of intention in “Embracing Sand,” Qu Yuan’s suicide is itself a morally exemplary deed of indirect remonstrance, the only one possible after the ironic “Li Sao” has failed to reform his king, his king has died, and he has been forbidden to return and engage in political life.

After Qu Yuan’s death, the narrative offers an explicit contrast to Qu Yuan’s deed of remonstrance:

屈原既死之后，楚有宋玉、唐勒、景差之徒者，皆好辭而以賦見稱；然皆祖屈原之從容辭令，終莫敢直諫。其后楚日以削，數十年竟為秦所滅。 After the death of Qu Yuan, Chu had people like Song Yu, Tang Le, and Jing Cuo; they all loved the *Chuci* and became known for their compositions [*fu*]; they all considered Qu Yuan’s decorous elocution to be their progenitor, but in the end none of them dared to directly remonstrate. After that, Chu was daily pared away, and in a few dozen years was completely extinguished by Qin.⁶⁰

This is a surprising statement given the poems of followers of Qu Yuan that survive in the *Chuci*, many of which contain criticism that could hardly be called tactfully indirect. The emphasis here is on “直” (directly): what these men did not dare do was face the king and remonstrate overtly in deed. In contrast to Qu Yuan, who veiled his criticism in

⁶⁰ P. 2491.

appropriately obscure, indirect language in order that he be able to actually present it to the king, his imitators wrote poems that were circulated for private reading among their coterie,⁶¹ or, as in the case of the “Seven Remonstrances” of the jester Dongfang Shuo, their poems were literary diversions intended to amuse and aggrandize the ruler, not to move him to action. If their work expressed criticism, they never meant it to have a reforming effect on the ostensible target of that criticism. This interpretation of the historian’s statement is supported by the line that immediately follows, which informs us that Chu was daily being pared away and in only a few dozen years was extinguished by Qin. The causal link suggested by the juxtaposition magnifies the literary cowardice of these men of Chu.

The main narrative of the Qu Yuan portion of the “Traditions” constructs a worldly, practical, and above all politically engaged Qu Yuan, a Qu Yuan whose historical circumstances and verbal compositions mutually affirm his moral-political virtue. The construction belongs to the ideal world of the Mao Prefaces. The “Traditions” acts as a commentary to explain that Qu Yuan’s poems were not just representations of abstract private virtue or spiritual attainment but critical acts in history. It frames the poems’ empowering Xunzian memory of moral glory within the Mencian hermeneutic that places importance on “the role of poetry as evidence of historical realities.”⁶² The result is a Mao Odes-esque poet of deeds, a maker of history. If we disregard the passages alleged to be later interpolations, he is hardly even a poet; the poems are documentary evidence of a man’s political engagement rather than literary texts interesting in their own right. The text of the “Li Sao” is not even included.

⁶¹ Cf. Pankenier.

⁶² Lewis, p. 165.

Turning then to the Jia Yi half of the chapter, that it begins with Jia Yi throwing a text into the river seems to be a rather pointed expression of the political non-engagement of Jia Yi's poetry. The narrative of Jia Yi emphasizes the discontinuity of his historical circumstances and his literary output, or the precisely literary, non-political character of his poetry. Moreover, Jia Yi's own relationship to and characterization of Qu Yuan focuses on literary rather than political or historical qualities. I propose that, as in the case of the Liu An citation, the history offers an earlier version of Qu Yuan that it does not entirely support. First I will present the Qu Yuan that emerges from Jia Yi's lament, and then consider the narrative that frames the lament.

It is in Jia Yi's poem "Lament for Qu Yuan," included in full in the "Traditions" chapter, that we have our earliest record of the "Li Sao" and Qu Yuan. The first use of the name Qu Yuan appears in the opening lines of "Lament for Qu Yuan": "共承嘉惠兮，俟罪長沙。側聞屈原兮，自沈汨羅" (Respectful of imperial beneficence — I wait out my offense in Changsha. / I hear it about of Qu Yuan — who sank himself in the Miluo).⁶³ Here is the first appearance of "Qu Yuan" in the historical record, and he is immediately identified as a suicide, even before he is identified as virtuous or as a poet. But the poem certainly views Qu Yuan as a poet; as we shall see, the second line, "造託湘流兮，敬弔先生" ([I] will entrust [this] to the Xiang River current — to respectfully mourn the master),⁶⁴ which established a pattern of mourning to be followed for thousands of years, addresses Qu Yuan as a master poet, not a master of political or moral behavior. The poem goes on to describe the disorder of the times, in language

⁶³ P. 2493.

⁶⁴ P. 2493.

typical of the *Chuci* and the “Gentleman not meeting his time” mode of *fu*; it embellishes the theme and imagery of “變白而為黑兮，倒上以為下。鳳皇在笯兮，雞雉翔舞” (Changing white to be taken as black —— inverting above to be the bottom. / The phoenixes are in cages —— while chickens soaring dance) that is only touched on in the “Li Sao” but is expounded at length in “Embracing Sand,” quoted in full and attributed to Qu Yuan previously in the *Shiji* narrative.⁶⁵

The “Lament” includes a direct quotation of the “Li Sao,” indicating that its author was familiar with the poem as a text as well as a legend.⁶⁶ The critical difference between at least potentially political literature and essentially literary literature can be illustrated by Jia Yi’s use of this allusion. The original and the quotation are included in the poems’ codas, which the “Lament for Qu Yuan” calls *xun* 訊 and the “Li Sao” calls *luan* 亂. In the “Li Sao” the coda is: “已矣哉，國無人莫我知兮，又何懷乎故都？既莫足與為美政兮，吾將從彭咸之所居” (Enough is enough! In the kingdom not a man, none me knows —— Then why [must I] yearn for the old capital? / There’s no one adequate with whom to make beautiful governance —— I will follow Peng Xian [or Peng and Xian] to [his/their] abode). Jia Yi restates the first of these lines but excludes the latter part about good governance and Peng Xian, and he adds a bit about speaking. His version emphasizes the expression of resentment in language rather than the implementation of policy: “已矣，國其莫我知，獨堙鬱兮其誰語” (Enough is enough. In the kingdom none me knows; alone with stifled feelings —— to whom could I speak

⁶⁵ P. 2487.

⁶⁶ See Schimmelpfennig, pp. 114-18, for an analysis of all the quotations of the “Li Sao” found in Jia Yi’s “Lament.”

of it?).⁶⁷ Then the coda of the “Lament” goes on to metaphorically elaborate the virtues of mystic hiding and the miserable plight of those who become bogged down in worldly affairs, famously blaming Qu Yuan for causing his own misfortune through a bit of allusive play on the quoted poem (“般紛紛其離此尤兮，亦夫子之辜也”).⁶⁸ Jia Yi then proposes his alternative course of action more strongly, embellishing his theme with even more metaphors and eventually returning to the direct quotation of the coda of the “Li Sao”: “嚮九州而相君兮，何必懷此都也” (Searching the nine regions to serve a lord — — Why must [you] yearn for this capital?).⁶⁹ Jia Yi takes out the character “故” (old) which significantly reduces the feeling of belonging to the capital⁷⁰ and makes it seem easier to accept his advice. Overall, he urges Qu Yuan to concern himself more with his own spiritual cultivation and less with the petty entanglements of government. The “Lament” comes to an oddly inconclusive ending, petering off into a wash of heavy-handed metaphorical imagery. Compared to the concise and decisive coda of the “Li Sao,” the coda of the “Lament” employs a great deal of imagery indeed, and all to say one thing: preserve yourself. It is part of the discourse of self-preservation and reclusion that flourished in early China and closer to the literary, self-referential language of the full-blown *fu*; it is farther from the critically engaged, politically functional language attributed to the Mao Odes and Sima Qian’s “Li Sao.”

⁶⁷ P. 2494. According to Hong Xingzu some manuscripts of the “Li Sao” did not have “哉,” in which case the two versions are even more similar.

⁶⁸ P. 2494.

⁶⁹ P. 2494.

⁷⁰ Guo Jianxun has proposed in conversation that calling Qu Yuan 愛國忠臣 (a loyal patriot, quoting Zhu Xi) is anachronistic; the idea of nationality did not exist in the Warring States. What he was loyal to was rather his 故鄉 (natal home) (October 2011).

In the beginning of the poem, Jia Yi addresses Qu Yuan as his master and expresses his intention to respectfully mourn him. However, his passionate criticism and strident advice demonstrate that he does not view Qu Yuan as a master of political engagement or of spiritual cultivation; on the other hand, his reiteration of and play on “Li Sao” images and themes as well as his use of *Chuci* form demonstrates his active discipleship in Qu Yuan’s literary tradition. Jia Yi’s Qu Yuan is an unfortunate man and at least potentially could have been a transcendent, but he is above all a literary model.

While Jia Yi’s poem celebrates Qu Yuan’s literary legacy and encourages Qu Yuan to remain aloof from worldly affairs, the *Shiji* narrative that presents this poem emphasizes that Jia Yi’s poetry is for its part simply literary and politically disengaged. According to the Mao hermeneutic that is applied in the first half of the chapter, the earlier of these poets lived in the chaotic decadence of the Warring States and thus wrote in the mode of ironic criticism. Jia Yi lived in what according to the “Traditions” narrative seems to be the great peace and stability of the Han, and thus should write only praise. Indeed, Jia Yi’s first political speech-act is presented as an expression of his deep confidence in the government of the Han:

賈生以為漢興至孝文二十餘年，天下和洽，而固當改正朔，易服色，法制度，定官名，興禮樂…… Master Jia believed that as it had been more than twenty years from the rise of the Han to the reign of [Emperor] Wen the Filial and all under Heaven was in harmony, the time was right to reform the calendar, change the colors of the regalia, regulate the

institutions, fix the official titles, promote the rites and music, [and so on].⁷¹

Emperor Wen declines Jia Yi's suggestion not because of any misperception of Jia Yi's virtue, but because of his own modesty.⁷² This seems to be a positive depiction of the ruler and the state of the kingdom, a world quite different from Qu Yuan's. According to the theory of the Mao prefaces, a poet of Emperor Wen's time should sing only straightforward praise; there is no need for irony and satire.

This is not the case. Like Qu Yuan, Jia Yi has met with jealousy, slander, and estrangement because the ruler favors his talent. While, according to the *Shiji* narrative, Qu Yuan actually presents the "Li Sao" to King Huai and uses the theme of estrangement rhetorically to encourage the king to make good use of his ministers, Jia Yi's poem represents a literal reality in which the poet's talent has led to complete estrangement and his poetry is not intended to effect a rapprochement. When Jia Yi is slandered by jealous colleagues—and it is not too difficult to sympathize with their jealousy, since according to the narrative this young upstart is always speaking up when they are at a loss for words—Emperor Wen sends him away to serve as tutor to the Prince of Changsha in the region of the former Chu.⁷³ There is nothing in the text to suggest this is a particularly imprudent move on the part of Emperor Wen, and as to Jia Yi, he fears not for the loss of the kingly way but for his own life, which he thinks is bound to be short in that damp region. There follows the text of the poem he throws in the river, the "Lament for Qu Yuan." It is full of self-pity and seems to have little to do with contemporary politics,

⁷¹ P. 2492.

⁷² P. 2492.

⁷³ P. 2492.

besides its general advice to not get too involved. It reiterates a “Li Sao” theme that has been interpreted as political criticism: bad things being mistaken for good and true talent going unrecognized. However, the narrative framing this poem has established that Jia Yi has no practical need for coded criticism: the times he lives in are not out of joint, the kingly way is not lost, and in any case he is going to throw his poem in the river. His poem is intended for the dead Qu Yuan—and future peer readers, of course, for whom he seems to have saved a copy—not for the living Emperor. Literature in the Han may have been useful for personal advancement, but not for kingly transformation. The narrative presents the “Lament for Qu Yuan” as literary self-representation, not as critical deed.

The framing of the “Owl *Fu*” further emphasizes the disengagement of Jia Yi’s poetry. The narrative states that he composes it “以自廣” (to ease himself).⁷⁴ This is a contrast from the statement that “Li Sao” was written “以諷諫” (to indirectly remonstrate). In aesthetically brilliant language the “Owl *Fu*” asserts the speaker’s transcendence of worldly conditions and the sameness of life and death. Yet immediately following the text, Jia Yi heeds a summons to court, which suggests he is still rather involved in worldly affairs, and in the end, Jia Yi blames himself for his royal pupil’s death in an equestrian accident and actually cries himself to death—surely not the practice of the sameness of life and death. The poem is at odds with the narrative of its author’s political activity; Sima Qian frames it as an autonomous expression, as a truly literary text.

The irony of the “Owl *Fu*” is a different kind of irony than that of Qu Yuan living on although his persona abandons hope. Whereas the irony of the “Li Sao” was

⁷⁴ P. 2496.

appropriate to the task of remonstrance, within this biographical narrative the irony of Jia Yi's poem seems to be hypocrisy, a disjunction between word and deed. However, the "Traditions" provides a more nuanced view of Jia Yi when it depicts him taking the opportunity to remonstrate ("諫") about the enfeoffment of the four princes of Huainan.⁷⁵ As the *Shiji* elsewhere records, the Princes will certainly make trouble, and apparently Jia Yi has been able to foresee this while Emperor Wen has not. The poet has met a situation in which ironic criticism could conceivably be appropriate; however, the narrative does not allow us to construe this particular act of remonstrance out of the text of the "Owl *Fu*." His remonstrance is a separate and non-poetic deed. This further emphasizes the distance between Jia Yi's politics and his poetry, and makes it difficult for readers to judge him and his works as one according to the standard of Qu Yuan.

The last point raises the problem of all this to the fore: Jia Yi was in fact a great statesman and a great poet, and the historian tacitly agrees to as much by writing Jia Yi and his poems into his history at all. To read the narrative in order is to evaluate Jia Yi according to the standards established by Qu Yuan, which leads to a rather poor view of Jia Yi. But it is also possible to reread the chapter and evaluate Qu Yuan according to the standard of Jia Yi, which is precisely what the Historian's Comment at the end suggests: "及見賈生弔之" (Then when [I] see Master Jia mourn for [Qu Yuan]...).⁷⁶ A choice of readings hinges on the last line: if we take "又爽然自失" as Burton Watson does, as expressing the historian's state of befuddlement, no conclusion emerges. That is the response we might expect from Sima Qian, who would have reason to sympathize with

⁷⁵ P. 2503.

⁷⁶ P. 2503.

both men. Hellmut Wilhelm, on the other hand, translates it as “I clearly realized my mistake,” which leads us to conclude that the historian agrees with the critical views expressed in the “Lament for Qu Yuan.” In this reading, literary language is not an effective vehicle for political action, in principle or in practice.

In the Historian’s Comment, Sima Qian replicates Jia Yi’s pattern of mourning, visiting the very spot and desiring to know Qu Yuan’s historical person. He interprets Jia Yi’s fantastical images as practical advice, and wonders, like Jia Yi, why Qu Yuan didn’t leave Chu in search of a more receptive king instead of destroying himself. If I may imagine what thoughts are contained in the historian’s moment of “自失”: Why didn’t Qu Yuan put his talent to work in some other state where it could actually have made a difference? Qu Yuan had the opportunity of a multi-state world, while Jia Yi lived in the monolithic unity of the Han. We know in advance that Qin will swallow up Chu and that King Huai will die a laughingstock, and the speaker of the “Li Sao” seems to know it too, having already abandoned all hope. Is it perhaps the case that the author of the “Li Sao” had no virtue in the Mao sense at all—no political force, no power to affect the king? Is the virtue of the poem’s speaker entirely a creation of the poem—a literary artifact? Perhaps the poem was never intended to influence the course of history, but only to represent something that would otherwise be lost to history. Perhaps the poem is not so much the record of an historical deed as the assertion of a private virtue that could not act in history—that is to say, a literary self-representation. Is this Qu Yuan impotent after all? Or, is it possible that his writing could be as valuable to posterity as policy-making would have been in his own historical moment?

Liu An's enthusiastically eulogistic "Preface" demonstrates the instability of the line between the theory of deed and the practice of literature. It reveals the ease with which the reverent mythologizing of the scholastic hermeneutic becomes the ground of literary imitations, but it also reveals that the priority of genesis can also be reversed. An existing practice, such as the composition of Chu-style poetry at the court of the Prince of Huainan, finds legitimacy in the apotheosis of its founding poet. The story of Qu Yuan's historical virtue, constructed as a validating interpretation of his poem, represents the virtue of all under-appreciated scholars, and validates in turn their own poetry of self-representation in its failed aspiration to the status of deed. Qu Yuan's heroic life was the necessary commentary for his abstruse poetry: it justifies their imitative poetic transports as commentary on their own otherwise seemingly un-heroic lives. And so, just as Qu Yuan's virtue must have been glorious enough to account for his poetry, so perhaps there was more to Jia Yi than the bare facts of his life reveal. If that is so, if men as talented as Jia Yi were sent away to their deaths, perhaps the vaunted peace and stability of the early Han was more a representation of eulogizing court memorials than substantial reality. Perhaps, like the poets he creates, the historian could only reveal such criticisms in such an indirect fashion. Is poetry a truer record of history than history itself?

What I would like to emphasize is that the narrative alone frames Qu Yuan as an exemplar of the hermeneutic of literary deeds, and frames Jia Yi as an example of the poetic of literary representation. At the time of the writing of the *Shiji*, both of these theories were current and developing within a context of literary and hermeneutic practices. The era of the ostentatious performance culture of the court of Emperor Wu, with its grand *fu* and ritual spectacles, was also the beginning of the institutionalization of

scholastic Confucianism with its moralizing and historicizing interpretation of ancient texts. The “Li Sao,” as a text long since removed from its original context, invited the scholastic approach, in which the poem presumes the moral integrity of the man and the life of the man becomes the necessary commentary on the work. The more recent work of Jia Yi participated in the Han reality of literary entertainment and is accordingly presented as aesthetic self-representation for its own sake. Sima Qian, a writer wronged by the Son of Heaven, awaiting the sage readers of future generations,⁷⁷ had every reason to hope that his own writing would function as both self-representation and judgment of his time. The composite *Shiji* narrative allows conflicting views of Qu Yuan and of writing to uneasily coexist, and the historian’s comment preempts any simple resolution.

No matter how we read its praise and blame, what is clear is that the *Shiji* narrative prioritizes the political force of writing. What is in doubt is whether this political force was once real, its loss being marked in the “Li Sao” that, being presented after that golden age of receptive kings, tragically failed to transform the ruler, or is only a persistent fantasy of frustrated writers and idealizing readers. The narrative foregrounds a representation of Qu Yuan as a practically engaged and rational political critic, but it does not silence the earlier fantasies that it records: Liu An wanted Qu Yuan to be a spiritual transcendent; Jia Yi wanted Qu Yuan to be an immortal poet. Sima Qian’s account firmly established this fantasizing as the mode of inquiry with which most later interpreters have undertaken to resolve their questions: “想見其為人” (Thinking of and imagining what kind of person he was).⁷⁸ The *Shiji* shows this in practice with Sima Qian’s own framing of the “Li Sao” and its records of earlier readers. The pattern of

⁷⁷ P. 3320.

⁷⁸ P. 2503.

interpretation that emerges in the *Shiji* is followed today; the hermeneutic it offers puts the origin of the poetry, and the site for its appropriate understanding, in the historical personhood of the poet.

The *Chuci zhangju*

After Sima Qian's time, the institutionalization of orthodox Han Confucianism exerted new pressure on *Chuci* scholarship. As texts that were not authored by Confucius or any of his disciples and did not straightforwardly originate from or promulgate Confucius' beloved Zhou culture, they did not unproblematically fit into the orthodox canon of the time. Bearing in mind also that writing was a much more literally laborious and materially intensive process in the time of bamboo and silk, for a serious scholar to work on the *Chuci* demanded some justification. This is clearly apparent in the polemical or apologetic tone of the writings on *Chuci* that have been transmitted to us from the time, namely, the work of Yang Xiong, Ban Gu, and Wang Yi. The rest of this chapter will discuss the work of Wang Yi, who composed the first transmitted anthology and commentary of the *Chuci* in dialogue with his predecessors, especially Yang Xiong and Ban Gu. Wang Yi argued against their earlier criticisms to represent Qu Yuan as a Confucian sage in line with late Han orthodoxy. While Michael Schimmelpfennig has analyzed in detail the exegetical strategy that Wang Yi employed to argue against his predecessors, I will focus on how Wang Yi's commentary translates the speaker of the "Li Sao" to construct a particularly Eastern Han version of Qu Yuan.

Eastern Han Confucianism was not the Confucianism of Zhu Xi or the present day Confucius Institute; its Five Classics were the *Odes*, *Changes*, *Documents*, *Rites*, and

Spring and Autumn, and it incorporated yin-yang theory and the theory of cosmological correspondences as described in the work attributed to Sima Qian's contemporary, the Western Han scholar Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒. For Sima Qian's father Sima Tan, the ideas of yin-yang and *ru* 儒 (Confucianist) were distinct enough to be separately evaluated in his "Lun liujia zhi yaozhi" 論六家之要指 (Treatise on the Six Schools);⁷⁹ over the course of the Han and in large part as the legacy of Dong Zhongshu, yin-yang theory and heaven-earth correspondences were incorporated in to the exegesis of Confucian classics and established as state ideology.⁸⁰ Confucian scholars thus took on the official role of interpreting authoritative pre-Qin texts and ominous natural phenomena for the enlightenment of the emperor and the harmonization of society. In a reflection of their institutional role, state scholars also reimagined history to fully develop the nostalgic fiction of indirect remonstrance, as Schaberg has discussed in "Playing at Critique."⁸¹ While Sima Qian's account of Qu Yuan and Jia Yi is ambivalent about whether or not literature can serve as effective political criticism, the didactic standard of literature as moral edification had been firmly established as part of the textually-based state-sponsored Confucianism of the Eastern Han. Yang Xiong and Ban Gu asserted that Qu Yuan lacked the perfect moral character to make the "Li Sao" a morally edifying text; to defend the "Li Sao" and uphold Qu Yuan, Wang Yi presented a didactic reading of the "Li Sao" as an act of remonstrance and an allegory of Eastern Han orthodox ideology.

⁷⁹ *Shiji* pp. 3288-3292.

⁸⁰ Queen, Chapters 1, 9, and 10.

⁸¹ In *Text and Ritual in Early China* (Kern, ed.).

Jia Yi voiced the first dissatisfaction regarding Qu Yuan's conduct, and Yang Xiong 揚雄 (BC 53—AD 18) seconded that empathetic but critical poetic response to Qu Yuan. A poet, linguist, and philosopher whose service during the Wang Mang interregnum has tarnished his work in the view of many a later scholar, Yang Xiong wrote many *Han fu* in the full-blown rhapsodic style, only to reject the form later in life on the grounds that it was excessive and could not accomplish the didactic, morally transformative mission of orthodox Confucian poetics. He wrote several scholarly and creative works related to the *Chuci* including “Fan Li Sao” 反離騷 (Anti-Li Sao) and two other poems since lost, “Guang Sao” 廣騷 (Expanding the Sao) and “Pan lao chou” 畔牢愁 (Riverbank Complaint).

The “Anti-Li Sao,” like Jia Yi’s “Lament for Qu Yuan,” is a work both lyrical and critical. Yang Xiong wrote that he cried every time he read the “Li Sao.”⁸² He admired Qu Yuan and, judging from the tone of the “Anti-Sao,” deeply sympathized with him, but criticized his suicide. The “Anti-Li Sao” is written in the same metrical form as the “Li Sao” and repeats many of its images, themes, and figures, but it is filled with rhetorical questions emphasizing the contradiction between Qu Yuan’s poetically represented deeds of self-cultivation and his assumed historical suicide.⁸³ He bemoans Qu Yuan’s lack of foresight at some length; it is thus particularly tragic that not long after composing the

⁸² ... like Jia Yi and Sima Qian before him; this may be a simply conventional description of appreciative reading (P. 157; see also *Hanshu*, “Yang Xiong zhuan shang” 揚雄傳上). On the other hand, the scholars who have maintained Qu Yuan’s legacy often had very personal reasons for doing so; Yang Xiong is surely such a one. Page number references are to the *Yang Xiong ji jiaozhu*.

⁸³ See Schimmelpfennig, pp. 126-33 for an analysis of how the “Anti-Li Sao” uses quotation to expose contradictions in the “Li Sao” and Qu Yuan’s actions.

“Anti-Li Sao” Yang Xiong himself would attempt suicide by leaping from the library roof, fearing implication in Wang Mang’s ascension.

Also like Jia Yi’s “Lament for Qu Yuan,” the “Anti-Li Sao” employs the metaphors of the *Chuci* tradition and uses many rhetorical questions to express the wish that the poet had not destroyed himself. But while Jia Yi’s criticism is undertaken from the single perspective of the Daoist value of self-preservation, Yang Xiong’s criticism is also a judgment in terms of the Confucian orthodoxy of his time. The “Anti-Li Sao” even makes an explicit and unfavorable comparison to Confucius. Confucius, unlike Qu Yuan, did return to his old home: “昔仲尼之去魯兮，萋萋遲遲而周邁。終回復於舊都兮，何必湘淵與濤瀨” (Long ago Confucius left Lu —— Roaming at length and wandering abroad. / Finally he returned back to his old capital —— What need for the Xiang River abyss and billowing rapids!).⁸⁴ The implication is that the Qu Yuan of the “Li Sao” coda should be evaluated according to the conduct of the sage, and does not measure up. Yang Xiong also criticized Qu Yuan according to the ideal of preserving oneself through reclusion in unfavorable times, most famously in his own preface to the “Anti-Li Sao”: “君子得時則大行，不得時則龍蛇，遇不遇，命也，何必沈身哉” (If the gentleman meets his time then he may undertake great things; if he does not meet his time then he [should be like] a dragon or serpent [i.e., hide and hibernate]. Meeting or not meeting is ordained [by Heaven]; oh, what need to drown yourself?).⁸⁵ In asserting that Qu Yuan did not comprehend meeting and not meeting, Yang Xiong measures Qu Yuan according to the fatalistic ideology of the Han dynasty and suggests that transformation of the king,

⁸⁴ P. 171.

⁸⁵ P. 157.

the source of the social order and the maker-breaker of a nobleman's career, is not really possible. Yang Xiong is exemplary of a tradition of frustrated scholars who complain of their own plight by writing about Qu Yuan; his criticism has been a lasting charge to which more sympathetic interpreters of the "Li Sao" have been compelled to respond.

The Western Han was different from the Eastern Han in many ways, something that Ban Gu (32-92), historian of the *Hanshu*, described with vivid exaggeration in his "Liang du fu" 兩都賦 (*Fu* on the Two Capitals). He paints the Western capital as bombastic, ostentatious, and finally decadent, while the Eastern capital is modest, solemn, and restrained by Confucian principles. Ban Gu's preface to the "Li Sao," a remnant of his lost commentary, also judges Qu Yuan severely according to Eastern Han Confucian principles and the literary standard of didactic interpretation, completing in prose what Yang Xiong had begun in poetry. Ban Gu's preface famously asserts that Qu Yuan "露才揚己" (flaunted his talent and aggrandized himself) and further states that the "Li Sao" uses empty language, does not adhere to legal or scriptural standards, and that Liu An's comparison to the *Shijing* and high praise of Qu Yuan were exaggerations.⁸⁶ This is different from Ban Gu's much more sympathetic account of Qu Yuan's life in his "Li Sao zan xu" 離騷贊序 (Laudatory Preface to the "Li Sao"),⁸⁷ but it is his criticism that has persisted in the hermeneutic imagination, a charge which later scholars have been compelled to defend or refute, implicitly or explicitly.

Before long, Wang Yi (circa AD 89—158) would rise to the challenge of Yang Xiong and Ban Gu's negative characterizations and transmit a very different Qu Yuan to

⁸⁶ Reproduced in Cui, p. 6.

⁸⁷ In Cui, pp. 5-6.

posterity with his work *Chuci zhangju*. Wang Yi's commentary presents important aspects of the dominant mid-late imperial and modern interpretations of the "Li Sao," such as the reading of images and narrative as elements of Qu Yuan's allegorical autobiography, the representation of Qu Yuan as a loyal and righteous government servant, and the commentarial suppression of the poem's potentially shamanistic or erotic discourse.⁸⁸ Wang Yi's evaluation of Qu Yuan is entirely positive and in line with the ruling-class ideology of his time.

The *Chuci zhangju* is our earliest extant version of the *Chuci* anthology as well as our earliest commentary; it contains Liu Xiang's first and otherwise lost collection of *Chuci* with the addition of Wang Yi's commentary and a poem by Wang Yi.⁸⁹ Due to internal contradictions in the *Chuci zhangju*, scholars have proposed that parts of it were copied directly from Liu Xiang's edition of the *Chuci* in 16 *juan*. It certainly preserves fragments of earlier interpretation and discourse, remarked and unremarked; it is best to view the *Chuci zhangju* as a late Han compilation rather than a work exclusively by Wang Yi. It has been transmitted to the present within the Song Dynasty text of Hong Xingzu's *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注, which is Wang Yi's work with the addition of Hong Xingzu's sub-commentary.

While the *Shiji* set the standard in terms of readers' macroscopic interpretative frame, the biography- and personality-oriented attitude of reading, the *Chuci zhangju*

⁸⁸ With regard to the suppression of shamanism in exegesis of the "Li Sao" and in late Han culture, see Gopal Sukhu's essay in *Defining Chu* (Cook, ed.) and his book *The Shaman and the Heresiarch*.

⁸⁹ See Hawkes' introduction to *Songs of the South* for a discussion of the bibliographic history of Wang Yi's anthology. Liu Xiang also included a brief biography of Qu Yuan in his *Xin xu* 新序, "Jieshi" 節士 (Temperate Elites) (reproduced in Cui, p. 5, and translated in Chapter VI of this dissertation). Liu Xiang's narrative differs slightly from the *Shiji* account but still is fundamentally concerned with Qu Yuan's secular political life.

established a formidable precedent for the microscopic level, the interpretation of individual words, phrases, and images. As Michael Schimmelpfennig has observed, although there is a long tradition of denigrating Wang Yi's work as inept scholarship, in reality the glosses and line exegeses of the *Chuci zhangju* are an essential and frequently cited source for later scholars.⁹⁰ One of Wang Yi's most important legacies to *Chuci* scholarship is his translations of Chu dialect words. Wang Yi was a native of Yicheng in the region of the former Chu, and his commentary to the "Li Sao" can in fact be considered the first Chu-to-Han translation of the "Li Sao." Using the structure "X, Y 也" (X is Y), it glosses words by one-to-one exchange (one of Derrida's definitions of translation), uses the formula "言..." (this says...) to paraphrase the original (as in Jakobson's theory of translation), and manifestly attempts to reduce the temporal and cultural difference of the original poem (as per Venuti's discussions of translation).

Wang Yi attempted to elevate the *Chuci* to classical status, calling the "Li Sao" a "經" (classic) as Liu An probably did, and in his work he applied the same exegetical methodology and form that was applied to the canonical *Shijing* in his time. The *Chuci zhangju* is a work of interpretation within orthodoxy: Wang Yi reads the "Li Sao" as scripture,⁹¹ presenting the "Li Sao" as a classic and Qu Yuan as an ideal Confucian moral exemplar. Wang Yi lays out his task explicitly in the afterword to the "Li Sao," gives instructions for reading accordingly in the preface, and applies his portrait of Qu Yuan as a Han Confucian gentlemen to his reading of individual lines (or one could also say, he reads the individual lines so as to construct this Confucian gentleman). Wang Yi, like

⁹⁰ Pp. 140-41, 162.

⁹¹ Here I am employing Sarah Queen's use of the word "scripture" (230-34), not Arthur Waley's (cf. Schimmelpfennig, p. 140).

Ban Gu, fully embraced the orthodox ideology of the Eastern Han. However, while Ban Gu saw Qu Yuan as a deviant from that ideology, Wang Yi viewed Qu Yuan as an illustrious paragon. Thus his afterword to the “Li Sao” especially targets Ban Gu’s criticism, and his entire interpretive effort is directed toward the elevation of Qu Yuan as a Confucian sage. Qu Yuan’s righteousness is mastery of the vast imperial cosmos; his complaint is directed against those who fail to comprehend and uphold the celestial order.⁹²

Wang Yi’s afterword to the “Li Sao” begins with a description of Confucius, which serves as a basis of comparison: “昔者孔子叡聖明喆，天生不羣，定經術，刪詩書，正禮樂，制作春秋，以為後王法” (In ancient times, Confucius was the profound and perspicacious sage; his nature set him apart from the crowd. He settled the classics and arts, redacted the *Odes* and the *Documents*, corrected the *Rites* and the *Music*, and wrote the *Spring and Autumn*, to set the model of kingship for posterity).⁹³ It is no surprise that for the scholarly Wang Yi, a minor official within the text-based orthodoxy of the Eastern Han, this Confucius is above all a literary man, the editor of the canonical texts. Qu Yuan is introduced with a similar narrative pattern. He too was extraordinarily virtuous and thereby set apart from the rest. He composed the “Li Sao” relying solely on the meaning of the *Shijing* poets, whose canonized works, we have just been reminded, were edited by Confucius. Like Confucius, he was esteemed by posterity and his literary works were “以相教傳” (transmitted in order to teach). Like Confucius, the original

⁹² According to Gopal Sukhu, the conditions of the imperial court in the time Wang Yi was composing the *Chuci zhangju*, namely the effective rulership of a regent, Empress Dowager Deng Sui, allowed the idea of a virtuously remonstrating official to be read as praise of the existing order, whereas in Ban Gu’s world potentially critical writing was a dangerous possibility; Ban Gu was himself arrested on the suspicion that his Han history might negatively portray Emperor Ming (*The Shaman and the Heresiarch*, Chapter 2).

⁹³ *Buzhu* p. 47.

meaning of his works has been confused over time: “則大義乖而微言絕” (So that the great principles were distorted and the subtle words were broken off) in the case of Confucius and “以壯為狀，義多乖異，事不要括” (taking ‘robust’ *zhuang* as ‘shape’ *zhuang*, distorting and altering many meanings, not encompassing the matter) in the case of Qu Yuan.⁹⁴ Wang Yi has thus implicitly legitimized his effort: studying the works attributed to Confucius was the principal undertaking of an ambitious scholar of his era, and according to this narrative, Qu Yuan’s works should receive similar treatment.

Wang Yi is also concerned with resolving the contradictions and overcoming the criticisms of earlier interpreters. His sources include at the very least Sima Qian’s historical account, lost works by Liu An, Jia Kui 賈逵, and Ban Gu, Liu Xiang’s earlier edition, and oral tradition.⁹⁵ Wang Yi claims for the “Li Sao” both of the purposes that are presented as incommensurable in the *Shiji* account: “獨依詩人之義而作《離騷》，上以諷諫，下以自慰” (By solely relying on the principles of the Odes poets he composed the “Li Sao,” to indirectly remonstrate above, and to comfort himself below)⁹⁶; it is both political act and literary self-representation. It sidesteps the problem that arises in Sima Qian’s narrative by attributing both of these purposes to the unquestionably authoritative canonical poets, and asserting that Qu Yuan’s composition relied on the meaning of the canonical poets and the canonical poets alone.⁹⁷ The afterword goes on to

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 48

⁹⁶ P. 48. Above and below may be in reference to the beginning (上) and ending (下) parts of the poem or to the ruler on high and the courtier below.

⁹⁷ Wang Yi’s afterword is concerned with establishing the authoritative status of his text and its author, whereas Sima Qian’s “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” raises the problem of whether or not texts could even be authoritative in the active sense of the word.

provide a bibliographic history of the *Chuci*, making note of losses and mistakes in transmission; thus Wang Yi's task as he states it is to “復以所識所知，稽之舊章，合之經傳” (copy what has been recognized and known, to investigate the old writings, and to match classic and commentary).⁹⁸ With these words he perhaps he also compares himself to the sage, who famously “述而不作” (transmitted but did not make).⁹⁹

Besides asserting the canonical origins of the “Li Sao,” Wang Yi further negates prior criticism by asserting that the poem's significance is morally correct, and he does this by an act of translation. “且人臣之義，以忠正為高，以伏節為賢。故有危言以存國，殺身以成仁” (When it comes to the courtier's [Qu Yuan's] principles, he takes loyal rectitude to be lofty, and takes self-sacrifice to be worthy. Thus he has extreme words in order to preserve the kingdom, and kills himself in order to accomplish humaneness):¹⁰⁰ Qu Yuan's irony and “extreme words” were in service to the state, the all-important Confucian undertaking; his unnatural death by suicide manifests the essential Confucian virtue of *ren* 仁 (humane, humaneness). The word *ren* appears twice in the *Jiu zhang* 九章 (Nine Verses) and not at all in the “Li Sao” or in any other poem attributed to Qu Yuan. *Ren* does not seem to have been one of Qu Yuan's essential values—at least not by that name: Wang Yi has translated what he understood to be Qu Yuan's meaning into a word appropriate to his own ideology. This type of translation—intuition of abstract meaning described in contemporary discourse—is an important

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 48.

⁹⁹ *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects), “Shuer” 述而.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 48.

technique that Wang Yi, first of a very long tradition, applies to refute earlier objections and construct a Qu Yuan that is acceptable within the orthodoxy of his time.

The main critic that Wang is concerned with is Bang Gu. Having established Qu Yuan's Confucius-like biography and justified his suicide and use of language, he moves to a direct frontal attack and repudiation of Ban Gu. His suit is essentially that Ban Gu did not sufficiently recognize and praise Qu Yuan's greatness.¹⁰¹ Wang Yi quotes Ban Gu's objections to Qu Yuan's behavior, which his narrative has already asserted to be perfectly exemplary, and rebuts them by citing historical and literary precedents that support Qu Yuan's behavior. In this Wang Yi fully activates and applies the sympathetic mode of interpretation offered by Sima Qian's account, but he goes further by using formal elements and particular lines from the poem to prove his point, moving the "Li Sao" into the discipline of literary criticism. He compares the *Chuci*'s remonstrance to the remonstrative poem "Yi" 抑 in the *Da Ya* 大雅 Odes, beloved of Confucius; he asserts that the literary pattern 文 of the "Li Sao" is modeled on the Five Classics, and goes on to provide line-to-line comparisons of the "Li Sao" and canonical works. He concludes with his own evaluation of Qu Yuan: unqualified praise of a peerless and unforgettable literary model.¹⁰²

The afterword to the "Li Sao" carefully constructs a certain interpretation of Qu Yuan the man; the preface, on the other hand, tells the reader how to interpret the stanzas and lines of the poetry. It consistently applies the orthodox Confucian lens. It begins with

¹⁰¹ Such criticism is a frequent theme of many respected recent works published on the mainland. For example, Yi Chonglian writes that Yang Xiong's approach "只会导致对嫉恶如仇和为理想而英雄献身的伟大诗人屈原的人格和作品的误解和曲解" (could only lead to misunderstanding and distorted representation of the personality and oeuvre of the great poet Qu Yuan, who despised evil and heroically sacrificed himself for his ideals) (p. 53); also see Huang Zhongmo's history of modern *Chuci* studies.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

a brief biography of Qu Yuan, giving the reader the personal and historical context for sympathetic, Mao-style reading. It provides Qu Yuan's impetus for composing the "Li Sao": "屈原執履忠貞而被讒衰，憂心煩亂，不知所愬，乃作離騷經" (Qu Yuan's integrity and conduct were loyal and pure, yet he was viciously slandered; with a sorrowful heart and anxious [or disordered] thoughts, not knowing whom to tell, he composed the Classic "Li Sao").¹⁰³ Here the emphasis, as in Jia Yi's "Lament," is on expressing one's feelings in language rather than on direct political action. Nevertheless, Wang Yi goes on to accord the poem the politically correct critical function with an odd and new gloss of the title:

離，別也。騷，愁也。經，徑也。言己放逐離別，中心愁思，猶依道徑，以諷諫君也。Li is separation. Sao is worry. "Classic" *jing* 經 is "path" *jing* 徑. This says he was banished and separated [from his lord]; his heart was full of anxious concern, but [he] still follows the path of the Way in order to indirectly remonstrate with his lord.

Jia Yi, Sima Qian, and Ban Gu in their various writings all seem to read "離" as "meet with," not "departure." The addition of "經" (classic) does little to bolster the authority of Wang Yi or his text; the punning gloss attributes the word "classic" to Qu Yuan himself and thereby erases the significance of the word as an indicator of a text granted authority by traditional canonicity; this interpretation has been rejected by many later commentators. In any case, he has definitively asserted that the poem is meant to "諷諫君" (indirectly remonstrate with the king), explicitly pointing our reading toward the master signifier of the Han Confucian hermeneutic and pivot of the latter Han cosmos.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 2.

And perhaps the effect of translating the title as “The [Correct] Path of Anxious Separation” rather than “The Classic of Encountering Affliction” is to emphasize its essential trait as a work of loyalty, loyalty to the king from whom he is anxiously separated.

The preface’s assertion that the poem “remonstrates with the king” indicates that it both filled that historical function and also can be and should be read in accordance with orthodox standards. Wang Yi’s preface goes on to explain how the “Li Sao” functions as an historical remonstrative event; immediately following the statement that the poem was made to remonstrate with the king, the king and the vicarious latter-day reader are provided with instructions for the appropriate response to the poem’s many historical examples. These are made “冀君覺悟，反於正道而還己也” (in the hope that the king would come to his senses, return to the right way and restore him [Qu Yuan]).¹⁰⁴ After the preface briefly returns to the biographical narrative, recording the death of King Huai, Qu Yuan’s re-banishment, his composition of the “Nine Songs” and his suicide (in other words, the tragic failure of the “Li Sao” to successfully realize the remonstrative intention, although Wang Yi does not say as much), it shows how the original remonstrative event can be read as such according to specific directions for strictly literary interpretation of its rhetorical structure. This is the canonical statement regarding the use of figure in the “Li Sao”:

離騷之文，依詩取興，引類譬諭，故善鳥香草，以配忠貞；惡禽臭物，以比讒佞；靈修美人，以媲於君；宓妃佚女，以譬賢臣；虬龍鸞鳳，以託君子；飄風雲霓，以為小人。As to the literary language of the “Li

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

Sao,” it takes its use of *xing* (affective stimulus) from the *Shijing*, and drawing on categories of likeness it makes comparisons, such that beneficent birds and fragrant plants are paired with devotion and loyalty, while evil birds and foul things are compared to slanderers and flatterers; the Spiritually Adorned and the Fair One are matched with the sovereign, while Fufei and beautiful women are compared to worthy ministers; dragons and phoenixes stand in for noble men, while swirling winds and rainbows indicate inferior men.¹⁰⁵

Wang Yi’s instructions explicitly apply a critical concept of *Shijing* exegesis, *xing* 興, but going on to specify that in the case of the “Li Sao” this *xing* takes the form of “引類譬諭” (comparisons drawn from categories of likeness). Wang Yi is here perhaps misusing the word *xing*, but the effect of the passage is to place the “Li Sao” on par with the authoritative classic *Shijing* while actually emphasizing its distinctive rhetorical feature.¹⁰⁶

The preface tells the reader how to find the Confucian gentleman poet behind the text, and thus accords the “Li Sao” the affective moralizing power of the Mao version of *Shijing*. There is a slippage in the preface between “君” (lord), the original audience of the poem, and “君子” (gentlemen), the present readers. While it failed to move the former, it will surely move the latter: “其詞溫而雅，其義皎而朗。凡百君子，莫不慕其清高，嘉其文采，哀其不遇，而愍其志焉” (Its diction is mild and refined, its content is clear and distinct. Of the many gentlemen, none does not admire his pure

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, Chapter 2, and Schimmelpfennig, pp. 151-57.

uprightness, praise his literary talent, mourn his misfortune, and feel sympathy for his intention).¹⁰⁷ Wang Yi's language does not differentiate between the poem and its gentlemanly author; the correct interpretation of the poetry is the same as the appropriate response to the poet. In this sense, the sympathetic imperative provided by Sima Qian, the defensive stance in response to Yang Xiong and Ban Gu, and the exegetical practice exemplified by Wang Yi are all of a piece. The gentlemen, if they read correctly, cannot help but be affected by its language, and according to Wang Yi, the overall effect of reading Qu Yuan's works is the mournful glorification and estimation of Qu Yuan.

Wang Yi applies his portrait of Qu Yuan as ideal Confucian gentleman, his exegetical rhetorical scheme, and his overall drive to present an indubitably orthodox text to his commentary of individual lines. His commentary on most lines takes the form of explicit translation as one-to-one exchange, first by glossing unusual words and then by restating the meaning. It applies the same exegetical methodology and form that was applied to the canonical *Shijing* in his time: it legitimizes allegorical reading by reference to other scriptural texts and use of the rhetorical patterns “X, Y 也” and “言...,” which assert equivalence in a proto-translating mode.¹⁰⁸

On a thematic level the poem shares enough general characteristics of orthodox Han Confucian texts that it is in fact an easy subject of the classic hermeneutical lens: it idealizes moral virtue as political power, describes a golden-age history and a fallen present, advocates for promotion by merit, and uses historical precedents for persuasion. But some aspects fall outside the scope of the classical lens, such as the cultivation of flowers and herbs and fabulous quests for female companionship. Below I will give a few

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Schimmelpfennig.

examples of these more difficult passages, and demonstrate how Wang Yi creatively translates them into his preferred discourse.

The allegorical rupture of the “Li Sao” begins with the distinction between inner and outer, essence and appearance: “紛吾既有此內美兮，又重之以脩能” (Abundantly I already had this inner beauty — And paired it with cultivated bearing).¹⁰⁹ Wang Yi’s commentary reaches to the concluding lines of the “Li Sao” to refer this passage to specifically governmental virtue and skill, the ability to order the public and select good assistants:

言己之生，內含天地之美氣，又重有絕遠之能，與眾異也。言謀足以安社稷，智足以解國患，威能制強禦，仁能懷遠人也。This says that from my birth I inwardly contain the beautiful energy [*qi*] of Heaven and Earth, and moreover to pair it I have the most surpassing bearing, [such that] I am different from the crowd. This says that my strategies are adequate to pacify this sacred land, my wisdom is adequate to undo the calamity facing the kingdom, my power can control the mighty officials, and my humanity can embrace the most distant men.¹¹⁰

This links the discourse of floral cultivation to the discourse of court politics, establishing the appropriate allegorical structure for interpretation. Following the instructions in the preface, all the imagery to follow should also be understood as referring to political governance.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

After the lines “扈江離與辟芷兮，紉秋蘭以為佩” (Wrapped with river cladophora and remote angelica — Stitched autumn eupatorium into a sash) Wang Yi comments, “扈，被也。楚人名被為扈” (*Hu* is wrapping. The people of Chu call wrapping by the name *hu*).¹¹¹ This is an example of translation as one-to-one exchange, and Wang Yi even points it out as such by identifying the word as a Chu name. He goes on to identify the rest of the flora referred to as “香草” (fragrant herbs) and the “佩” (sash ornament) as “飾” (ornament).¹¹² He goes on to unpack the rhetoric of the lines according to the equation provided in the preface, and he furthermore makes a connection between the content of the lines (the speaker’s adornment) and Confucius’ activities.

佩，飾也，所以象德。故行清潔者佩芳，德仁明者佩玉，能解結者佩觿，能決疑者佩玦，故孔子無所不佩也。言己修身清潔，乃取江離，辟芷，以為衣被；紉索秋蘭，以為佩飾；博采衆善，以自約束也。 A sash pendant is an ornament, so it symbolizes virtue. Thus those whose actions are pure wear fragrances on their sash, those whose virtue is benevolently perspicacious wear jade on their sash, those who can untangle knots wear bodkins on their sash, those who can break off (*jue*) doubts [command resolve] wear broken jades (*jue*) [symbols of resolution] on their sash; thus there was nothing that Confucius did not wear on his sash. This says I cultivate my personal purity, choosing river cladophora

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 5.

and remote angelica to be his robe, stringing autumn eupatorium to be his sash ornament; broadly selecting many good things for his self-restraint.¹¹³

Wang Yi completes the allegorical movement by saying in other words what the text means. His interpretation does not make a clear line between literal and figurative meaning. Instead, it paraphrases the original with much explicitation and adds or exposes another level. It is not clear if we are to understand that Confucius literally (historically) wore everything on his sash, or if Qu Yuan only figuratively (fictionally) made and wore garments of flowers.¹¹⁴ What this interpretation does make clear is *why* Qu Yuan says he wears garments of flowers. This method does not reduce the original to fiction but rather determines what it represents in terms of its relation to the speaker-author's intention. As stated in the preface, it draws on categories of likeness to do so: cultivating purity and presenting this virtue is like binding one's clothes together with a sash and beautifying them with a fragrant ornament. It assures us that this intention is comparable to Confucius' intention.

The Eastern Han particularity of this Confucian Qu Yuan is apparent in Wang Yi's frequent practice of inscribing images into the Han Confucian sub-discourse of yin-yang cosmology and the orientation toward harmony with an intentional Heaven.¹¹⁵ For

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹⁴ I am inclined to believe that in this case Wang Yi understood the flower imagery to be literal representation of Qu Yuan's historical actions, as he certainly understood flowers to be suitable adornment for nobility. In some cases he explains what he interprets as metaphorical images by reference to completely non-metaphorical (that is, purely metonymic) origins; as to the name “荃” (acorus), he comments: “荃，香草，以諭君也。人君被服芬香，故以香草為諭” (Acorus, a fragrant plant, serves as a metaphor for the lord. The clothing of the lord of men is fragrant, thus he uses a fragrant plant as a metaphor) (p. 9).

¹¹⁵ See Queen, Chapter 9.

example, the *Zhangju* translates the lines “朝搴阨之木蘭兮，夕攬洲之宿莽” (Mornings plucking the hills’ magnolia —— Evenings picking the islets’ beckmannia) as:

言己旦起陞山采木蘭，上事太陽，承天度也；夕入洲澤采取宿莽，下奉太陰，順地數也。動以神祇勅誨也。This says that he arises at dawn to ascend the hills and pluck magnolia, in order to serve the great yang above, undertaking the plan of Heaven. In the evening he enters the islets and marshes to gather beckmannia, in order to esteem the great yin from below, obeying the pattern of Earth. His movements accord with the dictates of the gods of heaven and earth.¹¹⁶

While Sima Qian seems to have attempted to exclude spiritual practices altogether from his portrayal of Qu Yuan, Wang Yi emphasizes them, and these spiritual practices are appropriate to late Han Confucianism. The lines “朝飲木蘭之墜露兮，夕餐秋菊之落英” (Mornings drinking magnolia’s pendant dew —— Evenings eating autumn chrysanthemums’ falling petals) are also interpreted in terms of yin and yang, in this case on the level of personal cultivation. Wang Yi’s commentary consistently translates passages of the “*Li Sao*” that contain images of flowers and plants into the discourse of Han Confucian cosmology including its discourse of yin-yang cultivation.

In order to comprehensively present Qu Yuan as a Han Confucian gentleman, some aspects of the poem need to be more thoroughly allegorized than others. Wearing plants and flowers is acceptable within an appropriate cosmological context to Wang Yi; so is flying with dragons and phoenixes; but encounters with women and female deities are not, and any image that could be interpreted as a reference to shamanism is

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 6.

interpreted otherwise. After many lines about cultivating and adorning himself with flowers and fragrant herbs, the “Li Sao” contains the line: “雖不周於今之人兮，願依彭咸之遺則” (Although it does not square with today’s people —— [I] wish to adhere to Peng Xian’s [or Peng and Xian’s] legacy).¹¹⁷ While one might naturally assume from this sequence that Peng Xian/Peng and Xian is/are an ancient exemplar(s) of self-cultivation by plants and herbs—perhaps a shaman or shamans—here Wang Yi identifies Peng Xian as a worthy Shang Dynasty minister who drowned himself because the king ignored his remonstrance.¹¹⁸ There are no traces of this “Peng Xian” in the historical record outside of the *Chuci* and derivative materials, but the contemporary *Chuci* scholar Huang Linggeng proposes three hypotheses: 1) Based on a meticulous analysis of the early uses of the names Peng and Xian, they were Qu Yuan’s ancestors, ancient shaman-scribes or diviners of the royal house of Chu; 2) Based on Han poems and Wen Yiduo’s research, Peng Xian was an ancient worthy who excelled in adorning himself with flowers and herbs and perhaps sought immortality thereby; 3) Based on a Han *Chuci* poem by Liu Xiang, Peng Xian was a Shang minister who drowned himself. Huang further proposes that as the Peng clan belonged to the sign of water, for Qu Yuan to go to the dwelling of Peng Xian could express his intention to drown himself in order to return to his ancestors at their spiritual origin.¹¹⁹ While according to Huang’s analysis we may well suspect that the possibility of reading Peng and Xian as shamans existed for Wang Yi, the commentary has left that aspect out and written in the aspects of Qu Yuan’s intention that Wang Yi is interested in defending; namely, his ministerial rectitude and suicide.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

¹¹⁹ Pp. 176-8.

Similarly, while it is possible that a reader who was not applying the lens of Han Confucian orthodoxy might interpret the female characters of the “Li Sao” as historical or mythological women or as allegorical figures, in Wang Yi’s commentary all women except *Nüxu* 女媧, who is glossed as Qu Yuan’s elder sister, are translated into male characters, usually ministers, on the grounds that both women and ministers are yin.¹²⁰ The yin-yang theory of Confucian orthodoxy elevated yang over yin, heaven over earth, the ruler over the ministers, male over female. In pre-Han texts and early Han texts such as the *Huainanzi*, yin and yang were complementary rather than hierarchical and were not strongly associated with gender, but in the Han Confucian text *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露, attributed to Dong Zhongshu, yang was prioritized and linked to men, and by the latter Han the hierarchy of yang over yin and men over women was widely accepted.¹²¹ In parallel development, over the course of the Han the social roles of women were gradually restricted and diminished.¹²² Wang Yi’s commentary represents the late Han state of affairs by reading most female characters as figures for historical men, thus reducing Qu Yuan’s possible contact with women. For example, “有虞之二姚” (the two Yao of Youwu), which could have been simply interpreted as a reference to historical women, the daughters of Lord Wu, is interpreted as a reference to the daughters of Wu as metaphors for ministers.¹²³ In a straightforward demonstration of this gender bias, to the lines “吾令豐隆乘雲兮，求宓妃之所在” (I command Fenglong, riding the clouds — [I] seek Fufei’s abode), Wang Yi comments that Fenglong is the master of clouds, and

¹²⁰ E.g., pp. 14, 30.

¹²¹ Raphals, pp. 153-65.

¹²² Raphals, Chapters 9-10.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Fufei is a water spirit, a metaphor for recluses. Thus, “言我令雲師豐隆，乘雲周行，求隱士清潔若宓妃者，欲與并心力也” (this says I command the Master of Clouds, Fenglong. Riding the clouds around, I pursue hermits as pure as Fufei, wanting to join our minds and strength)¹²⁴: the male master of clouds is an acceptable companion for a Han Confucian gentleman, whereas a female water spirit is not—she must be a metaphor.

Wang Yi’s commentary does not attempt to completely fictionalize the spiritual or religious imagery of the poem, but it does translate any possible reference to erotic pursuits or the “lewd rites” of Chu shamanism¹²⁵ into the ritual propriety of Han Confucianism; that is, from a discourse in which women may have a more public social role or shamans may pursue deities of the opposite gender as part of spiritual exercise into a discourse in which a male courtier may only appropriately seek companionship with other male courtiers. This is not an extreme case of allegoresis, as the speaker of the poem himself slips between genders and discourses, but considering the relative restriction of women and rationalization of politics that had occurred between Warring States Chu and the Eastern Han, especially the exclusion of shamans from policy-making and the official marginalization of Chu religion, Wang Yi’s insistence that the erotic quests of the “Li Sao” are metaphors for politics and politics only appears to be a case of Hanification.

Wang Yi’s commentary concludes with a decisive assertion of Qu Yuan’s suicide appended to the poem’s final lines. Qu Yuan’s spiritual purity and political integrity make him a martyr to the Confucian cause of harmonizing Heaven’s will with earthly

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

¹²⁵ *Buzhu*, p. 55; cf. Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, p. 19; Mathieu; and Sukhu in *Defining Chu* (Cook, ed.).

governance. While many of Wang Yi's Eastern Han particularities were not renewed in later interpretations, the basic elements of his version of Qu Yuan have persisted in the dominant strand of the interpretive imagination down to the present day. In dialogue with previous texts on Qu Yuan and the orthodox Han Confucian canon, the *Chuci zhangju* transmitted the foundational character of Qu Yuan: the morally upright Confucian minister, tireless in his cultivation of the Way, so pure that he could not survive in the corrupt political scene of his time, so principled that he committed suicide rather than leave his kingdom.

Summary

This chapter has examined the interpretive dialogue of the formative period of “Li Sao” reception. The interlocutors agree that the significance of the “Li Sao” is most essentially an understanding of its author, and accordingly read the poem’s speaker as a representation of Qu Yuan. However, their visions of what kind of a man Qu Yuan was and hence of what kind of a poem he wrote differ widely; from this earliest layer of transmitted interpretation there is already a debate about the original meaning of the “Li Sao.” The composite account of Qu Yuan in the *Shiji* established the basic interpretive approach for over 2,000 years. Its narrative presents the “Li Sao” as the rational, critical act of a politically engaged poet-statesman. But it also contains alternative versions of the “Li Sao” and Qu Yuan. Liu An described Qu Yuan as a spiritual adept, author of a classic of worldly transcendence. Jia Yi engaged with Qu Yuan as a literary predecessor and criticized his choice of suicide over self-preservation in obscurity. The inclusion of these alternative views in the *Shiji* account demonstrates both the powerful emphasis on

authorial intention as a hermeneutic principle in the Han dynasty and the range of possibilities that could be derived from the text within the biographical interpretive framework. Wang Yi's late Han anthology fully activates the biographical approach and uses the exegetical method of the Han Confucian Classics to translate Qu Yuan into a paragon of Confucian virtue. These efforts to articulate and stabilize the interpretation of the poem constitute acts of translation into the culture of the Han, and resulted in the lasting Hanification of Qu Yuan. The next two chapters will demonstrate how later interpreters entered this dialogue to construct new Qu Yuans, translating the "Li Sao" into the changing social-political orders of mid-late imperial and modern China. While Wang Yi's commentary expresses the interpretation that was dominant in the Tang and remains to this day the essential intermediary for understanding the language of the "Li Sao," in the more historically conscious mid-late imperial and modern eras it is the worldly statesman of the *Shiji* who has figured most prominently in the continuing life of the "Li Sao."

CHAPTER IV

THE MID-LATE IMPERIAL ERA

In the preceding chapter we have seen how Wang Yi's influential commentary Hanified Qu Yuan, reading him as if he were a participant in the late Han world and justifying his poem on the basis of Han ideology. This first period of afterlife can be summarized as "Qu Yuan, an orthodox Han gentleman." He was a paragon of spiritual purity, aristocratic political potency, and transcendent virtue. This chapter will discuss significant changes in both the methodology of interpretation and the resultant afterlife of Qu Yuan. In the very different intellectual and political world of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1276), Qu Yuan was justified anew. He was transformed into a man of reason and exemplar of trans-historical moral principles.

The philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) was pivotal in Qu Yuan's mid-imperial transformation. Zhu Xi and many of his Neo-Confucian followers in the Ming and Qing dynasties no longer read the "Li Sao" as a cosmological allegory, but rather as a metaphysical allegory, a rational structure whose literary form and elements reflect an order of moral principles that permeates the universe including the rational individual mind. The Qu Yuan that emerges from this allegory is a man who is great not only because of his cultivation of transcendent personal virtue but also, and more significantly, because of his reasoned expression of universal principles of good human relations. Zhu Xi is a giant presence in the dialogue of "Li Sao" interpretation throughout the mid-late imperial period, and his Neo-Confucian interpretation articulates essential features of Qu

Yuan's character that persisted into the modern era and are still part of his popular image today. The official CCP Qu Yuan's patriotism and the contemporary counter-cultural Qu Yuan's individual spirit are both directly traceable to Zhu Xi's interpretation.

The Southern Song was a period of significant transition in the history of Chinese reading and hermeneutics. There was a massive transformation in the materiality of text brought about by the spread of mechanical printing. There was also a fundamental change in the social position of the dominant interpreters of texts and in the way that class of men thought about culture, tradition, and virtue. As discussed in Chapter II, a consequence of the material and social changes was an increased awareness of and expression of the individual's role in reading and interpreting. In many commentaries to the *Chuci*, there is a shift in interpretive framework from text as the manifestation of a decorous cosmology to text as the vehicle for a metaphysical ethics. The king is the master signifier of the early imperial allegoresis, while the metaphysical reading discerns meaning through an intuitive relationship between the reader and the poet. This chapter will briefly summarize the intellectual conditions that differentiate the mid-late imperial period from the early imperial period. These conditioning factors will provide context for an examination of Hong Xingzu's 洪興祖 (1090-1155) subcommentary to Wang Yi's anthology and Zhu Xi's interpretation of the *Li Sao*. This chapter will demonstrate how, in contrast to the early imperial methodology that is brought to a pinnacle in Hong Xingzu's work, Zhu Xi's *Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集註 makes use of a new hermeneutic paradigm to give birth to a new Neo-Confucian Qu Yuan.

It may be useful at the beginning of this discussion to recall that one of Zhu Xi's major contributions to Confucian thought and institutions, and one of the characteristics that distinguishes Neo-Confucianism from earlier Han Confucianism, was his reformation of the Confucian canon. He put the *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning) chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Rites) in a privileged position, making it an independent Classic and the first stage in his educational curriculum. The *Daxue* begins with a description of the process of extending morality in the world:

古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國；欲治其國者，先齊其家；欲齊其家者，先修其身；欲修其身者，先正其心；欲正其心者，先誠其意；欲誠其意者，先致其知，致知在格物。 In ancient times those who wished to illuminate bright virtue throughout the world first ordered their kingdom; those who wished to order their kingdom first aligned their family; those who wished to align their family first cultivated their selves; those who wished to cultivate their selves first rectified their minds; those who wished to rectify their minds first made their intentions sincere; those who wished to make their intentions sincere first pursued knowledge; and pursuing knowledge is to investigate things.

When the individual investigates things, peace in the world follows. For Zhu Xi, the individual's investigation of things is the basis of social harmony and good governance. This is not necessarily different than the early imperial worldview, but the high value accorded to the individual in the process of effecting social-political good as outlined in the *Daxue* is foundational to understanding the Neo-Confucian response to the particular historical conditions of the Southern Song and after.

The attention given to the role of the individual in society was related to numerous historical changes. The historical transformation of society between early and mid-late imperial times involved many ecological, social, technological, and political factors, which in their interrelated development changed the social basis of the elite from an aristocracy that inherited government office to local gentry who may or may not have served in the government bureaucracy.¹ Hymes and Schirokauer identify three major processes of change that have bearing on the intellectual culture of the Southern Song period: huge population growth, concomitant expansion of local administration, and the gradual decline of the secular power of the central government vis-à-vis localities throughout the latter imperial period; the social, demographic, economic, and cultural transition from Tang to the late Song, including the breaking up of hereditary estates, the development of a commercial economy, new technology and farming techniques, and the enormous expansion of commerce and private wealth; and the political transition of the Song capital from north to south, which was also a change from the Song as a unified empire to the Song as one state among several.² Dependent upon these processes, the political thought of the elite class saw significant changes. In contrast to Northern Song “state-centered optimism” and “faith in state activism,” Southern Song thought was characterized by “individual moral and spiritual cultivation,” which locally based elites took up for the grassroots, voluntarist improvement of the world.³

¹ Robert Hartwell provides a history of the transitional era in “Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations in China, 750-1550”; see also *“This Culture of Ours”: Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China* by Peter K. Bol, and *Change in Song China: Innovation or Renovation?*, ed. Liu and Golas.

² *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, Introduction.

³ *Ibid.*, 12-31.

Because the population and private commercial economy grew rapidly while the state bureaucracy did not, in the Southern Song there were too many gentry to fill the available official posts. According to Peter K. Bol, Neo-Confucianism was a response to this situation; it was widely successful as an intellectual movement because it answered to “local elites with great ambition but poor prospects.”⁴ Zhu Xi’s political efforts exemplify this shift. In promoting new locally based institutions such as relief granaries, Confucian academies, and community compacts,

Zhu Xi sought to supply a role and sphere of action for gentlemen within a local community and apart from the state. He set out to define a ‘middle level’ for social and political action, a level lying between family on the one hand and state on the other. He also set out to define the local gentleman of cultivation and goodwill, who might or might not be an officeholder too, as a proper and legitimate leader at that level.⁵

Zhu Xi also articulated an intellectual identity for these new middle level elites. *Daoxue* (one of several Chinese words usually translated as “Neo-Confucianism”), Zhu Xi’s intellectual movement, “offered a vision of learning that helped the *shi* [elites] learn to survive without office and thus supported the independence of the *shi* from the government, but at the same time it explained how it was possible and why it was necessary for the *shi* as individuals to discipline themselves.”⁶ It was thus amenable to both the elite class and the interests of the state. While Zhu Xi thought of himself as an

⁴ *Neo-Confucianism in History*, p. 114.

⁵ *Ordering the World*, Introduction, pp. 24-5.

⁶ Bol, “*This Culture of Ours*,” p. 342.

outsider, his countercultural *daoxue* movement was established as a new cultural tradition by the late Song, and ultimately became the state orthodoxy.

Zhu Xi provided new legitimacy and identity for the elite in the form of a renovation of the Confucian tradition, giving it a philosophical system that encompassed the origin of the universe and the workings of the individual mind. Zhu Xi's philosophy has been understood as a response to the popular syncretism of the various schools of thought that flourished in the Tang. While "syncretism minimized the conflict between the Three Teachings by assigning them respective spheres of influence: Confucianism, governance; Daoism, physical culture; Buddhism, mental culture," Zhu Xi articulated a Confucianism that could explain and regulate all realms of life and thought.⁷ His new metaphysics competed with Daoism and Buddhism by its universality. Its explanatory power extended from the origin of things to the way of conducting oneself: "the ontological truth has an axiological dimension, which produces standards of good and right. Zhu Xi's view on the mind of heaven and earth and the virtue of benevolence as life-creativity provides both a metaphysical foundation for life-ends and moral distinctions and a moral foundation for metaphysical understanding."⁸ The moral principles of Zhu Xi's Confucianism were not themselves new—the three binding ties, five constants, the five virtues, and so on—but his development of a metaphysical system to give them ontological grounding is distinctive of Neo-Confucianism.

The shift toward the individual had implications for historical thought as well. Zhu Xi's consciousness of historical change posits an absolute distinction between the golden age of the sage-kings and the rest of history, and although the decline is itself a

⁷ Theodore de Bary in *Neo-Confucian Education* (de Bary, ed), pp. 187-88.

⁸ Chung-ying Cheng in *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism* (Chan, ed.), p. 191.

manifestation of Neo-Confucian metaphysics—the deterioration of *qi*—it was not irreversible: “Qin swept away the institutions of antiquity but the Three Bonds and Five Norms are indestructible.”⁹ Because the principles of morality are universal and eternal, and are moreover objectively available to the individual learner, the present is redeemable through individual cultivation.¹⁰ As represented in the *Daxue* process of moral illumination, the individual is embedded in a relationship to the world that is mediated by the state; or rather, society is the state: there is no outside of the state in the Confucian view of world peace. Zhu Xi therefore advocated the recovery of the north as the ultimate goal of historical understanding.¹¹ The individual’s correct application of Neo-Confucian learning could in theory reverse the flow of history and unite the world again as one benevolent China.

The ruler himself did not lose his role as mediator between heaven and earth in mid-late imperial thought, but the ideology of rulership did change dramatically given the rise of the literati class.

The early imperial vision of a powerful ruler who commanded the populace and kept nature on course, a ruler who mediated between heaven and man and was the center around which all revolved, whose rituals had the power to move heaven and humanity, lost credibility. Instead, the ruler became a more human figure, who was expected to cultivate himself through learning in the style of the literati and whose ability to maintain

⁹ Schirokauer in *Ordering the World* (Hymes, ed.), p. 214.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

the support of the populace depended on his success in managing government so that is served the common good.¹²

The cosmology of early imperial times was no longer adequate to the political and intellectual life of the Southern Song. In particular, Dong Zhongshu's notion of cosmic correspondences and the esoteric commentaries on the *Spring and Autumn* fell out of favor until they were revived under other circumstances in the late Qing. Neo-Confucianism offered a metaphysical scheme of moral principles instead. It was rational rather than mystical, ontological rather than categorical. While in the early imperial era, the emperor was different in kind from other men, the ruler in later times became one man among many, and thus ought to follow the same educational process to become moral and accomplish the illumination of bright virtue in the world. In turn, it was possible for individuals, even the many men who had little hope of attaining office, to regard themselves as politically significant through their efforts to become sages—true kings. Although the emperor maintained his absolute symbolic status, the state was demystified.

Peter K. Bol has written about the change in interpretive methodology that accompanied the material, political, social, and intellectual transformations outlined above:

The differences between early Tang exegetical strategies and those of the Song are often described as a shift from a philological (*xungu*) approach to a moralistic (*yili*) one. This is too simple a dichotomy. A more useful distinction is between the goals of interpretation. In early Tang, the aim was to synthesize the history of classical exegesis so as to arrive at a

¹² Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, p. 119.

definitive understanding of what the words of the Classics said, on the assumption that what the Classics said was both descriptive and normative. In the eleventh century, the goal became to grasp the conceptions that the sages had in mind, for these conceptions had made possible the sociopolitical achievements the Classics described. The challenge for Tang was to sort out a body of contradictory exegetical texts; for Song to develop strategies that could reveal the hitherto unapparent significance of the Classics themselves. ... This undermined the exegetical tradition of the Han through Tang even as it liberated the new generation to read the Classics for themselves with the aim of developing their own insights.¹³

The new purpose that interpreters brought to their texts in the Song was colored by the changes in society discussed above. The reorientation of elite priorities from “high official service toward local status seeking”¹⁴ effectively inverts the old paradigm of creating a good society from the king down—the trickle-down morality of the Mao hermeneutic. Neo-Confucianism places the individual person at the origin of the grassroots moral transformation of the world. As the goal of reading was, ultimately, to accomplish the Classics’ vision of world peace by way of individual learning, the sociopolitical world in which the interpreters lived was the necessary starting point of their endeavor, and Zhu Xi and others approached their new hermeneutic task with their own world of individual readers in mind.

Zhu Xi’s hermeneutic is as moralistic and didactic as that of the Mao exegetes, and as politically-oriented. But Zhu Xi had to accommodate Qu Yuan’s aesthetic flights

¹³ *Neo-Confucianism in History*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁴ *Ordering the World*, Introduction, p. 31.

and potentially seditious words to a world made different by massive historical transformations. He had to help Qu Yuan speak to a different audience, and ensure that the new audience would derive correct moral understanding from their reading. Thus he took a new approach to the poem. Wang Yi read the “Li Sao” as a text that expressed imperial values *as* its literary refinement—its decorous articulation of the cosmological system that encompassed all of nature, the state, and authoritative texts—while Zhu Xi was to read the “Li Sao,” after the social and intellectual turn, as the expression of an individual man’s moral intention. Like the account of the “Li Sao” offered in the *Shiji*, in which the text of the poem does not appear, in this reading the poem itself is less significant than the authorial intention that can be discerned within it. Zhu Xi read Qu Yuan as an exemplar of morally upright intention for the new elite of his era. Below I will discuss his method. First, I will discuss the culmination of the Han approach, the overcoming of which is the aim of Zhu Xi’s effort.

Hong Xingzu and the *Chuci buzhu*

Hong Xingzu’s Southern Song edition of the *Chuci*, the *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注, is the book that has preserved for us Wang Yi’s commentary as well as fragments of other early commentaries such as those of Guo Pu 郭璞 and the Five Ministers. The *Buzhu* can be considered the culmination of early imperial scholarship on the *Chuci*: while it adds a great deal of material to the *Zhangju*, it is primarily a commentary on Wang Yi’s commentary and not a revision of either Wang Yi’s methodology or his thesis that Qu Yuan is an orthodox Han Confucian gentleman. Rather than presenting a new version of Qu Yuan, Hong’s work is the collection of relevant material and meticulous cross-

referencing of ancient texts in order to close the textual-exegetical gaps within the *Zhangju* and between the *Zhangju* and the background discourse-world of Han Confucianism.¹⁵ For example, Hong Xingzu's comment appended to Wang Yi's postface explicitly quotes and synthesizes all the implicit views that Wang Yi was arguing against (those of Yang Xiong and Ban Gu as well as their re-articulation by later writers such as Yan Zhitui 顏之推), and supports Wang Yi's argument by again asserting the integrity of Qu Yuan's actions with reference to classical textual precedents. The comment closes with Hong Xingzu's evaluation of Qu Yuan's critics: “班孟堅，顏之推所云，無異妾婦兒童之見” (What Ban Gu and Yan Zhitui say is no different than the opinions of women and children!).¹⁶

Hong Xingzu's line commentaries are also primarily concerned with the careful closing of gaps, via exhaustive citation and cross-referencing, in order to clarify and support Wang's interpretation. The *Buzhu* does occasionally revise or reject Wang Yi's specific exegeses, most famously in the case of the poem's title, but it is overall a thorough legitimization of Wang Yi's interpretation of Qu Yuan. Hong Xingzu's revisions and corrections are mainly in the vein of meticulous exhaustion of the textual record to provide details about pronunciation, flowers, and historical names—extending the precision of the commentary, rather than debating Wang Yi's methodology or guiding intention.

As an example, consider the *Buzhu* treatment of the passage about the orchid sash ornament (“紉秋蘭以為佩”), Wang Yi's version of which was discussed in Chapter III.

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of Hong Xingzu's methodology and contributions see Li and Zhu (pp. 112-8) and Yi Chonglian (pp. 269-80).

¹⁶ P. 51.

In the Zhonghua shuju edition of the *Buzhu*, the commentary appended to this single half-line of the “Li Sao” extends for precisely one page. First Wang Yi’s commentary is provided, using only two lines of text, followed by “補曰” (the *Buzhu* states) and Hong Xingzu’s additions, expanding the commentary to a full page. The *Buzhu* comment cites the *Fangyan* 方言 and the *Shuowen* 說文 for the definition of *ren* 紉, and goes on to cite other poets, scholars, and commentators, herb manuals, the *Shuijing* 水經 (Classic of Rivers), the *Shijing*, and other poems in the *Chuci* on the natures of various orchids and on the use of fragrant herbs as sash ornaments. Hong Xingzu notes that Wang Yi failed to distinguish between different kinds of orchids in the *Chuci*, glossing all as simply fragrant herbs. He goes on to provide more citations suggesting that Qu Yuan did distinguish between the different kinds of orchids, some of which (*hui* orchids) have characteristics that make them more appropriate to ministers, and others of which (*lan* orchids) are more appropriate to rulers. After presenting this dizzying array of sources, he concludes that “其言蘭蕙如此，當俟博物者” (to speak of *lan* and *hui* like this, he must have been awaiting someone of broad knowledge).¹⁷ To state that Qu Yuan was waiting for someone who could recognize his broad knowledge in regard to plants alludes to Confucius’ dictum that learning poetry (or specifically the *Shijing*) can make one greatly familiar with animals and plants.¹⁸ It moreover refers us back to Wang Yi’s original comment, which also uses the word “博” (broad) in reference to Qu Yuan’s power of discernment and compares Qu Yuan to Confucius. Thus in the end, all of Hong Xingzu’s

¹⁷ P. 5-6. Why Qu Yuan should be thus casting himself in the role of the ruler is unquestioned and unexplained.

¹⁸ *Lunyu* (Analects), Yang huo 9.

supplementary material is mustered to support Wang Yi's comparison of Qu Yuan to Confucius. Characteristically of the *Buzhu*, while Wang Yi made his point by simple assertion, Hong Xingzu justifies that comparison with extensive textual support.

Although overall the *Buzhu* represents a continuation of Han *Chuci* scholarship, there is one important way that the *Buzhu* is a specifically Song text with a Song-style Qu Yuan. Following another great Song thinker, Su Shi 蘇軾, Hong Xingzu in his afterword to the "Li Sao" defends Qu Yuan against accusations of vanity and arrogance by asserting that his actions originated in his principled love of king and country.¹⁹ His suicide is defended as a legitimate moral action because, as a kinsman of the king, it would have been unprincipled to serve another king, and because, as his country was already doomed, he could not bear to leave it. But he died at home, completing the duty of a kinsman and minister, and his principled death ensured that his literary works would be remembered and their expression of his love of his king and sorrow for his country would last for countless generations. Thus, "屈原雖死，猶不死也" (Qu Yuan died, but it is as if he did not die); he lives on as a heroic example to later readers—although according to Hong Xingzu, few have perceived the greatness of his achievement.²⁰

While Hong Xingzu's emphasis on national loyalty does not contradict Wang Yi's view that Qu Yuan's critical poesis and suicide were orthodox political statements, it rebuts earlier criticisms from the perspective of duty and nationality. He is not loyal to his king because of their personal relationship, but because of his own identity as a nobleman of Chu. The shift from personal to public politics is consonant with the

¹⁹ For a demonstration of this tendency in the *Buzhu*, see Yi Chonglian (pp. 276-8) and Guo Jianxun, *Xiantang cifu yanjiu* (p. 38).

²⁰ P. 50.

massive shift in social-political organization that had occurred over the centuries. Between the Han and the Song, the shift in the primary interpreters of the *Chuci*, from various hereditary nobles and their courtiers to local literati who valued Chinese civilization but were not necessarily officers of the central government, provided the opportunity—or even demanded—the new national perspective on Qu Yuan. This nationalizing movement, an effort to assimilate the *Chuci* into Song culture, can be seen as an incipient tendency of the *Buzhu*; the effort was only carried through to completion in its successor, the *Chuci jizhu* of Zhu Xi.

Zhu Xi and the *Chuci jizhu*

The eminent Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi provides the first comprehensive reinterpretation of the “Li Sao” that has been transmitted to us. The *Chuci jizhu* is a milestone: a thousand years after the first anthology, it is a radically reformed version of the *Chuci*, with different contents, different hermeneutic methodology, and a different Qu Yuan. It accords with Zhu Xi’s grand project of reinterpreting the Confucian canon. Scholars have proposed many reasons for his investment in this project, which Yi Chonglian summarizes as: 1) perceived similarity of historical circumstances of the Southern Song and the Warring States; 2) personal sympathy with Qu Yuan, especially regarding his removal from court politics due to factionalism, and his residence and career in the south, particularly in the region of Qu Yuan’s exile and death; 3) dissatisfaction with existing *Chuci* scholarship.²¹ In addition, Zhu Xi had a well-known

²¹ Pp. 296-8.

distrust of commentaries²² and no doubt hoped to approach the *Chuci* with the same fresh eye and rational skepticism that he applied to the *Shijing*. The transmitted version of the *Chuci* must have seemed encumbered by its accumulated Han particularities, and Zhu Xi gave it a new afterlife by translating it into his own era.

The *Jizhu* is one of Zhu Xi's late works and strongly reflects his lifelong work of teaching the new *daoxue*. The text reflects important large-scale changes in the political shape of China and in the practices of writing and reading (see Chapter II). An implicit goal traditionally attributed to the *Jizhu* is the defense of Zhu Xi's hawkish politics. The *Jizhu* can also be understood as a response to the development of print culture and civil-service exams insofar as it addresses a large audience of individual readers and tries to ensure that those readers don't, in the manner of fortune-seeking examination students, mistake the surface of the text for its true significance. In response to the conditions of his time, Zhu Xi's *Chuci jizhu* recreates Qu Yuan anew, now a man of reason, a man whose literary work emerged logically from his principled intention. Qu Yuan's intention, moreover, is to serve his country; from the Han to the Song, the virtue most emphasized and celebrated in the "Li Sao" has shifted from personal purity as cultivation in accord with aristocratic cosmology to voluntary rational patriotism. I will discuss three methods by which Zhu Xi's commentary constructs this new afterlife of Qu Yuan, the principled patriot: emphasis on individual intention and abstract universal significance, dehistoricization, and rhetorical rationalization.

Zhu Xi's writings on education and self-cultivation strongly encourage reading as a personal encounter with the principles of the sages in texts. In the case of the "Li Sao," Zhu Xi allows his Southern Song readers to encounter the truth of the poem for

²² Gardner, pp. 159-60.

themselves by generalizing its references and discussing its significance in abstract terms. While Wang Yi constructed a distinctly Han gentleman and interpreted the poem as a concrete and specific criticism of King Huai, Zhu Xi attempts to depict Qu Yuan as a man of all time and his poem as a universally applicable expression of frustration. In this sense the *Jizhu* commentary is more strictly allegorical in the de Manian sense than the *Zhangzhu*; to make the poem's images available to the individual reflection of Song readers it empties many of them of their possible historical or literally referential significance.

Zhu Xi's preface to the *Jizhu* clearly states Zhu Xi's intention to reinterpret the works of Qu Yuan in terms of universal, abstract significance. He first introduces his motives by detailing the history and textual transmission of the *Chuci* down to Hong Xingzu, corrector of Wang Yi, but Zhu Xi specifies that the accomplishments of his predecessors, while essential, were limited to “訓詁名物” (exegesis and glossary). We might say that Zhu Xi's predecessors—he specifies that only Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu's commentaries are available to him—were only concerned with explicating the superficial literalness of the poem and neglected the deeper, immaterial, allegorical significance. This leads into Zhu Xi's defense of his own undertaking:

至其大義，則又皆未嘗沈潛反復，嗟歎咏歌，以尋其文詞指意之所出，而遽欲取喻立說，旁引曲證，以強附於其事之已然，是以或以迂滯而遠於性情，或以迫切而害於義理，使原之所為壹鬱而不得申於當年者，又晦昧而不見白於後世。 When it comes to its great principles, none of them appreciated its depth and complexity and gave it serious consideration through singing and chanting in order to seek out the

poet's intentions behind its diction, but rather made swift comparisons and explanations according to their own desires. They make wide-ranging citations and complicated demonstrations, strongly attributing [strained interpretations] according to pre-existing [ideas]. In this way [they] are either abstruse and far from human nature, or are over-eager and wreak damage on moral principles, making what [Qu] Yuan anxiously suppressed and could not express in his own time to be again obscurely hidden and unapparent in later generations.²³

His stated goal is to bring out the “大義” (great moral significance). The word *yi* 義, central to Neo-Confucianism, indicates that the *Zhangju* is part of Zhu Xi's comprehensive reinterpretation of the Classics according to the new hermeneutic system. He asserts that earlier interpreters have failed to bring out this great moral significance—which, the progress of this passage suggests, is “that which Qu Yuan anxiously suppressed and could not express,” or his authentic intention—because they were all too caught up in their own desires and preconceptions. Zhu Xi's task is thus to sweep aside all petty personal desires and received interpretations in order to commune with the essential truth of the poem itself. He is here asserting the same claim to authority that he asserts in his reinterpretation of the canonical Confucian masters: he will draw out the “義理” (moral principles) that have been overlooked and occluded by history. Through a process of critical reading, Zhu Xi will reveal Qu Yuan's original moral intention.

Zhu Xi's interpretation decisively emphasizes that individual intention is the essential value of literature and action. In the passage above, Zhu Xi states that it is

²³ Introduction, p. 3.

particularly “性情” (true feeling), “義理” (moral principles), and “原之所為壹鬱而不得申” (that which Qu Yuan anxiously suppressed and could not express), that have not been done justice in earlier interpretations. This is of a piece with the classical concept of poetry as the articulation of intention (the theory of *shi yan zhi* 詩言志). But while early scholars were typically concerned with the efficacy and decorum of poetry in giving voice to intention as political speech, in Zhu Xi’s interpretation the authorial intention is the unique and final value of poetry, regardless of political effects. The preface contains a tripartite apologetics of individual intention:

竊嘗論之：原之為人，其志行雖或過於中庸而不可以為法，然皆出於忠君愛國之誠心。原之為書，其辭旨雖或流於跌宕怪神，怨懟激發而不可以為訓，然皆生於繾綣惻怛，不能自己之至意。雖其不知學於北方，以求周公，仲尼之道，而獨馳騁於變風，變雅之末流，以故醇儒莊士或羞稱之。I have discussed it thus: As to [Qu] Yuan’s personality, although his aspiration and action sometimes overstep the doctrine of the mean, and so should not be made into a model, yet it all came out of a sincere mind of loyalty to the king and love of the kingdom. As to Yuan’s oeuvre, although his diction and content are sometimes in the current of the boldly unconstrained [i.e., overstep the bounds of decorum] or [deals with] ghosts and spirits, with resentment and provocation that should not be made into a teaching standard, yet it was all born of a perfect intention of inseparable attachment and earnest sympathy, and the inability to completely realize himself. Although he did not know to study in the north

and seek the way of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, yet he single-handedly galloped in the latter current of the changed *Feng* and changed *Ya*; because of this among the pure scholars and righteous elites there have been some who are shy to acclaim him.²⁴

Here the preface discusses the origin and purpose of the poetry with more specificity than Wang Yi or Hong Xingzu. The three facets of this explicit apologetics are character, oeuvre, and ideology. In each case, the defense is grounded in Qu Yuan's individual character and experience. Regarding Qu Yuan's personality, Zhu Xi implicitly claims to accomplish Sima Qian's desire to “見其為人” (see what kind of a man he was) and resolves the indecision of “Traditions of Qu Yuan and Master Jia” in regards to the relative value of intention and political effect, coming down firmly in favor of intention; the excesses of the poet and his poem are justified by his “誠心” (sincere mind) of loyalty and patriotism.²⁵ Regarding Qu Yuan's oeuvre, Zhu Xi apologizes for its unorthodox features by confirming its origin in “perfect intention.” The third facet of the apologetics is ideology. Qu Yuan's thought is defended by way of a historical distinction that does not seem to have been clear to the Han critics: while Qu Yuan was not schooled in correct northern ways due to the unavailability of those teachings in Warring States Chu, he “galloped” in the Confucian spirit of his own initiative. This demonstrates Zhu Xi's

²⁴ Introduction, p. 2. For a very different interpretation of this passage, see Richard John Lynn's translation in “Chu Hsi as Literary Theorist and Critic,” included in *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism* (Chan, ed.), p. 346. Lynn reads this as a strongly negative evaluation of Qu Yuan, but given Zhu Xi's statements in the latter part of the preface (translated and discussed later in this chapter), and his use of the word “經” in the poem's title, I believe Zhu Xi is expressing a deeply sympathetic attitude and finding morally exemplary intentions at the origin of Qu Yuan's work in order to explain and implicitly legitimize his own editorial undertaking.

²⁵ Also note the reference to *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean) as a standard of conduct, a text that was not central until the Neo-Confucians extracted it from the *Liji* and elevated it to one of Four Books of the reformed (Neo-) Confucian canon, as well as Zhu Xi's famous and enduring attribution of “愛國” (patriotism; more literally, “love of kingdom”) to Qu Yuan.

consciousness of historical difference, and it also demonstrates that for Zhu Xi the essence of the Confucian teachings transcend space and time and are available to individual reflection regardless of literal contact with Confucian schooling. While the Han commentators debated Qu Yuan as if he should have been one of them, a participant in their ideology, Zhu Xi both interprets Qu Yuan in his original historical context and makes the essential philosophical context of Neo-Confucianism an all-embracing trans-historical truth. This part of the preface moreover implies that Qu Yuan is a remarkable exemplar of Zhu Xi's independent study method, in which received teachings are unnecessary and the truth appears of itself to individual reflection.

Zhu Xi's valuation of individual intention encompasses the readers as well, for the power of the poem is in its sympathetic appeal: the anthology preface goes on to list the kinds of readers who love the *Chuci*:

然使世之放臣，屏子，怨妻，去婦，捩淚謳吟於下，而所天者幸而聽之，則於彼此之間，天性民彝之善，豈不足以交有所發，而增夫三綱五典之重？ But if the banished ministers, obstructed sons, complaining wives, and discarded women of this world dab their tears and chant [it] from [their position] below, and fortunately those whom they take to be heaven [above] are listening, then between these [who plead] and those [who listen] wouldn't the goodness of heavenly nature and of the common people be enough to mutually inspire them and augment the importance of the Three Binding Ties and the Five Standards?²⁶

²⁶ Introduction, p. 2. Thank you to Clay Chou for help interpreting this passage.

Zhu Xi emphasizes the *Chuci*'s universal relevance; it is not merely a courtly text, but can be sympathetically appreciated, understood, and used for appropriate communication by people in any position in Confucian social relations. This is an appeal to the individual reader, who should inhabit at least one of these roles. In the following line Zhu Xi rejects the idea that the “Li Sao” belongs to the class of “詞人之賦” (the work of the versifier). While according to Yang Xiong’s late criticism *ci* were beautiful but “淫” (excessive) and only *shi* 詩 were dedicated to soberly orthodox—that is to say morally and politically normative—Confucian content, Zhu Xi presents a properly Confucian *and* authentically emotional “Li Sao.” Thus the preface draws readers into an individual encounter with an authentic intention that is to be both Qu Yuan’s and their own. The comparisons and connections to Confucian texts, teachers, and teachings assure Zhu Xi’s readers that Qu Yuan’s intention, behind its wildly unrestrained expression in language, is also authoritative and correct.

The approach that Zhu Xi encourages readers to undertake is a natural development of Sima Qian’s foundational imperative to read sympathetically. On the other hand, while Sima Qian frames the creation of the poem and its interpretation and evaluation in terms of practical historical efficacy with exclusive reference to the ruler, Zhu Xi discusses writing, reading, interpreting, and evaluating as personal, individual ventures.

The preface having prepared readers for an encounter with the great moral significance of Qu Yuan’s principled intention, Zhu Xi makes that encounter possible in the line comments. The comments always follow the pattern of interpreting from the particular words to the abstract meaning in terms of Qu Yuan’s original experience:

閨中既以邃遠兮，哲王又不寤。懷朕情而不發兮，
余焉能忍而與此終古？既下，一有以字。邃，息遂反。一無
而字。古，叶音故。○小門謂之閨。邃，深也。哲，知也。寤，覺也。
終古者，古之所終，謂來日之無窮也。閨中深遠，蓋言處妃之屬不可
求也。哲王不寤，蓋言上帝不能察，司閨壅蔽之罪也。言此以比上無
明王，下無賢伯，使我懷忠信之情，不得發用，安能久與此閨亂嫉妬
之俗終古而居乎？意欲復去也。 After *ji*, one manuscript has the word *yi*.
Sui, pronounced xi+sui. One manuscript without the word *er*. *Gu* is
pronounced the same as *gu*. A small gate is called a *gui*. *Sui* means deep.
Zhe is learned. *Wu* is to awaken. As to *zhonggu*, it is the end of the old,
meaning that the future is inexhaustible. Deep and distant within the hall:
[I] infer this to say that the abode of Fufei cannot be sought. The learned
king does not awaken: [I] infer this to say that the Emperor of Heaven
cannot discern [the speaker], because of the fault of the trickery of
heaven's gatekeeper. [Qu Yuan] says this as a comparison for "there is no
wise king on high and no worthy ministers below, making the feeling of
loyal faith that I cherish to be unusable; how could [I] be long in this
disordered, jealous society and abide until the very end? It means that I
want to depart again.²⁷

The commentary first provides pronunciation and textual variants, then word glosses,
then paraphrases which interpret this passage in terms of previous passages, culminating

²⁷ P. 19. Guo Jianxun also discusses this passage in *Xiantang cifu yanjiu* p. 40.

in an interpretation of the images as comparisons for Qu Yuan's predicament and a statement of his intention, an intention which is rooted in the subjective "feeling" of loyalty. In this example we can also note another opening for subjective encounter. While the *Buzhu* refers "闺中" directly to the court of King Huai, Zhu Xi's interpretation is much more general, referring the words back to the poem itself and interpreting the general significance as reference to "the ruler above" and "ministers below." This is typical of the way the line comments consistently generalize and dehistoricize the poetry, making Qu Yuan speak not just about the court of king Huai but about perennial questions of personal experience such as political confusion and envy, thereby allowing readers to read across the gap that separates them from Qu Yuan.

From the above we have already seen that the emphasis on individual experience and abstract universal significance in the new interpretation of the "Li Sao" is intimately mixed with Zhu Xi's historical consciousness. While the Han readers all seemed to believe that Qu Yuan was one of them, Zhu Xi both recognizes the difference of a millennium past and makes Qu Yuan a contemporary model of his aspirations for the Southern Song. To do so, he makes a dialectical leap: he recognizes difference as historical and transcends difference with reference to transhistorical principles.

One of the primary strategies employed in the *Jizhu* to make the poem available to individual readers is to involve less historically referential specificity in the interpretation of images. Zhu Xi's stanza paraphrases are closer to the original than Wang Yi's, yet they are also less historically specific; the reference is generalized. Zhu Xi is more likely than Wang Yi to reuse the original words of the poem in his paraphrases, and he adds fewer external references. This is most apparent in the complete removal of King Huai from the

line comments. While Wang Yi's paraphrases consistently refer *quan* 荃 and *lingxiu* 靈修 specifically to King Huai, Zhu Xi simply refers them to “君” (the ruler).²⁸ This is a concrete example of what it means to interpret for “大義” (great moral significance) rather than “訓詁” (exegesis): Zhu Xi's dehistoricized interpretation allows readers the possibility of reading *Quan* as any ruler, even one's contemporary ruler, and thus, by extension, oneself as the speaker. Of course, Zhu Xi is specific about the poem's original purpose as remonstrance of King Huai in the preface and can assume his readers are familiar with that historical reference, but while Wang Yi insists at every opportunity that the poem refers *exclusively* to King Huai, Zhu Xi's generalized line comments permit a second, more abstract level of significance to emerge. Interpreting oneself as the poet but also the poet as oneself, the hermeneutic of “great moral significance” leads into a profound sympathy with Qu Yuan and a perception, from the perspective of self, of the universal principle of loyalty.

Zhu Xi also dehistoricizes the poem by removing many of the specifically Han interpretations attached to the “Li Sao.” While the raw material of the *Jizhu* commentary is primarily drawn straight from the *Buzhu*, some material is conspicuously absent from the new presentation of the “Li Sao.” For example, Zhu Xi's counter-Hanification strategy removes all attributions of yin-yang cosmology. The lines about the speaker's morning and evening plucking of herbs are thus interpreted only in terms of abstract virtues: “言所采取皆芳香久固之物，以比所行者，皆忠善長久之道也” (This says what he picks are all fragrant and enduring things, to compare with what he does, which

²⁸ Pp. 6, 6-7, 9.

are all [activities of] the loyal, good, and lasting Way).²⁹ Similarly, the consumption of morning dew and evening petals is simply referred to purity, not purity-as-absorption of yin-yang essences, and is called only *bi* 比 (comparison), not *fu* 賦 (narration), suggesting the speaker is not literally consuming these substances. By the Song dynasty the institutions and practices of Daoism and Confucianism were distinct, and herbal cultivation of spiritual essences fell in the domain of Daoism; these small edits eliminate what was no longer standard in the new Confucianism. For the speaker of these lines to be acceptable within Neo-Confucian thought, he should not actually be consuming herbs, yet he must have a purpose in saying so. Thus the *Jizhu* necessarily leaves the specific significance of the original images a bit of a mystery (why chrysanthemum petals?) even as it is much more clear than the *Zhangju* about what is metaphorical or fictional and what is literally historical. These exclusions demonstrate an awareness of historical difference, or the seeming inappropriateness of Han practices to the Warring States as well as to the Song dynasty, and yet they also demonstrate a greater degree of generality and abstraction in interpreting the imagery.

While Zhu Xi's intention seems to have been to make Qu Yuan a man of all time, there are of course still connections to the specific ideology of Zhu Xi's time, such as attributions to terms of specifically Song discourse. For example, he paraphrases the lines “民生各有所樂兮，余獨好修以為常” (Common people's lives each have their pleasures — I alone love cultivation as [my] constant) as “各有所樂言人生各隨氣習” (Each have their pleasures means human lives each follow their temperament)³⁰; *qixi* 氣

²⁹ P. 4.

³⁰ P. 11.

習 (temperament) appears frequently in Zhu Xi's writings and in other texts of the Song and later, but was not much used in earlier times.

The clearest instance of a specifically Southern Song version of Qu Yuan is in the *Jizhu* preface to the "Li Sao." The preface is mostly quotation of *Zhangju* preface, but with critical revisions. The *Zhangju/Buzhu* version is as follows: "屈原放在草野，復作《九章》，援天引聖，以自誠明，終不見省。不忍以清白久居濁世，遂赴汨淵自沈而死" (Qu Yuan was cast out into the wilds where he also made the "Nine Verses"; reaching for Heaven and summoning the sages, from the beginning [he was] sincere and virtuous, [but] in the end [he was] not understood. Not bearing that the purely white should long abide in the muddy world, he then threw himself in to the abyss of the Mi[luo] and drowned himself). For the *Chuci jizhu* Zhu Xi replaces these lines with:

屈原復作九歌，天問，遠遊，卜居，漁父等篇，冀伸己志，以悟君心，而終不見省。不忍見其宗國將遂危亡，遂赴汨羅之淵而死" Qu Yuan also made the "Nine Songs," "Heavenly Questions," "Far Roaming," "Divination," "The Fisherman," and other such works, hoping to extend his aspiration and awaken the mind of the ruler, but in the end he was not understood. Not bearing to see his fatherland in dire peril, he cast himself into the abyss of the Miluo and died.³¹

Other scholars have discussed the significance of Zhu Xi's different account of Qu Yuan's oeuvre; here I will focus on the different specification of his motive in committing suicide. According to Zhu Xi, and in accord with Hong Xingzu's afterword to the "Li Sao," Qu Yuan's preference for death was not primarily motivated by a

³¹ *Buzhu* p. 2, *Jizhu* p. 2.

concern with purity. Instead, he was dismayed by the impending political disaster of Chu, which he could apparently foresee. By rearticulating Qu Yuan's motive in this way, Zhu Xi has re-contextualized the poem from a Han discourse of purity/impurity and active service/self-preservation into the Southern Song discourse of loyalty/treason and absolutism.³² In this version of Qu Yuan many scholars have seen Zhu Xi advocating for the pro-war faction of the Southern Song. The ethnically Chinese court had been exiled from their ancestral homeland in the north, which was under the rule of the non-Chinese (Jurchen) Jin dynasty. Against the implemented policy of maintaining peace by diplomacy, Zhu Xi supported the reclamation of northern China by military force. While Jia Yi and Yang Xiong imagined that Qu Yuan had the option of non-service in the form of self-preservation, and perhaps wished that Qu Yuan had been loyal to the vision of an ideally unified China (to be realized in the Han) rather than loyal to his incompetent king, Zhu Xi's Qu Yuan is loyal to his rightful homeland, even when that is (soon to be) taken by the enemy. For Zhu Xi, non-service is simply not an option; non-service is the way of Daoist and Buddhist home-leavers, not the way of a Neo-Confucian gentleman. Likewise, travelling to another kingdom to find a more receptive king is not an option; that would have been like going to serve the Jin. Thus, Zhu Xi's revision of the "Li Sao" preface completes the Southern Song re-imagining of Qu Yuan in terms of national rather than personal politics, and in particular it presents Qu Yuan as a paragon for the pro-war faction of Southern Song politics. Zhu Xi encourages an overall reading of poem in terms

³² Peter K. Bol has argued, against prevailing historical accounts, that the Song and later imperial China were not in fact characterized by "absolutism" in the sense of emperors exercising absolute power (*Neo-Confucianism in History*, Chapter 4); however, within the Neo-Confucian vision of society the emperor was still in principle the absolute political authority, and furthermore, his rule was universal; that is, while Buddhism and Daoism offered alternatives to serving the emperor, there was no alternative within Neo-Confucianism. Cf. Hymes and Schirokauer, *Ordering the World*, pp. 36-46.

of the value of absolute patriotism. As discussed above, Zhu Xi gives Qu Yuan a new afterlife as a man of all time, allowing his latter-day readers to transcend history and encounter Qu Yuan as themselves, but he does so in terms of, perhaps even in the service of, Chinese political history.

The third facet of Zhu Xi's hermeneutic to discuss here is rationalization. The commentary undertakes a more strictly allegorical interpretation than its predecessors, rationalizing the fantastic imagery by reducing it to simply imagery and translating the poem into a discourse of strict realism. It also elucidates a logical rhetoric and a logical narrative for the poem, positing an overall rational structure and purpose. Ultimately, the purpose is to rationally advance Qu Yuan's principled intention to remain loyal to his kingdom.

Zhu Xi's insistence on the fictional status of fantastic imagery is stated explicitly in his line comments. To the stanza containing “駟玉虬以乘鸞兮” ([I] team four jade dragonets and ride the yi-bird) at the speaker's departure on his first journey, Zhu Xi comments, “然此以下，多假託之詞，非實有是物與是事也” (In this and what follows, there are many hypothetical expressions; it's not that there really was such a thing and such a situation).³³ This suggests a different cosmology and ideology than Wang Yi's, and it demands a more precise literary analysis. Wang Yi's rhetorical scheme for the “Li Sao” puts all the elements of the poem into one discourse-world of cosmological correspondences, making any distinction between factual and imaginary elements

³³ P. 15.

unnecessary.³⁴ Zhu Xi, however, insists that the fantastic elements are “非實有” (not substantially present).

Zhu Xi does not reiterate this view, but it is supported throughout his interpretation in the way he categorizes elements according to rhetorical analysis. He maintains two levels of discourse, the comparative and the narrative. All fantastic elements fall into the comparative category; they are material that Qu Yuan makes use of to describe his essential, strictly this-worldly narrative of political intention. For example, after the first list of historical precedents and conclusion that virtue will be received, the speaker departs on a magical journey. For Zhu Xi this change of field of reference, from historical to magical, is not a change in rhetorical structure; it is all “比而賦” (narration with comparison). Historical persons and jade dragons are all equally secondary, things “selected” (see below) to serve as comparators for the essential narrative of the poet’s rational intention. On the other hand, *nüxu* 女嬃 is identified as Qu Yuan’s sister and the phrases following as the record of a historical dialogue between Qu Yuan and his sister.³⁵ In this sense Zhu Xi reads allegorically, with two levels of meaning: the strictly historical narrative and the many “not substantially present” images and ideas that also describe this narrative.

The most important effect of Zhu Xi’s rationalization, bearing in mind that he has made the poem’s authorial intention to be its ultimate value, is to assert that intention of the “Li Sao” is a consistently rational intention. To demonstrate this I will first analyze

³⁴ Pauline Yu calls this “literalism”; see *The Reading of Imagery*, Chapter 2, for her discussion of Wang Yi and Zhu Xi. In addition, see Yi Chonglian, p. 308, on Zhu Xi’s rational reading of “*Buju*” 卜居 (Divination) as fiction.

³⁵ P. 11.

Zhu Xi's instructions for rational reading and then demonstrate how the application of these instructions in the line comments constructs a rational intention as the poem's "great moral significance."

The *Jizhu* preface to the "Li Sao" removes Wang Yi's instructions for interpretation of allegorical rhetoric, in its place quoting the praise of Liu An and the Northern Song literature scholar Song Qi. But the edited preface is followed by an extended note in which Zhu Xi provides a much more sophisticated scheme for interpretation of the poem's rhetoric. It begins, in the tradition of Wang Yi and Liu Xie, with reference to the *Shijing*, again defending the *Chuci* in terms of its orthodox northern precursor. But while the earlier interpreters were primarily concerned with establishing filiation between the two texts, Zhu Xi creates a purely formal rhetorical system to serve as the grounds of comparison; perhaps we could say that he discerns the transhistorical principles of rhetoric.³⁶

The note offers a concise summary of the six modes of the *Shijing* mentioned in the canonical *Zhouli* 周禮 and applies these terms to the rhetoric of the *Chuci*. After noting that the first three of the six terms of classical poetics, *Feng*, *Ya*, and *Song*, refer to different social or performative functions and are distinguished by their stanzaic form and rhythm, it states that *fu*, *bi*, and *xing* denote different form-content relations and are "其所以分者，又以其屬辭命意之不同而別之也" (distinguished by differences in their use of literary language to describe intention). According to the note, "誦詩者先辨乎此，則三百篇者，若網在綱，有條不紊矣" (readers of the *Shijing* poems must first distinguish according to this scheme, and then the three hundred poems are "like the

³⁶ P. 2.

ropes of a net, having lines without disorder” [a quotation of the *Shangshu* signifying “methodical and orderly”]). The preface next asserts that these six modes “不特詩也，楚人之詞，亦以是而求之” (are not limited to the *Shijing* poems but are also applicable to the *Chuci*), and goes on to give examples, attributing to various poems of the *Chuci* the performative functions of the “changed” *Feng*, *Ya*, and *Song*, and the rhetorical structures of *fu*, *bi*, and *xing*. Again, Zhu Xi does not attempt to prove a direct historical filiation of the *Chuci* from the *Shijing*, but puts the *Chuci* within the trans-historical spirit that includes and is paradigmatically exemplified in the *Shijing*. Thus, it is implied, readers should also interpret the *Chuci* according to this scheme and will thereby find the poems to be “methodical and orderly.”

The preface note focuses on the three latter rhetorical terms, *fu*, *bi*, and *xing*, which are the primary terms applied in the interlinear commentary. Zhu Xi defines these terms thus: “賦則直陳其事，比則取物為比，興則託物興詞” (*fu* directly recounts a matter, *bi* makes use of a thing as a comparator, and *xing* relies on a thing to introduce the theme). To translate into the terminology of literary structuralism, *fu* is narrative or direct description (metonymy) and *bi* is metaphor, while *xing* is circumlocutory deferral, a prefatory sign or “affective image.”³⁷ *Xing* is a slippery term even in Chinese writing and therefore poses a special difficulty for translation; the difficulty is exemplified in Zhu Xi’s use of the word *xing* to define *xing* (“興，則託物興詞”). In the same note he offers an example, which I will use to define his concept of *xing*: “興，則託物興詞，初不取義，如九歌沅芷澧蘭以興思公子而未敢言之屬也” (*Xing* is to rely on a thing to

³⁷ Stephen Owen translates *xing* as “affective image”; see *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Chapter 5, on *xing* in *Wen xin diao long*.

introduce the theme, not stating the meaning at the outset, such as the Yuan river angelica and Li river eupatorium of the “Nine Songs” introducing the content “[I] think of the young lord, and do not dare to speak [of him]”). From this example we can conclude that *xing* is a way of decorously deferring reference, and thus it describes a relationship of sequence in the composition and a relationship of secondary to primary importance. The preface note furthermore remarks upon the difference in frequency of *fu*, *bi*, *xing*: “然詩之興多而比賦少，騷則興少而比賦多” (While in the *Shijing* there are many *xing* and few *bi* and *fu*, in the *Sao* there are few *xing* and many *bi* and *fu*). In fact, Zhu Xi’s interlinear commentary to the “Li Sao” does not once apply the term *xing*; the scheme for interpreting the “Li Sao” is thus primarily to distinguish between narrative and comparison, or metonymy and metaphor. While this strongly suggests, even before analyzing his exegesis of the poem, that Zhu Xi was a reader of rhetorical allegory, the preface does not go so far as to present a universal theory of narrative comparison or strict allegory.

Zhu Xi’s scholarly approach to figure is radically different from Wang Yi’s. While Wang Yi asserted only that in the case of the *Chuci* plants are compared to Confucian political virtues, and so on, Zhu Xi asserts that *bi* is a figure deployed in the *Chuci* and that what *bi* does is select a thing to make a comparison. While Wang Yi’s theory of allegory was concerned only with accounting for the specific potential ambiguities and unorthodoxies of the *Chuci*, Zhu Xi has furnished principles of rhetoric applicable to all poetry. Furthermore, Zhu Xi explicitly states that being able to distinguish the *Shijing* and *Chuci* according to his scheme—that is to say, being able to apply the correct technique of rhetorical analysis—is essential to understanding the

meaning: “要必辨此，而後詞義可尋，讀者不可以不察也” (Always distinguish like this, and afterwards the significance of the words will be traceable, and the reader will not be able to miss it). The *Jizhu* commentary establishes, and makes continual reference to, a necessary principle of rhetorical structure, a principle that it posits is immanent in this poetry as it is in the canonical poetry.

The difference in scholarly approach carries through in the interlinear commentary, where the principles of rhetoric outlined in the preface are rigorously applied. Zhu Xi comments by *zhang* 章 (stanza), a stanza being defined by end-rhyme and each stanza usually consisting of two couplets, although in a few cases three or more couplets with the same rhyme are grouped as one stanza. Thus the reader of the *Jizhu* usually covers four lines of the original before arriving at commentarial assistance. The elements of the commentary are clearly distinct and arranged in a consistent sequence: textual variants, fanqie pronunciation, identification of rhetorical mode according to *fu/bi/xing* analysis, word glosses, and a paraphrase. In the paraphrase, the exegesis of the literal images is sometimes distinct from the interpretation of Qu Yuan’s intention, which is last in the sequence. At intervals throughout the text descriptions of the connections between preceding and following stanzas and demarcations of various perspectives are also added at the end of the comment, such as “自念之詞止此” (His words of thinking to himself end here) and “此下至終篇，又原自序之詞” (from here to the end of the work, the words are again [Qu] Yuan’s self-narration).³⁸ I would like to draw attention to three aspects of this commentary form: first, it demonstrates a rigorously systematic hermeneutic in which all passages are identified in terms of their rhetorical category

³⁸ Pp. 20 and 22.

before their significance is paraphrased; second, even as it breaks the poem down word by word, it emphasizes the integration and continuity of the poem's overall meaning; and third, it diverts attention from the aesthetic surface of the poem to consistently emphasize that the ultimate purpose of reading is to arrive at the abstract moral significance (Qu Yuan's unadorned intention).

In these interlinear comments another aspect of the Zhu Xi's rationalization of the "Li Sao" becomes clear: the *Jizhu* presents the "Li Sao" as if the poem is a systematically rational argument. The rhetoric that Zhu Xi is concerned with is persuasive rather than ornamental; he applies his rhetorical terms to present an orderly narrative qua logical argument. Just as the commentary is rigorously consistent in its application of a rational system of rhetoric, the interpretation that it creates is also of a consistently rational work: if flowers are virtues, they must be in every case virtues, not sometimes historical courtiers as in Wang Yi's interpretation.³⁹

The commentary states the persuasive purpose of the rhetoric in each stanza and asserts logical connections between them. For example, to the stanza that begins "屈心而抑志兮" (Bend heart and suppress aspiration) is appended an extended paraphrase with much explicitation, leading into a demonstration of the Confucius-authorized reasonableness of the speaker's argument and conduct, and a concluding description of the stanza's position in the overall narrative:

言與世已不同矣，則但可屈心而抑志，雖或見尤於人，亦當一切隱忍而不與之校，雖所遭者或有耻辱，亦當以理解遣，若攘卻之而不受於懷。蓋寧伏清白而死於直道，尚足為前聖之所厚，如比干諫死，而武

³⁹ See Li and Zhu, pp. 124-5; they discuss Zhu Xi's logical consistency in interpreting the imagery as *yuyan* 寓言 (allegory).

王封其墓，孔子稱其仁也。自怨靈修以下至此，五章一意，為下章回車復路起。 This says, [I am] already different from the world, and even though I could bend my heart and suppress my aspiration, although I sometimes may be blamed by others, I should silently endure it all and not compete with them. Although what I meet with sometimes may be disgraceful, I should hold to my principles and dismiss their blame. I ought to withstand it and not take it to heart. I must bear my purity and die on the straight path, and it will be enough for the reverence of the former sages—like Bi Gan’s remonstrance-unto-death, which King Wu honored with a burial mound, such that Confucius praised his benevolence. From the complaint of Spirit Perfection down to here there are five stanzas with one meaning; it is the inspiration for the next stanza on returning the chariot to recover the road.⁴⁰

In crude summary, the commentary classifies the five stanzas referred to as follows: complaint of *Lingxiu* and eyebrow jealousy=*bi*; distorted units of measure=*bi*; solitary suffering and preference for death=*fu*; solitary birds and incompatible shapes=*bi*; shame and the sage’s preference for pure death=*fu*. The diverse images in different discourse fields are classified as *bi* and the more strictly lyrical stanzas as *fu*. The inclusion of Bi Gan here (following Hong Xingzu) confirms that the good reader is the Confucius to Qu Yuan’s Bi Gan, able to recognize his true worth. The connecting comment asserts that the *bi* stanzas and the *fu* stanzas express one idea; thus the *bi* stanzas are supportive comparisons for the one idea that is expressed directly in the *fu* stanzas (in this case, the

⁴⁰ P. 9.

suchly-rationalized resolve to die an honorable death). Finally, the comment tells us that the whole sequence is a digression from the larger narrative of the journey, creating an overall sense of order and cohesion in seemingly fragmented section of the poem.

Another way to say this is that Zhu Xi presents the poem's persuasive claim as rational rhetoric. This is particularly obvious in the *Jizhu* interpretation of the passage about the speaker's quest among female characters.⁴¹ Wang Yi's interpretation is grounded in his cosmology, and so the women signify ministers because women and ministers are both *yin* while men and rulers are *yang*. For Zhu Xi, on the other hand, the speaker is looking for a “賢君” (worthy ruler). This is because Zhu Xi's grounding is rhetorical: the idea of the pursuit of a worthy lover is structurally analogous to the idea of the quest for a worthy ruler, making the former an apt metaphor for the latter. To the stanza containing “哀高丘之無女” ([I] grieve for the high hill's absence of women) Zhu Xi comments: “女，神女，蓋以比賢君也，於此又無所遇，故下章欲遊春宮，求處妃，見佚女，留二姚，皆求賢君之意也” (Woman [means a] female spirit; [I] infer that this is a comparison for a worthy ruler. To this point he has again not met [his appreciator], thus in the following stanzas his desire to rove in the Spring Palace, seek out Fufei, and stay with the two Yao sisters all has the meaning of searching for a worthy ruler).⁴² In the entire passage on courting various women (the “following stanzas” referred to in the comment) there are no references to yin-yang theory or cosmic correspondences to justify the gloss of women as potential rulers. For Zhu Xi the women are simply rhetorical devices and do not need to be cosmologically justified as in Wang

⁴¹ Pp. 17-19.

⁴² P. 17.

Yi's interpretation. Thus while Wang Yi's comments to this passage consistently and emphatically refer everything to the recruitment of virtuous courtiers, Zhu Xi simply rephrases the words of each stanza in easier-to-understand language, letting his classification of this part of the poem as “比而賦” (narrative with comparison) and this one comment at the beginning of the passage do all the work of gender translation. In addition, male mythical figures such as the god of thunder are given equal treatment—all are fictional elements comparing aspects of the speaker's quest. Finally, while Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu refer this passage directly to the court of King Huai, Zhu Xi first paraphrases the mythical narrative including Fufei and then provides its abstract significance, concluding with a link to the overall narrative of Qu Yuan's intention: “there is no wise king on high and no worthy ministers below, making the feeling of loyal faith that I cherish to be unusable; how could [I] be long in this disordered, jealous society and abide until the very end? It means that I want to depart again.”⁴³ According to the *Jizhu* the poem systematically articulates this intention through metaphors of courtship; its articulation is reasoned, logical, and therefore, in Zhu Xi's presentation, persuasive. Rather than follow Wang Yi's insistence at every reference to a woman that all have their place in a cosmology of correspondences, Zhu Xi draws attention to the rhetorical integrity of the poem. What Wang Yi interprets with cosmology, Zhu Xi interprets as rhetoric.

The effect of Zhu Xi's interpretation of Qu Yuan's quest for a woman as an extended metaphor for seeking a king is to place Qu Yuan within a world more like the Song. According to Wang Yi's exegesis, Qu Yuan seeks the king's favor through

⁴³ P. 19; Chinese text quoted above.

complex courtship rituals, employing go-betweens to obtain worthy ministers to serve the king on his behalf. There is only one king in Wang Yi's version, and that is the King of Chu; all of Qu Yuan's efforts are undertaken with the intention of being seen by and reunited with the King of Chu. The King of Chu, in this reading, is much like the emperor of the unified Han. For Zhu Xi, on the other hand, Qu Yuan himself seeks a worthy ruler, with the implication that rulers may be many or none—and in fact in the end he concludes that there is no worthy ruler at all in his time. Qu Yuan seeks a worthy ruler directly, expressing the value of his own discernment in a less personal and yet more individual relationship with the head of state. This Qu Yuan is more suitable for the social and political world after the Tang-Song transition, when for most readers the ruler was far away indeed, and individual learning and conduct was more essential to elite identity than one's personal relationship to the king. But this new Qu Yuan also reflects a certain continuity with the early imperial vision of the state: the problem with the world is, ultimately, the problem of the ruler's personal morality.

Zhu Xi's commentary individualizes, dehistoricizes, and rationalizes the "Li Sao" such that by the end of the poem there is little need for further explanation. His comment to the coda is a close paraphrase, barely adding anything to the text. He classifies it as *fu*, a return to the directly lyrical voice of Qu Yuan. The whole narrative and all metaphorical elements are decisively attributed to Qu Yuan's decision to return to Chu: "屈原託為此行，而終無所詣，周流上下，而卒反於楚焉，亦仁之至而義之盡也" (Qu Yuan pretends to undertake this activity, but finally it attains nothing. He roams about high and low, but in the end returning to Chu is truly the perfection of humaneness

and the completion of moral righteousness).⁴⁴ All the foregoing imagery has been significant only insofar as it rhetorically strengthens his final despair and heroic resolve. However, Zhu Xi's articulation of the moral principles might raise a question for the Neo-Confucian reader. According to Zhu Xi the last line of the poem says “時君不足與共行美政，故我將自沈，以從彭咸之所居也” (the rulers in this time are not adequate to join with in undertaking fair governance, so I will drown myself in order to follow Peng Xian to his abode).⁴⁵ Given Zhu Xi's view of history and morality, shouldn't Qu Yuan take up the task of morally transforming the world by himself, regardless of whether or not he could directly influence the ruler? How could Qu Yuan's death accomplish the great Confucian virtues of humaneness and moral righteousness? The answer to this, I believe, is to be found in the anthology preface. In the preface Zhu Xi does not hold up Qu Yuan as a model of conduct, only of intention. Thus it is Qu Yuan's intention to stay in Chu, his apprehension of the principle of loyalty, that is worthy of study. Perhaps it is even his renunciation of the quest to find a ruler somewhere other than right at home that is morally righteous. The reader is meant to see through Qu Yuan's actions as well as they see through the superficial fictional elements of his language, and to discern the real essence of the poem as a morally upright intention, as universal principles.

Wang Yi's cosmological exegesis of the “Li Sao” and Hong Xingzu's expansion of it are deeply involved in the elucidation of the textual surface, while Zhu Xi and his followers in later imperial times attempt to pierce the surface and extract the immaterial

⁴⁴ P. 26.

⁴⁵ P. 26.

essence. While Wang Yi reads the “Li Sao” as the expression of a glorious cosmos with the emperor at the center, Zhu Xi puts the individual at the center of the both the act of reading and its object. But the two approaches are not radically discontinuous; indeed, Zhu Xi’s reading is just as moralizing and ultimately political as his early-imperial predecessors.

The all-encompassing hierarchical order of the early imperial system, justified as the human counterpart to heaven-and-earth, had once claimed to be the realization of unity in practice. If that had not been entirely true in fact, it had been maintained symbolically through ritual and writing. But the Neo-Confucians shifted the focus of a belief in unity away from the imperial system and into the mind as something individuals embodied and could act on. They had internalized the classical idea of empire.⁴⁶

Zhu Xi created a Qu Yuan for the empire within the minds of mid-late imperial readers. In doing so, he helped open the language of the “Li Sao” to the possibility of different individual readings in later imperial times and set the stage for the rejection of the belief in unity altogether in the post-modern era. Of course, even in the Song dynasty, the Neo-Confucian model was not the only framework for reading. A thorough examination of the diversity of mid-late imperial interpretations of the “Li Sao,” the complexity of the particular historical circumstances to which they speak, and the paths they trace through the past and into the present, could fill a book of its own.

⁴⁶Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, p. 217.

This view of the “Li Sao” contains the wish, as did many traditional interpretations of poetry, that literature should be a potent political force. More fundamentally, and again with great continuity, it assumes that the real personhood of the poet is the alpha and omega of interpretation. The nationalistic modern afterlife of Qu Yuan has deep roots in earlier eras, roots that survived the radical questioning of traditional culture and scholarship during China’s modern revolutions. But in the early twentieth century, a significant change occurred: from a consolation to frustrated aristocrats and bureaucrats, Qu Yuan was transformed into an inspiration for the masses. His primary bond shifted from personal service to his king to solidarity with the common citizens and dedication to an abstract ideal of the Chinese nation.

The controversial and undoubtedly influential scholar Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) was largely responsible for constructing the dominant afterlife of Qu Yuan that persists in the People’s Republic of China today. Through Guo’s efforts, the aristocrat Qu Yuan became a symbol of social equality, and the abstrusely allegorical “Li Sao” was transformed into an accessible outpouring of patriotic sentiment. This chapter discusses how Guo’s writings construct this afterlife of Qu Yuan for the People’s Republic of China. His work accomplishes a specific task that Mao Zedong set to Chinese intellectuals in his 1942 talks at the Yan’an Forum of Literature and Art: “We should take over the rich legacy and the good traditions in literature and art that have been handed down from past ages in China and foreign countries, but the aim must still be to serve the masses of the people.”³ Discussions of Guo Moruo’s literary works on Qu Yuan and a close reading of the 1958 popular press edition of his vernacular translation of “Li Sao”

³ An English translation of this and many of Mao’s other works are available from the Marxists Internet Archive. The translation is that published by the Peking [Beijing] Foreign Languages Press. The Yan’an talks are included in Volume III.

will demonstrate how Guo articulated a new personality for Qu Yuan in step with the evolving political scene. During the May Fourth era, Qu Yuan embodied radical individualism and creativity. During the wars leading up to the founding of the People's Republic, he expressed the national passion, and after, its victory. By 1958 Qu Yuan was one with the people. His solidarity with the masses determines a new form, content, and method of reading for "Li Sao" in Guo's translation, but the poem is still intimately, invisibly linked to the interpretations of pre-modern commentaries. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of how Guo's work opened the interpretive gates to the current popular questioning of the dominant view of Qu Yuan.

The current politically correct view of the "Li Sao" is not to be taken for granted. Its author's politics and even his historical reality were debated throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sometimes Qu Yuan was a Confucianist, sometimes a Daoist or a Legalist. Chairman Mao would no doubt disapprove of David Hawkes' statement that "one of the few things that *can* be deduced about Qu Yuan is that he must have been a very old-fashioned kind of nobleman-official, very *ancien régime*."⁴ For Sun Cizhou he was the king's court jester and homosexual lover, and for Wen Yiduo he was a liberated slave.⁵ Hu Shi famously asserted that Qu Yuan was a legend and may never have been a real man at all, a thesis that Guo Moruo strongly denounced.⁶ Laurence

⁴ *The Songs of the South*, p. 63.

⁵ See Song Geng, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*, Chapter 2. Wen Yiduo proposed that Qu Yuan was a slave in "Qu Yuan wenti."

⁶ A few Japanese scholars developed Hu Shi's thesis in the latter half of the century, to which many mainland Chinese scholars responded with furious counter-assertions of Qu Yuan's authenticity, often using Guo's work as their supporting evidence. The history of the debates surrounding Qu Yuan's historical personhood is described in Huang Zhongmo's 1990 book *Xiandai Chuci piping shi*. Huang

Schneider's book *A Madman of Ch'u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent* offers a history of some of these transformations in the context of their contemporary cultural and political movements. Here I will not dwell on the many contradictory possibilities for modern Qu Yuans that existed at the emergence of Guo Moruo's Qu Yuan, but rather on Guo's own writings in the context of the early modern and Maoist projects of popularizing national literature.

According to Li Zhonghua and Zhu Bingxiang, the main accomplishment of the modern era in regards to the study of the *Chuci* is that “屈原脱下了不同历史时代为他描绘的各式脸谱，逐渐显出了他作为一个‘人’——一位卓杰诗人的真实面目” (Qu Yuan shed the diverse masks that different historical eras had painted for him, and gradually revealed himself as a “person”—a preeminent poet's true face).⁷ At its heart, this is the same fundamental claim that almost all the traditional scholars have made for their interpretations—with the notable exception of Sima Qian, who still wondered what kind of a person Qu Yuan was even after composing his biography. But what Li and Zhu no doubt mean to emphasize is that the modern era revealed a personhood for Qu Yuan that is adequate to the modern understanding of human being: the facts of his life were established according to modern historiography, his psychological experience was analyzed, his intellectual and political positions were investigated, and so on. Guo Moruo was foundational in this process. One of his most important contributions to Qu Yuan's

constructs a narrative of the victory of Guo Moruo's version of Qu Yuan, in which all competing viewpoints are negatively evaluated according to Guo's correct standard. It provides a useful summary of the many articles published in the debate and is also representative of the tone of much politically correct scholarship on this issue: any doubts about Qu Yuan's existence, authorship, or moral exemplarity are energetically discredited, while the grounds of the argument are often more ideological than logical or empirical.

⁷ *Chuci xueshi*, p. 274.

modern afterlife is his establishment of the now commonly accepted dates of birth and death, 340-278 B.C.E. These dates give Qu Yuan a place on the timeline of historical facts. They guarantee that he had a material self, the necessary origin of an authentic voice. Given the continuity of the assumption that poetry is read in order to hear the authentic voice of the poet, which Stephen Owen has called reading “as a way of knowing persons,”⁸ Guo Moruo’s work offers an especially easy-to-know view of the poet. Guo wrote about Qu Yuan in a creative as well as a scholarly capacity, and his poetic and dramatic portrayals of Qu Yuan bring the poet to life much more immediately than the backward seeking of poetic interpretation. They directly represent Qu Yuan as a human being speaking to contemporary issues in contemporary language. They present a multidimensional individual whom we can easily imagine giving voice to Guo’s vernacular translation of the “Li Sao.”

In his capacities as poet, literary scholar, Marxist historian, dramatist, and politician, Guo Moruo’s work reveals a lifelong dedication to Qu Yuan. Qu Yuan was a major character in his influential poetry collection *Nüshen* 女神 (Goddesses), written during the years when Guo was at the forefront of the May Fourth Movement and associated New Poetry Movement. During his years of exile in Japan, Qu Yuan was one topic of his intensive historical and literary study. During the Japanese occupation, after Guo had returned to China and joined the Communist Party, Qu Yuan was the star of a mobilizing modern drama he composed. Guo was one of the primary forces behind the 1953 All-China Federation of Writers and Artists, at which Qu Yuan was declared to be one of the Four Famous Men of World Culture. And in his days as president of the

⁸ See *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Chapter 1, and *Tradition Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Omen of the World*, Chapter 4.

Zhongguo kexueyuan 中國科學院 (Chinese Academy of Sciences), an important government think tank, from its founding in 1949 to his death in 1978, Guo wrote many policy statements invoking Qu Yuan as an example of politically correct literary practice. In all of Guo's writings, Qu Yuan represents inspired nationalist fervor.

May Fourth Romanticism: "Xiang Lei"

Guo Moruo's early work was written in the context of the May Fourth break with the traditional Confucian social order and celebrates individual liberty.⁹ Guo Moruo's *Goddesses*, considered the first significant work of the New Poetry Movement, contains a piece composed in 1920 entitled "Xiang Lei" 湘累,¹⁰ which is a dramatic dialogue between Qu Yuan and his elder sister.¹¹ The Qu Yuan of this early work is a passionate Romantic poet:

我所以一刻也不敢闭眼，我翻来复去又感觉无限的孤独之苦。我又盼不得早到天明，好破破我深心中不可言喻的寥寂。啊，但是，我这深心中海一样的哀愁，到头能有破灭的一天吗？哦，破灭！破灭！我欢迎你！我欢迎你！我如今什么希望也莫有，我立在破灭底门前只待着死神来开门。啊啊！我，我要想到那‘无’底世界里去！So I dare not shut my eyes, even for a moment—I toss and turn and feel the pain of

⁹ Cf. Liu Jianmei, *Zhuangzi de xiandai yunming*, pp. 27-41.

¹⁰ The title is an epithet for Qu Yuan that originates from Yang Xiong's "Anti-Li Sao"; it could be translated as "The Troubled One of the Xiang River."

¹¹ In his later work Guo seems to have changed his view that *nüxu* 女媭 (a character in the "Li Sao" and "Xiang Lei") is Qu Yuan's elder sister (see below). See also his discussion of the character Chan Juan in "How I Wrote the Five-Act Historical Drama 'Qu Yuan'" 我怎樣寫五幕史劇《屈原》 appended to some additions of *Qu Yuan* (e.g.: Guo Moruo. *Qu Yuan*. Hong Kong: Jindai tushu, 1963).

a limitless loneliness. And I hope in vain for an early dawn, to break the unspeakable solitude in the depths of my heart. Oh, and yet, in the end could this my deep heart's sea-like sorrow one day be destroyed? O, destruction! Destruction! I welcome you! I welcome you! Now I haven't any hope; I stand before the gate of destruction and only await the god of death to come and open it. Oh, oh! I, I want to go to that world of emptiness!¹²

and

我的诗，我的诗便是我的生命！我能把我的生命，把我至可宝贵的生命，拿来自行蹂躏，任人蹂躏吗？我效法造化底精神，我自由创造，自由地表现自己。我创造尊严的山岳，宏伟的海洋，我创造日月星辰，我驰骋风云雷雨，我萃之强仅限于我一身，放之则可泛滥乎宇宙。

My poetry, my poetry is my life! Can I take my life, take my greatest treasure of life, pull it out and trample on it myself, let someone trample on it? I follow the way of the Spirit of Creation: I create freely, and freely express myself. I create honored mountains, magnificent oceans, I create the sun and moon and the stars, I gallop on the wind and clouds and thunder and rain. I gather it and its power is confined to my one body, but if I let it go it can overflow the universe.¹³

This early Qu Yuan is an outsider, not the model of Marxist solidarity he would become, but he is certainly revolutionary. He speaks in the modern vernacular, which was only

¹² *Nüshen*, p. 18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

recently taking shape as a written literary language. Although this Westernized May Fourth Qu Yuan would have been incomprehensible to the largely uneducated masses of the 1920s, his language is, in theory, theirs. Just as the May Fourth Movement was of a piece with the creation of a national literature in vernacular Chinese, the Romantic Qu Yuan of Guo's early works was already something of a Whitmanesque voice of the nation.

As in all of Guo's works, the Qu Yuan of "Xiang Lei" is a concretely historical man. Guo Moruo frequently inserts allusions to the traditional historical narrative of the *Shiji* 史記 and associated historical figures—for example, Qu Yuan blames King Huai's favorite consort Zheng Xiu for his downfall: "Her, Zheng Xiu! It was she alone who ruined me!" 她，郑袖！是她一人害了我！¹⁴ That Zheng Xiu was primarily responsible for misleading King Huai had been proposed by earlier scholars including Qian Chengzhi 錢澄之 (1612-1693) and Lin Yunming 林雲銘 (1628?-1682?);¹⁵ the rather exaggerated view that Zheng Xiu was solely responsible for harming Qu Yuan is a thesis that Guo maintained in his later play. Guo transformed Qu Yuan into an individualistic, alienated Romantic hero, but not a mythical hero; even when depicted conversing with the spirits of Dongting Lake, he is still connected to his historical image and firmly engaged in the real circumstances of national politics.

The Qu Yuan of "Xiang Lei" represents the breaking free of a creative spirit that according to Guo and others of the May Fourth Movement had been shackled by the

¹⁴ *Nüshen*, p. 19.

¹⁵ In keeping with the blame-the-depraved-woman strand of traditional historiography, Qian draws a parallel with the exemplary scapegoat Baosi 褒姒; see *Chuci xueshi*, pp. 195-198. For comparison of historical "Li Sao" commentaries I have relied on You Guoen's extremely useful *Li Sao zuanyi*; for Lin Yunming and others on Zheng Xiu, see, for example, p. 316.

Chinese tradition—but finding this spirit in Qu Yuan meant that it had existed in Chinese history all along.¹⁶ Zheng Yi, in “The Figuration of a Sublime Origin: Guo Moruo’s Qu Yuan,” describes how Romanticism became the modern “spirit of the times” for the May Fourth movement and after, through a process she calls “translation” between European literary history, Chinese tradition, and Chinese modernity. In Guo’s refiguration, “Qu’s poetic revolution is not only analogous to the New Poetry movement of Chinese modernity, but also to the modern Western configuration of the Romantic and the sublime of which Guo and his fellow poets were the Chinese interpreters.”¹⁷ And in spite of “the overwhelming ‘iconoclasm’ that is generally seen to typify the spirit of the times,” the destructive revolutionary spirit of May Fourth nationalistically posited its own pre-history within Chinese tradition: “As the ‘true’ progenitor of New Poetry, his quest inevitably leads him to traces of origins. Guo’s attempt to figure himself as the modern Chinese poet and a ‘new’ epic culture hero is founded upon his refiguration of new cultural monuments upon the ruins of his explosive iconoclasm,” especially Qu Yuan, whom Guo found to be particularly appropriate to the times.¹⁸ Guo thus created himself as a new kind of modern Chinese poet and expressed the “spirit” of modern Chinese poetry through his translation of Qu Yuan into a Romantic revolutionary. This Qu Yuan exemplifies Guo’s early efforts to reconcile Western individualism and aesthetic values

¹⁶ Guo did not completely reject Confucian tradition, but sought to reconcile the Western individualism that he found so personally compelling with the basic values of Wang Yangming’s Confucianism and, later on, Marxism; see Chen Xiaoming’s *From the May Fourth Movement to Communist Revolution: Guo Moruo and the Chinese Path to Communism*.

¹⁷ P. 166.

¹⁸ Zheng Yi, *ibid.*, pp. 163-5.

with those aspects of the Chinese tradition that he continued to cherish.¹⁹

The individualistic, creative, and passionate aspects of Qu Yuan's character as represented in "Xiang Lei" have somewhat passed from the mainstream, but they are consistently present in Guo's work, and Qu Yuan continues to be routinely identified as a Romantic poet. Guo joined the Communist Party in 1927, and while his emphasis accordingly shifted from literature as individual expression to literature as revolutionary propaganda, he maintained the view that the ultimate purpose of a communist society as he envisioned it was to enable full individual realization.²⁰ The Romantic genius Qu Yuan of "Xiang Lei" is the prophet of a nation yet to come.

Qu Yuan on Stage

Guo fled to Japan after the failure of the Nanchang Uprising of 1927, in which he had been deeply involved. He returned to aid the communist cause in 1937 at the onset of the war against the Japanese invasion. His years of studying ancient history and writing scholarly essays in exile may have tempered but did not dull his revolutionary view of Qu Yuan; Qu Yuan's revolution, however, became more political than aesthetic. The Japanese occupation unified and politicized the fragmented May Fourth writers, and Yan'an policies changed the target audience of many writers, including Guo, from the urban elite toward the masses.²¹ Qu Yuan figured large in Guo's efforts to mobilize the masses through art according to the Maoist standard.

¹⁹ Cf. Chen Xiaoming.

²⁰ Chen Xiaoming, p. 40, p. 87.

²¹ Cf. C. T. Hutters in *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of China* (McDougall, ed.).

A few months before Mao Zedong would address the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, Guo Moruo wrote, in matter of days—in a flood of Romantic inspiration²²—the historical drama *Qu Yuan*, which was first performed to critical acclaim in Chongqing on April 3, 1942. The play is a Western-style “spoken drama” in the vernacular (*huaju* 話劇). The action spans one day; it dramatizes Qu Yuan's life by imaginatively reenacting the immediate circumstances leading to his exile. Like Mao's later poem on Qu Yuan—and like “Li Sao” and so much of traditional Chinese political writing—it invokes the past to speak to contemporary events. In the depths of the Japanese occupation and amid the Communists' frustration with Chiang Kaishek's leadership, it was undoubtedly intended to express the anger of the times and inspire the audience with revolutionary zeal. It uses Qu Yuan to identify the true national cause with that of the masses.

There is continuity between the Qu Yuan of the play and the Qu Yuan of Guo's earlier writing in his days at the forefront of the New Poetry movement. While the later Qu Yuan is decidedly more a worldly political statesman and much less a socially marginal poet-prophet, he is still as passionate as ever. In the final scene, Qu Yuan expresses a Romantic madness that is highly reminiscent of Guo's early work. But Qu Yuan's passion has now been put in the service of a more explicitly political and popular revolution. In fact, Qu Yuan almost seems to apologize for his earlier “outsider” form of individualism: “哼，真没有想出，你会这样的陷害我！可你陷害的不是我，是我们整个儿的中国阿！” (Alas, I truly did not imagine that you could frame me like this! But

²² “自己的腦識就像水池開了閘的一樣” (My mind seemed just like a pond when the sluice gate has opened); see “How I Wrote the Five-Act Historical Drama ‘Qu Yuan.’”

the one you have set out to destroy is not me, but all of our China!).²³ “Our China” means the common people’s China; Qu Yuan’s bond with the common people is represented in the play through his relationship with his loyal servant Chanjuan and his emblematic encounter with the fisherman. Qu Yuan has changed from the solitary outcast of “Xiang Lei.” He has undergone “a change from one class to another,” the process of tempering that Mao prescribed in his “Yan’an Talks”: “If our writers and artists who come from the intelligentsia want their works to be well received by the masses, they must change and remould their thinking and their feelings. Without such a change, without such remoulding, they can do nothing well and will be misfits.”²⁴ Guo Moruo once wrote New Poetry legible only to the cosmopolitan elite, a tiny fraction of China’s people; in the play Qu Yuan is not only a creative genius but also a friend of the common people and a progressive political force on their behalf.

The play itself underwent changes over time that further popularized the image of Qu Yuan. After the establishment of the People’s Republic, the primary task of socialist literature shifted from inspiring resistance to unifying the masses.²⁵ One way the victorious Communists celebrated their rule was through the apotheosis of Qu Yuan as a folk literary hero.²⁶ Jin Yuhong has analyzed Guo’s gradual revisions to the text of the play, which for the 1953 edition included using grander language to describe the common people, giving the dialogue on poetics an explicitly populist orientation, and replacing

²³ *Qu Yuan*, Act III, p. 42 (my translation).

²⁴ “Yan’an Talks,” *ibid.*

²⁵ McDougall in *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts* (McDougall, ed.), p. 280.

²⁶ Schneider, Chapter 5.

quotations of original poems with vernacular translations.²⁷ These revisions reflect a new vision of the play's audience as inclusive of the rural masses.

In the opening scene of the play, as revised for the 1953 performance at the All-China Federation of Writers and Artists forum,²⁸ Qu Yuan and his disciple Song Yu discourse at length on the power of self-cultivation and continual study. Qu Yuan is in a garden of mandarin trees, expressively reciting Guo Moruo's free vernacular translation of the *Chuci* poem "Ode on the Mandarin Tree" (perhaps the translation is so free as to be more properly called imitation), which according to Guo's scholarship is one of Qu Yuan's early works. The first part of the poem seems to be literal praise of the beauty of the tree, until the last lines that Qu Yuan recites make it clear that the image is a metaphor:

内容洁白，芬芳无可比拟。 Its substance is purely white,

fragrant beyond comparison.

植根深固，不怕冰雪雾霏。 Roots deep and firm,

fearless of blowing ice and snow.

赋性坚贞，类似仁人志士。 Its true nature is constancy; it corresponds

to realized men and aspiring worthies.²⁹

Qu Yuan's disciple Song Yu enters. Qu Yuan tells Song Yu that he has composed the poem for him, and Song Yu reads the latter part of the poem, which praises the glory of youth. After completing his reading, Song Yu says, "我怎么当得起呢?" (How can I

²⁷ Jin Yuhong, p. 72. Reflecting the development of a mass national audience, Guo's revisions to the play are in line with Mao's contemporaneous revisions to the "Yan'an Talks" as discussed in McDougall, Chapter 12.

²⁸ Jin Yuhong, p. 72; cf. Schneider pp. 160-64.

²⁹ Act I. *Qu Yuan*, pp. 3-4.

live up to this?) to which Qu Yuan responds, “我希望你当得起” (I hope you will live up to it).³⁰ Song Yu seems to have understood, but just in case the audience has missed the point, Qu Yuan goes on to provide an extensive commentary on the metaphor. Qu Yuan’s words to Song Yu could be said to express Guo Moruo’s revolutionary hopes for the audience.

Returning to the poem’s opening lines, Qu Yuan moves from praise of the mandarin tree-as-youth to praise of the spirit of the south-as-Chinese nationalism:

他们是不容许你任意侵犯的。他们生长在这南方，也就爱这南方，你要迁移他们，不是很容易的事。这是一种多么独立难犯的精神！你看这是不是一种很好的榜样呢？They will not allow you to interfere with them as you please. They grow in the South here, and they love the South, thus it is no easy matter to move them. What an independent and unyielding spirit this shows! Don’t you think it sets a good example for us?³¹

The south had only in recent history been reevaluated as a positive, creative source of China’s culture—specifically, it was seen as a revitalizing force against the sober conservative tradition of northern culture.³² Guo and other scholars undertook a revision of originary geography specifically in terms of China’s two principle rivers: instead of the ancient myth of the northern Yellow River as the cradle of Chinese civilization,

³⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

³¹ Here and in several passages below I present the translation of Yang Hsien-I and Gladys Yang, which was produced in 1953 in conjunction with the festivities around Qu Yuan’s instatement as one of the Four Famous Men of World Culture. Their work expresses the spirit of that age. This passage is found on page 5 in the original, page 4 in the translation.

³² *A Madman of Ch’u*, pp. 94-106.

Guo's early poetry presents the southern Yangtze (*yangzi*, 扬子江, 长江), which flowed through Qu Yuan's kingdom of Chu, as the origin of Chinese culture.³³ At the time of the writing and first performance of *Qu Yuan*, the north was also where the Japanese occupation had begun and was most strongly entrenched. Mao Zedong was from the southern region of Hunan, and the Communist revolution, like the Republican revolution and like the mandarin tree, had been rooted in the south. The audience of 1953 could not fail to think of the great task of nation-building. Of course these lines also foreshadow the poet's unwillingness to accept exile, dramatized at the end of the play.

Song Yu voices optimism at the ability of "we the people" to achieve the fortitude and purity of the mandarin tree. Qu Yuan and Song Yu discourse at length on the power of self-cultivation and continual study. The conversation turns from how Qu Yuan is and the ancient heroes were in fact ordinary men, to how ordinary people can become heroes, to how Qu Yuan's accomplishment in the field of literature derives precisely from his study of the ordinary people, especially youth. He then articulates a justification of his own revolutionary poetics:

所以有许多人说我的诗太俗，太放肆了，失掉了“雅颂”的正声，我是一点也不介意的。我在尽量地学老百姓，学小孩子，当然会俗。我在尽量地打破那种“雅颂”之音，当然会放肆。那种“雅颂”之音古板板的，让老百姓和小孩子们听来，就好像在听天书。那不是真正把人性都失掉干净了吗？不过话又得说回来，我自己究竟比你们出世得早一些，我的年青时代是受过“典谟训诂”，“雅颂”之音的熏陶，因此我的文章一时也不容易摆脱那种格调。这就是跟奴隶们头上的烙

³³ See Zheng Yi's discussion of Qu Yuan's "Yangzi River Soliloquy," *ibid.*, pp. 167-8.

印一样，虽然奴隶籍解除了，而烙印始终除不掉。到了你们这一代就不同了，你们根本就没有受过烙印，所以你们的诗，彻内彻外，都是自己在作主人。这些地方是使我羡慕你们这一代的。So, when many people say my poetry is too vulgar and too free, having lost the authentic note of the traditional poetry, I am not in the least disturbed. I am doing my utmost to imitate the common people and to imitate children, so naturally it is vulgar. I am doing my utmost to break the rules of the traditional poetry, so naturally it is free. Those traditional poems are all strictly limited to so many words a line, and when ordinary people and children hear them, they seem to be hearing a strange tongue. It is my belief that they are really divesting poetry of all human feeling. But, from another point of view, since I am older than you, and, as a boy, was influenced by the rules and conventions of the old poetry, it is difficult for me to rid my writing of them entirely. This is like the mark branded on the forehead of slaves. Even if they are set free, they cannot get rid of the brand. But it is different in your generation, for you have never been branded; so when you write poems you are the masters in every sense. In this respect I envy your generation.³⁴

Qu Yuan here reclaims his poetry from his ancient readers, who from the earliest times had justified it by making some sort of positive connection to the *Shijing* and the

³⁴ Act 1. Yang and Yang translation, pp. 9-10; original, p. 9.

authority of tradition.³⁵ In fact, Qu Yuan's self-justification is a concise articulation of the view of Qu Yuan that Guo Moruo developed in the essays of *Qu Yuan yanjiu* 屈原研究 (Studies on Qu Yuan). One of Guo's main concerns in those essays was to situate Qu Yuan in his Marxist periodization of Chinese history. He proposed that Qu Yuan's moment was the transition from slave society to feudal society—the image of the liberated slave here is surely not accidental. Indeed, a few lines later Qu Yuan presents Guo's history of Chu, which he theorized was originally derived from the northern Shang culture and evolved distinctly from the Zhou culture. In sum, Qu Yuan's speech demonstrates that he represents the progressive ideology of his time but is nevertheless unable to transcend his time, as Guo asserted in the essays.

In *Studies on Qu Yuan* Guo also asserts that the *Chuci* are infused with vernacular language. What earlier scholars had called *fangyan* 方言 (dialect) Guo calls *baihua* 白話 (vernacular), making the distinction of importance between aristocratic and popular speech, rather than between standard (northern) and non-standard (southern) language. He asserts that Qu Yuan liberated poetry from the restrictive aristocratic style exemplified in the *Shijing* and early Chu texts by breaking out of the four-syllable line, drawing on local songs, and using dialect words, conjunctions, and expressive particles. He even went so far as to give Qu Yuan the title of “最偉大的一位革命的白話詩人” (single greatest revolutionary vernacular poet).³⁶

The character Qu Yuan's explanation of his poetics is therefore highly analogous to the Marxist poetics in which Mao instructed his audience at Yan'an. In May of 1942

³⁵ E.g., the fragments of Liu An's preface preserved in the *Shiji* biography of Qu Yuan, Wang Yi's preface to the *Chuci zhangju*, and Liu Xie's "Bian Sao," all explicitly compare the "Li Sao" to the standard of the *Shijing*.

³⁶ Pp. 45-51.

Mao discussed the importance of writers and artists to the revolutionary cause as follows: “Many comrades like to talk about ‘a mass style.’ But what does it really mean? It means that the thoughts and feelings of our writers and artists should be fused with those of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. To achieve this fusion, they should conscientiously learn the language of the masses.”³⁷ Mao then recounted his personal story of conversion to the truth of the working class. The Qu Yuan of Guo’s play has already been converted and declares that his poetry *is* written in the language of the masses: “所以我尽力地在想向你们年青的人学，尽力地在想向那纯真，素朴的老百姓们学，我要尽力保持着我年青时代的新鲜，纯粹，素朴” (So I want with all my heart to learn from you young people, with all my heart I want to learn from the sincere and simple common people. I want with all my heart to preserve the freshness, purity, and simplicity of my youth).³⁸ Although the emphasis in the play is on youth more than on workers, peasants, and soldiers, both Mao and Guo intend literature to unite and mobilize the common people for the national cause.

The play furthermore asserts that Qu Yuan was deeply sympathetic to and beloved of the common people. Guo created the character of Chan Juan, Qu Yuan’s maid, to represent this bond. In Act IV she is seen sighing over the mistreatment of Qu Yuan at the hands of Zheng Xiu and the court. A fisherman says to her,

你在替你老师太息，你的老师却在替我们老百姓太息啦。他有两句诗多好呵，“长太息以掩涕兮，哀民生之多难。”能够为我们老百姓所受的灾难，太息而至于流眼泪的人，古今来究竟有好几个呢？You

³⁷ Yan’an talks, *ibid.*

³⁸ Yang and Yang translation, p. 9; original, p. 9.

sigh for your master's sake, and yet your master is sighing for the sake of us common people. He has two lines of a poem that are so good: "Long did I sigh, and wiped away my tears, / To see my people bowed by griefs and fears." All through history how many people have there been who could sigh and even shed tears for the sufferings of us common people?³⁹

The lines quoted, according to Guo's timeline of Qu Yuan's compositions and the play's narrative, should not yet have been composed, but references to the common people are few and far between in the *Chuci*, and it is essential that the play make this point.

Whereas previous interpreters had to justify Qu Yuan in terms of relationship to his king, the essential relationship in the Marxism of Guo's time is that with the masses. And indeed, in the play, Qu Yuan's populist poesis affects at least one common young person.

While the aristocratic intellectual Song Yu fails to live up to Qu Yuan's hopes in the course of the play, Chan Juan, the exemplary humble maidservant, fully achieves Qu Yuan's aspiration to be like the mandarin tree. Her final loyal sacrifice literally frees her from servitude, as Qu Yuan pronounces her to be his own daughter and true disciple. She, too, is transfigured, from feudal servant to honored citizen and model martyr.⁴⁰ Qu Yuan's alignment with the masses is mutual, and positively advances the revolutionary vision.

The original play in 1942 was no doubt intended to galvanize the audience against Japan, by putting the impassioned patriotic legacy of Qu Yuan in the service of the common people. The 1953 version of the play even more thoroughly popularizes Qu

³⁹ I have presented the Yang and Yang translation of the "Li Sao" quotation (p. 75), because the form they have given it is quite apt; the rest of the dialogue is my translation as theirs is rather condensed. Original, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁰ On Chan Juan as a symbol of patriotism, see also Zheng Yi, *ibid.*, p. 183.

Yuan, reflecting the new conception of a unified mass audience. In offering a classical poet as a voice of the common people in the common people's language, it popularizes a literary tradition; by raising the standards of the audience to awareness of the glorious common destiny foretold in their transfigured national heritage, it accomplished the dialectic of popularization and raising of standards that Mao outlined in his address to the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art.⁴¹

There is continuity between the Qu Yuan of the play and the Qu Yuan of Guo's earlier writing in his days at the forefront of the New Poetry movement. While the latter Qu Yuan is decidedly more a worldly political statesman and slightly less a socially marginal poet-prophet, he is still as passionate as ever. In the final scene, Qu Yuan expresses a Romantic madness that, with wild invocations of destruction, is highly reminiscent of Guo's early work—and, as the soliloquy of a noble man brought low, set in the midst of a storm on the wilderness, of the Romantic favorite *King Lear*. But Qu Yuan's heroic untouchability and Romantic passion have now been put in the service of a more explicitly political revolution. He has undergone “a change from one class to

⁴¹ “Since our literature and art are basically for the workers, peasants and soldiers, “popularization” means to popularize among the workers, peasants and soldiers, and “raising standards” means to advance from their present level. What should we popularize among them? Popularize what is needed and can be readily accepted by the feudal landlord class? Popularize what is needed and can be readily accepted by the bourgeoisie? Popularize what is needed and can be readily accepted by the petty-bourgeois intellectuals? No, none of these will do. We must popularize only what is needed and can be readily accepted by the workers, peasants and soldiers themselves. Consequently, prior to the task of educating the workers, peasants and soldiers, there is the task of learning from them. This is even more true of raising standards. There must be a basis from which to raise. Take a bucket of water, for instance; where is it to be raised from if not from the ground? From mid-air? From what basis, then, are literature and art to be raised? From the basis of the feudal classes? From the basis of the bourgeoisie? From the basis of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals? No, not from any of these; only from the basis of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. Nor does this mean raising the workers, peasants and soldiers to the “heights” of the feudal classes, the bourgeoisie or the petty-bourgeois intellectuals; it means raising the level of literature and art in the direction in which the workers, peasants and soldiers are themselves advancing, in the direction in which the proletariat is advancing. Here again the task of learning from the workers, peasants and soldiers comes in. Only by starting from the workers, peasants and soldiers can we have a correct understanding of popularization and of the raising of standards and find the proper relationship between the two” (ibid.).

another,” the process of tempering that Mao prescribed: “If our writers and artists who come from the intelligentsia want their works to be well received by the masses, they must change and remould their thinking and their feelings. Without such a change, without such remoulding, they can do nothing well and will be misfits.”⁴² As Zheng Yi observes, Qu Yuan was a symbol of national renovation as early as *Goddesses*, but his creativity in those poems was, with regards to contemporary society, first of all iconoclastic and destructive. In the play, as in the essays, Qu Yuan is not only a creative cultural genius, but also a progressive political force and a friend of the common people.

Qu Yuan in Translation: The People’s Poet

The nationalistic, populist Qu Yuan of the revised play is consistent with Guo’s scholarly work throughout the 1950s. His popular essays “The People’s Poet Qu Yuan” (*Renmin shiren Qu Yuan* 人民詩人屈原) (1950) and “The Great Patriotic Poet: Qu Yuan” (*Weida de aiguo shiren Qu Yuan* 偉大的愛國詩人——屈原) (1953),⁴³ assert that Qu Yuan loved the people, was beloved of the people, and, as a landless aristocrat, was socially on the level of the people. They assert that his suicide was a response to the failure of Qu Yuan’s goal for Chu to unite all of China under one just government and his foreseeing of Qin’s immanent destruction of Chu. Guo concludes “The Great Patriotic Poet” with a call to redeem Qu Yuan in the revolution:

⁴² Yan’an talks, *ibid.*

⁴³ Both essays are included in volume 17 of his collected works (*Moruo wenji*).

虽然他的时代意义已经和我们远隔了，他的诗歌已经是难于接近了，但他的爱人民，爱祖国的精神在我们今天是更容易了解的。屈原虽然死去了二千多年，在今天他才真正得到了可以维持生命的条件。

古代只能有一个屈原，新时代将有无数的屈原不断产生！

Although the meaning of his era is already distant from us, his poetry already difficult to approach, yet his love of the people and spirit of patriotism are easier for us to understand today. Although Qu Yuan died more than two thousand years ago, it is only today that he has truly attained the conditions under which his life can be preserved.

There could only be one Qu Yuan in ancient times, but the new era will give birth unceasingly to countless Qu Yuans!⁴⁴

Guo calls upon the common people to accomplish Qu Yuan's unfinished goal and maintain Qu Yuan's spirit in themselves.

This model revolutionary Qu Yuan—romantic hero of his time, student and friend of the masses, speaker of the popular speech, and exemplary patriot—is the voice of the “Li Sao” in the 1958 edition of Guo Moruo's vernacular translation.⁴⁵ In 1958 Guo also wrote a policy statement reiterating Mao's instructions to the Yan'an Forum and asserting China's special synthesis of socialist Realism and revolutionary Romanticism. His statement, like many in later years, presents Qu Yuan as the great exemplar of this

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 146.

⁴⁵ Guo Moruo, *Li Sao jinyi*.

mode.⁴⁶ In the words of Laurence Schneider, in the late 1950's Qu Yuan "was never closer to becoming a mythical alter ego for Mao Zedong."⁴⁷

Guo's vernacular translation first appeared in the 1943 first edition of *Studies on Qu Yuan*. Those essays were meant to present Qu Yuan as revolutionary vernacular poet to the scholarly community, while the 1958 edition is explicitly meant to present Qu Yuan to the masses. Now there are hundreds of vernacular translations of the "Li Sao," but at the time, what Guo's Qu Yuan said of the *Shijing*—"那种‘雅颂’之音古古板板的，让老百姓和小孩子们听来，就好像在听天书" (That kind of stiff and stodgy sound of the *Ya* and *Song* [canonical poetry], if the common people and children hear it they might as well be listening to the Books of Heaven [i.e., it's Greek to them])⁴⁸—must have been certainly true of the *Chuci*. Indeed, another version of the *Chuci* was also published in 1958, edited by Ma Maoyuan.⁴⁹ Its interpretation of the poems is highly consistent with Guo Moruo's, and it frequently refers explicitly to Guo's scholarship, but Ma's densely academic text highlights by contrast the genuinely popularizing intention of Guo's version. It is truly a translation "in the service of the people." I will discuss how Guo's translation popularizes "Li Sao" on three fronts: form, content, and their relation, or rhetorical structure. I will analyze the formal popularization, the popularization of content, and the rhetorical popularization with special attention to how Guo's translation is rooted in pre-modern commentaries while nevertheless fundamentally breaking with the

⁴⁶ *A Madman of Ch'u*, pp. 179-185.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴⁸ *Qu Yuan*, Act 1, p. 9.

⁴⁹ *Chuci xuan*.

traditional way of reading the poem. The effect of Guo's translation is a radical reconfiguration of the poem's social world.

The text reads left to right, with the translation on the left and the original on the right facing page (the earlier version reads vertically, right to left, original underneath). The translation and original are lined up line to line for easy comparison. Collected notes follow after every group of stanzas, in the format that is still popular for most vernacular translation of ancient poetry today. Guo's few original notes justifying his interpretations of certain lines in light of his philological and historical research are omitted, but the editors have added new notes, mostly glossing original words and providing narrative and historical interpretation, “以簡明必要的注釋，以便於廣大讀者的閱讀” (In order to clarify the interpretation where necessary, and facilitate the reading of a wide audience of readers).⁵⁰

The preface to the 1958 edition uses many exclamation points and highly enthusiastic language to present Qu Yuan as the people's poet. The author of the preface, identified only as “editor,”⁵¹ makes Qu Yuan accessible to the presumably proletariat or peasant reader by reminding him or her that the masses already love Qu Yuan, and that Qu Yuan belongs to the people. Proof of the former point is demonstrated by the Dragon Boat Festival: “這個風俗流傳了兩千多年，還傳到日本，朝鮮，越南，馬來亞去了，足見廣大人民對這位大詩人的熱烈愛護！” (This custom has been passed on for more than two thousand years, even spreading to Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Malaysia; this is

⁵⁰ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 3.

⁵¹ The editorial staff included many prominent literary men of the time. Historical staff information is available from People's Literature Publishing House web page: *Renwen dashiji* 人文大事记: http://www.rw-cn.com/templet/renwen/aboutEvents_hh.jsp?id=1217. Accessed 15 Dec. 2012.

sufficient to show that all the people ardently cherish this great poet!).⁵² *Chuci* scholars before the modern era had rarely connected the reading of the “Li Sao” to the folk festival associated with its poet, until Wen Yiduo and others initiated folklore studies in Chinese literature.⁵³ The latter point is made by using interpellating language such as “我們的詩人” (our poet). The preface also asserts (following Guo’s scholarship) that the “Li Sao” was written in the style of Chu folk songs, and that the Chu folk were the real strength of Chu. The preface does not go so far (as Wen Yiduo did) as to say that Qu Yuan was actually one of the common people himself; in fact, it elliptically identifies him as “知識份子” (an intellectual). But it claims him for the people, and establishes the people’s claim.

The preface summarizes some of the main findings of Guo’s earlier research, including that Chu failed to unify China because Qu Yuan failed to understand the power of the masses and instead put all his hope in the highest government official. The ideological point of this is driven home in the preface’s conclusion. “生活在社会主义祖国的我们是幸福的*⁵⁴，祖國古代的歷史情況，我們越了解得多，就更會熱愛今天和明天的幸福！” (We who live in our fatherland under Socialism are fortunate, for we have greatly transcended the historical conditions of our fatherland in ancient times, and

⁵² *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 2.

⁵³ See *A Madman of Ch'u*, Chapter 4, for a history of this development.

⁵⁴ The starred phrase only is in simplified characters in the edition I quote from (a 1978 reprint), and clearly was inserted over some other text. At the time that I compared the 1958 first edition to my photocopy of the reprint at the National Library of China in Beijing, the text appeared to be identical; I did not notice this odd line until I was already far from the National Library, and since then I have been unable to obtain another 1958 version for further investigation.

therefore can even more warmly love the happiness of today and tomorrow!).⁵⁵ And the moral lesson that readers are intended to gain from their reading is made clear: Qu Yuan was tempted to seek elsewhere, “但我們的詩人呢？決不離開自己的國土！”(But our poet? He could never leave his own country’s soil!).⁵⁶ The enthusiastic preface expresses the optimism of the new communist nation embarking on the Great Leap Forward, the consequences of which were as yet unimaginable. Guo’s translation is also darkly optimistic—even as an expression of Qu Yuan’s despair, it is passionate, idealistic, and unwaveringly patriotic.

I will discuss how Guo’s translation popularizes the “Li Sao” and its poet on three fronts: form, content, and their relation, or rhetorical structure. I will analyze the formal popularization, the popularization of content, and the rhetorical popularization with special attention to how Guo’s choices relate to the commentaries of pre-modern interpreters.

Throughout Guo’s translation there is consistent grammatical simplification, a move from elision and complex syntax to straightforward subject-verb-object construction. For example, the rhetorical questions of “夫孰非義而可用兮孰非善而可服” (Oh who is unprincipled yet could be relied on [?] — Who is unkind yet could serve [?]) are rendered into straightforward statements: “不會有過不義的人而可以信用，／不會有過不善的事而可以服膺” (Never has there been an unprincipled man who could

⁵⁵ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

be trusted, / Never has there been a bad affair in which confidence could be placed).⁵⁷

This kind of translation seamlessly continues the tradition of paraphrastic re-articulation characteristic of earlier commentary efforts.

But Guo's formal popularization goes beyond simply translating the language into easier grammar and syntax. For example, this is his rendering of the second stanza:

先父看見了我有這樣的生日，	My late father saw that I had
	such a birthday,
他便替我取下了相應的美名。	He then for me chose good
	corresponding names.
替我取下的大名是叫着正則，	[He] for me chose the formal name
	of True Standard,
替我取下的別號是叫着靈均。	[He] for me chose the sobriquet
	of Spirit Balance. ⁵⁸

As Qu Yuan himself asserts in Guo's play, the poem is *fangsi* 放肆, unrestrained or intemperate. It breaks the formal restraints of Chinese classical verse in lines of 11, 12, even 13 characters. Rhyming is very frequent but not consistent. The parallelism of classical regulated verse is echoed in frequent repetition, but at the same time that repetition breaks the fundamental principles of classical parallelism (complementary

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 35. This is one of many instances in which my translation falsely resolves irresolvable interpretive uncertainties in the original. I have attempted as much as possible to express some of the semantic ambiguity of the original in my translations for the sake of comparison with Guo's versions, which resolve those inherent uncertainties in their own way.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 4. I have attempted to closely follow the syntax of the original in my translations so that the reader can use them as a crib, as creating stylistic analogues for both the original "Li Sao" and Guo's translation would involve a degree of creativity and theorization beyond the scope of this project. Because of that, the English versions may not always obviously demonstrate the points that I am trying to make about the Chinese. While these English lines are neither syntactically standard nor unusually long, the point holds for Guo's Chinese lines in comparison to the original.

tonal pattern and variation of diction). The auxiliary words and verb complements eschewed in classical verse are here in force. And yet, comparing Guo's lines to the facing original lines, it could be said that they are a magnification of what is already there, rather than a radical transformation. After all, the lines of the "Li Sao" are already much longer and more grammatically determined than the laconic and strictly measured four-syllable lines of the *Shijing*; they already contain frequent auxiliary words such as *zhi* 之, *yu* 于, and *yi* 以. Guo's translation demonstrates what he asserts in *Studies on Qu Yuan*, that the poem was already highly form-breaking for its time.

Another claim that Qu Yuan makes for his poetry in the play is that it is *tai su* 太俗, too common or even too vulgar for conservative aristocratic standards. Accordingly, Guo's version uses many colloquial expressions. It especially employs emphatic expressions, such as “我自己就萎謝了也不算甚麼” ([If] I myself wither away it still won't matter [to me] at all)⁵⁹ and “原本是自古以來就是這樣” (All along since ancient times it's just been that way).⁶⁰ It also uses rather earthy or visceral expressions: “余猶惡其佻巧” (I so hate his frivolity) in the original becomes “但我又嫌惡他，實在有點多嘴” (But I so detest him, [he's] really got a loose mouth),⁶¹ and “懷朕情而不發兮余焉能忍與此終古” ([I] embosom my affect and don't express [it] — I how could endure with this to the end) becomes “我一肚子的衷情真無處可訴呀，／我那能夠忍耐得就這樣的死去！” (So my gut-filling emotions truly have no place where they could be told! / Then I

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 46.

can endure like this unto death!).⁶² The references to body parts and use of emphatic and expressive particles (*you* 又, *ya* 呀, *na* 那) could be considered vulgar in the classical tradition; for example, I can't find any instance of *duzi* 肚子 in the *Complete Tang Poems* 全唐詩 or *Complete Song Lyrics* 全宋詞, although it appears in *Journey to the West* 西遊記.

With regards to the popularization of content, it is useful to consider Guo's version in comparison to traditional modes of interpretation. Being lined up next to the original, Guo's translation functions very similarly to the interlinear comments of earlier eras, and, like traditional commentary, it incorporates the interpretations of many of his predecessors. However, whereas traditional commentary literalizes the allegorical relationship of text and interpretation, manifesting the difference of the interpreted significance and the difficulty of correct understanding, the translation incorporates interpretation as content. This presentation emphasizes the continuity of text and interpretation and suggests a certain ease of understanding.

Guo's practice of incorporating interpretation as content both popularizes traditional ideas and newly absorbs popular ideas. For example, instead of using annotation to refer readers to forgotten ancient mythology as most of his predecessors did, Guo explicates references to old myths in the translation and even adds some folklore that may have been more familiar to readers of his time. For example, “日御” (sun charioteer) and “月御” (moon charioteer) are added before the names of Xihe 羲和 and

⁶² Ibid., pp. 48-9.

Wangshu 望舒,⁶³ providing immediate, in-text explanation for names that are no longer current. But in another line where the original has only “日月” (sun and moon), Guo’s translation has “金烏和玉兔” (Gold Crow and Jade Hare).⁶⁴ Again, this is in keeping with Guo’s view that Qu Yuan took the common people for his composition teachers. These renderings incorporate some homey, familiar folklore, and mitigate the alienation factor of ancient mythology.

In his interpretation of the content, Guo does not seem to have had a preferred commentary, but made eclectic selections of what suits his popularizing purpose—usually those comments that attach historicizing or concretizing interpretations to archaic allusions and indeterminate images. In preferring historicizing and concretizing interpretations, Guo was playing out a tendency that had been growing since at least the Song dynasty. Song scholars Hong Xingzu and Zhu Xi interpreted the *Chuci* with a greater emphasis on historical conditions and material culture than the transmitted commentaries of the Han and Tang, which relatively emphasized exegesis in terms of eternal cosmology. Many Qing dynasty commentators were especially concerned with attaching everything in the “Li Sao” to specific historical events, reading it as an allegory of Chu court politics or Warring States diplomacy.⁶⁵

Guo’s translation frequently absorbs and explicates traditional exegeses. For example, “願依彭咸之遺則” ([I] wish to adhere to Peng Xian’s legacy) becomes “而我所願效法的是殷代的彭咸” (But I wish to follow the example of the Yin [Shang]

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 38-9.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁵ Cf. Li & Zhu.

dynasty's Peng Xian),⁶⁶ following Wang Yi and the dominant interpretation, and Jiandi's name 簡狄 is explicitly inserted into the translation where previously she existed only in the commentaries.⁶⁷ Likewise, “玄鳥” (dark bird) is inserted in the passage about the matchmaking phoenix (*fenghuang* 鳳皇), becoming “玄鳥的鳳皇” (the dark bird “pheonix”),⁶⁸ linking this passage to the quasi-historical mythography of the *Shijing* story of Jiandi following commentators such as Jiang Ji 蔣驥 (1678-1745) and Xia Dalin 夏大霖 (18th C.).⁶⁹ Again, “揚雲霓之晦藹兮鳴玉鸞之啾啾” (Raise the cloud rainbow's dark shade — Sound the jade *luan*-bird's chirping), following Hong Xingzu and others, becomes the more concrete “高標着雲霓的旗幟映日生輝，／搖動着玉製的鸞鈴和音欽其” (The loftily displayed raincloud flags reflect the sun gloriously, / the swinging jade-wrought *luan*-bird bells harmonize admirably).⁷⁰ Sometimes, Guo's interpolations actually come from a more abstract strand of the tradition: since some commentators specified that the plants mentioned in the lines “朝搴阨之木蘭兮夕攬洲之宿莽” (Mornings plucking the hills' magnolia — Evenings picking the islets' beckmannia) bloom in spring and in winter respectively, morning and night are translated into the dawn and eve of the year and the lines become “我在春天去攀折山上的木蘭，／我在冬天去收攬水邊的青藻” (I in springtime go pick the hilltop magnolia, / I in wintertime

⁶⁶ *Li Sao jinyi*, pp. 16-17. For the purpose of providing an English translation for this chapter I have adopted Guo's reading, which is the traditionally dominant one, that “*Peng Xian*” is a single name.

⁶⁷ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 46.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Li Sao zuanyi*, pp. 323, 330-1.

⁷⁰ *Lisao jinyi*, pp. 64-5. For Hong Xingzu's philological elucidation of this passage, see *Chuci buzhu*, p. 44; also *Li Sao zuanyi*, pp. 462-3.

go gather the streamside river weed).⁷¹ This emphasizes, following Xu Huanlong 徐煥龍 (1645-?) and others, that the poet's efforts are unceasing—without the explicitation, a reader might think his efforts last but a day and not consider that he perseveres high and low throughout the year.⁷²

Sometimes Guo departs entirely from traditional precedent to accomplish his popularizing goal. His translation makes a novel intervention in the debate about the lines “朝飲木蘭之墜露兮夕餐秋菊之落英” (Mornings [I] drink magnolia's dropping dew — Evenings [I] eat autumn chrysanthemums' falling petals). Because according to Hong Xingzu and other meticulous scholars, the petals of chrysanthemums do not fall, there has been a vigorous debate over the centuries as to exactly what Qu Yuan is describing in the second line.⁷³ Some have claimed that “落” here means “first” (including Ma Maoyuan, Guo's contemporary),⁷⁴ while others have claimed that although autumn chrysanthemums typically wither on the stalk, still a few petals might fall, making those few fallen petals all the more rare and precious (Yang Shen 楊慎, 1488-1559). Still others have dredged the ancient texts for citations to prove that some autumn chrysanthemums do lose their petals (including Zhou Gongchen 周拱辰, 17th C.); or argued that Qu Yuan implicitly means “making them fall” to refer to plucking them (Wang Yuan 汪瑗, ?- ca. 1566); and so on. Guo takes a completely different approach to this conundrum by adding a new

⁷¹ I have made use of Pan Fujun and Lü Shengyou's illustrated *Chuci Zhiwu Tu Jian* to translate many of the original plant names, but the impossibility of definitively identifying the plants is demonstrated in the great variety of attempts to do so that are collected in Cui Fuzhang's commentary compilation.

⁷² *Li Sao zuanyi*, pp. 36-41.

⁷³ See *Li Sao zuanyi* for the interpretations of Hong Xingzu and other scholars including those mentioned below, pp. 103-9.

⁷⁴ *Chuci xuan*, p. 15.

item that is not mentioned in the original line: “我在春天飲用着木蘭花上的清露，／我在秋天餐食着菊花瓣上的紅霜” (I in springtime drink the pure dew on the magnolia blossoms, / I in autumn eat the red frost on the chrysanthemum petals).⁷⁵ Adding red frost to the translation turns the ambiguously suggestive image of the original into a striking, concrete, and descriptively precise image, it preserves an imitation of the original’s tight parallel structure for Guo’s grammatically unpacked lines, and it creates an end-rhyme between *shuang* 霜 (frost) and *fang* 妨 in the following line. This rendering is relatively unambiguous and easy to understand.

Guo Moruo’s translation also undertakes another kind of popularization of thematic content. It radically reinterprets the social world of the poem in terms of modern revolutionary politics. This is most obvious in Guo’s use of pronouns and modes of address, and can also be discerned in his treatment of class- and gender-specific content.

The “Li Sao” is usually considered the first lyric of the Chinese tradition, because it is the first recorded work in which the speaker throughout describes personal sentiments with the frequent use of first-person pronouns. In the original, a first person perspective is implied but not made explicit with a subject pronoun until the second line. In the translation, *wo* 我 (I) is the very first word. While the original uses several first-person pronouns or often uses no explicit pronoun at all, the translation uses only *wo*, and uses it constantly. This assertive, self-confident, and omnipresent *wo* speaks with a direct and authoritative voice. This Qu Yuan is a modern subject, grammatically and also socially.

⁷⁵ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 16-17.

In so far as the “Li Sao” was historically understood as Qu Yuan’s address to the king, the ancient scholars saw varying degrees of indirect tact (or lack thereof, in Ban Gu’s case) in Qu Yuan’s language. In fact, many of the historical debates about Qu Yuan’s loyalty and political stance could be subsumed under an analysis of tactfulness or decorum. In Guo’s translation, however, the self-confident *wo* inhabits a world in which no such tact is necessary; Qu Yuan is an individual who addresses his king as an equal.

For example, Guo translates the flower-name *quan* 荃 (perhaps a species of *acorus*) as “你” (you) making what could be a metaphorical description, an indirect third-person allusion, or possibly a decorative epithet or eulogistic second-person address into an unambiguously direct and informal second-person address.⁷⁶ Wang Yi explains *quan* as tactful metaphor: Qu Yuan would hate to repeatedly reprimand the one he respects, so he changes up the language, using a circumlocutory fragrant plant (“惡數指斥尊者，故變言荃也”).⁷⁷ Guo’s translation sweeps this tradition aside: “你既不肯鑒察我胸中的愚誠” (You’ve never been willing to discern my heart’s sincerity). This Qu Yuan seeks for straightforwardness, transparency, and authentic self-revelatory communication; using the self-deprecating “愚誠” (my humble sincerity) even seems a bit ironic or resentful, expressing annoyance that the equality of his views is not recognized.

Guo’s revolutionary translation of this social content is not entirely unprecedented. Of the ancient commentators, Wang Yuan, for one, seems to have planted a seed for this interpretation:

⁷⁶ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 12; c.f. *Li Sao zuanyi*, p. 68.

⁷⁷ *Chuci buzhu*, p. 9.

彼古者人君稱朕，人臣亦稱朕，而盛世君臣吁咈都兪於一堂之上，且相爾汝之如家人父子然矣，豈若末世之拘忌也哉。……故吾嘗謂楚辭所言美人，荃，蓀，靈脩，皆當時平交贊美之通詞，而可共稱之於上下者也。 Among the ancients, the lord of men called himself by ‘the royal I’ [*zhen*] and the ministers also called themselves ‘I’ [*zhen*]. In the golden age lords and ministers all harmoniously stood in the same hall, and moreover they called one another ‘you’ or ‘thou’ in the familial way of fathers and sons. How unlike the restrictive taboos of latter days! ... Thus I have said that when the *Chuci* speak of the Beautiful One, acorus, calamus, and Spirit Perfection, these are all terms of praise used in ordinary communication in those days, and they all could be used by those above and those below alike.⁷⁸

The harmonious social ideal that Wang Yuan of the Ming dynasty nostalgically imagined “in the golden age” is imagined anew in Guo’s revolutionary time; like Wang Yuan, Guo Moruo finds in Qu Yuan a precursor of his ideals.

Ancient Chinese allows for a great deal of tactful elision and ambiguity.

Sometimes the king is only implied, as in the following lines: “不撫壯而棄穢兮何不改此度／乘騏驎以馳騁兮來吾道夫先路” (Not maintaining the robust and discarding the waste — Why not change this course / Ride a fine steed at a gallop — Come, I will guide [you] on the former road).⁷⁹ These lines leave space for interpretation. Is the poet

⁷⁸ *Li Sao zuanyi*, p. 73.

⁷⁹ I have quoted the original as it appears in the *Chuci buzhu* (pp. 6-7). The original given next to Guo’s translation omits the 不, adds 也 after 度 and 路, and has 導 for 道 (p. 7).

addressing the king, or describing the king to himself or to a third party? Is he making a proposal, making a wish, or reflecting on the past? Guo's translation makes these lines very clear: they are a direct, personal, and informal address to the king:

你應該趁着年少以自圖修潔，	You ought to take advantage of
	youth to plot your cultivation of purity,
為甚總不改變你那樣的路數？	Why don't [you] ever change that
	way of yours?
我駕着駿馬正要打算去奔馳，	I'm driving fine horses, just planning
	to gallop away,
你來吧，我要為你在前面引路。	You, come on! I'll go ahead and lead
	the way for you.

The speaker of these lines clearly considers himself equal to his addressee—he even has a casually commanding attitude, the particle *ba* 吧 suggesting he anticipates the king's compliance. Speaking the common people's language, yet speaking as an equal to his king, this Qu Yuan seems to prefigure a democratic era.

I believe that Guo's translation makes Qu Yuan a precursor not only of social equality, but specifically of democratic governance. The poem's famous final lines, “既莫足與為美政兮吾將從彭咸之所居” (There's no one adequate with whom to make fair government — I will follow Peng Xian to his abode), are rendered as “理想的政治既沒有人可以協商， / 我要死了去依就殷代的彭咸” (Ideal governance: since there's no one [with whom] to discuss it, / I will go to die, following the Yin [Shang] dynasty's

Peng Xian).⁸⁰ While traditional interpreters understood the original lines to mean that there was either no worthy king or no worthy ministers, the addition of the word “協商” (discuss, consult) emphasizes the speaker’s desire to fully and equally participate in negotiating ideal governance. When Guo first composed these lines that dream may have seemed near at hand; who knows if, by 1958, it might not also have brought to mind for some the anti-rightist crackdown that followed the Hundred Flowers campaign or the struggle meetings of rural collectivization. The final lines negatively express a democratic utopianism, and they have a special dark resonance for that forward-looking historical moment.

Guo’s version of the “Li Sao” also interprets the poem’s class and gender content in terms of revolutionary humanistic equality. For example, the word *min* 民 (people) has an interesting and, for Guo’s purposes, potentially problematic history. Martin Svensson argues that in early Chinese history the word *min* referred to the vast laboring populace with strongly derogatory significance, as in “the commoners.”⁸¹ Guo, however, takes the interpretation of “哀民生之多艱” anticipated by Lin Yunming and translates it as “我愛憐着人民的生涯多麼艱苦” (I am tenderly concerned that the people’s lives are so bitterly difficult).⁸² Guo invokes this line in both the play *Qu Yuan* and in *Studies on Qu Yuan* to demonstrate Qu Yuan’s concern for the common people. Perhaps no word was

⁸⁰ *Li Sao jinyi*, pp. 68-9. N. B.: Guo has strongly explicitated Qu Yuan’s intention to commit suicide, but there were other interpretations of these lines circulating in his time.

⁸¹ “A Second Look at the Great Preface on the Way to a New Understanding of Han Dynasty Poetics,” pp. 11-14.

⁸² *Li Sao jinyi*, 20-21. Lin Yunming is quoted in *Chuci xuan*, p. 15-16: “可憐這些百姓，征戍則危其身，賦斂則奪其財，謀生多少艱難，如何再當得滿朝求索” (How pitiable are these common folk, with garrison duty endangering their bodies and taxation snatching their property. Making a living has so many difficulties—on top of all that, how could one withstand [those who are] filling the court with [greedy] demands?).

more potent for Guo's era than *renmin* 人民 (the people), and here in Guo's articulation it signifies Qu Yuan's respect. At other points in the poem he translates *min* as *wo* or *renmen* 人們 depending on the context; but the instance above is historically the most debated and was often interpreted in ways that specifically denied any reference to the laboring social classes.⁸³ Similarly, “僕夫悲余馬懷兮蜷局顧而不行” (Servants grieve, my horse yearns — Curling up, turning back, and not going) does not define any explicit hierarchy between servants and horses, and according to Guo's own research, members of the ruling class often regarded the common people as animals in the slave economy period. But according to Guo, Qu Yuan represents the progressive force of his time, and so in Guo's translation, he assumes the superiority of humans over beasts: “我的御者生悲，馬也開始戀棧， / 只是低頭回顧，不肯再往前走” (My charioteer becomes sorrowful; even the horses begin to feel reluctant to leave, / Just lowering their heads and turning to look back, not willing any more to go ahead).⁸⁴ Rather than servants and horses together expressing the impossibility of Qu Yuan's departure, the *ye* 也 marks degrees of sorrow: his chariot driver, and even the very horses, wish to remain. Xu Huanlong preceded this interpretation: “人是舊鄉之人，馬亦舊鄉之馬。臨睨其處，馬尚懷思，而況于人乎？” (The people are people of the old country, the horses too are old country horses. Looking down and glimpsing their place, even the horses yearn; what need is

⁸³ *Li Sao zuanyi*, pp. 129-30.

⁸⁴ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 66.

there to speak of the people?).⁸⁵ But Guo's translation goes a step farther than Xu's—the possessive *de* 的 of “我的御者” (my charioteer) connotes solidarity.

The creation of solidarity is perhaps the most important intention of Guo's work on Qu Yuan. And so his revolutionary Qu Yuan goes beyond mere tender concern for the humanized common people. Referring to the celestial entourage as it arrives at Heaven's Gate, Guo inserts a grammatical subject where there is none in the original: not “it” or “my entourage” but “we.” Thus “紛總總其離合兮斑陸離其上下” (Abundantly collected, separating and joining — Sparklingly variegated, rising and falling) becomes “我們是蓬蓬勃勃地時離時合， / 我們是光輝燦爛地或下或上” (We are with vigorous energy now separating, now joining, / We are with glorious radiance here descending, there ascending).⁸⁶ Twice emphatically asserting the unity of Qu Yuan and his guard, the togetherness of the poet and his team on the quest, the translation presents Qu Yuan as a representative of class solidarity.

While the primary responsibility for making Qu Yuan a man with the masses is Guo's, the editors also find an opportunity to insert the Marxist ideals of human dignity and class solidarity in their note to the allusion to Fu Yue 傅說. The original “Li Sao” only gives his name, place, and the work he was doing, building a wall (“說操築於傅巖兮”); Guo Moruo explicates his role, so that in the translation, Fu Yue is described as “爲傭” (working as hired labor).⁸⁷ In traditional texts there are several accounts of the story of King Wu Ding and his dream of Fu Yue, and some ancient scholars went to

⁸⁵ *Li Sao zuanyi*, p. 494.

⁸⁶ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 40.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

lengths to explain away Fu Yue's presence in the convict gang and thereby legitimize the king's use of him.⁸⁸ The editors' notes to the 1958 edition, however, specify that Fu Yue was of slave birth,⁸⁹ and take the opportunity to level the field of king and slave. The note to "Wu Ding" reads:

殷高宗的名字，有名的賢君，他未作國王前，曾經和庶民（殷是奴隸制時代，當時的階級，有“百姓”——奴隸主，“畜民”，“萬民”——奴隸，而“庶民，”即“百姓”中貧窮而耕種小塊土地的農人，隨時可淪為奴隸，如犯罪，貧債等。）生活在一起，很知道稼穡的艱苦。The given name of [King] Gaozong of Yin, a famous virtuous ruler. Before he became king, he lived together with the common people (The Yin dynasty was in the slave-economy era. The classes of that time included “the hundred surnames”—slave owners; and “serfs,” “the multitudes”—slaves; “common people” means the poor farmers of “the hundred surnames” who tilled little plots of earth, and at any moment they could fall into slavery, for example, due to crime or debt and so on), so he understood the hardships of farm labor.

Guo and the editors have discovered seeds of revolutionary social content in the original poem and its associated lore.

Finally, as a note to the translation of both class and gender content, *nüxu* 女嬃 becomes *nüban* 女伴: an interesting resolution of the historical uncertainty generated by the lines “女嬃之嬋媛兮申申其詈予” (the reason for not providing an English

⁸⁸ *Li Sao zuanyi*, pp. 394-8.

⁸⁹ *Li Sao jinyi*, 60.

translation of this line will become clear in the discussion below). Just who *nüxu* refers to is highly contested, and scholars have translated *chanyuan* 嬋媛 according to their interpretation of *nüxu*: thus those who believe *nüxu* is Qu Yuan's elder sister translate *chanyuan* as hanging on, sentimental attachment, or meek affection (Wang Yi, Zhu Xi, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, etc.), or as chaste beauty or fairness (Qian Gaozhi 錢杲之, Zhu Yidong 朱亦棟); Wang Yuan, who interprets *nüxu* as a low sort of concubine and a metaphor for the clique, translates *chanyuan* as seductive and cheaply lascivious; Li Chenyu 李陳玉, who interprets *nüxu* as a metaphor for Qu Yuan's political underlings, translates *chanyuan* as brandishing oneself; while Chen Yuanxin 陳遠新 says that *nüxu* is a female servant and *chanyuan* is the attitude of a servant girl. Zhou Gongchen interprets *nüxu* as a female shaman like the other diviners in the poem. Zhang Fengyi 張鳳翼 asserts that due to her inappropriate advice to Qu Yuan *nüxu* can hardly be called a worthy, while Wang Kaiyun 王闈運 simply interprets *nüxu* as a wise and talented woman, thus a metaphor for the great ministers who pretend to be Qu Yuan's companions. Zhang Yun'ao 張雲璈 says that according to other uses of the word *xu*, *nüxu* could be an elder or a younger sister or any other woman, while Zhang Fengyi writes that *nüxu* is not necessarily his sister but she must have been a family member, either a wife or sister, to blame him such. The interpretation of *shenshen* 申申 is in much the same situation.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ *Li Sao zuanyi*, pp. 183-190. To reduce clutter the dates of the commentators are provided here: Wang Fuzhi: 1619-1692. Qian Gaozhi: ?-? Southern Song. Zhu Yudong: ?-? 18th C. Li Chenyu: ?-? 17th C. Chen Yuanxin: ?-? Qing. Zhang Fengyi: 1527-1613. Wang Kaiyun: 1833-1916. Zhang Yun'ao: 1747-1829.

While the most popular interpretation, following Wang Yi and attested in the “Unofficial Biography of Qu Yuan,” is that *nixu* is Qu Yuan’s elder sister,⁹¹ Guo’s “我的女伴” (my female companion) suggests a extra-familial relationship. As if she inhabits a liberated modern society, the woman of Guo’s version does not need to have her intervention in Qu Yuan’s affairs legitimated by ties of blood or marriage. The lines that describe her read: “我的女伴她慇懃地替我關心， / 她妮婉而又迴環地勤戒着我” (My female companion, she earnestly shows concern for me, / She gracefully, and with tactful repetition, endeavors to caution me).⁹² The diction is not entirely determinate; it probably connotes a socially equal relationship of companionship or partnership, but perhaps it could bring to mind the bond between an outspoken female servant and her master—perhaps Chan Juan 嬋娟 of the play, whose name is so similar to *chanyuan* 嬋媛, who respects her master but does not fear to speak her mind to him. In fact, whether she is a female friend of his own social class or a Chan Juan, in Guo’s rendering this woman could be said to have the same relationship to Qu Yuan that Qu Yuan has with his king. Mao famously asserted that “妇女能顶半边天” (women can hold up half the sky) and Guo Moruo was also proponent of women’s liberation; although the overall feminist value of Guo’s representations of the Qu Yuan story is debatable,⁹³ in this case he has taken the opportunity offered by the ambiguities of the original to translate for a female character’s equality.

⁹¹ The “Unofficial Biography,” attributed to Shen Yazhi 沈亞之 of the Tang dynasty, is included in Qing scholar Jiang Ji’s *Shandaige zhu Chuci*, p. 21. A translation is included in Chapter VI of this dissertation.

⁹² *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 28.

⁹³ Zheng Yi’s article (*ibid.*) throughout includes thought-provoking discussions of gender in Guo’s work.

To conclude this analysis of Guo's translation, I would like to add a few words about the popularization of its rhetorical structure. This popularization is primarily a shift of emphasis from allegory to imagination. The 1958 edition does not reject early allegorical interpretation of the poem (although it is a far cry from the whimsical allegoresis of the Tang dynasty Five Ministers commentary),⁹⁴ but it literally marginalizes it, and adds a new emphasis on Romantic imagination. It refers the literal narrative to an historical narrative, but does not interpret the particular images within the narrative as allegorical emblems. This is a popularizing move: while allegorical interpretation is scholastic, requiring initiation into the allegorical cosmos, imagination is supposed to be freely and naturally available to all.

The 1958 edition makes relatively few references to another level of discourse, and these references are marked as external to the text. Traditional Chinese commentaries are interlinear, so that the interpretation immediately translates every line, just as Guo's vernacular translation in its bilingual format interprets the original line by line. But the marginalized notes of the 1958 edition differentiate the biographical allegory of the narrative from the translation of imagery. The first and longest footnote briefly summarizes the historical circumstances of Qu Yuan's composition as established by the *Shiji*. It also adds something new, and that is a modern account of the poem's literary form: “它授受了楚國的民歌的影響，馳騁其豐富的想象力，神遊於大宇宙間，借古代神話的傳說，來作擬人式的抒情” (Under the influence of the folk songs of the kingdom of Chu, [the “Li Sao”] gallops with rich power of imagination, voyaging in spirit among the great universe, drawing on the legends of ancient fairy tales to make a

⁹⁴ Included in the *Wenxuan*, from p. 455.

lyric of personification).⁹⁵ Other notes even more briefly refer to the traditional biographical account of the poem. But unlike the traditional interlinear commentaries, these comments are rigorously separated from the images themselves, and the images themselves are not unpacked. Below is a sample of commentaries to a much-interpreted passage, presented in an approximation of traditional interlinear format, followed by Guo's version in its vernacular/original facing-page format (with my translations).

鸞皇爲余先戒兮

雷師告余以未具

Luan-phoenix(es) as my fore-guard —— Thunder master tells me it is not yet complete
[*Luan*-phoenix(es) give(s) me advance warning ——]

王逸：[鳥]以喻仁智之士。雷爲諸侯，以興於君。Wang Yi: [Birds] serve as a metaphor for benevolent and wise elites. Thunder is the feudal lords, as a prefatory allusion to their lord [the king].

陸善經：雷聲赫赫，以興於君也。Lu Shanjing: The sound of thunder is majestic, as a prefatory allusion to the lord [king].

洪興祖：《山海經》女牀山有鳥，狀如翟，而五彩畢備……見則天下安寧。Hong Xingzu: According to *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, Nüchuang Mountain has [this] bird, shaped like a pheasant but with all colors... when it appears, all under heaven is peaceful.

⁹⁵ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 7. My best guess as to the meaning of “擬人式的抒情” (a lyric of personification) is that the editors, like Ma Maoyuan, interpret the “Li Sao” as a psychomachia in which the various characters personify the competing desires of Qu Yuan's inner struggle.

汪瑗：此章悉言風月雷鳥，以見其欲往之亟也。Wang Yuan: This stanza details the wind, moon, thunder, and birds, to show the earnestness of his desire to go.

王夫之：鸞皇先戒，盡禮紹介以往求也。雷師告以未具，極言其情之迫也。Wang Fuzhi: “*Luan*-phoenix fore-guard” is exhausting ritual respect to go in pursuit. “Thunder master tells it’s not complete” emphatically states that his feelings are too urgent.

徐煥龍：先戒，先時約婚期也。Xu Huanlong: “Advance warning” is setting a wedding date ahead of time.

夏大霖：鸞皇隱喻國瑞賢臣，雷師隱喻威嚴任法之官。言成浴日之功，固吾之志，然吾亦賴羣力爲我之地，而後能成。Xia Dalin: The *luan*-phoenixes are a veiled metaphor for the kingdom’s fortune, the worthy ministers; thunder master is a veiled metaphor for the dignified and law-abiding officials. This says that to complete the meritorious deed of bathing the sun is surely my intention; this being so, I will rely on the strength of the group for the sake of our land, and after that we can succeed.

王闈運：鸞皇，以喻結昏於齊也。雷師不喻諸侯，此蓋專謂齊王也。言離合縱，尤專恃齊也。Wang Kaiyun: *Luan*-phoenix is a metaphor for a marriage with Qi. Thunder master is not a metaphor for the feudal lords; this must exclusively refer to the king of Qi. This says that in forming a vertical alliance, [Chu] certainly must rely exclusively on Qi.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ *Li Sao zuanyi*, pp. 272-4; *Chuci buzhu*, p. 28-9.

[Guo's translation]	[Classical text]
<p>想遣天雞的鸞鳳替我作着鼓吹——</p> <p>[I] want to send the Sky Rooster “Phoenix”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">to serve as my trumpeter ——</p> <p>雷師走來告訴道：一切未曾準備。</p> <p>The Thunder Master walks over and tells [me]:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">everything is not yet prepared</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">鸞皇爲余先戒兮</p> <p><i>Luan</i>-phoenix as my fore-guard ——</p> <p style="text-align: center;">雷師告余以未具</p> <p>Thunder master tells me it is not yet</p> <p style="text-align: right;">complete⁹⁷</p>

The traditional commentators emphasize that the particular images, such as phoenix and thunder master, are specifically significant on multiple levels, in reference to a hierarchical cosmology of divine royal privilege, in reference to Qu Yuan's principles and conduct, and in reference to a historical narrative of interstate politics. They make the fundamental allegorical move of reading the surface images as signs of other specific and deeply significant things. In contrast, the 1958 edition presents the imagery as imaginative imagery that is not specifically significant in terms of other correspondences.

Guo's version explicitates *luanhuang* 鸞皇 (a phoenix-like bird) by adding a less-obscure bit of folklore, the Sky Rooster. Although the *huang* of *luanhuang* is probably female (凰), and the Sky Rooster is a folk tale while phoenixes are cosmological symbols, Guo provides the Sky Rooster as a vernacular equivalent for the phoenix(es).⁹⁸ I presume

⁹⁷ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 38.

⁹⁸ The *tianji* 天雞 (sky chicken) is said to fly over the sky and wake up all the roosters to announce the dawn, and at least one representation of it in the archeological record is male (housed in the Sanxingdui Museum in Chengdu), so I have translated it as “Sky Rooster” to emphasize its function and probable gender. I categorize it as folklore because it is an agricultural myth, whereas I call the phoenix a cosmological symbol because it is found in political, moral, and occult/philosophical contexts, for example in imperial display, in marriage décor, and in yin/yang texts and images.

he considers this suitable because both are unreal birds. Although Guo throughout consistently inserts clarifying words to explicitate his interpretation, as he does here with “Sky Rooster,” nothing is added to link the images to the king or his courtiers, to celestial omens, to politico-moral virtues, or to details of Qu Yuan’s diplomatic strategy. The editors added a brief footnote on *luanhuang*, glossing it as colorful phoenixes; again, there is no mention of the allegorical potential of this image. The editors’ section note to the passage containing these lines, which is to be found in very small print six pages later at the end of the numbered footnotes, refers the narrative sequence to the traditional allegorical interpretation, but only after calling the literal narrative “illusory” and making no reference to the possible significance of its particular images:

以上十節，寫神遊於虛幻的境界，排除一切阻難去追求崇高的理想，但可惜天國也並沒有自己的對象。借求愛說明政治上的寄托。Above in the tenth section, he writes of a spirit journey in an illusory realm, removing all his obstructions to go pursue his highest ideal, but unfortunately his mate is neither to be found in the heavenly kingdom. He uses [the theme of] pursuing love to explain his hopes for government.⁹⁹

The 1958 edition thus literally marginalizes and suppresses the traditional allegorical interpretation, so that the images of the poem appear to be simply spontaneous products of Qu Yuan’s rich imagination rather than purposefully selected elements of traditional cosmology and erudite metaphors for aristocratic ideology. The editors go a step beyond Zhu Xi, who also reminded his readers that many of the images in the poem were not

⁹⁹ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 45.

necessarily real,¹⁰⁰ in defining the non-reality of the images as “虛幻” (illusory), rather than as metaphorical or allusive.

Even as the editors’ celebrate Qu Yuan’s rich imagination, they encourage their readers to abide in strictly material reality. For example, they describe the imaginary world of the poem as an escapist fantasy: “以上五節，說明現實的道路走不通，只好退到想象的境域中去，使精神暫時得以安息” (Above, in the fifth section, he describes how in reality he is unable to go forward on the road, and can only retreat to an imagined land, giving his spirits a momentary rest).¹⁰¹ Or they provide emphatically anti-allegorical information in lieu of interpretation. The lines “吾令鳳鳥飛騰兮斷之以日夜／飄風屯其相離兮帥雲霓而來御” (I command the phoenix-bird to soar — Continuing by day and night / Whirling wind assembling, separating — Leading cloud rainbows to come welcome) were made much of historically; the phoenixes, the wind, and the rainbows being interpreted by many commentators as emblems for specific concepts on the level of the overarching political and cosmological allegory. As we have seen above, Guo’s translation frequently incorporates interpretative explanation into the text of the poem, but here again nothing is added to link the words to their traditional allegorical interpretations:

我便令我的乘鳳展翅飛騰，	I then command my chariot
	phoenixes to spread their wings and soar,
即使入了夜境也無須停頓，	Even having entered the nightscape,
	there’s no need to pause,

¹⁰⁰ *Chuci Jizhu*, p. 15.

¹⁰¹ *Li Sao jinyi*, p. 29.

飄風聚集着都在恐後爭先， 率領着雲和霓來表示歡迎。	In the whirling wind assembling, all are striving to arrive first, Leading the clouds and rainbows to come express welcome. ¹⁰²
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The notes to these lines merely gloss a few words and provide this anti-allegorical explanation of *ni* 霓: “音泥，虹霓的外環（外環叫虹[sic]，合起來即虹霓）。日光射入水份較多的雲層中，折返後的五色光圈” (Pronounced *ni*, the outer circle of the rainbow {the outer circle is called *hong* [sic]; joined together they are *hongni*, the rainbow}). It is the five-colored ring of light that occurs after refraction when the rays of the sun pierce clouds with a high water content).¹⁰³ This amusingly concretizing note perhaps represents the editors’ effort to relate the text to reality as understood by historical materialism. Similarly, the note to *jiaolong* 蛟龍 (flood dragons) informs us that “蛟和龍，都是古代的爬虫，傳說中把它們當作神物” (*Jiao* and *long* are both ancient reptiles; in legends they were turned into divine beings).¹⁰⁴ Even the fertile imaginations of the ancients were necessarily grounded in material reality.

Thus in the 1958 version, the traditional allegorical narrative of the “Li Sao” is maintained but marginalized and emptied of its traditional ideological and cosmological significance. The specific images of the poem are not interpreted; they are no longer multivalent interpretive emblems, as they were for commentators of the imperial era, but rather are simply—images. The most imaginative passages are presented in a negative

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 38-40.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

light as powerful escapist fantasies that Qu Yuan ultimately, heroically, overcomes.

Indeed, the editors' notes conclude the translation with the victorious assertion of

historical materialism, which is directly linked to patriotism:

以上九節，寫自己放逐後，離都門日遠，只好把精神昇入了更深邃的境界，擺脫塵世的羈絆，得到了大光明，但靈魂的一觸及到祖國的土地，就再也難以向前移動腳步了！Above, in the ninth section, he writes that after he was exiled, increasingly distant from the seat of government, he could only raise his spirits into a profounder realm, casting off the fetters of the dusty world, attaining great brilliance; but as soon as his soul touches the earth of his fatherland, he can no longer move his feet forward!¹⁰⁵

The possibility of reading Qu Yuan as the great people's poet and greatest representative of Chinese nationalism was made possible by the history of apologizing for him in terms of orthodox state ideology, especially Confucianism, the religion of state politics. In the early commentaries Qu Yuan's virtue is his mastery of a cosmology that glorified aristocratic privilege; in late imperial commentaries the poet's patriotism is a necessity of his Neo-Confucian absolute loyalty to the king. The 1958 edition makes Qu Yuan, virtuous patriot, into a model of the struggle for socialist national unity. The cosmological ideology that legitimated the ancient imperial state had been discredited in Guo's time through the efforts of Guo and his fellow revolutionaries, and replaced with the modern ideology of materialism. In Guo's version, Qu Yuan does not ultimately depart from this world into the realm of spirits and apotheosized ancestors; that Qu

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 69.

Yuan's return from the realm of idealism and imagination necessitates his suicide is proof of the absolute identity of reality and contemporary national politics. The individualism of Guo's Qu Yuan is ultimately sacrificed in selfless dedication to an ideal of the nation.

Conclusion: Into the Next Century

Qu Yuan survived the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, Reform and Opening, and Tiananmen. Over the years there have been disagreements and reassessments, but, on the popular level, Guo's version largely stands. This may be due to Guo's own prominence and political endurance, which, in a bitterly ironic twist, he maintained by practicing Qu Yuan's hated flattery and self-denial, through constantly changing according to Chairman Mao's weather.¹⁰⁶ For details of later developments, I refer the reader to Laurence Schneider's book *A Madman of Chu* and Ralph Crozier's 1990 article on paintings of Qu Yuan. Crozier's article concludes with an unusual portrait of a despairing Qu Yuan by Huang Yongyu:

At present we cannot know whether Huang Yongyu's Qu Yuan, finished and published in exile, is a solitary image testifying to the crushed hopes of 1989, or whether painters in China will also invoke Qu Yuan as a rebuke to oppressive rulers when, and if, it is possible to speak or paint on such issues. In some ways, the poet-statesman of Chu, paragon of dynastic loyalty, is a poor symbol for modern democracy. Yet his embodiment of independent judgment and individual conscience could serve the cause of

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Jin Qiu's "Between Power and Knowledge: Defining Moments in Guo Moruo's Career," pp. 127-68, and Liu Zaifu & Lin Gang in *Tianya*.

intellectual pluralism and toleration that must be one of the foundations for building democracy in China.¹⁰⁷

The popularizing mission of Mao Zedong and Guo Moruo can be considered a qualified success. Although most readers today come to the “Li Sao” as an academic duty, most Chinese citizens will become readers of the “Li Sao” before they graduate from high school. And the seeds of youthful creativity, individuality, and equality that Guo planted in the “Li Sao” are thriving underground. By marginalizing allegory and calling on imagination, the 1958 edition almost broke the connection between the poem and its traditional mode of reading, allegoresis. It thereby made the poem available for new imaginings, and radical questioning. Some young new readers claim Qu Yuan for their own; their interpretative battles are waged within the public anonymity of Internet study help forums, sometimes with a degree of passion that would have been familiar to the ancient commentators. Contemporary questions about Qu Yuan’s sexuality, his loyalty, and the value of his suicide can be seen as challenges—challenges to the dominant vision of Qu Yuan, which assumes he was an exemplar of CCP-approved social values and nationalism and that his suicide was necessary and good; more incisively, challenges to the dominant vision of good nationalistic identity and behavior, which is heterosexual and self-sacrificing; or generally, challenges to the government’s authority to determine reading. If the most important development in Qu Yuan’s tradition at the turn of the twentieth century was a shift of allegiance—from the king to the people—then perhaps the most important development at the turn of this century (into the era of the 90 后 generation) is a shift from allegiance to identity. The desire to see what kind of a man he

¹⁰⁷ “Qu Yuan and the Artists: Ancient Symbols and Modern Politics in the Post-Mao Era,” p. 50.

was persists—but new readers, more socially independent than their ancestors, want to see what kind of a man he was on their own terms—in terms of opinions, preferences, and desires. Qu Yuan is still in translation into his latest afterlife, and continues to reveal unexpected faces.

CHAPTER VI
TRANSLATION

《離騷》 屈原 “Li Sao” by Qu Yuan

With diverse selections from historical commentaries

English translation by Monica E M Zikpi

Translator’s Preface

We must adopt a standpoint in relation to art that does not pretend to immediacy but corresponds to the historical nature of the human condition.¹

My translation methodology has been to strive for proximity to syntax and fidelity to ambiguity. These interpretive choices reflect, according to my understanding, the persuasive influence of Walter Benjamin. I have attempted to derive my translation from the starting point of each word rather than to produce and represent a totalizing interpretation. I have attempted to imitate the word order of the original, in order to facilitate reading back toward the original. And I have attempted to the best of my ability to not close off too many possible interpretations, but to maintain the *originality* of the poem—the nature of the poem as origin of many diverse interpretive threads and even

¹ Gadamer, p. 97.

more possibilities. Furthermore, proximity to syntax and fidelity to ambiguity seem to be called for by the spatial arrangement I have chosen, which is derived from the material tradition of interlinear commentary texts of Chinese classics including the “Li Sao.” In those texts the words fill the page from margin to margin, and the primary text, commentaries, and subcommentaries are intermixed in the same space, their difference marked only by font size. In this version, I have used lines breaks between the different kinds of text for visual clarity, but the sequence is the same; interpretation is not placed outside the original, but amid it.

The presence of the Chinese text above the English version—my interpretation—and of the commentary selections below it persistently remind me of the textual entangledness of my activity of translation and the responsibility I feel toward the contexts that inform this work. The approach I have taken has provided a view of the work as a garden of forking paths,² and in the end I have found it impossible to discern a singular, definitive interpretation. Therefore, I have not tried to create an independent English version that will represent an autonomous “Li Sao”; instead I have tried to create something adequate to its changeable afterlife. In this I have significantly departed from one practice of most previous interpreters. Whereas traditional and contemporary commentaries normally cite previous interpretations only in order to authorize or refute them, I usually cite a variety of previous interpretations and do not attempt to provide a corrected final interpretation—except in so far as my English version can’t refuse to provide its own interpretation. I hope this arrangement of the words will direct the reader’s attention outward, toward the conditioning texts and contexts, and will hold the “Li Sao” open to new interpretation, relevant for today.

² “A labyrinth of symbols... an invisible labyrinth of time.” Borges, p. 25.

How can we read this poem? I might ask: Who wrote this poem? To whom is it addressed? What is its purpose? Why has it stayed alive in history? I have looked to the poem's textual afterlife for a provisional answer to these questions. The earliest statement of poetics in the Chinese historical record is the famous *shi yan zhi* 詩言志: "poetry speaks of aspirations," "poetry articulates aims," or "poetry gives voice to what is on the mind intently."³ Confucius and Mencius furthermore asserted the importance of truly knowing and appreciating other men, and out of their recorded statements Chinese poetics and hermeneutics developed with a decisive emphasis on authorial intention and personality. The "Li Sao" has usually been read with the assumption that the speaker of the poem is the author of the poem, Qu Yuan: the speaker is not a fictional invention but an authentic representation of Qu Yuan himself, and the poem is a lyrical expression of Qu Yuan's lived experience. Readers have read to know Qu Yuan, and understood the poem as Qu Yuan's effort to be truly known. This has proved to be problematic, given the questionable orthodoxy of the poet's expressed political stance and therefore his dubious status as a friend or role model, and the nevertheless compelling authorial voice of the poem, which continually asserts the author's powerful claim to be known. The poem's tradition, then, is often apologetic; I would like to put it in contemporary terms and say that most of the transmitted commentaries are first of all attempts to justify Qu Yuan's special right to free speech. Many commentators have believed that the "Li Sao" was originally a performative statement of political intention addressed to the king of Chu, meant to effect a change in the king's policies. Others have believed it was a lyric expression addressed to posterity in commemoration of Qu Yuan's tragic experience. My

³ See Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality*, and Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, for developed analyses of this statement.

use of the vague present tense in the English rendering of many passages is to avoid determining whether this is to be read as a recollective lyrical memoir or a performative political presentation, a question that implicitly or explicitly continues to be essential to interpretation and criticism for many readers. Most of the readers who have taken time to write commentaries about the “Li Sao” have presented Qu Yuan as a noble and exemplary figure, although others have seen him in a strongly negative light. In modern times, in light of new scholarly methodologies, a few readers such as Hu Shi have asserted that Qu Yuan was not necessarily the author of the poetry and that such a man may have never even existed. Today this view is considered heretical in the People’s Republic of China, where Chairman Mao canonized the “Li Sao” as essential revolutionary literature and Qu Yuan as the people’s literary saint. Western critics and translators of the “Li Sao” have tended to de-emphasize Qu Yuan; they have applied the skeptical methods of modern science and written from beyond the bounds of Chinese hermeneutic conventions and political orthodoxies.

Writing about literature in China has always been more or less the undertaking of the ruling class, but sometimes, and often in the case of the possibly seditious “Li Sao,” it could be subversive of the ruling order. The traditional authors of “Li Sao” commentaries were men of two kinds: 1) those who had careers in the government, as aristocrats or as bureaucrats, and 2) those who either failed to achieve or voluntarily rejected careers in government. They were men (probably not women) of Han ethnicity, and of the social classes that could access books and education in private schools. Studying literature was part of their social role: it provided the elite cultural polish necessary for an aristocrat such as Liu An; for the later literati, it was essential preparation for the civil-service

exams or a mode of moral investigation or a way to demonstrate one's intelligence, talent, and, within the narrow bounds of the permissible, one's political views; for educated men who did not serve the nation, it was a pastime and a mode of self-consolation. As you will see in the following selections, writing a commentary to the "Li Sao" was usually more than a simple exercise in scholarly duty. As a poem both emotionally compelling and potentially unorthodox, it elicited passionate writing and interpretative ingenuity. In the 21st century, mass literacy, the nationalized school curriculum of the People's Republic of China, and internet access have made the poem available to a wider spectrum of commentators, including contemporary Chinese high school and college students, who, in their very different circumstances, bring very different concerns to the poem. Often they do come to the poem as a scholarly duty, but nevertheless the interpretative debates waged in internet study-help forums are sometimes passionately intense. Some of the more common contemporary questions regard Qu Yuan's sexuality and whether or not he was a model patriot. This translation presents a sampling of the traditional commentaries, but I hope it will be open to contemporary questions.

Now, how can we read this poem? Perhaps now my rather traditional questions ought to be re-articulated as: What, in this constellation of contradictory historical contexts, is properly essential to the poem? What does it say now, in and for the present?

The commentary selections arranged below each line of the poem are not exhaustive or even thoroughly representative. This project could be literally infinite; to make it possible, many interpretative battles have been left out of the selections entirely, particularly those dealing with matters of prosody, variant characters and orthography, or that simply seem too tedious or abstruse; in addition, I have represented interpreters of

the “great significance” (大義) approach more than those of the “textual exegesis” (訓詁) approach, as the former are more akin to paraphrase and thus amenable to the translation project. These selections are highly arbitrary, conditioned by availability of resources, by comprehensibility, by personal preference, and by time and chance. My intention throughout has been to represent a great diversity of interpretations and not to give precedence to the dominant or most influential interpretations. That a name is attached to a comment by no means indicates that the person named is the original inventor of the interpretation embodied in the comment; sometimes that may be the case, but often I selected a commentator just because he articulated an old interpretation in a particularly clear, compelling, or interesting way. It should also be born in mind that in most cases it is impossible to know what oral sources or lost texts may have influenced the interpreter. Therefore, it is useful to think of these commentators as voices in an ongoing cultural dialogue and each the transmitter of his preferred interpretation. They are usually listed roughly in chronological sequence, although my own comments often appear at the beginning of the dialogue.

Commentators:

This list of the more frequently cited commentators is by no means exhaustive; the intention is to represent a diversity of views rather than the most influential views. The information for these introductions is primarily drawn from Li & Zhu, Yi Chonglian, the Cui Fuzhang compilation, and the China Biographical Database Project.

屈原 Qu Yuan: Qu Yuan was a gentleman of the kingdom of Chu in the late Warring States era, when the part of the world we now call China was divided among seven warring kingdoms. A distant relative of Chu royalty, Qu Yuan served at the court of King Huai but was slandered and exiled in disgrace. Qu Yuan wandered in the south (in the region of modern Changsha, Hunan province) and eventually leapt into the Miluo River to die. Less than a century later, Qin would conquer Chu and the rest of the kingdoms, ending the Warring States era and unifying “all under heaven” into the first centralized empire of China. According to the earliest records available, Qu Yuan was the author of the “Li Sao” and many other poems included in the *Chuci*, the anthology of Chu-style poetry.

賈誼 Jia Yi: 弔屈原賦 (Western Han, 200-168 BCE) An early Han poet and statesman, he was demoted and sent to the region of Qu Yuan’s exile for his outspokenness; when he reached the Miluo River he cast in a copy of his “Lament for Qu Yuan” in which he expresses his wish that Qu Yuan had accepted his hard fate, disengaged himself from petty political affairs, and preserved his life, instead of committing suicide.

劉安 Liu An: 離騷傳 (Western Han, 180?-122 BCE) Uncle of Han Emperor Wu, Prince of Huainan in the region of the former kingdom of Chu, and patron of the arts and occult sciences, he attempted to usurp the throne and later (according to some of his followers) ascended to heaven as an immortal. He supervised the compilation of the *Huainanzi*, sponsored a revival in Chu poetry, and wrote the first commentary to the “Li Sao,” fragments of which have been preserved in other texts. He viewed Qu Yuan as a wronged nobleman and spiritual transcendent.

司馬遷 Sima Qian: 史記 (Western Han, 135 or 145-? BCE) The great historian of the world as he knew it from the earliest times to his own era, his *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian* or *The Grand Scribe's Records*) includes the foundational biography of Qu Yuan. He suffered an extreme punishment in his own life and compared his authorial intent to Qu Yuan's: he viewed the "Li Sao"—like his own *Shiji*—as the expression of personal frustration and thwarted political intention. The Qu Yuan of the *Shiji* is decidedly worldly and pragmatic, concerned with great matters of state. The commentary includes the full text of the translation from Nienhauser's edition, "Qu Yuan and Scholar Jia, Memoir 24" (Romanization altered, Chinese characters removed, brackets & parentheses as in original).

劉向 Liu Xiang: (Western Han, 77 or 79-6 or 8 BCE) Descendant of the Han royalty, bibliographer of the imperial library, and scholar of classics and literature, he compiled the first recorded *Chuci* anthology. His edition is no longer extant, but Wang Yi made use of his work.

揚雄 Yang Xiong: (Western and Eastern Han, 53 BCE-18 CE) He appreciated Qu Yuan's talent and wrote many poems in the *Chuci* tradition, but he also accused Qu Yuan of "露才揚己" (flaunting his talent and aggrandizing himself) bringing about his own downfall. He wished that Qu Yuan had imitated Confucius, who offered his services in many states, and had not destroyed himself.

班固 Ban Gu: (Eastern Han, 32-92 CE) Classicist poet and historian of the Eastern Han, he admired Qu Yuan but considered his poetry to be excessively ornamental and his conduct, particularly his suicide, to be unorthodox.

王逸 Wang Yi: 楚辭章句 (Eastern Han, fl. ca. 119 CE) He wrote the earliest fully extant commentary to the *Chuci*. He viewed Qu Yuan as an exemplar of late Han Confucian orthodoxy and, like Liu An, he viewed Qu Yuan as a perfect, even transcendent figure. He provided translations of words in Chu dialect as well as interpreted the imagery of the poem in terms of yin-yang cosmology. Wang Yi sometimes offers alternative possibilities of interpretation in his commentary, while most later commentators worked hard to eliminate any such ambiguity.

郭璞 Guo Pu: 楚辭注 (Jin, 276-324) A great scholar of ancient mythology, occult philosophy, and astrology, Guo Pu's commentary to the "Li Sao" was lost except for a few fragments preserved in other texts, but his commentary to the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* is often relied on to help explain the myths mentioned in the "Li Sao."

道騫 (智騫) Daoqian (also called Zhiqian): 楚辭音 (Sui) Daoqian was a Buddhist monk influenced by techniques for reading Sanskrit scripture. Phonology was one of the Five Fields of Study of early Buddhism, and although Daoqian's work does not seem to have been explicitly influenced by Buddhist philosophy, it was certainly related to Buddhist research methodology. The emphasis is on pronunciation and the performance of the text, although it also includes semantic interpretation.

陸善經 Lu Shanjing: (Tang, ?-ca. 749?) An official during the Xuanzong and Kaiyuan eras, his commentary on the *Wenxuan (Selections of Refined Literature)*, including the "Li Sao," was lost in China for hundreds of years, but fragments of it were preserved in Japan. It was made for a slightly more general audience than Wang Yi's commentary, and is less esoteric and more concise.

吕延濟 Lü Yanji, 劉良 Liu Liang, 吕向 Lü Xiang, 張銑 Zhang Xian, 李周翰 Li

Zhouhan: (Tang) The “Five Ministers,” actually four minor intellectuals and a lower-level official (Lü Yanji) during the reign of Tang emperor Xuanzong. The Five composed an influential commentary on the *Wenxuan*, the essential text that Tang aristocrats needed to verse themselves in to become culturally polished. Their commentary on the “Li Sao,” included in the *Wenxuan*, usually follows Wang Yi but is much more succinct, and is famous for its oversimplifications and whimsical or farfetched interpretations of imagery.

沈亞之 **Shen Yazhi:** 屈原外傳 (Tang, ?-831) He recorded anecdotes and apocryphal lore about Qu Yuan and his broader cultural tradition, including the Duanwu Festival (also known as the Dragon Boat Festival), in his “Unofficial Biography of Qu Yuan.”

洪興祖 **Hong Xingzu:** 楚辭補注 (Northern and Southern Song, 1090-1155) He reinforced Wang Yi’s interpretation by writing a sub-commentary, and defended Qu Yuan’s suicide by expounding on Qu Yuan’s duty as a member of the Chu royal family. Drawing on a broad and deep familiarity with ancient texts, he provided extensive textual references for his exegeses and shows the connections between the *Chuci* and other early writings.

朱熹 **Zhu Xi:** 楚辭集注 (Southern Song, 1130-1200) One of the most important thinkers of medieval China, he reformed the Confucian canon and synthesized a new Confucian philosophy (called Neo-Confuciansim in English) in terms of universal principles. During his lifetime he was dismissed from official service and spent his exile teaching in the region of Qu Yuan’s exile, but after his death the imperial court promoted Zhu Xi’s teachings as the orthodox standard until the end of the imperial era. He viewed Qu Yuan as a man whose words or actions were sometimes excessive but who was always

sincerely motivated by correct principles, and he provided a greatly universalized interpretation of the “Li Sao” in terms of absolute loyalty to China and the emperor.

吳人傑 **Wu Renjie**: 離騷草木疏 (Southern Song, fl. 1178) He wrote a study of the plants of the “Li Sao.” He attempted to identify the plants and find the concrete basis for their use as metaphors by assembling relevant botanical, medicinal, culinary, and mythological lore.

錢杲之 **Qian Gaozhi**: 離騷集傳 (Southern Song) He more or less supported Wang Yi’s method and exegeses, but made use of different early Han texts for substantiation and some revisions, and added an analysis of the organizational structure of the “Li Sao.”

李時珍 **Li Shizhen**: 本草綱目 (Ming, 1518-1593) It is not cited in this translation, but Li’s precise illustrations of flora may be helpful to those interested in the botanical world of the “Li Sao.”

汪瑗 **Wang Yuan**: 汪瑗 楚辭集解 (Ming ?-1556?) During the flush of the Restoring Antiquity movement, he was an independent thinker who relied on careful reasoning to interpret the *Chuci*. He believed that Qu Yuan was a perfect exemplar of Confucian values, but rejected the traditional biography—the cornerstone of previous interpretation—and asserted that Qu Yuan did not drown himself. Wang Yuan argued that suicide was not condoned by Confucius, would have been of no benefit to the kingdom of Chu, and was not in the poetry’s original meaning but was put there due to later misinterpretation. In Wang Yuan’s view, what Qu Yuan really intended and accomplished was to cultivate his moral purity by going into reclusion in the hills of Chu.

張鳳翼 **Zhang Fengyi**: 文選纂註 (Ming, 1527-1613) A composer of operas, he also edited a *Wenxuan* commentary.

趙南星 Zhao Nanxing: 離騷經訂註 (Ming, 1550-1627) He researched the *Shiji* biography and interpreted the “Li Sao” according to Mencius’ dictum of 知人論世 (know the man by learning about his time; in other words, befriend the great men of antiquity by considering their writing in terms of its historical context).

胡應麟 Hu Yinglin: (Ming, 1551-1602) An exemplar of the Restoring Antiquity literary movement and a hermetic book collector of the Ming, his *Chuci* scholarship emphasizes Qu Yuan’s literary artistry and his place in the historical development of poetic forms.

陳第 Chen Di: (Ming, 1540-1617) He was a renowned scholar of ancient phonetics. In addition to historicized exegesis of words and rhyme structure, he added paraphrases in relatively simple language.

黃文煥 Huang Wenhuan: 楚辭聽直 (Ming, fl. 1625) A scholar of early poetry who lived during the Ming-Qing transition, he was inspired to write the *Correctly Understood Chuci* while in prison for being implicated in criticism of imperial policy, and later witnessed the Manchu (Qing) conquest of China and the end of the Ming dynasty. He believed that his experience of these misfortunes provided him personal insight into Qu Yuan’s poetry and thought. His commentary passionately critiques feudal politics, blaming slanderers, petty wrangling, and meddling women for the downfall of dynasties, and champions absolute loyalty to the king. Huang suggested that Qu Yuan was not loyal enough, and had to commit suicide because he had failed to prevent King Huai from dying in Qin.

賀貽孫 He Yisun: 騷筏 (Ming-Qing, 1605 or 1606-1685 or 1688) A mountain recluse after the fall of the Ming, he published a book entitled “Raft to the Sao” together with “Raft to the Odes,” meaning that his writings would serve as a raft to ferry the reader

across the confusion of interpretation. The “Raft” is not a proper commentary but rather a collection of comments on and appraisals of selected passages. It focuses on the poems’ general significance with regard to the basic idea of loyalty, and appraises the artistic creativity and historical literary influence of the *Chuci*.

錢澄之 Qian Chengzhi: 屈詒 (Ming-Qing, 1612-1693) A high official in the court of Emperor Yongli, after the fall of the Ming he became a Buddhist monk and focused on literature for the rest of his life. He wrote commentaries to the works of Qu Yuan and the works of Zhuangzi together, interpreting them as complementary works on suffering and liberation respectively. His *Chuci* commentary imitates classic *Shijing* interpretation.

王夫之 Wang Fuzhi: 楚辭通釋 (Ming-Qing 1619-1692) A scholar of philosophy, classics, and history, and a highly original literary theorist, Wang Fuzhi was a native of the region of the former Chu. As an official who suffered slander and malicious accusations in the intrigue-ridden court of the last years of the Ming and a survivor of the Qing conquest who lived the remainder of his days in bitter mountain reclusion, rejecting many invitations from the Qing court, he identified his own life with Qu Yuan’s and wrote about the *Chuci* to express his own plight. In his view, Qu Yuan was perfectly loyal, having never criticized King Huai but only criticized the bad influences around the king; he passionately defended Qu Yuan against all earlier accusations of deficient or excessive loyalty. He also interpreted some of the imagery in terms of Daoist alchemy and self-cultivation techniques.

李陳玉 Li Chenyu: 楚辭箋註 (Ming-Qing, 17th C.) Written in one month while he was living in reclusion ten years after the fall of the Ming, his commentary presents Qu Yuan as purely loyal and perfectly filial. Li’s interpretation focuses on explicating the concepts

of loyalty and betrayal and the aesthetics of thoughts and emotions as expressed by Qu Yuan.

周拱辰 Zhou Gongchen: 離騷草木史 (Ming-Qing, 17th C.) Having failed the civil service exams many times during the Ming, he went into reclusion in the hills after the Qing army conquered the south. He viewed the “Li Sao” as an allegorical critique of governance and interpreted the imagery, especially plants and flowers, according to this view. He may have been using his commentary as a vehicle for criticism of the poor governance of the late Ming.

林雲銘 Lin Yunming: 楚辭燈 (Qing, 1628-1697) Demoted and eventually dismissed from official duties (apparently due to his lack of political finesse and excessive sensitivity to the plight of the common people), and imprisoned for two years during the Geng Jingzhong uprising, he believed Qu Yuan and he himself were two of a kind. His commentary is called “The Lamp of the *Chuci*” because he believed that the hundreds of years of commentaries attached to the text had only obscured the real meaning, putting the reader in the dark. He wrote a highly vernacular commentary to the *Chuci*, making it more easily accessible to a wider readership. His commentary emphasizes Qu Yuan’s sorrow for his country and the common people.

奚祿詒 Xi Luyi: 楚辭詳解 (Qing, fl. 1659) He regarded Qu Yuan as an infallible sage-worthy and a talented servant of the king, the author (not a mere 辭人, lyric-writer) of a classic on par with the Five Classics.

李光地 Li Guangdi: 離騷經九歌解義 (Qing, 1642-1718) *Jinshi* of the Kangxi era, scholar of the Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucian tradition, Li’s commentary emphasizes the moral teachings of the “Li Sao” and does not permit it to make any complaint against the king.

He viewed Qu Yuan as unremittingly dedicated to the awakening of his king and the renewed prosperity of his kingdom.

徐煥龍 Xu Huanlong: 楚辭洗髓 (Qing, 1645-after 1698) He failed many times to attain *jinshi* (進士 presented scholar) status, then buried himself in study. He also wrote commentaries to the *Yijing* (易經 *Book of Changes*) and *Shijing*. He had eclectic influences, using Neo-Confucian concepts as well as Daoist alchemy, yin-yang, and Five Phases theory to interpret the imagery and allegory of the *Chuci*.

方苞 Fang Bao: 離騷正義 (Qing, 1668-1749) A Kangxi era Neo-Confucian scholar, he was imprisoned for being implicated in a scandal but later pardoned. His commentary emphasizes ministerial conduct.

屈復 Qu Fu: 楚辭新註 (Qing, 1668-?) A scholar of the Qianlong era, he considered himself a descendant of Qu Yuan. He authored his commentary late in his life. He viewed the “Li Sao” as Qu Yuan’s statement of and justification of his intention to commit suicide and emphasized the expression of Qu Yuan’s feelings. In contrast to the dominant Qing philology of his time, which interpreted according to the referential details, he interpreted according to the work’s coherent unity of significance (文脈). He cited many earlier commentaries, explicitly affirming the importance of engaging earlier interpretations, and regarded the correct interpretation as an emergent process of rectification.

顧成天 Gu Chengtian: 離騷解 (Qing, 1671-1752) He believed the “Li Sao” was composed during the reign of King Qingxiang, after King Huai’s death. He regarded the “Li Sao” as Qu Yuan’s message for posterity, since Qu Yuan was unable to succeed in his own time due to his unwavering loyalty to King Huai and King Qingxiang’s

unreceptiveness and banishment. He attempted to overcome earlier interpretations that stated the poet was seeking a different king in certain passages. He also attempted to attach every moment and image of the poem to specific historical events in Qu Yuan's life.

王邦采 Wang Bangcai: 離騷彙訂 (Qing, 1676-1746) A painter and poet of the Kangxi era, he strongly disagreed with previous scholars, especially those of Lin Yunming's interpretative school, and undertook a systematic critique of the commentaries of Wang Yi, Hong Xingzu, Zhu Xi, Xu Huanlong, Lin Yunming, and Zhu Ji. His own interpretation of the "Li Sao" emphasizes its narrative coherence and artistic technique and the interdependence of artistic expression and Qu Yuan's ordinary inner psychological experience. He strongly asserts that Qu Yuan criticized his king with the "Li Sao."

蔣驥 Jiang Ji: 山帶閣注楚辭 (Qing, 1678-1745) He had a life of frail health and was a complete failure at the civil service exams, unlike his successful elder brothers. Written in Kangxi/Yonghe eras, his "Li Sao" commentary is part of a comprehensive edition of the *Chuci* that presented his lifelong research in the text's history, language, transmission, and interpretation, including maps of Chu and the version of Shen Yazhi's "Outside Account" that is translated below. While he did not have an unusual view of Qu Yuan, he sympathetically emphasized Qu Yuan's feelings, and based his interpretations on internal and historical-biographical evidence and careful analysis. He connected references in the poetry to specific places and times in Qu Yuan's life.

謝濟世 Xie Jishi: 離騷解 (Qing, 1689-1756) He rose to a high position through the examination system but stepped down to a lower position in Hunan (a region that was

formerly in the territory of the kingdom of Chu) in order to care for his ailing mother; he became famous for daring to impeach corrupt higher-up officials, and eventually returned home sick and aged himself. During his time in Hunan he aroused an interest in Qu Yuan. He interpreted the “Li Sao” as a lyrical expression of Qu Yuan’s intention to remain in Chu, and commented on Qu Yuan’s relationships with the different characters in the poem.

朱冀 Zhu Ji: 離騷辯 (Qing, first edition 1706) Disagreeing with Song and Ming interpretation and especially with Lin Yunming’s commentary, his main goal was to demonstrate Qu Yuan’s perfect loyal obedience and filial piety. He viewed Qu Yuan as a proponent of political compromise and negotiation, and did not permit even the least hint of a complaint against King Huai to appear in his interpretation.

魯筆 Lu Bi: 楚辭達 (Qing, ?-ca. 1747) He believed “Li Sao” was the interpretive key to the whole *Chuci*, and that Qu Yuan was a perfect exemplar of both emotions and rational thought. He asserted that correct interpretation originates in a complete experience of the whole aesthetic/literary/technical aspect of the poem; he explained the “Li Sao” in terms of the 情境 (affect and scene) dialectic of contemporary lyric poetics and interpreted the fantastic imagery as expressive of Qu Yuan’s real emotional experience.

林仲懿 Lin Zhongyi: 離騷中正 (Qing, fl. 1711) His commentary expounds Qu Yuan’s exemplary Neo-Confucian conduct and the expression of Confucian and Mencian principles in the “Li Sao.” He also commented on the thematic structure of the work.

吳世尚 Wu Shishang: 楚辭疏 (Qing, first edition 1727) Wu affirmed Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucian interpretation while rejecting the possibility that the poems criticize the king,

and also attended to the structure and artistic techniques of the *Chuci*. He asserted that the significant principle of the “Li Sao” is the original nature of loyalty and filial piety.

夏大霖 Xia Dalin: 屈騷心印 (Qing, first edition ca. 1734) Xia used maps, printed with his edition, to represent the history and mythology of the *Chuci*, and in his comments to the “Li Sao” he placed a strong emphasis on elucidating the overall narrative and thematic structure of the poem.

劉夢鵬 Liu Mengpeng: 屈子章句 (Qing, fl. 1751) His text includes a dated account of Qu Yuan’s geneology and compositions that differs from earlier accounts. Using Qu Yuan’s biography as the basis, Liu Mengpeng first established the overall significance of each poem and then interpreted the stanzas, lines, and words accordingly. He viewed Qu Yuan as piously orthodox and justified the righteousness of his patriotic grief and complaint.

戴震 Dai Zhen: 屈原賦註 (Qing, 1723-1777) A prominent scholar of the Qianjia School from a poor family, who also authored texts on dialects and rhyme, he wrote his Qu Yuan commentary when he was thirty and his family had not enough to eat. His interpretations are firmly based on philological research; his emphasis is on demonstrable exegesis and identification of references, not on implied meaning or speculation. Relying on the orthodox Confucian canon of his time for evidence, he tended to discount the significance of mythological imagery.

董國英 Dong Guoying: 楚辭貫 (Qing, 1729-ca.1810) He interpreted the “Li Sao” in terms of his reading of the *Shiji*. He extensively cited and critiqued previous interpreters in his commentary, and added relatively few comments of his own.

陳本禮 Chen Benli: 楚辭精義 (Qing, 1739-1818) Founder of poetry society and a lifelong devotee of the *Chuci*, his intention was to explain the overall original meaning of the *Chuci* with attention to allegory and artistic technique. His comments apply the rhetorical vocabulary of *Shijing* analysis to explain the “Li Sao” and elucidate his interpretation of the non-literal meaning.

胡文英 Hu Wenying: 屈騷指掌 (Qing, fl. 1765) Writing that he did not depend on commentaries to interpret the “Li Sao,” but relied on his own personal understanding of the text, Hu Wenying first put himself in Qu Yuan’s shoes and only consulted previous commentaries in cases where he couldn’t intuit the meaning in this way. He often interprets the imagery in terms of specific moments in Qu Yuan’s biography. Through this approach he produced some novel interpretations. He believed the text of the *Chuci* had been significantly jumbled in its early transmission and liberally rearranged it according his intuition of its inner structure. Like many other scholars of Qing philology, he interpreted the poetry in terms of the precise time and place of its composition.

龔景瀚 Gong Jinghan: 離騷箋 (Qing, 1747-1802) A scholar of the prosperous Qian-Jia era, he was strongly influenced by the Neo-Confucian thought of loyalty and filiality that dominated his time and the doctrine of monarchial absolutism. He believed the “Li Sao” articulates a process of development in Qu Yuan’s thought, and he wanted to bring out this overarching significance.

王闈運 Wang Kaiyun: 楚辭釋 (Qing-Republic, 1833-1916) A proponent of the late Qing revival of the New Text School and Gongyang studies, he emphasized finding profound significance in every detail of textuality, and produced novel and strange theses thereby. He initiated a spirit of doubting received truths in *Chuci* studies. He viewed the

“Li Sao” as a coded statement of a specific political policy written while King Huai was on his doomed journey to Qin, and much against the grain of previous interpretation, he asserted that Qu Yuan supported an alliance of Chu with Qin.

廖平 Liao Ping: 楚辭新解 (Qing-Republic, 1852-1932) A student of Wang Kaiyun’s, Liao Ping, also known as Liao Jiping, was a dynamic thinker who championed Confucianism during the time of foreign cultural, economic, and military incursions into China. He articulated a new Confucianism in which the teachings of the sage encompassed all knowledge, both human and superhuman, Chinese and foreign. He viewed the content of the *Chuci* to belong to his category of 天學 “Heavenly Learning,” i.e., the supernatural and extraterrestrial, rather than to “Human Learning,” i.e., social and moral themes. Late in his life he completely rejected the basis of traditional “Li Sao” interpretation by declaring that it was not written by Qu Yuan but by a group of official scholars in the court of Qin Shihuang, the first Emperor of Qin; he asserted that Han scholars had attributed the poetry to Qu Yuan because they hated Qin and loved Chu. His research is often stridently rejected or simply dismissed in contemporary Chinese scholarship; he is not even included in Yi Chonglian’s history of *Chuci* studies.

馬其昶 Ma Qichang: 屈賦微 (Qing-Republic, 1855-1930) Building on extensive citation of historical commentators for a thoroughly-grounded but novel interpretation, he may have been the first to propose that Qu Yuan’s loyalty was loyalty to the fatherland and *not* to its king: a theme appropriate to Ma Qichang’s own revolutionary era and his personal opposition to Yuan Shikai.

郭沫若 Guo Moruo: 屈原研究 (Qing-People’s Republic, 1892-1978) The maker of the modern Qu Yuan, the extremely influential poet, historian, playwright, revolutionary, and

politician Guo Moruo studied ancient Chinese history and poetry in terms of Marxism and Maoism. His assertions that Qu Yuan was a model patriot, people's poet, and exponent of both Socialist Realism and Revolutionary Romanticism form the essence of the popular understanding of Qu Yuan in contemporary China.

游國恩 You Guoen 離騷纂義 (Qing-People's Republic, 1899-1978) and **姜亮夫 Jiang Liangfu** 楚辭通故 (Qing-People's Republic, 1902-1995): While few of their comments are explicitly cited, this translation attempts to take into account the work of these two formidable modern scholars who dedicated their history-spanning lives to the meticulous scientific interpretation of the *Chuci*. The present translator is profoundly indebted to their exhaustive philological and textual research.

馬茂元 Ma Maoyuan: 楚辭選 (Republic-People's Republic, 1918-1989) Editor of many student-oriented editions of classical poetry, he interprets the "Li Sao" in terms of the nationalistic, populist ideology of the Communist era. Following revolutionary thinkers Mao Zedong, Wen Yiduo, and Guo Moruo, he views Qu Yuan as an advocate for the common people, a progressive statesman, and a martyred patriot; he views the "Li Sao" as an example of Romanticism in the Chinese literary tradition and interprets the imagery in terms of imagination and lyric emotion. Ma Maoyuan reads the "Li Sao" as the story of Qu Yuan's life struggle and his resolution through the process of overcoming of temptations in his mind, represented by the various interlocuters in the poem.

David Hawkes (British, 1923-2009): Translator of the *Chuci* as well as the *Hong lou meng* 紅樓夢 (*Dream of the Red Chamber* or *Story of the Stone*), Hawkes' elegant translation includes extensive endnotes that present his broad knowledge of Chinese prehistory and mythology. He viewed traditional Chinese interpretation of the "Li Sao"

as anachronistically Confucian and emphasized the practices and ideas of ancient shamanism as an interpretive framework.

Background reading

Biography and character analysis from historical readers

淮南劉安：國風好色而不淫，小雅怨誹而不亂。若離騷者，可謂兼之矣。上稱帝嚳，下道齊桓，中述湯武，以刺世事。明道德之廣崇，治亂之條貫，靡不畢見。其文約，其辭微，其志絜，其行廉，其稱文小而其指極大，舉類邇而見義遠。其志絜，故其稱物芳。其行廉，故死而不容自踈。濯淖汙泥之中，蟬蛻於濁穢，以浮游塵埃之外，不獲世之滋垢，皜然泥而不滓者也。推此志也，雖與日月爭光可也。 Liu An, Prince of Huainan: The “Airs of the States” love beauty and yet are not excessive, the “Lesser Odes” complain and yet are not disorderly. As to the “Li Sao,” both of these can be said of it. Above it names Di Ku, below it speaks of Duke Huan of Qi, in the middle it narrates Tang and Wu, all in order to criticize the affairs of its time. The illumination of the expansive breadth and great height of the Way and its virtue, and the presentation of orderly and disorderly governance, are all made completely apparent. Its literary pattern is restrained, its diction is fine; his aspiration is pure, his actions maintain integrity. Its literal words are small but it refers to the most great; selecting from categories near at hand it makes visible a distant significance. His aspiration is pure; thus he names fragrant objects. His actions maintain integrity; thus he died and did not accept estrangement. Soaked in the muck, a cicada comes free of its dirty husk to float beyond the dust: he did

not reap the pollution of the world. Shining purely, he was enmired but not dirtied.

Advancing this aspiration, he vies for brilliance even with the sun and moon.

劉向：新序：節士：屈原者，名平，楚之同姓。大夫有博通之知，清潔之行，懷王用之。Liu Xiang: New Prefaces: Temperate Elites: Qu Yuan, named Ping, of the same [ruling] clan of Chu. The Grand Master [Qu Yuan] had broad penetrating knowledge, and clean pure conduct; King Huai made use of him. 秦欲吞滅諸侯，并兼天下。屈原為楚東使於齊，以結強黨。秦國患之，使張儀之楚，貨楚貴臣上官大夫靳尚之屬，上及令子蘭，司馬子椒，內賂夫人鄭袖，共譖屈原。Qin wanted to swallow up and extinguish the feudal lords, and unify [all the land] under heaven. Qu Yuan was sent to Qi in the east of Chu to forge a strong alliance. The kingdom of Qin was worried, and sent Zhang Yi to Chu, buying the aristocratic ministers of Chu such as the Senior Grand Master Jin Shang, and even on up to the Prime Minister Zilan [Sir Eupatorium] and the Minister of War Zijiao [Sir Zanthoxylum], and bribing the lady Zheng Xiu within, to join together in slandering Qu Yuan. 屈原遂放於外，乃作離騷。Qu Yuan was then exiled, and hence made the “Li Sao.” 張儀因使楚絕齊，許謝地六百里，懷王信左右之姦謀，聽張儀之邪說，遂絕強齊之大輔。楚既絕齊，而秦欺以六里。In order to make Chu break off [negotiations] with Qi, Zhang Yi promised to cede six hundred *li* of territory [from Qin to Chu]. King Huai believed the treacherous schemes of his advisors, and heeded Zhang Yi’s devious persuasion, and subsequently refused the great assistance of powerful Qi. After Chu had broken with Qi, Qin cheated [Chu] by giving it only six *li*. 懷王大怒，舉兵伐秦，大戰者數，秦兵大敗楚師，斬首數萬級。秦使人願以漢中地謝，

懷王不聽，願得張儀而甘心焉。張儀曰：「以一儀而易漢中地，何愛儀！」請行。遂至楚，楚囚之。上官大夫之屬共言之王，王歸之。King Huai was enraged, and raised the army to punish Qin. The great battles were many, and the Qin army routed the Chu troops, cutting off heads by the tens of thousands. [Later] Qin sent emissaries [again] wishing to cede the middle stretches of the Han river region [as compensation for the previous cheating act]; King Huai paid no heed, [only] wishing to obtain Zhang Yi for satisfaction. Zhang Yi said: “With one [Zhang] Yi to so easily [keep] the middle Han river region—how could one Yi be counted dear!” and asked permission to go. Then he arrived in Chu, and Chu imprisoned him. The senior Grand Master and his group together spoke to the king, and the king returned him. 是時懷王悔不用屈原之策，以至於此，於是復用屈原。屈原使齊，還聞張儀已去，大為王言張儀之罪，懷王使人追之，不及。 At this time King Huai regretted not having used Qu Yuan’s strategy, thereby causing it to come to such a pass, and so he renewed his employment of Qu Yuan. Qu Yuan was sent to Qi, and when he returned and heard that Zhang Yi was already gone, he spoke strongly to the king of Zhang Yi’s offence. King Huai sent someone to follow him, but they did not catch up. 後秦嫁女于楚，與懷王歡，為藍田之會，屈原以為秦不可信，願勿會，群臣皆以為可會，懷王遂會，果見囚拘，客死於秦，為天下笑。 Later Qin gave a daughter in marriage to Chu, to please King Huai, and proposed to hold an alliance meeting at Blue Field. Qu Yuan believed that Qin could not be trusted, and wished [the king] would not participate in the meeting; [but] the crowd of ministers all supported his participation in the meeting. King Huai then went to the meeting. As a result, he was imprisoned, died abroad in Qin, and became the laughingstock of the world. 懷王子頃襄王，亦知群臣諂誤懷王，不察其罪，反聽群讒之口，復放屈原。 The

son of King Huai, King Qingxiang, also knew the crowd of ministers had disasterously mislead King Huai; he did not investigate their offences, but rather heeded the mouths of the crowd of slanderers, and again exiled Qu Yuan. 屈原疾闇王亂俗，汶汶嘿嘿，以是爲非，以清爲濁，不忍見于世，將自投於淵，漁父止之。屈原曰：“世皆醉，我獨醒；世皆濁，我獨清。吾獨聞之，新浴者必振衣，新沐者必彈冠。又惡能以其冷冷，更世事之嘿嘿者哉？吾寧投淵而死。”遂自投湘水汨羅之中而死。 Qu Yuan agonized over how the deluded king(s) made chaos of the common customs, muddling about in their ignorance, taking truth to be falsehood, taking purity to be defilement; not bearing to be seen in the world, he went to cast himself into the abyss. A fisherman stopped him. Qu Yuan said: “The whole world is drunk, I alone am sober; the whole world is defiled, I alone am pure. I alone have heard that one who has newly bathed must shake out his robe, and one who is newly cleaned must dust off his cap. Then how could [I] take their impurity and endure the miserable state of affairs of the world? I would rather leap into the abyss and die.” Then he cast himself into the Miluo of the Xiang waters and died.

外傳：昔漢武愛騷。令淮南作傳。大概屈原已盡於此。故太史公因之以入史記。外有二三逸事。見之雜紀方志者尤詳。屈原廋細美髮。丰神朗秀。長九尺。好奇服。冠切雲之冠。性潔。一日三濯纓。 Unofficial Biography [attributed to Shen Yazhi]: In ancient times, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty loved the Sao, and commanded [Liu An] Prince of Huainan to compose a commentary. The general matters of Qu Yuan were all included in this, so the Imperial Historian [Sima Qian] used it in the *Shiji*. But besides this there are still one or two anecdotes; more details are seen in miscellaneous records

and local chronicles. Qu Yuan was slender and had beautiful hair [and beard], was richly spirited and brightly cultivated. He was nine *chi* tall [that is, exceptionally tall]. He preferred unusual clothing, and the cap he wore was a “cloud-slicing cap.” His character was pure. Each day he washed his cap-straps three times. 事懷襄間。蒙讒負譏。遂放而耕。吟離騷。倚耒號泣於天。時楚大荒。原墮淚處獨產白米如玉。江陵志有白米田。即其地也。 He served between the reigns of kings Huai and Qingxiang. He suffered slander and derision. Following his exile, he ploughed. He chanted the “Li Sao,” leaning on his rake with great cries and tears to heaven. At that time there was a famine in Chu. Rice as white as jade sprang up in those places where Yuan’s tears fell. The chronicle of Jiangling mentions a [place named] White Rice Field: it is that very place. 嘗遊沅湘。俗好祀。必作樂歌以樂神。辭甚俚。原因棲玉筍山，作九歌。托以風諫。至山鬼篇成。四山忽啾啾若啼嘯。聲聞十里外。草木莫不萎死。 He once travelled in the region of the Yuan and Xiang rivers. The common people there liked to make religious offerings. They had to make music [樂] and song in order to please [樂] the spirits; their liturgy was extremely rustic. Yuan thus lodged at Jade Basket Mountain [near Miluo; today it is a touristsite with a “Cap-strap Washing Bridge”] and composed the “Nine Songs,” using them as satirical remonstrance. When he completed the piece called “Mountain Spirit,” the hills in all directions suddenly filled with a noise like mournful cries; the sound was heard even beyond ten *li* [roughly five kilometers] away, and the plants and trees all withered and died. 又見楚先王廟及公卿祠堂。圖書天地山川神靈。琦瑋僑佹。與古聖賢怪物行事。因書其壁。呵而問之。時天慘地愁。白晝如夜者三日。 He also saw the shrine of the former kings of Chu and the ancestral halls of the high ministers,

which were painted with images of the gods and spirits of heaven and earth, mountains and rivers, exquisite and mystical; also [there were] the deeds of ancient sages and monsters. So he wrote [“Heavenly Questions”] on the walls; he sighed and questioned them. At that time Heaven lamented and the earth sorrowed. Daylight hours were like night for three days. 晚益憤懣。披蓁茹草。混同鳥獸。不交世務。採栢實。和桂膏。歌遠遊之章。托遊仙以自適。 Later years increased his frustrations. He covered himself with leaves and mingled with the birds and beasts, and did not engage in worldly affairs. He picked cypress nuts and mixed them with herbal balm [to nourish his nerves and spirit?]. He sang the stanzas of “Far Roaming,” using the spirit journey for his leisure. 王暹逐之。於五月五日遂赴清冷之水。其神遊於天河。精靈時降湘浦。楚人思慕。謂爲水仙。每值原死日。必以筒貯米投水祭之。至漢建武中。長沙區回。白日忽見一人。自稱三閭大夫。謂曰。聞君嘗見祭。甚善。但所遺並蛟龍所竊。今有惠。可以楝樹葉塞上以五色絲轉縛之。此物蛟龍所憚。回依其言。世俗作糉並帶絲葉。皆其遺風。 The king banished him. On the fifth day of the fifth lunar month he then leaped into the clear, cold water. His spirit roamed the River of Heaven [the Milky Way]. His ghost sometimes descends to the banks of the Xiang River. The people of Chu think of him with respect. They call him an immortal of the water. When it comes to the day of his death, they always make offerings to him by casting steamed bamboo tubes stuffed with rice onto the water. In the Jianwu era of the [Eastern] Han dynasty, one [Mr.] Ou Hui, of Changsha, in broad daylight suddenly saw a man calling himself the Grand Master of the Three Wards [Qu Yuan, by his official title]. [The man] said: “I have heard that offerings have been made by you to me. Very good! But what was offered was all stolen by the river dragons. Today I grant you a favor: you can use the leaves of the *lian*

tree to wrap the stuffing and bind it all up with multi-colored thread. This is a thing the river dragons fear.” Hui obeyed his words. The common custom is to make these cakes with leaves and thread; this is all his legacy. 晉咸安中。有吳人顏珽者。泊汨羅。夜深月明。聞有人行吟曰。曾不知夏之爲丘兮。孰兩東門之可蕪。珽異之。前曰。汝三閭大夫耶。忽不見其所之。 In the Xian’an area of the Jin dynasty, there was a man of Wu, Yan Jue. When he anchored at Miluo, the night deep and the moon bright, he heard someone walking along and chanting, saying: “To think that its palace walls should be mounds of rubble, / And its two East Gates a wilderness of weeds!” [These are lines from “A Lament for Ying,” another poem in the *Chuci* about the destruction of the Chu capital. David Hawkes’ translation.] Jue thought it was strange. Advancing, he said: Are you not the Grand Master of the Three Wards? But suddenly he couldn’t see where [Qu Yuan] went. 江陵志又載原故宅在姊歸。鄉北有女嬃廟。至今擣衣石尚存。時當秋風夜雨之際。砧聲隱隱可聽也。嘻！異哉！ The chronicle of Jiangling also records that Yuan’s old home was in Zigui. In the country to the north there is a “Woman Temple” [for the “woman,” perhaps Qu Yuan’s elder sister, in the “Li Sao”]. The rock where she washed clothes remains to this day. Sometimes between the autumn wind and the midnight rain, the sound of pounding [the clothes] can be softly heard. Alas, what a marvel! 原以忠死。直古龍比者流。何以沒後多不經事。特千古騷魂鬱而未散。故鸞熊雖久不祀。三閭之跡。猶時彷彿占斷於江潭澤畔蒹葭白露中耳。 Yuan died for loyalty. Why did loyal ministers like Long and Bi [Gan] of ancient times not endure after their deaths, while the soul of the Sao, uniquely for a thousand years, flourishes and is not lost? Therefore even though there have been no sacrifices to Yu Xiong [ancestor of Chu]

for a long time, the traces of [Qu Yuan, Minister of] the Three Wards, can still from time to time be divined among the white dew of the reedy banks of the rivers and marshes.

The poem proper

Romanization in *pinyin* is provided for the convenience of students studying Chinese.

Pinyin represents modern Mandarin—a dialect invented to be the standard national language for the People’s Republic—and is only one representation of the many possible vocalizations of the diverse and historical Chinese language.

The primary text is from the *Chuci buzhu*. Text variants are marked as follows:

*You Guoen

[Jiang Liangfu]

Would it be different to read the “Li Sao” in simplified characters, or in seal script or on bamboo strips?

離騷

or, 離騷經

Lí Sāo

Lí Sāo jīng

Encountering Sorrow

The Classic of Encountering Sorrow

Separation’s Lament

The Classic of Separation’s Lament

司馬遷／劉安？：離騷者，猶離憂也。夫天者，人之始也；父母者，人之本也。人窮則反本，故勞苦倦極，未嘗不呼天也；疾痛慘怛，未嘗不呼父母也。屈平正道直行，竭忠盡智以事其君，讒人間之，可謂窮矣。信而見疑，忠而被謗，能無怨乎？

屈平之作離騷，蓋自怨生也。Sima Qian [quoting Liu An?]: “Li Sao” means “Encounter Sorrow.” Heaven is the origin of humankind. Fathers and mothers are the root of humankind. When humans despair, they return to their roots. For this reason, those who have been driven to the limits of exhaustion by toil and suffering, who push themselves to exhaustion, always cry out to heaven. Those who endure the grief and sorrow caused by sickness and pain, always call out to their fathers and mothers. Qu Ping walked the straight and narrow path and served his lord with utmost loyalty and intelligence; when slanderers divided them, he can be said to have despaired. Faithful and yet doubted, loyal but defamed, could he have failed to be resentful? It was this resentment, perhaps, which gave rise to Qu Ping’s composition “Encountering Sorrow.”

班固：屈原以忠信見疑，憂愁幽思而作離騷。離，猶遭也；騷，憂也，明己遭憂作辭也。Ban Gu: Qu Yuan was doubted for his loyalty and trustworthiness; in sorrow and profound concern he composed the “Li Sao.” “Li” is like “to meet with;” “Sao” is “Sorrow”; to express that he met with sorrow and composed the lyrics.

王逸：離，別也，騷，愁也，經，徑也。言己放逐離別，中心愁思，猶依道徑 [一云陳直徑，一云陳道徑]，以諷諫君也。Wang Yi: “Li” is “separation”; “Sao” is “anxious”; “Classic” [經, included in Wang Yi’s version of the text] is “Path” [徑]. This says that he was banished and separated [from his lord], and his heart was full of anxious

concern, but he still followed the path of the Way [or, he spoke directly; or, he laid out the path of the Way] in order to satirically remonstrate with his lord.

王應麟：《楚語》伍舉曰：德義不行，則邇者騷離，而遠者距違。伍舉所謂騷離，屈平所謂離騷，皆楚言也。Wang Yinglin: In the “Discourses of Chu” [a chapter of the *Discourse of the States*], Wu Ju says: When virtue and righteousness are not implemented, those who approach are discontented and dissentful [*sao li*], but those who keep their distance are oppositional and defiant. What Wu Ju calls discontented and dissentful [*sao li*] is what Qu Ping calls “Li Sao”; both are Chu dialect.

汪瑗：篇內曰：余既不難夫離別兮，傷靈修之數化，此離騷之所以名也。Wang Yuan: The text says: “I have not [thought] it hard, this separation —— [But have] pained for Spirit Perfection’s many changes.” This is what the “Li Sao” takes for its name.

戴震：離騷，即牢愁也。蓋古語。揚雄有畔牢愁。Dai Zhen: “Li Sao” means complaint [pronounced *láo chóu* in contemporary Mandarin]. It must be archaic language. Yang Xiong has a “Complaint of the Riverbank” [“Pan Lao Chou,” an imitation of the “Li Sao].”

帝高陽之苗裔兮 朕皇考曰伯庸

dì gāo yáng zhī miáo yì xī zhèn huáng kǎo yuē bó yōng

Divine Gao Yang’s progeny —— My exalted father hight Bo Yong

Gao Yang, also called Zhuanxu, is a deified ancestor of the royal house of Chu. The speaker uses a special form of address to respect his deceased father.

The word 兮, characteristic of *Chuci* poetry, is found between every two lines of the “Li Sao.” It expresses a sound or a feeling rather than a specific meaning. In modern Mandarin it is pronounced “xī,” but according to Guo Moruo in ancient times it may have indicated an audible breath, something like “ah.” It is marked in the English translation as a long dash.

司馬遷：屈原者，名平，楚之同姓也。Sima Qian: Qu Yuan’s *praenomen* was Ping. He had the same *cognomen* as the Chu [royal family]. *I have included most of the text of the *Shiji* biography of Qu Yuan at various points in the commentary, because historically it is the foundational and essential aid to understanding the “Li Sao.”

Although some modern scholars have questioned the facticity of the biography, it remains the primary source outside of the poems themselves used by Qu Yuan scholars today.

王逸：屈原言我父伯庸，體有美德，以忠輔楚，世有令名，以及於己。Wang Yi: Qu Yuan says, my father is Bo Yong; his person had fair virtue. For loyal service to Chu, our generations have made good name, culminating in myself.

林雲銘：便有宗國不可去之義。Lin Yunming: These [lines] contain the principle that the ancestral kingdom cannot be quit.

Liao Ping proposed that the “Li Sao” was written by a committee of occultists at the court of the first Emperor of Qin; the prominent May Fourth intellectual Hu Shi proposed that Qu Yuan was probably not a real man but rather a legend constructed from the poetry.

攝提貞於孟陬兮

惟庚寅吾以降

shè tí zhēn yú mèng zōu xī

wéi gēng yín wú yǐ jiàng

Sheti configuration, in spring's first month — On the day *gengyiin* I descended
 You Guoen summarizes five different ways that the astronomical references in these lines
 have been interpreted in order to determine Qu Yuan's birthday (纂义 16-8). Many
 Chinese scholars accept the date established by Guo Moruo's research into historical
 astronomy: BCE 340, 7th day of the 1st lunar month. Other scholars reject the idea that
 these lines refer to Qu Yuan's historical birthday. Jiang Liangfu proposes that these lines
 do not necessarily indicate Qu Yuan's precise date of birth but rather describe his birth as
 occurring at the most astrologically auspicious moment.

The general formal structure of this poem can be schematized as such: XXXxXX —
 XXXxXA / XXXxXX — XXXxXA / XXXxXX — XXXxB / XXXxXX —
 XXXxB / XXXxXX — XXXxC / XXXxXX — XXXxC, as so on, where X is
 a semantically loaded word and x is a grammatical function word or particle. Often
 several couplets in a row rhyme, according to reconstructed ancient Chinese
 pronunciation.

王逸：寅爲陽正，故男始生而立於寅。庚爲陰正，故女始生而立於庚。言己以太歲
 在寅，正月始春，庚寅之日，下母之體而生，得陰陽之正中也。Wang Yi: *Yiin* is
 the true yang, thus maleness is born and established in *yiin*. *Geng* is the true yin, thus
 femaleness is born and established in *geng*. This says, when Jupiter was in the third
 celestial mansion, at the first month of the year which is the beginning of spring, on the
 day *gengyiin*, I came out of my mother's body, arriving at the center of the true *yin* and
yang [I have romanized 寅 with two i, *yiin*, in order to avoid confusion with 陰, *yin*].

皇覽 [鑿] 揆余初度兮 肇錫余以嘉名

huáng lǎn [jiàn] kuí yú chū dù xī

zhào xī/cì yú yǐ jiā míng

The exalted appraised my first aspect —— Began conferring me with auspicious names
Commentators disagree about whether the first aspect observed is his birthday or his
character.

汪瑗：初度之度，猶言時節也 [朱熹]，謂初生一歲之時節，不必專指初下母體之
時而言也。 Wang Yuan: [Zhu Xi says that] the first aspect is the time; but it means the
time of the first year after birth, it does not necessarily exclusively indicate the moment
of being born.

林雲銘：初生時氣象便與凡人不同，父視而揣之，知余長成時必無邪行，始擇其名
之美者而命之。 Lin Yunming: At the time of [my] birth the signs were different than
those of ordinary people. My father saw and evaluated this, and knew that the time of
[my] maturity would surely be without depravity; he began by selecting beautiful names
to confer on me.

蔣驥：因其少有令德，而予以美名，下文所謂內美也。 Jiang Ji: Since he had
virtuous character in his childhood, he was given beautiful names; this is what is called
inner beauty in the text below.

4 名余曰正則兮

字余曰靈均

míng yú yuē zhèng zé xī

zì yú yuē líng jūn

[He] named me: True Standard —— [He] called me: Spirit Balance

From the time of our earliest records of Chinese culture it has been typical for people to
have different kinds of names used at different stages of life and for different social

purposes. The names in these lines could be word plays on Qu Yuan's names. 原, Yuan, has the meaning of "plain," as in the high plains of northern China, the cradle of classical Confucian culture. In the earliest biography of Qu Yuan (contained in the *Shiji* or *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian) he is also called Qu 平, Ping; Ping has the meaning of level, even, balanced, or fair.

王逸：言正平可法則者，莫過於天；養物均調者，莫神於地。高平曰原，故父伯庸名我爲平以法天，字我爲原以法地。言己上能安君，下能養民也。 Wang Yi: This says that what is true and level can be a standard method, and in this nothing surpasses Heaven. As to that which can nourish all things in balanced harmony, nothing is more spiritual than Earth. What's high and level is called a plain, so my father Bo Yong named me "level" [Ping] in order to make a model of the heavens, he named me "plain" [Yuan] in order to make a model of the earth. This says, above I can stabilize my lord, and below I can nourish the common people.

Many readers have agreed with Wang Yi or found other ways to relate True Standard and Spirit Balance to Ping and Yuan. Chen Di asserts that this is all groundless speculation and the names in the poem are simply childhood names the speaker's father gave to express his love and hopes.

5 紛吾既有此內美兮 又重之以脩能 [態]

fēn wú jì yǒu cǐ nèi měi xī yòu chóng zhī yǐ xiū néng [tài]

Abundantly I already had this inner beauty ——

Moreover [I] paired it with cultivated bearing

Commentators disagree if 能 here refers to skill or to appearance. Many commentators have linked the word 能 to 熊, bear, a most powerful animal; hence “bearing.”

汪瑗：內美總言上二章祖，父，家世之美，日月生時之美，所取名字之美，故曰紛其盛也。內美是得之祖，父與天者，脩能是勉之於己者，下文扈蘼芷，佩秋蘭即是比喻自家脩能。Wang Yuan: Inner beauty summarizes the above two stanzas. The beauty of his ancestors, father, and lineage, the beauty of his astrology and time of birth, the beauty of the chosen names—thus he describes this plentitude as abundant. Inner beauty is attained from his ancestors, his father, and heaven; cultivated bearing is strived for with his own effort. The wrapping of cladophora and angelica and the sash of eupatorium in the text below are metaphorical comparisons for his own cultivated bearing.”

胡文英：內美，本質也。脩能，學力也。Hu Wenying: Inner beauty is original nature. Cultivated bearing is studied knowledge.

扈江離與辟 [關] 芷兮

紉秋蘭以爲佩

hù jiāng lí yǔ pì zhǐ xi

rèn qiū lán yǐ wéi pèi

Wrapped with river cladophora and remote angelica ——

Stitched autumn eupatorium into a sash

The plants in the “Li Sao” were found in the humid climate and rugged geography of Chu, Qu Yuan’s homeland (the modern region of Hubei, Hunan, and Anhui in southern China).

I have frequently used the scientific names for the plants because the common names bear the wrong connotations. The flowers of the “Li Sao” are delicate, wild, and

medicinal, nothing like the showy hothouse irises and orchids for sale at the florist; so I have chosen to call them angelica and eupatorium. In ancient Chu fragrant herbs and flowers were used for personal adornment, for medicine, and for magic. Sashes were used to hold together robe-like garments and objects on the sash represented social rank or occupation. For example, carpenters, scribes, or shamans could hang the tools of their trade on their sashes, and aristocrats could hang amulets, symbolic ornaments, or sachets of precious herbs from their sashes.

王逸：佩，飾也，所以象德。故行清潔者佩芳，德仁明者佩玉，能解結者佩觿，能決疑者佩玦，故孔子無所不佩也。 Wang Yi: A sash pendant is an ornament, so it symbolizes virtue. Thus those whose actions are pure wear fragrances on their sash, those whose virtue is benevolently perspicacious wear jade on their sash, those who can untangle knots wear bodkins on their sash, those who can break off (*jue*) doubts [command resolve] wear broken jades (*jue*) [symbols of resolution] on their sash; thus there was nothing that Confucius did not wear on his sash.

洪興祖：故者男女皆佩容臭，臭，香物也。 And: 由是知屈原真所謂多識草木鳥獸，而能盡究其所以情狀者歟 [...] 蘭蕙之才德不同，蘭似君子，蕙似士夫 [...] 其言蘭蕙如此，當俟博物者。 Hong Xingzu: In the old days men and women all wore aromatic sachets on their sashes. Hong Xingzu also says: Therefore we know that Qu Yuan can truly be called a great knower of plants, trees, birds, and animals [he fulfills Confucius' dictum about the educational value of poetry], and therefore is able to thoroughly comprehend their conditions! [...] The abilities and virtues of eupatorium and ocimum are not the same: eupatorium resembles the gentleman, while ocimum resembles the [common] officer; [Qu Yuan discriminated correctly among different species of

flowers and made an erudite comparison, so] to speak of eupatorium like this, he must have been awaiting a reader of broad knowledge.

戴震：扈者，掩襲不散之稱。此以芳草比嘉言懿行。Dai Zhen: “Wrapped” is what we call a robe that is bound and not loose. This compares fragrant plants to kind speech and exemplary conduct.

董國英：取其產於江濱，潔而不污；生于僻壤，超而遠俗也。Dong Guoying: [He] takes what is produced on the river bank and is pure and unstained, what grows in the wilds and is transcendent and far from common.

汨 [汨] 余若將不及兮 恐年歲之不吾與

yù [mì] yú ruò jiāng bù jí xī

kǒng nián suì zhī bù wú yǔ

Rushing, I, as if unable to keep up —— Fearing the years don't for me wait

The *Chuci* contain many special syntactic constructions, such as putting an adverb at the beginning of a phrase or reversing the usual word order. For this translation I have strived to maintain the word order as closely as possible.

王逸：言我年歲命汨然流去，誠欲輔君，心中汲汲，常若不及。Wang Yi: This says the years of life are flowing away like rushing water; I sincerely desire to serve my lord, and my heart is anxious, always as if unable to keep up.

錢澄之：此言其進德脩業，欲及時也。Qian Chengzhi: This says that he “hopes for the timely promotion of virtue and establishment of meritorious deeds” [a quotation of a commentary to the *Book of Changes*].

王夫之：若將不及，志業既正，欲及時利見也。Wang Fuzhi: His cause is correct,

and he desires to promptly make its benefits manifest.

。朝搴阰之木蘭兮

夕攬 [攬] 洲之宿莽

zhāo qiān pí zhī mù lán xi

xī lǎn zhōu zhī sù mǎng

Mornings plucking the hills' magnolia —— Evenings picking the islets' beckmannia

王逸：草冬不死者，楚人名曰宿莽。言己但起陸山采木蘭，上事太陽，承天度也；

夕入洲澤採取宿莽，下奉太陰，順地數也。動以神祇自敕誨也。木蘭去皮不死，宿

莽遇冬不枯，以喻饒人雖欲困己，己受天性，終不可變易也。Wang Yi: The people

of Chu call the herb that does not die in winter beckmannia. This says that he arises at

dawn to ascend the hills and pluck magnolia, in order to serve the great yang above,

undertaking the plan of Heaven. In the evening he enters the islets and marshes to gather

beckmannia, in order to esteem the great yin from below, obeying the pattern of Earth.

His movements accord with the dictates of the gods of heaven and earth. The way

magnolia sheds its bark but does not die and beckmannia encounters winter but does not

wither are metaphors for [this]: although slanders wish to entrap me, I have received the

nature of heaven, and to the end I cannot change.

朱熹：言所採取皆芳香久固之物，以比所行者皆忠善長久之道也。Zhu Xi: All the

fragrant and enduring things gathered are comparisons for the completely loyal, good,

and lasting Way [I have] undertaken.

李陳玉：宿莽乃陳草蕪穢，未經芟薙，喻小人臭穢叢雜，無攬之者，將阻險盤踞不

死矣。朝搴夕攬，朝夕爲國家進賢鋤奸也。舊註併以宿莽爲香物，蓋始于郭璞之誤。

Li Chenyu: Beckmannia is really a name for overgrowth that has never been mowed or

weeded: a metaphor of petty men as stinking waste and messiness. The weeds are not picked, dangerously occupying the place and refusing to die. Morning plucking and evening picking: morning and evening [he works for] the nation's promotion of virtuous men and elimination of traitors. The old commentaries lump beckmannia as a fragrant plant, which must have begun with Guo Pu's mistake.

魯筆：阝之木蘭，喻高明正大之業，爲昭代明王所建立者，則憲而章之，故用朝攀，攀者，仰攀也。洲之宿莽亦香草，經冬尚存，喻沈淪零落之迹，爲現代方策所遺留者，則幽而討之，故用夕攬；攬者，俯拾也。Lu Bi: The hills' magnolias is a metaphor for the high, bright, truly upright cause, that which was established by the enlightened kings in the golden age, then was taken as the ultimate model and made manifest; so he uses morning plucking: plucking is reaching up high. The islets' beckmannia is also a fragrant plant; it undergoes winter and still remains. It is a metaphor for the sunken and scattered traces, that which is preserved in the ancient books of the present day, when it was retrieved from deeply hidden places; so he uses evening picking: picking is to reach down low.

夏大霖：二句比朝夕向學之事。朝夕者時也，阝洲者地也，攀攬者力也，承上文之脩能，言無時無地不致其力也。Xia Daming: These two lines are comparisons for the matter of learning from morning to evening. Morning and evening are times, hills and islets are places, and plucking and picking are kinds of effort; continuing from the cultivated bearing in the text above, this says there is no time and no place at which he does not exert his efforts to the utmost.

董國英：蓋盡一國之賢，朝攀夕攬，急欲盡羅而致之君側。Dong Guoying: The inference is to bringing in all the worthies in the kingdom: morning plucking and evening

picking, urgently desiring to recruit every last [worthy] and make them servants of my lord.

According to some commentators, there are magnolias that bloom year-round, therefore they doubly represent steadfastness and endurance; according to others, magnolias bloom in only spring while beckmannia is associated with winter, and therefore these lines describe spring-to-winter or year-round effort.

9 日月忽其不淹兮

春與秋其代序

rì yuè hū qí bù yān xī

chūn yǔ qiū qí dài xù

Suns, moons, quick in their unlasting — Springs and falls, in their succession

王逸：言天時易過，人年易老也。Wang Yi: This says the seasons of nature quickly pass; a person's years quickly age.

王夫之：春秋代序，喻國之盛則有衰，草木之零落，喻楚承積疆之後，至於懷王，秦難益棘，疆宇日蹙，有隕墜之憂。Wang Fuzhi: Spring and Autumn supersede each other: a metaphor for the prosperity and inevitable decline of kingdoms as the decay of plants and trees. It is a metaphor for what happened after Chu accumulated territory, when it came to the reign of King Huai and Qin increasingly made difficulties, pressing in the borders day by day. [These lines] have the sorrow of decline.

10 惟草木之零落兮

恐美人之遲暮

wéi cǎo mù zhī líng luò xī

kǒng měi rén zhī chí mù

Thinking of the herbs' and trees' decay —— Fearing for the beautiful one's dusk

{scatter and fall}

王逸：美人，謂懷王也。[...]言天時運轉，春生秋殺，草木零落，歲復盡矣；而君不建立道德，舉賢用能，則年老耄晚暮，而功不成，事不遂也。Wang Yi: The beautiful one is King Huai. [...] this says that the seasons cycle around, spring gives birth to what autumn kills, the plants and trees decay, the year is exhausted again; but my lord does not establish the moral way, raising up worthies and employing the talented. In his old age and late times he still has not accomplished meritorious deeds; his cause is failing.

呂延濟：美人，喻君也。Lü Yanji: The beautiful one is a metaphor for his lord.

朱熹：美人直謂美好之人，以男悅女之號也。Zhu Xi: The beautiful one directly names a good person; it's a name a man calls a woman to please her [and is an indirect allusion to the king, not a direct address].

黃文煥：美人，原自謂也。Huang Wenhuan: The beautiful one is what Qu Yuan calls himself.

錢澄之：美人自況爲是也。臣之於君，猶女之於夫，故坤曰地道也，臣道也，妻道也。Qian Chengzhi: The beautiful one should be taken as a self-description. Ministers are to their lords as women are to their husbands; thus the *kun* hexagram says it is the way of earth, the way of ministers, and the way of wives.

魯筆：美人比君，此三百篇遺法，既漢樂府君馬黃亦以美人目君，佳人目相。離騷今以美人爲君，後文以賢女爲相，又何疑？Lu Bi: “Beautiful one” is a comparison for his lord [the king]. This is the legacy of the *Shijing* poems, and the Han music-bureau poem “The King's Horse is Yellow” also has “the beautiful one” as a name for the king

and “fair one” [feminine] as a name for a companion [political aid]. The “Li Sao” here has the beautiful one as the king, and later has talented women as peers, what is there to doubt?

馬其昶：美人泛言賢士。Ma Qichang: Beautiful one generally refers to worthy elites.*

*Following Hucker’s *Dictionary of Officials in Imperial China*, I have usually translated 士 as “elite.” Hucker’s entry for 士: “Elite: Throughout history a broad generic reference to the group dominant in government, which also was the paramount group in society; originally a warrior caste, it was gradually transformed into a non-hereditary, ill-defined class of bureaucrats among whom litterateurs were most highly esteemed. From the era of N-S Division into T’ang times, status in the group was authenticated by the state and jealously guarded by powerful families.” In cases where 士 refers specifically to aristocracy rather than literati, I have translated it as “nobleman.”

11 不撫壯而棄穢兮

何不改 [+乎] 此度

bù fǔ zhuàng ér qì huì xi

hé bù gǎi (hū) cǐ dù

Not maintaining the robust and discarding the waste —— Why not change this course

There are disagreements about whether or not the text should include the first 不.

王逸：百草爲稼穡之穢，讒佞亦爲忠直之害也。[...] 言願令君甫及年德盛壯之時，

修明政教，棄去讒佞，無令害賢，改此惑誤之度，修先王之法也。Wang Yi: The

many weeds are the waste of reaping and sowing, and slanders and toadies are the injury

of the loyal and direct. [...] This says, I wish my lord would make use of his time of

robust age and flourishing virtue to cultivate enlightened governance and civilization,

discard slanderers and toadies, not cause injury to the worthies, change this mistaken course, and cultivate the method of the former kings.

12 乘騏驥以馳騁兮 來吾道夫先路

chéng qí jì yǐ chí chěng xī

lái wú dào fú xiān lù

Ride a fine steed at a gallop ——

Come, I will guide [you] on the former road

Come, I will guide [you], leading the way

司馬遷：爲楚懷王左徒。博聞彊志，明於治亂，嫻于辭令。入則與王圖議國事，以出號令；出則接遇賓客，應對諸侯。王甚任之。Sima Qian: He was Under-secretary to King Huai of Chu (r. 328-299 B.C., d. 296 B.C.). His knowledge was broad, his memory strong, he clearly understood how to bring order to chaos, and he was practiced in rhetorical arts. At court, he planned and discussed affairs of state with the king, so as to issue orders and commands [for him]. Outside court, he would receive guests and converse with the feudal lords. The king made much use of him.

王逸：以言任賢智則可成於治也。[...]言己如得任用，將驅先行，願來隨我，遂爲君導入聖王之道也。Wang Yi: This is to say that by relying on the knowledge of worthies, success in governance can be had. This says that if you employ me, I will lead the way. I hope you will come follow me, and I will lead my lord into the way of the Sage Kings.

馬茂元：通過自叙的筆法，提出了積極用世的人生觀：首先追溯世系，表明自己是楚國宗室之臣；詳紀生年和名字的由來，強調稟賦的純美。這和愛國主義思想結合起來，就成爲屈原生命中進步的動力，奠定了他那種堅強不屈的戰鬥性格的基礎。

Ma Maoyuan: Using the technique of self-narration, he introduces his philosophy of life as active worldly engagement: first he traces his genealogy, expressing that he is a minister of the royal house of the kingdom of Chu; he records in detail the year of his birth and origin of his names, and emphasizes the pure beauty of his natural endowments. Combining this with patriotic ideals, it becomes the progressive power in Qu Yuan's life, establishing the foundation of his unyielding, fighting personality.

13 昔三后之純粹兮

固衆芳之所在

xī sān hòu zhī chún cuì xī

gù zhòng fāng zhī suǒ zài

The ancient Three Sovereigns' purity — Ensured the assembled fragrances' presence

王逸：謂禹湯文王也。[...]衆芳，諭羣賢。Wang Yi: This refers to Yu, Tang, and King Wen [The exemplary founding kings of the Three Dynasties of orthodox Confucian history, Xia, Shang, and Zhou]. ... Assembled fragrances is a metaphor for the assembly of worthies.

朱熹：三后若果舊說，不應其下方言堯舜。疑謂三皇，或少昊，顓頊，高辛也。

Zhu Xi: If the Three Sovereigns were actually as the old interpretation says, then [the poem] shouldn't only *afterward* speak of Yao and Shun. I suspect it refers to the Three Divine Kings, or Shao Hao, Zhuanxu, and Gao Xin.

汪瑗：三后謂楚之先王，特不知其何所指的也。Wang Yuan: The Three Sovereigns refers to the first kings of Chu, but we don't know in particular which ones it indicates.

王夫之：三后，舊說以爲三王，或鬻熊熊繹莊王也。Wang Fuzi: As to the Three Sovereigns, the old interpretation says it means the Three [Founding] Kings [see Wang

Yi], or it could refer to Yu Xiong, Xiong Yi, and King Zhuang.

蔣驥：三后謂伯夷禹稷也。Jiang Ji: The three sovereigns refers to Bo Yi, Yu, and [Hou] Ji. [They must be ministers, not kings, according to the context].

戴震：三后謂楚之先君而賢昭顯者，故徑省其辭，以國人共知之也，今未聞。在楚言楚，其熊繹若敖蚡冒三君乎？ Dai Zhen: The Three Sovereigns refers to the first lords of Chu whose virtues are magnificently illuminated; their names are omitted as this was something known by all in the kingdom, though unheard of now. Being in Chu and speaking of Chu, couldn't it be the three lords Xiong Yi, Ruo Ao, and Fen Mao?

馬茂元：三后：熊繹，若敖，蚡冒。Ma Maoyuan identifies the kings as Chu founding fathers Xiong Yi, Ruo Ao, and Fen Mao. And: 因爲君德純粹，所以賢才被搜羅無遺。Because the purity of the lord's virtue, every last [person of] worthy talent has been gathered [into the service of the court].

游國恩：第以證據不足，未可遽指爲確詁耳。就上下文義而言，三后指賢君，衆芳喻賢臣，確然無疑。You Guoen: As the verifiable evidence is insufficient, we should not hastily offer a definitive exegesis. But according to the text above and below, there is no doubt that Three Sovereigns must indicate worthy lords and assembled fragrances is a metaphor for worthy ministers.

14 雜申椒與菌 [籩] 桂兮 豈維紉夫蕙茝

zá shēn jiāo yǔ jūn guì xi

qǐ wéi rèn fú huì chǎi

Varied zanthoxylum and cinnamomum — Could [you] only stitch the ocimum?

Could [you] only stitch ocimum and angelica?

Some interpret 蕙茝 as one plant, ocimum, others as two, ocimum and angelica.

王逸：言禹湯文王，雖有聖德，猶雜用衆賢，以致於治，非獨索蕙茝，任一人也。

Wang Yi: This says that Yu, Tang, and King Wen, although they possessed sagely virtue, still made varied use of the assembly of worthies in order to perfect their governance, and did not only stich the ocimum, relying on one person. [Wang Yi goes on to provide a list of exemplary ministers.]

夏大霖：申椒，菌桂，辛辣之物，比耿直之臣；蕙，茝清芬，比純德之臣。Xia

Dalin: Zanthoxylum and cinnamomum are spicy things, comparisons for bold and forthright ministers; ocimum and angelica are clear fragrances, comparisons for purely virtuous ministers.

洪興祖：椒與菌桂木類也，蕙茝草類也，以言賢無小大，皆在所用。Hong Xingzu:

Zanthoxylum and cinnamomum are kinds of trees; ocimum and angelica are kinds of herbs; this is to say that there is no great and small among ministers, all have their use.

奚祿詒：申椒句喻賢臣，蕙茝句喻美德。言三王能用衆芳以輔治，豈獨身有美德乎？

Xi Luyi: the phrase about zanthoxylum is a metaphor for virtuous ministers; the phrase about ocimum is a metaphor for beautiful virtue. This says the Three Kings could use the assembled fragrances to assist governance; how could one body alone have beautiful virtue?

游國恩：以上二句概言三后用人不拘一格。夏大霖，奚祿詒 [among others] 諸說或失之深求，或穿鑿附會，均無可取。You Guoen: The above phrase probably says that the Three Sovereigns did not restrict their employment of people to one type. The statements of Xia Dalin, Xi Luyi [and others] all erred in either pressing too deeply or in forcing farfetched interpretations; they are all untenable.

15 彼堯舜之耿介兮

既遵道而得路

bǐ yáo shùn zhī gěng jiè xi

jì zūn dào ér dé lù

There is Yao and Shun's magnificence ——

[They] esteemed the Way and kept to the road

[They] esteemed the Way and attained the road

王逸：堯舜所以有光大聖明之稱者，以循用天地之道，舉賢任能，使得萬事之正也。

Wang Yi: The reason Yao and Shun have the reputation of being glorious and sagacious is that they abided by the Way of Heaven and Earth; through their promotion of worthies and employment of the talented, they brought about the rectification of all affairs.

洪興祖：上言三后，下言堯舜，謂三后遵堯舜之道，以得路也。Hong Xingzu:

Above it speaks of the Three Sovereigns, below it speaks of Yao and Shun, referring to the Three Sovereigns' respect for the Way of Yao and Shun, and being able to obtain the the road.

蔣驥：原蓋以三后自比，而望其君爲堯舜也。Jiang Ji: Yuan is probably using the three sovereigns as a comparison to himself, and hoping that his lord will be like Yao and Shun.

16 何桀紂之猖披兮

夫唯捷徑以窘步

hé jié zhòu zhī chāng pī xi

fú wéi jié jìng yǐ jiǒng bù

Why Jie and Zhòu's disarray —— That was only shortcuts with hasty steps

王逸：昌披衣不帶之貌。Wang Yi says: Disarray is the appearance of having one's clothing untied.

陸善經：堯舜行耿介之德以致太平；桀紂昌狂，唯求捷徑，而窘迫失其常步，以至滅亡。Lu Shanjing: Yao and Shun practiced magnificent virtue to make perfect peace. Jie and Zhòu were disarrayed, only seeking shortcuts, and in their haste they lost the constant pace, thus causing the extinction of their dynasties.

洪興祖：桀紂之亂，若衣披不帶者，以不由正道，而所行蹙迫耳。Hong Xingzu: The disorder of Jie and Zhòu is like clothing that is untied; it does not follow the right way, but goes in haste.

17 惟夫黨人之偷樂兮 路幽昧以險隘

wéi fú dǎng rén zhī tōu lè xī

lù yōu mèi yǐ xiǎn ài

Think of the clique-men's stolen ease —— The road is deep dark, dangerously narrow

司馬遷：上官大夫與之同列，爭寵而心害其能。Sima Qian: The senior Grand Master held the same rank as [Qu Ping]. He strove for favor and was secretly envious of [Qu Ping's] abilities. *Nienhauser originally translated 上官大夫 as “Grand Master Shang-guan,” reading 上官 as a name rather than a title.

王逸：言己念彼讒人相與朋黨，嫉妬忠直，苟且偷樂，不知君道不明，國將傾危，以及其身也。Wang Yi: This says I think of these slanderers joining as a clique, jealous of the loyal and straightforward; they plot to take their own pleasure, not knowing that the way of their lord has been obscured and the kingdom is headed for ruin, even to their

own bodily harm.

洪興祖：小人朋黨，偷爲逸樂，則中正之路塞矣。Hong Xingzu: Petty men form cliques, stealing to secure their own comforts; then the correct road is blocked.

錢澄之：惟君不能信賢，故小人得以植黨，如上官子蘭靳尚鄭袖輩，內外一氣，以成朋比是也。偷樂，但顧身家，不顧君國，圖目前不圖後來耳。Qian Chengzhi: [I] think of the lord's inability to trust worthy [servants], so that petty men successfully establish cliques, such as the likes of the senior [Grand Master], Zilan [Sir Eupatorium], Jin Shang, and Zheng Xiu, accomplices on the inside and on the outside, forming a faction for their private interests: that's what this is. To steal ease means that although they look out for their own families, they don't look out for their lord or the kingdom, and they make immediate plans but don't make long-term plans.

馬茂元：古人所謂黨，是指朋比爲奸的不正當的結合。所以孔子說：君子群而不黨。Ma Maoyuan: What ancient people called a clique indicates the improper union of a treasonous faction. So Confucius said: gentlemen make groups but do not make cliques.

18 豈余身之憚殃兮

恐皇輿之敗績

qǐ yú shēn zhī dàn yāng xi

kǒng huáng yú zhī bài jì

Could I [my] body's disaster fear? — [I] dread the imperial chariot's overturning

汪瑗：蓋不敢斥言其君，故以皇輿言之，且於行路之比亦切也。敗績則指車之覆敗，以君國之傾危也。Wang Yuan: We can infer that he doesn't dare to directly denounce his lord, so he uses the imperial chariot as a close comparison. Overturn indicates the wreck of the chariot, thus [it means] the overthrow of the kingdom.

19 忽奔走以先後兮

及前王之踵武

hū bēn zǒu yǐ xiān hòu xi

jí qián wáng zhī zhǒng wǔ

Quickly running before and behind —— Pursuing the former kings' footprints

In orthodox thought, the former kings were those of the golden age in the distant past; their way of governance was the true and good way.

朱冀：此正敍爲左徒時與王圖議國政，直言正諫也。Zhu Ji: This narrates [Qu Yuan's] strategizing governance together with the king during his time as Secretary of the Left, when he spoke directly and remonstrated uprightly.

20 荃 [蓀] 不察余之中情兮

反信讒而齎 [齊] 怒

quán bù chá yú zhī zhōng qíng xi

fǎn xìn chán ér jì/qí nù

Acorus does not perceive my inner affection ——

Rather believes in slander and ignites rage

It seems to this translator that 情 is the most difficult word to translate in the whole poem.

The main problem is historical correctness. In the “Li Sao” 情 doesn't seem to be the kind

of “matter of the heart” that I now think of when I read those English words—nor

“emotion,” “love,” “feeling,” and so on—it's not quite a private, emotional, somewhat

irrational, highly individual and subjective matter—but it might have been for some of

Qu Yuan's later readers. In fact 情 may have been something much more objective: one's

innate character, the true state of one's inner affairs, or a particular state of mind that has

come about naturally in response to wordly events. I finally settled on “affection,” but in doing so I hope readers will check the Oxford English Dictionary rather than assume “affection” means a fuzzy feeling of liking something, and it still suggests something rather too mild. A translation methodology other than the philological would have yielded a different rendering. Ezra Pound might have given Qu Yuan “the blues”...

司馬遷：懷王使屈原造為憲令，屈平屬草稿未定，上官大夫見而欲奪之，屈平不與，因讒之曰：「王使屈平為令，眾莫不知，每一令出，平伐其功，（曰）以為『非我莫能為』也。」王怒而疏屈平。 Sima Qian: King Huai had Qu Yuan draw up laws; he was writing a draft, but it was not finished. The senior Grand Master saw it and wanted to take it. Qu Ping did not give it [to him]. Then [the Grand Master] slandered him: “When the king has Qu Ping draw up a decree, everyone knows [the contents of] it. Every time a decree is issued, Ping boast of his merit and thinks, ‘none but I am capable of doing [this].’” The king was angry and distanced himself from Qu Ping.

王逸：人君被服芬香，故以香草為諭。惡數指斥尊者，故變言荃也。 Wang Yi: The lord of men is clothed in fragrance, thus a fragrant plant serves as a metaphor. He would hate to repeatedly reprimand the one he respects, thus he changes to the word Acorus.

朱熹：荃亦香草，故時人以為彼此相謂之通稱，此又借以寄意於君也。[又曰：]荃以喻君，疑當時之俗，或以香草更相稱謂之詞，非君臣之君也。此又借以寄意於君，非直以小草喻至尊也。 Zhu Xi: Acorus is another fragrant plant, therefore people used it as a general form of address for each other; here it is borrowed for another indirect allusion to his lord. [...] As to using Acorus as a metaphor for his lord, I suspect it was the common practice of that time; some take it as a word for fragrant plants used by people in addressing one another, not the ministers to the lord. This is another indirect

allusion to the lord; it does not directly use a little plant as a metaphor for His Majesty.
 吳仁傑：藥有君臣佐使，而此爲君。Wu Renjie: Medicinal herbs have “lords,” “ministers,” “assistants,” and “emmisaries,” but this is for the lord. [In traditional Chinese medicine the different herbs in a compound prescription are categorized according to a system that takes its organizational structure from analogy with the ranks of officers in the royal court. This system is referred to in the *Huangdi nei jing* 皇帝內經, *Zhizhenyao dalun* 至真要大論 21. It is still used in contemporary TCM. Wu Renjie reverses the analogy to posit Acorus as the “lord” of a recipe for medicine and therefore the lord of the state.]

游國恩：離騷往往以夫婦比君臣，荃蓀者，亦以婦對其夫之美稱爲喻耳。You Guoen: The “Li Sao” often uses husband and wife for lord and minister; Acorus likewise uses a wife’s name of praise for her husband as a metaphor for the lord.

21 余固知謇謇之爲患兮 忍而不能舍 [捨] 也

yú gù zhī jiǎn jiǎn zhī wéi huàn xī rěn ér bù néng shě yě

I surely know ingenuousness means disaster ——

Enduring and/but unable to relinquish am

王逸：謇謇忠貞貌也。Wang Yi: Ingenuousness is the aspect of loyalty.

劉朗：謇謇，直言貌。Liu Liang: Ingenuousness is the aspect of direct speech.

朱熹：謇謇，難於言也。Zhu Xi: Ingenuousness is difficulty in speaking.

汪瑗：蹇蹇，不避險難而竭力盡忠之意也。Wang Yuan: Ingenuousness means not avoiding danger but exerting all one’s powers in utmost loyalty.

周拱辰：謦謦，語不違心，戇直自任也。Zhou Gongchen: Ingenuousness is [to use] language that is not contrary to one's mind, to be blunt and hold oneself responsible.

徐煥龍：余固知忠言逆耳，必爲身患，欲隱忍不發，而愛君至性終不能止。Xu Huanlong: I certainly realize that loyal speech grates on the ears, and must lead to disaster for my body; I want to endure silently and not express [myself], but my perfect love for my lord in the end can't be restrained.

胡文英：謦謦，納言而靜也，數而取辱之意。Hu Wenying: Ingenuousness means to speak out and meet silence, to repeat and accept disgrace.

22 指九天以爲正兮

夫唯靈脩之故也

zhǐ jiǔ tiān yǐ wéi zhèng xi

fú wéi líng xiū zhī gù yě

[I] point to the nine heavens that it be true — That only Spirit Perfection's cause it is
{to be my judge, for verity}

九天 is the eight directions of the horizon (the edges of the heavens) plus the center, or the ninth and highest heaven.

The word 脩, often rendered as “cultivation” at other points in this translation, in this line has been historically interpreted to mean ornamentation or cultivated virtue. In this case it is part of a name or honorific title. I have chosen the word “Perfection” for its active sense: the process of carefully improving oneself or a created thing, cultivating, polishing, refining, repairing, embellishing, adorning; the process of perfecting.

司馬遷：屈平疾王聽之不聰也，讒諂之蔽明也，邪曲之害公也，方正之不容也，故憂愁幽思而作離騷。 [劉安?] 離騷者，猶離憂也。夫天者，人之始也；父母者，

人之本也。人窮則反本，故勞苦倦極，未嘗不呼天也；疾痛慘怛，未嘗不呼父母也。屈平正道直行，竭忠盡智以事其君，讒人閒之，可謂窮矣。信而見疑，忠而被謗，能無怨乎？屈平之作離騷，蓋自怨生也。 Sima Qian: Qu Ping was distressed: that the king listened without understanding, / that his vision was blocked by flattery and slandering, / that depravity obstructed the just, / the the upright won no trust. Thus filled with sorrow and gloom, he composed the “Li Sao.” [The following lines may be from Liu An’s preface] “Li Sao” means “Encounter Sorrow.” Heaven is the origin of humankind. Fathers and mothers are the root of humankind. When humans despair, they return to their roots. For this reason, those who have been driven to the limits of exhaustion by toil and suffering, who push themselves to exhaustion, always cry out to heaven. Those who endure the grief and sorrow caused by sickness and pain, always call out to their fathers and mothers. Qu Ping walked the straight and narrow path and served his lord with utmost loyalty and intelligence; when slanderers divided them, he can be said to have despaired. Faithful and yet doubted, loyal but defamed, could he have failed to be resentful? It was this resentment, perhaps, which gave rise to Qu Ping’s composition “Encountering Sorrow.”

陸善經：靈脩，謂懷王也。 Lu Shanjing: Spirit Perfection refers to King Huai.

朱熹：靈修，言其有明智而善修飾，蓋婦悅其夫之稱，亦託詞以寓意於君也。 Zhu Xi: “Spirit Perfection” is to say that he has bright wisdom and good ornamentation; we can infer it is a name a wife uses to please her husband, and is likewise indirect diction to allude implicitly to his lord.

汪瑗：王逸神明遠見，服飾美好之訓釋，固不能無失，而所謂以是直指君言，亦無妨也。觀篇內言三后，堯舜，皇輿，前王等字，是明以人君之事言之矣，則曰美人，

曰荃，蓀，曰靈脩，又何嫌於指君乎？彼古者人君稱朕，人臣亦稱朕，而盛世君臣吁咈都俞於一堂之上，且相爾汝之如家人父子然矣，豈若末世之拘忌也哉。又靈脩亦美好之通稱，不必謂爲以婦悅夫之名也。故吾嘗謂楚辭所言美人，荃，蓀，靈脩，皆當時平交贊美之通詞，而可共稱之於上下者也。故曰蹇吾法夫前脩，則君子之稱脩也久矣。 Wang Yuan: Wang Yi's explanation of Spirit Perfection as spiritual

farsightedness and beautiful adornment is surely without fault, and his statement that this directly refers to his lord is likewise without error. Looking within the text, we see that it uses the words “the Three Sovereigns,” “Yao and Shun,” “the imperial chariot,” “the former kings,” and so on; these obviously speak of affairs of the lords of men, so when it speaks of the Beautiful One, Acorus, calamus, and Spirit Perfection, how could there be any doubt that these refer to the lord? Among the ancients, the lord of men called himself by the “royal We” [朕] and the ministers also called themselves “I” [朕]. In the golden age lords and ministers all harmoniously stood in the same hall, and moreover they called one another “you” or “thou” in the familial way of fathers and sons. How unlike the restrictive taboos of latter days! Spirit Perfection is likewise a beautiful form of address; it does not need to refer to a wife's pleasing name for her husband. Thus I have said that when the *Chuci* speak of the Beautiful One, Acorus, calamus, Spirit Perfection, these are all terms of praise used in ordinary communication in those days, and they all could be used by those above and those below alike. Thus he says, “Ah, my rule is those former cultivators”; and true gentlemen have been called “Perfection” for a very long time.

黃文煥：其曰靈脩者，原自矢以好脩，望君以同脩也。Huang Wenhuan: As to the name Spirit Perfection, Qu Yuan sets his mind on cultivation, and hopes his lord will cultivate [perfect] himself similarly.

王夫之：靈，善也。脩，長也。稱君爲靈脩者，祝其所爲善而國祚長也。 Wang

Fuzhi: Spirit is goodness. Perfection is long-lasting. By addressing his lord as Spirit Perfection, he wishes that he will undertake the good and his reign be long-lasting.

臧庸：靈修當是屈原自謂，非指懷王。 Zang Yong: Spirit Perfection is actually Qu Yuan's self-address; it does not indicate King Huai.

姜亮夫：這是封建時代早期對神權與君權還未十分劃斷的思想。故以神異視其君。

Jiang Liangfu: This is the thinking of early feudal society when divine right and monarchy were not yet completely separated. Thus he has a mystical [divine/numinous] view of his lord.

23 曰黃昏以爲期兮

羌中道而改路

yuē huáng hūn yǐ wéi qī xī

qiāng zhōng dào ér gǎi lù

Stated yellow dusk as the time ————— Ah, mid-way [she/he] changed roads

While these lines are included in the traditional text of the “Li Sao,” Hong Xingzu argues that this line was mistakenly added to the poem during its manuscript transmission. These are the only lines on which Wang Yi did not comment, and furthermore there are almost identical lines in another poem in the *Chuci*. Jiang Liangfu also points out that these lines do not fit into the overall rhyme scheme.

24 初既與余成言兮

後悔遁而有他

chū jì yǔ yú chéng yán xī

hòu huǐ dùn ér yǒu tā

Firstly [he/she] with me made words —— Later repented, fled, and had others

王逸：言懷王始信任己，與我平議國政，後用讒言，中道悔恨，隱匿其情，而有他志也。Wang Yi: This says that King Huai trusted me in the beginning, and discussed governance with me, but later he believed slanderous words, repented midway, concealed his affections, and had other intentions.

朱熹：成言，謂成其要約之言也。Zhu Xi: “Made words” refers to coming through on the words of his agreement.

王夫之：原所與懷王成言者不傳，史稱屈平爲楚合齊以擯秦，懷王感於張儀，合秦以絕齊，或謂此歟？Wang Fuzhi: [Any record of] the agreement Yuan made with King Huai has not been transmitted, but the histories say that Qu Ping was for the alliance of Chu with Qi to eliminate Qin; King Huai was moved by Zhang Yi and allied with Qin by breaking with Qi—could this refer to that?

司馬遷：屈平既紕，其后秦欲伐齊，齊與楚從親，惠王患之，乃令張儀佯去秦，厚幣委質事楚，曰：「秦甚憎齊，齊與楚從親，楚誠能絕齊，秦願獻商、於之地六百里。」楚懷王貪而信張儀，遂絕齊，使使如秦受地。張儀詐之曰：「儀與王約六里，不聞六百里。」楚使怒去，歸告懷王。懷王怒，大興師伐秦。秦發兵擊之，大破楚師於丹、淅，斬首八萬，虜楚將屈匄，遂取楚之漢中地。懷王乃悉發國中兵以深入擊秦，戰於藍田。魏聞之，襲楚至鄧。楚兵懼，自秦歸。而齊竟怒不救楚，楚大困。明年，秦割漢中地與楚以和。楚王曰：「不願得地，願得張儀而甘心焉。」張儀聞，乃曰：「以一儀而當漢中地，臣請往如楚。」如楚，又因厚幣用事者臣靳尚，而設詭辯於懷王之寵姬鄭袖。懷王竟聽鄭袖，復釋去張儀。是時屈平既疏，不復在位，使於齊，顧反，諫懷王曰：「何不殺張儀？」懷王悔，追張儀不及。其后諸侯共擊

楚，大破之，殺其將唐昧。時秦昭王與楚婚，欲與懷王會。懷王欲行，屈平曰：「秦虎狼之國，不可信，不如毋行。」懷王稚子子蘭勸王行：「奈何絕秦歡！」懷王卒行。入武關，秦伏兵絕其后，因留懷王，以求割地。懷王怒，不聽。亡走趙，趙不內。復之秦，竟死於秦而歸葬。Sima Qian: Qu Ping was demoted and sometime later Qin wanted to attack Qi. Qi was allied with Chu. King Hui[-wen] of Qin (r. 337-311 B.C.) was troubled by this and ordered Zhang Yi to pretend to forsake Qin, to make lavish gifts, to present his pledge, and to serve Chu. [Zhang Yi] said, "Qin loathes Qi. Qi is allied with Chu. If Chu truly can break off with Qi, Qin would be willing to present it with 600 *li* [on a side] of territory between Shang and Wu." King Huai of Chu was greedy and trusted Zhang Yi; he broke relations with Qi. He sent an envoy to Qin to receive the territory. Zhang Yi lied to him: "I agreed to six *li* [on a side] with your king. I haven't heard anything about six hundred." The Chu envoy left angrily and returned to report to King Huai. King Huai was very angry, raising a great force to attack Qin. Qin sent out troops to attack them. They crushed the forces of Chu between the Dan and the Xi [rivers], cut off 80,000 heads, and captured the Chu commander, Qu Gai, then took Chu's territory of Han-zhong. King Huai then sent out all the troops in the state to strike deep into Qin. They fought at Lan-tian. Wei heard of it and launched a surprise attack on Chu reaching as far as Deng. The troops of Chu were frightened and returned from Qin. Qi was so angry that it did not go to Chu's rescue. Chu was in dire straits. The next year [311 B.C.] Qin ceded the territory of Han-zhong to Chu to make peace. The king of Chu said, "I don't want to have territory. I want to have Zhang Yi and take sweet revenge on him." Zhang Yi heard this and said, "If a single Yi is worth the territory of Han-zhong, your servant asks permission to go to Chu." When he got to Chu he once more made

lavish gifts to the man holding power, the vassal Jin Shang, in order to present cunning arguments to the king's favorite consort, Zheng Xiu. King Huai was so persuaded by Zheng Xiu that he again released Zhang Yi. At this time Qu Ping, having been alienated from the king, no longer held his [high] position. He was sent as an envoy to Qi, but returned to admonish King Huai: "Why didn't you kill Zhang Yi?" King Huai has second thoughts and had Zhang Yi pursued, but it was too late. After this the feudal lords attacked Chu in concert, crushing it[s army] and killing its general, Tang Mei [唐昧]. At that time, King Zhao of Qin (r. 306-251 B.C.), who had marital ties with Chu, wanted to meet with King Huai. King Huai wanted to go, but Qu Ping said, "Qin is a country of tigers and wolves and cannot be trusted. It would be better not to go." King Huai's youngest son, Zilan [Sir Eupatorium], urged the king to go: "How can you put an end to our happy relations with Qin?" In the end King Huai went. When he entered Wu Pass, troops hidden by Qin cut off his retreat and they then detained King Huai, seeking territorial concessions. King Huai was angry and would not agree. He fled to Zhao, but Zhao would not receive him. They sent him back to Qin. He finally died in Qin and his body was returned for burial.

²⁵ 余既不難夫離別兮

傷靈脩之數化

yú jì bù nán fú lí bié xī

shāng líng xiū zhī shù huà

I have not [thought] it hard, this separation ——

[But have] pained for Spirit Perfection's many changes

汪瑗：篇名離騷二字之義，蓋取諸此。Wang Yuan: The two words of the title, “Li Sao,” must each come from this.

游國恩：此言靈脩數化者，實兼指懷王之內政外交而言，蓋深以王之不明，胸無定主，致國衰身死爲可傷也。You Guoen: When this speaks of the many changes of Spirit Perfection, its words really indicate both King Huai’s internal politics and his interstate relations. It implies that [Qu Yuan] is profoundly pained on account of the king’s ignorance and the lack of a fixed idea in his heart, which lead even to the decline of the kingdom and [King Huai’s] own death.

馬茂元：在古代社會裡，凡是具有政治抱負的士大夫，他們的理想都必然寄托在最高統治者的身上，因而屈原就必須爭取楚懷王的合作，首先是取得他的信任。可是懷王的態度是不堅定的。Ma Maoyuan: In the society of ancient times, all scholar-officials who had political aspirations had to completely entrust their ideals in the person of highest government authority. Because of this Qu Yuan must struggle for the cooperation of the King Huai of Chu, first of all by obtaining his trust; but King Huai’s attitude is inconstant.

26 余既滋蘭之九畹兮

又樹蕙之百畝

yú jì zī lán zhī jiǔ wǎn xi

yòu shù huì zhī bǎi mǔ

I have cultivated eupatorium by nines of hectares ——

Again planted ocimum by hundreds of acres

Forests have been devastated to produce the paper and ink sticks with which the precise nature and relative merit of the flowers in these lines have been debated.

畹 and 畝 are not mathematically equivalent to hectares and acres, but they are units of surface area. Nine, as the largest numeral, often indicates “many.”

黃庭堅：蘭蓋甚似君子，生深山叢薄之中，不爲無人而不勞，含香體潔。平居蕭艾不殊，清風過之，其香靄然，在室滿室，在堂滿堂，是所謂含章以時發者也。然蘭蕙之才德不同。蘭似君子，蕙似大夫，槩山林中，十蕙而一蘭也。楚辭曰，予既滋蘭之九畹，又樹蕙之百畝。至其發華，一幹一華而香有餘者蘭，一幹五七華而香不足者蕙。蕙雖不若蘭，其視椒櫟則遠矣。Huang Tingjian: Eupatorium quite

resembles the gentleman. Growing among the thickets deep in the mountains, not put there by anyone and never receiving anyone’s labor, it holds in its fragrance and is entirely pure. It commonly grows in the same place as [bitter] wormwood. A clear wind passes over it and its fragrance is gently [released], in a [small] room filling the room, in a [grand] hall filling the hall. This is what is called “holding illuminated patterning to express it at the right time.” Now, the abilities and virtues of eupatorium and ocimum are not the same. Eupatorium resembles the gentleman, while ocimum resembles the [ordinary] officer; so it is that in the mountain forests, there are ten ocimum for every one eupatorium. The *Chuci* says, “I have cultivated eupatorium by nine hectares, again planted ocimum by hundreds of acres.” When it comes to their blossoming, one stalk with one flower that has more than enough fragrance is eupatorium, while one stalk with five or seven flowers that is yet not fragrant enough is ocimum. Ocimum can’t be compared to eupatorium, but it is far beyond zanthoxylum and cornus.

蔣驥：以香草喻己所薦拔之士。Jiang Ji: This uses fragrant plants as metaphors for the elites that I [Qu Yuan] have recommended and promoted.

27 畦留夷與揭車兮

雜杜衡與芳芷

qí/xié liú yí yǔ jiē jū xi

zá dù héng yǔ fāng zhǐ

Farming paeonia and lysimachia ——

Varied asarum and fragrant angelicas

Historically commentators have been unable to definitely identify these plants. Here, as with all the plants in the poem, I have relied on the research of Pan Fujun and other scholars to propose speculative translations of the plant names, using their scientific names where possible.

28 冀枝葉之峻 [俊] 茂兮

願俟時乎吾將刈

jì zhī yè zhī jùn mào xi

yuán sì shí hu wú jiāng yì

Hoping for stalks' and leaves' flourishing ——

Wishing, awaiting the time when I would reap

張鳳翼：言已培植善類，願及時收用，所謂持衆美而効之君也。Zhang Fengyi: This says that I have cultivated good things, hoping to reap and make use of them in good time, by which he means, holding the assembled fair ones and presenting them to his lord.

29 雖萎絕其亦何傷兮

哀衆芳之蕪穢

suī wěi jué qí yì hé shāng xi

āi zhòng fāng zhī wú huì

Though withering away, still what's to pain ——

Grieve for the assembled fragrances' fallow waste

王逸：言已脩行忠信，冀君任用，而遂斥棄，則使衆賢志士失其所也。Wang Yi:

This says I train myself in loyal trust, hoping my lord will employ [me]; but then he discards me, causing the assembled worthies and aspiring elites to lose that which they relied on.

陸善經：言所種芳草，冀其大盛，忽逢霜雪，遂至萎死。喻脩行忠信，乃被放流，不惜身之時亡；恐志士亦羅害也。Lu Shanjing: This says that the fragrant plants, sown in the hopes of great flourishing, suddenly meet frost and snow, and then wither and die. This is a metaphor for [his] cultivation of loyal trust. When he is then exiled, he does not pity his body's untimely death, but fears that the aspiring elites will also be ensnared and injured.

朱熹：言此衆芳病而落，何能傷於我乎？但傷善道不行，如香草之蕪穢耳。Zhu Xi: This says that even if the assembled fragrances get sick and fall, how could it cause me pain? But I am pained that the good Way is not practiced, like fragrant herbs going to fallow waste.

戴震：蕪穢，所云蘭芷變而不芳之屬是也。非誠好修，有不隨世遇轉移乎？是屈原之所哀矣。Dai Zhen: As to “fallow waste,” what is said by “eupatorium and angelica changed and are not fragrant” includes this. [Among those who] do not sincerely love self-cultivation, are there any who do not follow the [vulgar] world and undergo its transformations? This is that for which Qu Yuan grieves.

30 衆皆競進以貪婪兮

憑不厭乎求索

zhòng jiē jìng jìn yǐ tān lán xī

píng bú yàn hū qiú suǒ

The assembled all vie for advancement avariciously — Full insatiable in their pursuits

王逸：言在位之人，無有清潔之志，皆並進取，貪婪於財利，中心雖滿，猶復求索，不知厭飽也。

Wang Yi: This says that among the people in the court, not one has a pure aspiration; they are all struggling for attainment, greedy and gluttonous for wealth and profit; although their hearts are full, yet they still repeat their pursuits, not knowing that they are over-satiated.

胡文英：靳尚楚臣，而敢受敵國之賄，則其于本國貪婪可知矣。Hu Wenying: Jin Shang was a minister of Chu, and dared to receive a bribe from an enemy state: from this we can know that he was surely greedy in his own state [as well].

31 羌內恕己以量人兮 各興心而嫉妒

qiāng nèi shù jǐ yǐ liàng rén xi

gè xīng xīn ér jí dù

Ah, inwardly overlooking oneself to weigh [other] men ——

{looking over}

Each arouses [his] mind and is envious

There is disagreement as to whether 恕己 means to carefully scrutinize oneself or to indulgently tolerate oneself.

呂延濟：言貪婪之人，乃內恕於己，以量他人，謂與己同貪。若否，則各生嫉妒之心，讒讚之使不得進用。Lü Yanji: Avaricious people may inwardly ponder themselves as a measure for other people, to say if they are the same in their greed. If not, then each gives rise to an envious mind, and they slander and flatter to keep [others] from advancing.

李陳玉：自己本可做好人，而曰我不能，謂之恕己；他人要做好人，則曰我不能，彼亦不能，謂之量人。Li Chenyu: I myself could originally be a good person, but say that I can't: this is called tolerating oneself. Other people want to be good people, but say that I can't, and they can't either: this is called weighing people.

32 忽馳驚以追逐兮

非余心之所急

hū chí wù yǐ zhuī zhú xī

fēi yú xīn zhī suǒ jí

Quickly galloping about to follow the chase —— Not my heart's urgency

{Not that for which my heart races}

王逸：衆人急於財利，我獨急於仁義也。Wang Yi: The crowd is hurrying for wealth and profit; I alone am hurrying for benevolence and righteousness.

汪瑗：馳驚，亂走也；追逐，急走也。總申競進貪婪二句。非余心之所急，屈子自表其心不同于衆，而衆人不必嫉妬也。總申恕己量人二句。Wang Yuan: Galloping about means disorderly steps; following the chase means hurried steps. This generally explains the two lines about vying with avarice. In “Not my heart's urgency,” Master Qu expresses that his heart is not the same as the crowd's, but the crowd need not be envious. This generally explains the two lines about pondering oneself to weigh people.

李陳玉：非不知和光同塵，與之馳驚追逐，或可以免禍，奈我心更有急於免禍者。老至矣，修名不立，尚可隨波逐流，空過此一生邪？Li Chenyu: It's not that I don't know that by merging with the herd, galloping about and pursuing the chase with them, I might escape disaster, but my heart quickens for something other than avoiding disaster. Old age is coming, my cultivated name has not been established; how could I ever swim

with this tide, living a whole life in vain?

33 老冉冉其將至兮 恐脩名之不立

lǎo rǎn rǎn qí jiāng zhì xī kǒng xiū míng zhī bú lì 。

Old age gradually is coming on —— [I] fear a cultivated name will not stand

論語：君子疾沒世而名不稱焉。From the *Analects*: The gentleman is anxious that he might be lost to the world and his name be unpraised.

洪興祖：脩名，脩潔之名也。屈子非貪名者，然無善名以傳世，君子所恥，故孔子曰，伯夷叔齊餓於首陽之下，民到于今稱之。Hong Xingzu: A cultivated name [脩名] is the fame [名] of cultivated purity. Master Qu was not greedy for fame, but if one does not leave a good name to transmit to later generations, that is the shame of a gentleman. Thus Confucius said that Bo Yi and Shu Qi starved on the foot of mount Shouyang, and the common people praise them down to this day. [Bo Yi and Shu Qi protested the Zhou founding kings' conquest of their Shang dynasty by fleeing to the hills and refusing to eat the grain grown in Zhou, eventually starving to death. Confucius praised their incorruptible loyalty.]

34 朝飲木蘭之墜露兮 夕餐秋菊之落英

zhāo yǐn mù lán zhī zhuì lù xī xī cān qiū jú zhī luò yīng

Mornings drinking magnolia's pendant dew ——

{dropped?}

Evenings eating autumn chrysanthemums' falling petals

{scattered}

Because according to Hong Xingzu and other erudite scholars, the petals of chrysanthemums do not fall, there has been a vigorous debate over the centuries as to exactly what Qu Yuan is describing in the second line. Some have claimed that 落 here means “first” (including Jiang Liangfu and Ma Maoyuan), while others assert that reading it this way breaks the logical harmony with the preceding line (see below); 楊慎 Yang Shen claims that although autumn chrysanthemums typically wither on the stalk, still a few petals might fall, making those few fallen petals all the more rare and precious; others have dredged the ancient texts for citations to prove that some autumn chrysanthemums do lose their petals (including Zhou Gongchen); and so on. Whatever the case may be, chrysanthemums have been known since ancient times to have medicinal value and are associated with longevity.

王逸：言己旦飲香木之墜露，吸正陽之津液；暮食芳菊之落華，吞正陰之精藥，動以香淨，自潤澤也。Wang Yi: This says that at dawn I drink the drops of dew on the scented trees, absorbing the fluid of true yang; at sunset I eat the fallen petals of the fragrant chrysanthemums, swallowing the essence of true yin; always fragrant and clean, I am lustrous.

胡應麟：餐秋菊之落英，談者穿鑿附會，聚訟紛紛，不知三閭但託物寓言。如集芙蓉以爲裳，紉秋蘭以爲珮，芙蓉可裳，秋蘭可珮乎？然則菊雖無落英，謂有落英亦可。屈雖若誤用，謂未嘗誤亦可。Hu Yinglin: As to “eating autumn chrysanthemums' fallen petals,” those who have discussed it have made preposterous and forced interpretations, causing great confusion and disorder. They do not recognize that [the

officer of] the Three Wards [Qu Yuan's official title before his downfall] is simply using an object allegorically. It's like "Collecting lotuses to be a skirt" and "Stitched autumn eupatorium into a sash": could lotuses be a skirt, could eupatorium be a sash ornament? And so even though chrysanthemums do not drop their petals, one can certainly *say* that they drop their petals. Although Qu seems to have made a mistake in usage, it could also be said that he has made no mistake.

汪瑗：所言朝夕，不過謂己動以香潔常自潤澤耳。所謂循行仁義，勤身勉力，朝暮不倦是也。無取於陰陽之義。凡篇中所言朝夕字，王逸俱以陰陽言之，非是。又曰：洪氏曰，秋花無自落者，當讀如我落其實，耳取其華之落。其說雖好，然對上墜露而言，下又有落蕊之文，則不得通矣。夫落者不必自落而後謂之落，採而取之，脫於其枝即可謂之落；如取露於木蘭之上亦可謂之墜也，若果謂墜之於地，則露豈可飲乎？Wang Yuan: What is said about mornings and evenings here is nothing more than a description of his continual purification and constant self-lustration. What it describes is maintaining benevolence and uprightness, exerting his utmost efforts, untiring from dawn to dusk. There is nothing to take from this about yin-yang principles. Every time the words "morning" and "evening" are found in the text, Wang Yi has to expound on yin-yang, but that's wrong. Also: Mr. Hong says that autumn flowers don't *naturally* drop their petals, so he reads it like "I make the fruit fall [into my hand], and then pick the flowers." Although his explanation is good, when we compare the wording of the "pendant dew" line above, and see that the text below also has "fallen pistils," then [Hong's explanation] is not completely thorough. Now, fallen things don't necessarily have to fall *naturally* in order to be called fallen; what has been plucked and gathered, released from the stalk, can also be called fallen. It's like taking the dew that is *on top of*

the magnolias and calling it “pendant” [the word 墜 usually means dropped or fallen]. If it had dropped to the ground, then how could he drink it?

35 苟余情其信姱以練要兮 長顛頷亦何傷

gǒu yú qíng qí xìn kuā yǐ liàn yào xī

cháng kǎn hàn yì hé shāng

If my affection is sincerely fair in devotion —— Long pale and gaunt, still what’s to pain
王逸：何者，衆人苟欲飽於財利，己獨欲飽於仁義也。Wang Yi: What he questions is why the crowd lusts to have their fill of wealth and profit, while I alone desire to have my fill of benevolence and righteousness.

徐煥龍：承上所急非彼，所空在此，故雖朝無飲，但飲木蘭之墜露，夕無餐，但餐秋菊之落英，清貧若此，顛頷可知。誠使余之中情信實姱美，以至精練要約，長此顛頷，亦又何傷？正與貪婪之輩相反。Xu Huanlong: This continues from above about my anxiety being different from theirs, [yet] in this I have gained nothing. Thus, though in the morning I have nothing to drink, I will drink the magnolias’ pendant dew, and although in the evening I have nothing to eat, I will eat the autumn chrysanthemums’ fallen petals; as plain and poor as this—you know why I am pale and gaunt. I sincerely make my inner affection fair and beautiful in order to perfect my devotion to our pact; though I be long this pale and gaunt, yet how could I feel pain? This is just the opposite of the avaricious crowd.

36 擘木根以結茝兮 貫薜荔之落藥 [蕊]

lǎn mù gēn yǐ jié chǎi xī

guàn bì lì zhī luò ruǐ

[I] gather tree roots and knot angelica —— String ficus' fallen pistils

王逸：言已施行，常攀本引堅，據持根本，又貫累香草之實，執持忠信，不為華飾之行也。Wang Yi: This describes my behavior. I often gather roots to take their fortitude, to support my rooted basis; also I string garlands of the fruits of fragrant plants, to assist my loyal faith. These are not activities of ornamentation.

汪瑗：王，洪，二家取譬之說非是。不過謂採取香木之根，以紉茝而為佩耳，曷嘗有喻本之意哉？以此推之，則下所云數物又何喻也？Wang Yuan: Wang and Hong both explain this as a metaphor for original [literally, “root”] nature, but that’s wrong. It is nothing more than a description of gathering the roots of scented trees and using cut angelicas as a sash; how could it have significance as a metaphor? If we condone this [interpretation], then what metaphors are we to make of the many objects mentioned in the text below?

魯筆：先進宗族有德之士，固結於其本圖；隱反射令尹子蘭不足任用。次須將賢才之散布失識者貫串起來，令維持庶政。Lu Bi: At first, the patriarchal clans had virtuous nobles, resolute in the original plan; this [phrase] implicitly expresses that the Prime Minister Zilan [Sir Eupatorium] is not suitable for employment. Next [Qu Yuan] must find the worthy talented men who have been scattered and derecognized and string them together, in order to protect government service.

37 矯菌桂以紉蕙兮

索胡繩之纒纒

jiǎo jūn guì yǐ rèn huì xī

suǒ hú shéng zhī xiǎn xiǎn

Take up cinnamomum and stitch osimum —— Bind allium's entasselled ropes

Bind allium and cnidium's entasselled ropes

To bind cap-ribbons' tassels

It is undecided as to whether 胡繩 refers to one kind of plant or two; Lu Shanjing asserts it is not a plant at all but the chin-ribbon that secures a cap [a sign of rank] on one's head.

劉良：言舉此香木以自比，結索其香草，以約束於己。Liu Liang: This says [I] take up this scented wood as a comparison for myself; I tie these fragrant plants into a rope in order to bind myself within [appropriate] bounds.

王夫之：以木根蹙茵，以大繩穿薜荔，束縛桂蕙，喻君子之受摧殘也。Wang Fuzhi:

Using tree roots to bind angelica, using cnidium to string ficus, and tying up cinnamomum and osimum, are metaphors for gentlemen encountering ruin.

蔣驥：申上雜申椒二語之意，明摧折之後，所脩加勵也。Jiang Ji: This explains the meaning of the two lines about varied zanthoxylum above; it makes it clear that after his disaster he increased his efforts at cultivation.

38 謬吾法夫前脩兮

非世俗之所服

jiǎn wú fǎ fū qián xiū xi

fēi shì sù zhī suǒ fú

Oh, my rule is those former cultivators —— Not this age's custom's habit

{Not the habit that is customary to this age}

汪瑗：前脩，前代脩習道德之聖賢也。或曰泛言，或曰暗指下彭咸也。服字，有被服，服食二意。Wang Yuan: The former cultivators are the sagely worthies of the training of moral virtue in earlier dynasties. Some say that it is a general reference, and

some say it alludes to Peng Xian below. The word “habit” contains the two meanings of “apparel” and “dressing and eating.”

游國恩：服字正對上文芳貞言之，訓爲行，事，或服習，或被服，均可通。 You Guoen: The word “habit” rightly stands for the fragrant loyalty in the text above, so the exegeses of “behavior,” “a matter of effort,” or “familiarity [with a craft],” are all equally possible. (Wang Yuan was incorrect to connect it to actual eating habits.)

39 雖不周於今之人兮

願依彭咸之遺則

suī bù zhōu yú jīn zhī rén xi

yuàn yī péng xián zhī yí zé

Although it does not fit with today’s people ——

[I] wish to adhere to Peng Xian’s legacy

[I] wish to adhere to Peng and Xian’s legacy

There are no traces of this “Peng Xian” in the historical record outside of the *Chuci* and derivative materials, but the contemporary *Chuci* scholar Huang Linggeng proposes three hypotheses: 1) Based on a meticulous analysis of the early uses of the names Peng and Xian, they were Qu Yuan’s distant ancestors, ancient shaman-scribes or diviners of the royal house of Chu; 2) Based on Han poems and Wen Yiduo’s research, Peng Xian was an ancient worthy who excelled in adorning himself with flowers and herbs and perhaps sought immortality thereby; 3) Based on a Han *Chuci* poem by Liu Xiang, Peng Xian was a Shang minister who drowned himself. Huang further proposes that as the Peng clan belonged to the sign of water, for Qu Yuan to go to the dwelling of Peng Xian could express his intention to drown himself in order to return to his ancestors at their spiritual

origin (*Shuzheng* 176-8). David Hawkes proposes even more possibilities: the inventors of medicine and divination or a primordial father of them both. The absence of evidence has not prevented scholars beginning with Wang Yi from advancing definitive and influential identifications of the person or people referred to, just as the complete absence of Qu Yuan in the historical record until the Han has not shaken most mainland Chinese scholars' faith in Qu Yuan's historical personhood.

王逸：彭咸，殷賢大夫，諫其君不聽，自投水而死。Wang Yi: Peng Xian was a worthy officer of the Yin [Shang dynasty] who remonstrated with his lord and was not heard; he cast himself into the water and died.

洪興祖：按屈原死於頃襄之世，當懷王時作離騷，已云願依彭咸之遺則，又曰吾將從彭咸之所居，蓋其志先定，非一時忿懟而自沈也。Hong Xingzu: Since Qu Yuan died in the era of Qingxiang, but wrote the “Li Sao” in the time of King Huai, [the fact that in these lines] he already speaks of his wish to follow the tradition of Peng Xian, and also says “I will follow Peng Xian to where they abide” [below], implies that his aspiration was fixed early; it was not the case that he drowned himself in a momentary fit of resentment.

朱熹：彭咸，洪引顏師古以爲殷之介士，不得其志而投江以死，與王逸異。然二說皆不知其所據也。Zhu Xi: As to Peng Xian, Hong [Xingzu] cites Yan Shigu's claim that he was a great elite of Yin [Shang dynasty], who did not attain his aspiration and so cast himself into the river to die; this is different than [the explanation of] Wang Yi. And no one knows what [sources] they relied on for these two explanations. *Is Zhu Xi's analysis pointing out that Wang Yi's 大夫, officer, is significantly different than Yan Shigu's 介士, perhaps a warrior who has not attained his aspiration? Is his aspiration an

official post that would enable him to remonstrate effectively? Is Zhu Xi making a distinction between suicide as political statement and suicide as despair?

汪瑗：……大抵彭祖乃古之有德有壽之隱君子也。或曰，然則以爲自投水死者非邪？曰，非也。意者後世因其西逝流沙之語，故誤以爲投水，而又不知屈原實未嘗赴淵自沉，見編內亟稱其人，遂附會其說焉。若以屈原慕彭咸爲欲自投水死，則孔子竊比之意豈亦欲自沉乎？嗚呼！孔子嘗欲浮海矣，嘗欲居夷矣，使無上文述而不作，信而好古之語，又安知後世不援引浮海居夷之說，亦以孔子爲欲投水耶？蓋孔子竊比之意，實指刪述六經，而老彭當年亦必有所著作，惜乎世遠言湮，莫之考也。屈原之亟慕彭咸者，又安知非指己之所作離騷，而擬其好古之心乎？…… Wang

Yuan: [After pointing out that everyone cites Wang Yi who cited Liu Xiang but nobody knows who Liu Xiang cited, and providing his own voluminous citation of texts to prove that Peng Xian is Ancestor Peng, descendant of Gao Yang, and the same as Old Peng mentioned in the *Analects*] ...in sum, Ancestor Peng was a gentleman hermit of ancient times who had both virtue and longevity. Some may say, if that's the case, then you think he *didn't* throw himself into the water to die? I say, he didn't. That idea came about in later generations from the language about departing for the west and the flowing sands, which caused them to mistakenly believe he cast himself into the water, and so they didn't know that Qu Yuan never leaped into the abyss to drown himself. Their writings earnestly praise his personality, then proceed to foist their interpretations [upon him]. If Qu Yuan admired Peng Xian because he wanted to cast himself into the water and die, then musn't it be the case that Confucius so humbly compared himself [to Old Peng] because he also wanted to drown himself? Mercy! Confucius once wanted to float out to sea on a raft, and once wanted to live among the barbarians; if [we pretend that] the

literature didn't contain the words "I transmit but do not create, I keep good faith and love antiquity," and if later generations didn't quote his words about floating on the sea or living among the barbarians, then [what would prevent us from] believing Confucius wanted to cast himself into the water [to die]? I infer that Confucius' meaning in humbly comparing himself [to Old Peng] actually indicates his redaction of the six classics, and that some of Old Peng's writings must have existed in those days; what a pity that era is distant and its words have [long since gone up in] smoke, so that there is no way to investigate it. As to Qu Yuan's earnest admiration of Peng Xian, we can likewise rest assured: mustn't it refer to his making of the "Li Sao," and the *imitatio* of his antiquity-loving mind? [More copious citation to prove his thesis accords with *Chuci*.]

王闔運：彭，老彭；咸，巫咸。殷臣傳道德者……舊乃傳彭咸水死，又以爲一人，非也。Wang Kaiyun: Peng is Old Peng, Xian is Shaman Xian: Yin ministers who transmitted the Way and its virtue.... Old [books] transmit that Peng / Xian drowned, and that [Peng / Xian] was one person; that's false.

You Guoen tentatively approves Wang Yi's thesis on the basis of the coda, which he claims indisputably proves the poet's intention to commit suicide.

⁴⁰長太息以掩涕兮

哀民生之多艱

cháng tài xī yǐ yǎn tì xī

āi mín shēng zhī duō jiān

Long sighing to cover [my] tears ——

Grieving that the common people's lives have many troubles

Grieving that a person's life has many troubles

Grieving that people are born into so many troubles

Martin Svensson argues that in early Chinese history the word “民” referred to the vast laboring populace with strongly derogatory significance, as in “the commoners”; however, interpreters of a more populist bent, notably Guo Moruo, have read it in the socialist or democratic sense of “the masses” or “the people.” Varieties of difficulty with the social content of this line are apparent in many of the interpretations below.

王逸：哀念萬民受命而生，遭遇多難，以隕其身。Wang Yi: He grievingly ponders the innumerable populace enduring their fate, encountering many difficulties that bring harm upon their bodies.

汪瑗：哀人生之多艱與終不察夫人心，人字是屈原自謂也。一作民字。Wang Yuan: He grieves that a man’s life has many troubles and that this heart of man is unrecognized to the end; the word “man” is Qu Yuan referring to himself. Some texts have the word “commoners.”

陳第：人生多艱，謂遇合之難。Chen Di: A man’s life has many troubles, referring to the difficulty of getting along with others.

王夫之：民，人也，謂同列之小人，如靳尚之黨。艱，險也。Wang Fuzhi: Common people means men, referring to all the petty men of his same rank [at court], such as Jin Shang’s clique. Troubles means danger. [Wang Fuzhi reads this line as “Grieving that those [petty] men [create] many dangers.”]

林雲銘：可憐這些百姓，征戍則危其身，賦斂則奪其財，謀生多少艱難，如何再當得滿朝求索！Lin Yunming: How pitiable are these common folk, with garrison duty endangering their bodies and taxation snatching their property. Making a living has so many difficulties! On top of all that, how could they withstand [those who are] filling the

court with [greedy] demands?

徐煥龍：君不向道，民生多艱，民艱不知，喪亡立至，彭咸所以苦諫其君。我今長太息，至不敢卒哭而掩涕，正哀民生多艱，務欲君之一悟，俗之一改。Xu

Huanlong: My lord does not turn to the Way; the common people's lives have many troubles, but their troubles are unknown and their demise is imminent. This was the reason for Peng Xian's bitter remonstrance to his lord. Today I sigh at length; extreme [is my grief], yet not daring to mourn loudly I cover my tears. In grieving for the common people's many troubles, I serve with the desire that "my lord will awaken completely and completely reform his customs" [a quotation from the *Shiji* biography].

蔣驥：民，人也。原自謂，下民心同。Jiang Ji: People means man. Yuan is referring to himself; same for "people's heart" below.

陳本禮：民，泛指孤臣孽子言。Chen Benli: Common people generally indicates solitary ministers and bastard sons.

馬茂元：就對外的策略來說，屈原之所以反對『黨人』走『險隘』的道路，是爲了『恐皇輿之敗績』；就對內的政治來說，屈原之所以反對衆人的『求索』，是爲了『哀民生之多艱』。足見他愛國家和愛人民的思想是一個不可分割的整體。Ma

Maoyuan: Regarding interstate strategy, Qu Yuan's opposition to the "dangerous and narrow" road taken by "those of the clique" is due to his "fear the imperial chariot will be overturned"; regarding internal governance, Qu Yuan's opposition to the crowd's "demands" is due to his "grief for the people's many troubles." This sufficiently demonstrates that in his thinking love of the nation and love of the people are a single indivisible whole.

41 余雖好脩姱以鞿羈兮

謇朝諝而夕替

yú suī hǎo/hào xiū kuā yǐ jī jī xī

jiǎn zhāo suì ér xī tì

I, although ~~loving to~~ cultivate fairness as bridle and reigns ——

Oh, morning remonstrating but evening replaced

I, however, ~~love to~~ cultivate fairness as bridle and reigns ——

Oh, Morning remonstrating and evening another [remonstrance]

I although ~~loving to~~ cultivate fairness am bridled and reigned ——

Oh, [they are] morning berating and evening detracting

There is a general consensus that 好 is a mistaken interpolatation. Many scholars read 鞿羈 as passive verbs (I have been bridled and reigned, i.e., held back); but since above the speaker says he wants to gallop and lead the king's carriage, I infer that he would also enjoy being the king's horse, so I prefer to read them as nouns (to be [my] bridle and reigns, i.e., to make myself servicable). Strictly speaking 鞿羈 probably refers to a bit and a halter, but since those do not have ready verb equivalents in English I have slightly altered the reference to bridle and reigns.

王逸：言己雖有絕遠之智，姱好之姿，然以爲饑人所鞿羈而系累矣。Wang Yi: This says that although I have the deepest wisdom and elegant manner, still I have been encumbered by the bridle and reigns of slanderers.

朱熹：鞿羈，言自繩束，不放縱也。Zhu Xi: “Bridle and reigns” state his self-restraint and non-self-indulgence.

汪瑗：言己愛脩姱而不醜惡，鞿羈而不方縱。喻己德行之高潔謹飭，而朝夕淬礪興起，不知休止也。Wang Yuan: This states, I love to cultivate fairness and not

repulsiveness, [with] bridle and reigns and not self-indulgence. It is a metaphor for my virtuous conduct being nobly pure and prudent, so morning and evening I refine my presentation, and do not know rest.

42 既替余以蕙纒兮

又申之以攬茝

jì tì yú yǐ huì xiāng xi

yòu shēn zhī yǐ lǎn chǎi

Already replaced me with an ocimum sachet ——

And [I? he?] extended it with gathered angelica

Already replaced, me and [my] ocimum sachet ——

Again [I?] expanded it with eupatorium and angelica

林雲銘：重疊以修姱得罪，不止一次。舊注君以蕙茝爲賜而遣之 [朱熹]，大謬。

Lin Yunming: [His] redoubled efforts at cultivating fairness only offended, and more than once. The old commentaries say that his lord gave him ocimum and angelica as a parting gift when he was sent away [referring to Zhu Xi's interpretation] but that is a great error.

董國英：既廢我廉潔之行，又廢我培植之賢。Dong Guoying: Then they discarded my pure conduct, and moreover discarded my cultivated worthies.

馬茂元：“纒蕙”“攬茝”本來是屈原的美德善行，可是現在卻變成人們攻擊他的罪狀。

Ma Maoyuan: The ocimum sachet and gathered angelica originally were Qu Yuan's virtue and good conduct, but now they have become the indictment for which everyone attacks him.

43 亦余心之所善兮 雖九死其猶未悔

yì yú xīn zhī suǒ shàn xī

suī jiǔ sǐ qí yóu wèi huǐ

This is my heart's goodness —— Despite nine deaths, even so without regret

{This is that which my heart holds to be good}

劉良：九，數之極也。Liu Liang: Nine is the highest numeral.

44 怨靈脩之浩蕩兮 終不察夫民心

yuàn líng xiū zhī hào dàng xī

zhōng bù chá fú mín xīn

Begrudging Spirit Perfection's loftiness ——

{Complaining of}

To the end [she/he] does not perceive the common people's heart

To the end [she/he] does not perceive this person's heart

王逸：上政迷亂則下怨，父行悖惑則子恨。靈脩，謂懷王也。[浩蕩]，無思慮貌也。……言己所以怨恨於懷王者，以其用心浩蕩，驕傲放恣，無有思慮，終不省察萬民善惡之心，故朱紫相亂，國將傾危也。夫君不思慮則忠臣被誅，忠臣被誅則風俗怨而生逆暴，故民心不可不熟察之也。Wang Yi: If above the government is lost in confusion, then those below will begrudge; if the conduct of a father is unreasonable, then the son will lament. Spirit Perfection refers to King Huai. "Loftiness" is the state of not considering. ... This says, that which I resent with respect to King Huai is his lofty attitude and arrogant indulgence, his thoughtlessness; to the end he did not examine the love and hate in the hearts of the innumerable populace, so the pure and the impure

became mixed up, and the kingdom approached a crisis. If the lord does not consider then loyal ministers will be eliminated [or, put to death]; if loyal ministers are eliminated [put to death] then the common culture will be full of complaint and brutality; therefore the heart of common people must be thoroughly investigated.

洪興祖：孔子曰：詩可以怨。孟子曰，小弁之怨，親親也。親之過大而不怨，是愈疏也。屈原於懷王，其猶小弁之怨乎？Hong Xingzu: Confucius said: [the *Shijing*] poems can complain. Mencius said: the complaint of the “Little Joy” poem [of the *Shijing*] is familial. If a family member’s mistake is great and one does not complain, it is as good as neglect. As to Qu Yuan with regards to King Huai, isn’t it like the complaint of “Little Joy”?

汪瑗：浩蕩，言君心之縱放如水之浩蕩無涯，靡所底止也，狂惑不定之意。人心，屈原自謂也。Wang Yuan: “Lofty” says my lord’s heart is unrestrained like the boundless billowing of the sea, with no stopping point, arrogant, confused, and unsettled. The heart of man is Qu Yuan referring to himself [again, Wang Yuan has a different text].

魯筆：意民心作人心，邪正俱在，雖原自指，亦兼指黨人，所以接衆女二句。Lu Bi: The meaning of “common people’s hearts” is “the heart of man”; it includes both wickedness and uprightness. Although Yuan does refer to himself here, he is also indicating those of the clique, so he follows with the two lines about the assembled women [below].

45 衆女嫉余之蛾眉兮

zhòng nǚ jí yú zhī é méi xi

謠諑謂余以善淫

yáo zhuó wèi yú yǐ shàn yín

The assembled women envy my moth [-wing] eyebrows ——

Sing slander about my wantonness

王逸：衆女，謂衆臣。女，陰也，無專擅之義，猶君動而臣隨也，故以喻臣。……

猶衆臣嫉妒忠正，言己淫邪不可任也。Wang Yi: the assembled women refers to the assembly of ministers. Women are yin; they signify not acting on their own volition, like the ministers who only follow their lord's initiative, so they are a metaphor for ministers. ... This is to say that the assembly of ministers is envious of my loyal integrity, saying that I am wanton and depraved and am not reliable.

洪興祖：反離騷云，知衆嫿之嫉妒兮，何必揚累之蛾眉。此亦班孟堅顏之推以爲露才揚己之意。夫冶容誨淫，目挑心與，孟子所謂不由其道者，而以污原何哉？詩人稱莊姜之賢，曰螭首蛾眉，蓋言其質之美耳。……言衆女競爲謠言，以讚愬我，彼淫人也，而謂我善淫，所謂恕己量人。Hong Xingzu: The “Anti-Li Sao” [by Yang Xiong] says, “you knew of the assembled damsels’ jealousy —— Why did you have to flaunt your moth-wing eyebrows?” This is what Ban Gu and Yan Zhitui meant by “flaunting his talent and aggrandizing himself.” A woman who dresses beautifully invites lewd attention, and where the eyes go the mind follows; Mencius called this “not following the Way.” But how could we stain Yuan with that? The *Shijing* poet who praised the worthiness of Zhuang Jiang said [she had a] “cicada forehead and moth eyebrows” in order to describe the beauty of her character. ... This says that the assembled women vie with singsong and gossip about me; those lewd people, saying that I am wanton, are whom is referred to by “overlooking oneself in order to weigh people.”

46 固時俗之工巧兮

值規矩而改錯

gù shí sú zhī gōng qiǎo xi

miǎn guī jǔ ér gǎi cuò

Surely this time's custom's craftiness ——

[Is to] turn face from compass and square and change methods

These and the following lines refer to the measuring tools a carpenter uses to create standardized shapes.

47 背繩墨以追曲兮

競周容以爲度

bèi shéng mò yǐ zhuī qū xi

jìng zhōu róng yǐ wéi dù

Turn back on the levelling line to follow curves ——

Vying for complaisance is the standard

王夫之：追曲，隨意曲直，無定則也。周容，比周以求容。Wang Fuzhi: To follow the curves is to distinguish right and wrong [literally, curved and straight] however one pleases, without a fixed rule. Complaisance is to ingratiate oneself with those around in order to seek one's ease.

48 屯鬱邑余侘傺兮

吾獨窮困乎此時也

tún yù yì yú chà chì xi

wú dú qióng kùn hu cǐ shí ye

Brooding gloomily, I am despondent —— I alone exhausted and trapped by this era am

朱冀：此句無限神情，在獨字，也字內，蓋大夫遙想從前一片婆心，滿腔熱血，不意今日到此地位。Zhu Ji: These lines are limitlessly expressive. Between the words

“alone” and the emphatic particle, the Grand Master recalls the expansive heart of kindness that since the beginning has filled his chest and heated his blood; he never imagined [he] could today come to such a [low] status.

49 寧溘死以流亡兮

余不忍爲此態也

nìng kè sǐ yǐ liú wáng xī

yú bù rěn wéi cǐ tài yě

Rather sudden death and flowing loss —— I won't endure [it] to be in this manner

王逸：言我寧奄然而死，形體流亡，不忍以中正之性，爲邪淫之態。Wang Yi: This says I would rather suddenly die, my form and substance flowing away; I will not endure that [my] righteous nature will adopt a perverted manner.

林雲銘：或受誅立死，或放斥喪身。Lin Yunming: [He will be] either executed and immediately die, or dismissed and death will follow.

50 鷲鳥之不羣兮

自前世而固然

zhì niǎo zhī bù qún xī

zì qián shì ér gù rán

Raptors' not [flocking] together ——

Since former eras it has been surely so

Raptors are hunting birds, such as eagles, falcons, and hawks.

王夫之：忠之不能容佞，猶佞之不能容忠，如鷲鳥不能與燕雀爲羣。Wang Fuzhi: The loyal can't accommodate toadies, just as the toadies can't accommodate the loyal, like hunting birds can't make a flock with swallows and sparrows.

51 何方圜 [圓] 之能周兮

夫孰異道而相安

hé fāng huán [yuán] zhī néng zhōu xī

fú shú yì dào ér xiāng ān

How could square and circle possibly fit ——

So who with different way(s) [could] yet meet peaceably

Qu Yuan is a square peg; his place and time were a round hole. Perhaps he is a square
peg to any place and time.

52 屈心而抑志兮

忍尤而攘詬

qū xīn ér yì zhì xī

rěn yóu ér rǎng gòu

Bending my heart and suppressing my aspiration ——

Enduring blame and withstanding insults

王逸：言己所以能屈案心志，含忍罪過而不去者，欲以除去耻辱，誅讒佞之人，如
孔子誅少正卯也。Wang Yi: This says, in so far as I am able to bend and repress my
heart's aspiration, to contain and endure blame and not be rid of it, it is due to my wish to
clear away my disgrace and eliminate the slandering toadies, just as Confucius executed
Shaozheng Mao.

朱熹：言與世已不同矣，則但可屈心而抑志，雖或見尤於人，亦當一切隱忍而不
與之校。雖所遭者或有耻辱，亦當以理解遣，若攘却之而不受於懷。……又曰：舊
注以攘詬爲除去耻辱，誅讒佞之人，非也。彼方遭時用事，而吾以罪戾廢逐，苟得
免於後咎餘責，則已幸矣，又何彼之能除哉？爲此說者，雖若不識事勢，然其志亦
深可憐云。Zhu Xi: [Zhu Xi didn't believe Confucius killed Shaozheng Mao.] This says,

[I am] already different from the world, and even though I could bend my heart and suppress my aspiration, although I sometimes be blamed by others, I should silently endure it all and not compete with them. Although what I meet with sometimes is disgraceful, I should hold to my principles and dismiss their blame. I ought to withstand and not take it to heart. ... Also: The old commentary has “withstand insults” as eliminating disgrace by executing the slandering toadies, but that’s wrong. They had opportunities and power, while I have censure and banishment; to avoid being held accountable for this excessive blame in future generations would already be lucky enough, how could I also be able to eliminate them [slanderers]? Those who say such things, although they seem to misunderstand the state of affairs, [we] can profoundly sympathize with their intentions.

蔣驥：凡非其所有之物，因其自來而取之之謂攘。尤詬，根謂予善淫言。世方嫉惡好脩，而吾欲去其詬，則必亦競爲周容而後可，故尤詬之來，直受而不却也。舊注訓攘爲除，失其旨矣。Jiang Ji: Because all the things one doesn’t have come from

outside and are taken in, they can be “withstood.” The blame and insults are rooted in what was said about “my wontonness.” The world envies and hates good cultivators, and I wish to be rid of their insults; but one must vie for accommodation and only then could [they accept me], thus when blame and insults come, I directly accept them and don’t reject it. The old commentary explains “withstand” as “eliminate”; that loses the idea.

王闖運：言己欲屈抑以從俗，忍衆人之所尤，則將取病前修也。Wang Kaiyun: This says, I want to bend and suppress [myself] and follow the common way, and to endure the sorrows of the crowd; thus I will take on the ailments of the former cultivators.

53 伏清白以死直兮

固前聖之所厚

fú qīng bái yǐ sǐ zhí xi

gù qián shèng zhī suǒ hòu

To uphold clear whiteness by dying straightly — Surely the former sages' reverence

{Surely is that which the former sages revered}

洪興祖：比干諫而死，孔子稱仁焉，厚之也。Hong Xingzu: Bi Gan remonstrated and died; Confucius praised his humaneness, and revered him.

周拱辰：清白死直，以一死洗濯其心於天下也。Zhou Gongchen: Clear whiteness dying straightly, with one death washing his heart for all under heaven [i.e., China] [to see].

錢澄之：死為今人之所笑，為前聖所厚，法前修，祇合見重於前聖耳。Qian Chengzhi: Death is what contemporary people laugh about; it is what the former sages revered; his modelling himself on the former cultivators will be esteemed and regarded only by the former sages.

王夫之：厚謂難言也。……上言誓死而不能與姦佞並立。此又設為兩全之說，以己非不念及引身歸隱之計，以潔己而全身，亦嘗往復思惟，使隱忍以遠譏謗，奚必抗直以死，為前聖之所難言。固將悔己不熟察於進退語默之道。而及今禍之未及。

Wang Fuzhi: “Reverence” refers to that of which it is difficult to speak. ... Above it said, [I] swear to die and cannot exist alongside traitors and slanderers. This [phrase] then proposes a second complete possibility: I never fail to think upon my plan of withdrawing into seclusion to purify my entire body, and [I] often turn this thought over in my mind, using it to secretly endure and keep myself distant from calumny. Why one would [choose to] be unyielding unto death is that of which the former sages found it difficult to

speak. Surely [Qu Yuan] must regret that he did not thoroughly investigate the Way of advancing and withdrawing and of speaking and keeping silence in time to prevent his present disaster.

54 悔相道之不察兮

延佇乎吾將反

huǐ xiàng dào zhī bù chá xi

yán zhù hū wú jiāng fǎn

[I] regret assistance and leadership are not investigated —— Wait—I will turn back

[I] regret that the marks of the way are not investigated ——

王逸：言己自悔恨，相視事君之道不明審，當若比干伏節死義，故長立而望，將欲還反，終己之志也。Wang Yi: This says I regret myself, that the way of carefully serving my lord has not been clearly perceived—just like Bi Gan who righteously sacrificed his life. So [I] long stand and look, and then desire to turn back and finish my aspiration.

洪興祖：異姓事君，不合則去；同姓事君，有死而已。屈原去之，則是不察於同姓事君之道，故悔而反也。Hong Xingzu: As to those of other clans who serve the lord, if they do not get along they can simply leave [and serve another king]; but as to those of the same [ruling] clan who serve the lord, their option is death, and that is all. Qu Yuan left, but in that he had not investigated the Way of serving his lord as a member of his clan, and so he regretted it, and returned.

王闈運：人臣誓死而無益於國，非相道也。既欲伏死，又自悔其不察，於是又謀退隱也。Wang Kaiyun: If a subject swears away his life it has no benefit for the kingdom: it is not assistance and leadership. He wanted to give up his life, and moreover repented

that he had not been appreciated; because of this he again plans to withdraw into
reclusion.

游國恩：相道者，以視察路途比審擇自處之道也。You Guoen: As to “the marks of
the way,” it is surveying the road as a comparison for the studied choice of the way of
arranging for oneself.

55 回朕車以復路兮 及行迷之未遠

huí zhèn chē yǐ fù lù xī

jí xíng mí zhī wèi yuǎn

[I] return my chariot to recover the road —— To the path lost it is not far

汪瑗：此章以行路爲譬，實悔其初輕出仕而欲將隱去耳，非設言也。下文製芰荷集芙蓉，蓋欲辭紱冕之榮，而爲隱者之服矣。王洪二註皆以同姓之義言之，以爲屈原初欲隱去，既而悔其不當隱去，故復回返，以終事君之道，不亦大謬其旨而牽強之甚乎？殊不知雖隱而去之，固無害於屈子之忠也。何爲回護之若是，而反使屈子之心事千載之不明也？故楊班之流往往譏之者，皆未知屈子實有去志也。且以同姓言之，則殷之三仁固有不去者，亦有去者；固有死者，亦有不死者，豈可謂同姓之臣自古皆不去而盡死也哉！其事君之忠，同姓之義，要亦顧時勢事體及各人之自處何如耳，固不必於去不去死不死以爲賢否也。Wang Yuan: This stanza takes driving as a metaphor. Truly regretting how he early on had gone lightly into official service, he now wants to go into reclusion. This is not a hypothetical statement. In the text below, making nelumbo and collecting lotuses must [express] his desire to quit the glory of official regalia, and take up the attire of a recluse. The commentaries of Wang and Hong

both say this is about belonging to the same clan [as the ruling family], believing Qu Yuan at first wanted to go into reclusion but then repented and did not go into reclusion, so he returned and took up the way of service to his lord to the end; but is this not to greatly mistake the significance and strain interpretation to the extreme? How could they not know that although he went into reclusion, it in no way detracts from Master Qu's loyalty? Why try to protect him in this way, and yet instead cause Master's Qu's true concern to be obscured for a thousand generations? Thus those of the school of Yang [Xiong] and Ban [Gu] often ridicule him, but they have all failed to recognize that Master Qu truly had the aspiration of departing. It has been explained by way of "belonging to the same clan," yet among the Three Exemplars of Yin [Shang dynasty; i.e., Weizi, Jizi, and Bi Gan] there were those who did not depart, and there were also those who departed; and there were those who died, and there were those who did not die. How could we say that since ancient times every minister who belonged to the same clan [as the king] refused to depart and they all died to the last man!? As to his loyalty in service to his lord and the significance of belonging to the same clan, we must look back to the conditions and tendencies of the time and to the person's way of arranging for himself. Certainly we must not determine whether or not a person is worthy by his departing or not departing and dying or not dying!

游國恩：又古人心中，視兼濟與獨善爲人生二途，而均不失其正者也。離騷此節所云，亦以示思想之曲折，情感之波瀾而已；猶下文設爲去國遠逝之辭，作用正復相似。You Guoen: [Supports Zhu Xi's reading of return to 昔來之路, "the previous road," and vigorously rejects Wang Yuan's interpretation.] And in the minds of the ancients, there were two paths of human life: to oversee the common good, or to cultivate

goodness alone; and they were both paths of integrity. What this section of the “Li Sao” describes is only the expression of complications in [Qu Yuan’s] thought and the oscillations of his emotions. It’s like the language in the text below that fictively proposes distant travels abroad; the mode of composition repeats in a similar fashion.

⁵⁶ 步余馬於蘭皋兮

馳椒丘且焉止息

bù yú mǎ yū lán gāo xi

chí jiāo qiū qiě yān zhǐ xī

[I] walk my horses by the eupatorium bank ——

Gallop to the zanthoxylum hill then here stop and rest

王逸：言己欲還，則徐步我之馬於芳澤之中，以觀聽懷王。遂馳高丘而止息，以須君命也。Wang Yi: This says, I want to return, thus I slowly walk my horse among the fragrant marshes, in order to observe and obey King Huai. Then I gallop to the high hill and rest, in order to await my lord’s command.

蔣驥：步余馬，止椒丘，所謂回車以復路也。止息，歸隱之意。Jiang Ji: Walking my horse, stopping at the zanthoxylum hill: these are what is referred to by turning my chariot to recover the road. Stopping to rest means retreating to reclusion.

Yu Xiaoke 余蕭客 and Wang Kaiyun relate these lines to Zilan [Sir Eupatorium] and Zijiao [Sir Zanthoxylum] (see below).

⁵⁷ 進不入以離尤兮

退將復脩吾初服

jìn bú rù yǐ lí yóu xi

tuì jiāng fù xiū wú chū fú

[1] advance without entrance for encountering blame ——

Retire to renew the cultivation of my first habit

See the descriptions of “habit” (perhaps clothes) above and below. To what extent is the cultivation of habit metaphorical, and what is the tenor of the metaphor? Whatever the case may be, there is a tension or dialectic in the poem between preservation and cultivation: between primordial uncorrupted virtue or nature (and nature, that place outside of civilization), and the active fashioning of social presence and political prowess, or what in the Renaissance was called decorum or civility.

蔣驥：初服，未仕時之服也。Jiang Ji: First habit is the habit of the time before official service.

58 製 [制] 芰荷以爲衣兮 彙 * 集 芙蓉以爲裳

zhì jì hé yǐ wéi yī xi

jí fú róng yǐ wéi cháng

Making nelumbo to be a robe ——

Collecting lotuses to be a skirt

Another lengthy debate concerns the plants referred to in these lines: 芰 could be water caltrop, 荷, lotus, and 芙蓉 could be hibiscus, but I have followed Ma Maoyuan’s demonstration that 芰荷 refers to one plant, not two, and specifically it refers to the leaves of the lotus plant (nelumbo), while 芙蓉 refers to the blossoms of the same plant. Lotus plants are rooted in the mud but the blossoms stand above the water and are luminously clean; they are a symbol of purity in Buddhism, which entered China several hundred years after the “Li Sao” was composed. The roots and seeds are edible, the leaves are water-repellent, and the flowers can be used to scent tea. Some scholars have

attested that the leaves and flowers referred can indeed be used to make clothing (such as Wang Yuan), while others have asserted that this is a purely metaphorical statement (such as 張雲璈：楚辭隨物寓言，不必實有其事 Zhang Yun'ao: The *Chuci* use objects allegorically; these things are not necessarily real). The skirt mentioned is not necessarily a woman's garment but may be something like a sarong or kilt.

吳仁傑：蓮，花之君子也。Wu Renjie: Lotus is the gentleman of flowers.

寥平：詩多詳鳥獸草木，蓋借木之根本條幹枝葉以喻疆域。楚辭以花草爲衣裳，則衣裳非衣裳，花草非花草，皆借以比疆域。周南言灌木樛木喬木於條幹枝葉，緯書言皇帝得其根本，王得其幹，伯得其枝葉，皆借草木以立說 Liao Ping: The *Shijing* has great precision regarding birds, beasts, herbs, and trees; it must make use of the roots, the branches, and the twigs and leaves of trees as metaphors for territories. When the *Chuci* uses flowers and herbs for robe and skirt, the robe and skirt and not a robe and skirt, and the flowers and herbs are not flowers and herbs. They are all made use of as comparisons for territories. The “South of the Zhou” [chapter of the *Shijing*] speaks of orchard trees, of trees with hanging branches, and of tall and mighty trees, according to branches and twigs and leaves. Occult books [or apocryphas] speak of the emperor attaining its root, the king attaining its branch, and the earl attaining its twigs and leaves. All make use of herbs and trees to establish their assertions.

馬茂元：衣，裳，則用以比喻內心的清白。Ma Maoyuan: Robes and skirts are used as metaphorical comparisons for the pure whiteness of his inner heart.

59 不吾知其亦已兮

苟余情其信芳

bù wú zhī qí yì yǐ xī

gǒu yú qíng qí xìn fāng

None me knowing, this is still complete — If my affection is sincerely fragrant
Who is it that doesn't know me? The king (according to the Five Ministers)? The
common world (according to Wang Yuan)? The government and the people (according to
You Guoen)?

汪瑗：不吾知，言世俗之溷濁，不知己之奇服也。Wang Yuan: None me knowing
says the customs of the time are muddy and [no one] recognizes my unique attire.

朱冀：言芳而必本乎情者，芳本積中發外，非徒襲取以自文者也。Zhu Ji: The one
who speaks of fragrance must be rooted in affection, because fragrance accumulates at
the root within and is expressed outwardly. He is not the kind who wrests [unrelated
external things] in order to ornament himself.

60 高余冠之岌岌兮 長余佩之陸離

gāo yú guàn zhī jí jí xī

cháng yú pèi zhī lù lí

High my cap's steepness — Long my sash's assortment

The words used to describe the cap and the sash ornaments are a particular kind of word:
like onomatopoeia, but they imitate all kinds of states, not only sounds. Commentators
agree that 岌岌 (in modern Mandarin, jí jí) imitates tallness, but they disagree as to just
what 陸離 (lù lí) imitates: lengthiness, the attractively uneven lengths of the pendants,
their variegation, shininess, beauty, or what have you. The official caps and ornamental
regalia of ancient China could be very grand indeed; their ostentatiousness is kept alive in
the popular costume dramas of modern TV and movies. The word for cap, 冠, suggests

an official's cap, but the same word is used for the cap of male officials and for the ornate headwear worn by high-ranking palace women.

61 芳與澤其雜糅兮

唯昭質其猶未虧

fāng yǔ zé qí zá róu xī

wéi zhāo zhì qí yóu wèi kuī

Fragrant and lustrous are intermingled — Only shining substance is still without loss

Fragrant and swampy are intermingled —

王逸：芳，德之臭也，易曰，其臭如蘭。澤，質之潤也。玉堅而有潤澤。……言我外有芬芳之德，內有玉澤之質，二美雜會，兼在於己，而不得施用，故獨保明其身，無有虧歇也。Wang Yi: Fragrance is the smell of virtue; the *Book of Changes* says, “its smell is like eupatorium.” Lustre 澤 is smoothness of character [slickness of substance]. Jade is unyielding but has smooth lustre. ... This says, without I have fragrant virtue, within I have the character of jade lustre; these two beauties are mixed together, and both are mine; but they are not made use of, thus I alone preserve and esteem my person, without loss to it.

魯筆：澤，垢澤，指小人污穢者。又曰：言世雖污潔不分，而我在躬之清明如故，不因世而少變也。(Jiang Liangfu seconds) Lu Bi: A swamp 澤 is a dirty marsh; it indicates the filthy waste of petty men. Also: This says that although the world can't differentiate foul and pure, yet the bright purity of my body is as it ever was, it does not change even a bit because of the world.

馬茂元：這兩句說自己雖然在小人當道，邪正不分的朝廷裡從事政治活動多年，但並未受到任何不良影響。Ma Maoyuan: These two lines say, although I am here where

petty men are in power, undertaking governance for many years in a court where right and wrong are not distinguished, yet I still have not received any negative influence.

62 忽反顧以遊目兮

將往觀乎四荒

hū fǎn gù yǐ yóu mù xī

jiāng wǎng guān hū sì huāng

Suddenly [I] turn [my] head to allover gaze —— [I] will go to survey the four frontiers

陸善經：觀乎四荒，欲之他國也。Lu Shanjing: Surveying the four borderlands, [I]

want to go to another kingdom. [According to Wang Yi he wants to go out to look for a worthy lord; according to the Five Ministers, he wants to go out to look for a 知己, someone who understands him].

汪瑗：或曰，此章言己回車返服，謝仕而隱，將事遠遊，以舒憤懣耳。非謂往觀四荒以求賢君而事之也。Wang Yuan: We could say that this stanza simply says, I return my chariot and give back my [official] attire, decline official service and go into reclusion, to undertake a distant journey in order to relieve my resentment. It doesn't refer to going to the four borderlands to seek a wothy lord and serve him.

林雲銘：四海之外，豈無知我與類我者乎？因上文不吾知，故自考而欲往觀之，以自廣其意，非思去國求君也。Lin Yunming: Beyond the four seas, how could there be no one who recognizes me and is similar to me? Because in the above line “none me knows,” therefore he examines himself and desires to survey [the world]. In [these lines] he expands his intention for himself [i.e, rhetorically?]; it is not that he considers leaving his kingdom to seek [another] lord.

馬茂元：這兩句是說，不能忘情現實，仍然有所追求。Ma Maoyuan: These two

lines say, [I] can't be indifferent to reality; there is still something to be sought [no flights of fancy here].

游國恩：According to You Guoen, these lines have been interpreted as seeking a king, an understanding mate, a man of like interntion, or both a king and worthies; but really the speaker is *showing*, not seeking.

63 佩繽紛其繁飾兮 芳菲菲其彌章

pèi bīn fēn qí fán shì xi

fāng fēi fēi qí mí zhāng

Sash profuse, such numerous ornaments ——

Fragrance aromatic, such increasing radiance

朱熹：佩服愈盛而明，志意愈脩而潔也。Zhu Xi: The more my sash and robe are profuse and brilliant, the more my aspiration and intention are cultivated and pure.

屈復：欲隱而彌章，謂又不能隱也。Qu Fu: Desiring reclusion [lit., obscurity, shade] but increasing in radiance: this means he still can't retreat.

64 民生各有所樂兮 余獨好脩以爲常

mín shēng gè yǒu suǒ lè xi

yú dú hǎo xiū yǐ wéi cháng

Common people's lives each have their pleasures ——

I alone love cultivation as [my] constant

蔣驥：始之事君以脩能，其遇讒以修姱，其見廢而誓死則法前脩，即欲退以相君亦脩初服，固始終一好脩也。Jiang Ji: In the beginning he served his lord with cultivated

bearing. He met slander for cultivating fairness; he was discarded and vowed to die on the model of the former cultivators. So he wants to retreat from assisting his lord and cultivate his first attire: surely from beginning to end there is a continuous love of cultivation.

65 雖體解吾猶未變兮

豈余心之可懲

suī tǐ jiě wú yóu wèi biàn xi

qǐ yú xīn zhī kě chéng

Though body be undone I still will not change — How could my heart be punishable?

體解, “body undone,” is usually glossed as dismemberment, one of the punishments of early China.

王夫之：此上原述志已悉，自女嬃以下至末，復設為愛己者之勸慰，及鬼神之告，以廣言之，言己悲憤之獨心，人不能為謀，神不能為決也。Wang Fuzhi: Down to this point Yuan has already clearly narrated his aspiration; from “The woman” on to the end of the text, he embellishes it with the admonishments of those who love him, even with the declarations of ghosts and spirits, in order to state it more expansively. He says, in grief and anger my solitary heart has no one to turn to, and cannot be resolved by spirits.

66 女嬃之嬋媛兮

申申其詈予

nǚ xū zhī chán yuán xi

shēn shēn qí lì yú

The woman’s sweet sympathy — Spread softly, her scolding me

The woman's bewitching allure —— Again and again she rebukes me

These English lines are extremely speculative and should be taken with a grain of salt!

Just who 女嬃 refers to is highly contested, and scholars have translated 嬋媛 according to their interpretation of 女嬃: thus those who believe 女嬃 is Qu Yuan's elder sister translate 嬋媛 as hanging on, sentimental attachment, or meek affection (Wang Yi, Zhu Xi, Wang Fuzhi, etc.) or as chaste beauty or fairness (Qian Gaozhi 錢杲之, Zhu Yidong 朱亦棟), while Wang Yuan, who interprets 女嬃 as a low sort of concubine and a metaphor for the clique, translates 嬋媛 as seductive and cheaply lascivious (妖嬈貌，邪淫之賤態也); Li Chenyu, who interprets 女嬃 as a metaphor for Qu Yuan's political underlings, translates 嬋媛 as brandishing oneself, while Chen Yuanxin 陳遠新 says that 女嬃 is a female servant and 嬋媛 is the attitude of a servant girl! Zhou Gongchen interprets 女嬃 as a female shaman in the same vein as the diviners in the poem below, and Guo Moruo interprets 女嬃 as a female companion. Zhang Fengyi asserts that due to her inappropriate advice to Qu Yuan 女嬃 can hardly be called a worthy, while Wang Kaiyun simply interprets 女嬃 as wise and talented women, thus a metaphor for the great ministers who pretend to be Qu Yuan's companions. Zhang Yun'ao says that according to other uses of the word 嬃, 女嬃 could be an elder or a younger sister or any other woman, while Zhang Fengyi writes that 女嬃 is not necessarily his sister but she must have been a family member, either a wife or sister, to blame his such. The translation of 申申 is in much the same situation. (See also the "Unofficial Biography.")

67 曰鮌 [鮌] 婞直以亡身兮 終然歿乎羽之野

yuē gǔn xìng zhí yǐ wáng shēn xi

zhōng rán yāo hū yǔ zhī yě

Saying: Gun in forthrightness so lost his body — Finally perished on Mt. Yu's wilds

Saying: Gun stubbornly persisted, forgetting his body—

Gun was also a descendant of Gao Yang, hence the poet's kinsman. According to one version of the story, Yao ordered Gun to control China's disastrous flooding problem, but he failed and was executed. According to another story, Gun remonstrated with Yao regarding the transmission of imperial power to Shun, and was subsequently purused to Mt. Yu and there executed. He was either sentenced to death by the king and "lost his body" or he rashly "forgot his body" and so brought the king's death upon himself.

朱熹：女嬃以屈原剛直太過，恐亦將如鮌之遇禍也。Zhu Xi: The woman thinks that Qu Yuan's forthrightness is excessive and fears he is headed for disaster, like Gun.

朱冀：姊嬃見大夫被替後，不肯自晦，反露英華，知其必不免禍，故勸誠之，欲其去此剛直也。Zhu Ji: Elder Sister saw that the Grand Master did not permit himself to be obscured after he was deplaced, but instead displayed his flowery magnificence. She knew he could not avoid disaster, so she admonishes him, wanting him to be rid of this [stubborn] forthrightness.

68 汝何博謔而好脩兮 紛獨有此媵節

rǔ hé bó jiǎn ér hào xiū xi

fēn dú yǒu cǐ kuā jié

You why so broadly candid and loving cultivation —

You why so broadly gathering and loving cultivation ——

Abundantly [you] alone keep this fair measure

While most commentators have glossed 譽 as either loyalty or forthright speech, Jiang Liangfu reads it as the similar word 擷, to pluck or take in, which matches the next line nicely.

69 贅菘蒺以盈室兮

判獨離而不服

zī/cí lù shī yǐ yíng shì xi

pàn dú lí ér bù fú

Amassing arthraxon and xanthium to fill rooms ——

Separately [you] alone distance [it] and don't make [it into your] habit

The early commentators interpreted 贅 as an unpleasant plant; but, according to the grammatical patterns of the “Li Sao,” it seems to be a verb. Perhaps there was an error in transmission and 贅 is a mistake for 茨 or 資. Xanthium are spiny plants; one species is known as “stinking cocklebur.”

徐煥龍：女嬃之言止此，語若未了然，蓋不忍言其究竟。Xu Huanlong: The woman's speech stops here; if her statement seems to be rather unfinished, it's because she can't bear [to state] its outcome. [Others believe that the woman's speech continues through the next lines.]

70 衆不可戶說兮

孰云察余之中情

zhòng bù kě hù shuō/shuì xi

shú yún chá yú zhī zhōng qíng

The crowd can't at [each] door be persuaded ——

Who is it can perceive my inner affection

The meaning is probably that Qu Yuan can't "go knocking door to door," i.e., explain himself to everyone personally and win their support. It's not decided if Qu Yuan (or his current persona) is saying this in response to the woman's advice, or if these are still her words.

錢澄之：此亦述女嬃之言，上余字爲原言也，下予字自指。Qian Chengzhi: This also recounts the woman's speech; the word 余 [I/we] above means Yuan, and the word 予 [I] below indicates herself.

王夫之：察余之余，代原自稱；予聽之予，代世人自稱。Wang Fuzhi: The 余 of "perceive my..." is a pronoun Qu Yuan uses for himself; the 予 of "...me hearing" is a pronoun the people of the world use for themselves [Wang Fuzhi thinks the Woman represents the rest of the people].

71 世並舉而好朋兮

夫何熒獨而不予 [余] 聽

shì bìng jǔ ér hào péng xī

fú hé qióng dú ér bù yú tīng

The world joins for promotion and loves to make factions ——

Then why solitary and not me hearing

Is the woman chastising Qu Yuan for not listening to her advice, or is Qu Yuan asking why he has to be alone and unheard?

王逸：言世俗之人，皆行佞僞，相與朋黨，並相薦舉；忠直之士，孤熒特獨，何肯聽用我言，而納受之也。Wang Yi: This says, the people of the common customs of

this era are all getting along with flattery and fakery, joining together in cliques and mutually promoting each other; the loyal and straightforward nobleman is solitary and unique. How could they understand and make use of my words, and accept me?

夏大霖：女嬃言止此。舊解謂原自言，語氣不順。Xia Dalin: The woman's speech ends here. The old [commentators] explained this as referring to Yuan's own words, but that doesn't suit the tone.

72 依前聖以節中兮

喟憑心而歷茲

yī qián shèng yǐ jié zhōng xī

kuì píng xīn ér lì zī

Rely on the former sages to moderate within —— Sigh, full heart, and undergo this

夏大霖曰：承上言以姊之嬋媛，固眷余者，而詈余之言且如此，是今世無有察余者矣。然余實依前聖所為，則惟有依前聖以求節衷。嘆余固憑我本心之所安，而今乃至於此。今見放江南，且濟沅湘南去矣，有重華墓在可陳詞焉。Xia Dalin: This continues from above; because of my elder sister's "sweet sympathy" [I know that] certainly she is one who is devoted to me, but even her words of admonishment for me are like this. So it is that in this era there is absolutely no one who perceives me.

Nevertheless, I truly rely on the way of the former sages, for only by relying on the former sages can one seek [attain] moderation. I sigh that I have always depended on the certainty of my original heart, yet today I have come to such a pass. Now I have been banished south of the river, and I cross the Yuan and Xiang going south; there is Chonghua's grave where I can state my case.

73 濟沅湘以南征兮

就重華而陳詞 [陳]

jì yuán xiāng yǐ nán zhēng xī

jiù chóng huá ér chén cí

Cross the Yuan and Xiang to southward go — Arrive at Chonghua and state the case

Qu Yuan is said to have been banished to the southern margins of Chu. The Yuan and Xiang rivers are in the region where Qu Yuan is thought to have committed suicide.

Chonghua is a name for the sage-king Shun, mentioned above. He is said to have died on Jiuyi mountain, south of the Yuan and Xiang rivers. In some stories, Chonghua/Shun is the one who pursued and executed Gun, mentioned above as an exemplar of excessive forthrightness. Thus Qu Yuan may be comparing himself to his executed ancestor in these lines.

74 啟九辯 [辨] 與九歌兮

夏康娛以自縱

qǐ jiǔ biàn yǔ jiǔ gē xī

xià kāng yú yǐ zì zòng

Qi [had] the Nine Pieces and Nine Songs — Greatly [he] delighted to himself indulge

Xia Kang played in self-indulgence

The interpretation of the mythic history of the “Li Sao” depends on the accounts available to the particular interpreter. But the mythology of ancient China and the geneology of its pantheons of gods, divine emperors, sage kings, and heroes is complex and dynamic. The myths changed with the changing political shape of China, the stories and divine lineages of various tribes and kindgoms merging and transforming as those people encountered each other, often in the context of colonization or conquest. Thus the accounts that scholars made use of varied widely according to their place and time of origin.

Furthermore, scholars sometimes gain access to texts that were forgotten for hundreds of years, such as those that modern scholars recovered from the caves of Dunhuang. As to this line, scholars have disagreed if 夏 is a name or part of a name or if it is an adverb, “greatly”; and they have disagreed if 康 is part of a name, 夏康, or if it is part of a two syllable work for revelry, 康娛. According to the fragmentary material available at present, it seems that either 1) Qi, son of the Xia dynasty founder Yu, stole the music of Heaven and enjoyed it inappropriately on earth; or 2) Qi rightfully inherited virtuous music from his father but his son Tai Kang (or the later kings of Xia generally) misused it. In either case, we can discern the ancient theory of culture as the expression of political morality, such that cultural decadence and political decline are indivisible.

王逸：啓，禹子也。……夏康，啓子太康也。Wang Yi: Qi is the son of Yu. ... Xia Kang is Tai Kang, the son of Qi.

陸善經：言夏啓能修禹之功，奏九辨九歌之樂以和神人。Lu Shanjing: This says that Xia Qi can cultivate the meritorious deeds of Yu, playing the music of the Nine Pieces and the Nine Songs to pacify the immortals.

朱冀：此下七章，乃自陳其平日以往昔興亡之故諫君，而撮其大略如此耳。要知大夫一言一淚，一字一血，全是爲楚王對症發藥，並非心閒無事，坐古廟中，對土木偶人攀今弔古也。此一章對楚王不思繼穆莊伯業，而耽樂是從。Zhu Ji: In the seven stanzas from here down, he presents his custom of using stories of rise and decline from antiquity to remonstrate with his lord, and points out his [political] ideas in this way. We should know that the Grand Master had a tear for every phrase, a drop of blood for every word: all of this is a prescription for the ailment of the king of Chu. It is not the case that

he is unoccupied and of idle mind, seated in an ancient temple, facing an idol of clay and wood, grasping at the present and mourning for antiquity. This stanza regards the king of Chu not pondering how to continue the hegemony of Mu and Zhuang, but rather decadently indulging himself.

胡文英：啓之九辨九歌本以教民，而非以為娛也。夏康以此為娛而自縱者何哉？夫祖宗之樂，本以示功德，而子孫乃以為戲，其衰也不亦宜乎？Hu Wenying: Qi's Nine Pieces and Nine Songs were originally used to educate the commoners, and were not meant for entertainment. Xia Kang used these for entertainment and self-indulgence; why was that? Now the music of the ancestral fathers was originally for the manifestation of merit and virtue, but the sons and grandsons used it for play; how could their decline not but follow?

Most commentators believe one extra word was mistakenly inserted into these lines early in the poem's history, either 用 (made) or 失 (lost), but they disagree which word it is.

75 不顧難以圖後兮

五子用失乎 [夫] 家巷

bú gù nán yǐ tú hòu xi

wǔ zǐ yòng shī hū [fú] jiā xiàng

Not regarding difficulty and planning for later ——

Wu the Younger thus made household [struggle]

Five sons thus made household [struggle]

OR

Not regarding difficulty and planning for later —— Five sons lost their family home

The musical abuses were such that the next generation (either Qi's Fifth Son Wu Guan or

the the five sons of either Qi or Xia Kang) embroiled the royal house in internal strife;
OR, due to their father's cultural-political abuses, the five sons had to leave the court and
live in the south; according to some accounts, there they wrote songs about Yu's virtue or
their loss.

汪瑗：言禹德業之盛而後人不能守，以見楚之先君創業垂統而懷襄之不能繼也。

Wang Yuan: This says the flourishing of Yu's virtuous enterprise was not maintained by
the people of later times, to show how the establishment bequeathed by the first lords of
Chu is not carried on by [Kings] Huai and Xiang.

黃文煥：嘆五子之失家，原以自比也，宗臣與國共存，國破而家亦亡。憂國所以憂
家，未聞有獨存之身也。五子之作歌，原之作騷一也。Huang Wenhuan: Sighing for
the five sons who lost their home, Yuan is comparing them to himself. Ministers of the
royal clan survive together with kingdom: if the kingdom collapses then their houses will
also perish. To sorrow for the kingdom is hence to sorrow for one's family, for we never
hear of one person surviving all alone. The five sons' composition of songs is the same as
Yuan's composition of the Sao.

76 羿淫遊以佚畋兮

又好射夫封狐 [豨]

yì yín yóu yǐ yì tián xi

yòu hào shè fū fēng hú [xī]

Yi wantonly roamed in wild hunting ——— Again loved to shoot the great fox [boar]

Yi was a power-usurping relative of the royal clan in the era of Qi's grandsons/Xia
Kang's sons. Han rhapsodies on the royal hunt give an idea of just how excessive these
hunting expeditions could be, or at least an idea of how they could be perceived: as

incredibly gruesome and wasteful slaughter-fests.

王逸：言羿爲諸侯，荒淫遊戲，以佚畋獵，又射殺大狐，犯天之孽，以亡其國也。

Wang Yi: This says that when Yi was a fuedal lord, he indulged in great hunts for debauchery and amusement, and even shot and killed the great fox [a sacred animal]: this is a crime against Heaven, and portends the extinction of the kingdom.

77 固亂流其鮮終兮

湑又貪夫厥家

gù luàn liú qí xiǎn zhōng xī

zhuó yòu tān fú jué jiā

Surely wildness to the current has its rare end —— Zhuo then lusted for his family
{against the flow}

Han Zhuo was an accomplice and minister of Yi; after Yi came into power, Zhuo lusted for Yi's wife and ordered one of Yi's apprentices in archery to assassinate Yi with an arrow.

王逸：羿以亂得政，身即滅亡，故言鮮終。Wang Yi: Yi took the government by wild strife, and his body was then destroyed: thus it says “rare end.”

王夫之：橫流而渡曰亂流，言不順理也。Wang Fuzhi: To cross against the current is called “wildness to the current”; it means not following principles.

朱冀：此一章對楚王盤於遊畋，惑於鄭袖。Zhu Ji: This stanza regards the king of Chu's roving about on the hunt and being misled by Zheng Xiu.

78 澆身被服強圉兮

縱欲 [慾] 而不忍

jiāo shēn pī fú qiáng yǔ xi

zòng yù ér bù rěn

Jiao's body was clothed in strong fortitude ——

[He] indulged desires and did not forbear

Guo Jiao was a son of Han Zhuo and Yi's wife. He killed Prince Xiang, heir of the Xia royal lineage. However, Jiang Ji cautions that this line only describes his lewd addiction to entertainment women and the like, not necessarily his homicidal intentions.

79 日康娛而自忘兮

厥首用夫顛隕

rì kāng yú ér zì wàng xi

jué shǒu yòng fú diān yǔn

Daily delighting and himself forgetting —— So his head by this fell severed

Guo Jiao was killed by Prince Xiang's son, Shao Kang, the biological heir. A fuller account of this sordid era of Xia history is recorded in the *Zuo Zhuan*.

王夫之：自忘，忘其身之危也。Wang Fuzhi: “Himself forget” means to forget that his body is in danger.

80 夏桀之常違兮

乃遂焉而逢殃

xià jié zhī cháng wéi xi

nǎi suì yān ér féng yāng

Xia Jie's constant transgression —— Then followed like such and met disaster

{the constant transgressed}

Jie is the legendarily brutal last ruler of the Xia. He was so immoral and tyrannical that he brought about the loss of the Mandate of Heaven and the end of the Xia dynasty. The Mandate was then awarded to the morally upright and benevolent founding kings of the

Shang [Yin] dynasty. Of course, it was the Shang who transmitted this story to us.

王逸：言夏桀上背於天道，下逆於人理，乃遂以逢殃咎，終爲殷湯所誅滅。Wang

Yi: This says that Jie of Xia turned his back on Heaven above, and forsook the norms of humanity below, and subsequently met disaster, in the end being killed and extinguished by Tang of Yin (the Shang founder).

81 后辛之菹醢兮 殷宗用而不長

hòu xīn zhī zū hǎi xī

yīn zōng yòng ér bù cháng

Lord Xin's mincing and saucing — The Yin lineage thusly could not last.

Lord Xin is Zhòu, the legendarily brutal last ruler of the Shang [Yin]. One of Zhòu's oft-cited crimes is having the bodies of outspoken ministers served up for supper. He was so immoral and tyrannical that he brought about the loss of the Mandate of Heaven and the end of the Shang [Yin] dynasty. The Mandate was then awarded to the morally upright and benevolent founding kings of the Zhōu dynasty... (see above).

朱冀：此一章對楚王改路復諫，疏斥忠良。已上皆忘國之大戒也。Zhu Ji: This stanza regards the king of Chu's changing of course, not accepting remonstrance, and distancing and rejecting the loyal and good [courtiers]. This concludes the great warning about forgetting the governance of the kingdom.

82 湯禹儼而祗 [祗] 敬兮 周論道而莫差

tāng yǔ yǎn ér zhī jìng xī

zhōu lùn dào ér mò chà

Tang and Yu were solemn and respectfully venerated ——

Great Yu was solemn and respectfully venerated ——

Zhōu theorized the Way and made no error

Tang was the founding king of the Shang dynasty and Yu was the founder of the Xia dynasty. Since the Xia was before the Shang, usually these names are given as “Yu and Tang.” Jiang Liangfu therefore interprets this 湯 as “great,” not as the name “Tang.”

王逸：言殷湯夏禹周之文王，受命之君，皆畏天敬賢，論議道德，無有過差，故能獲夫神人之助，子孫蒙其福祐也。 Wang Yi: This says that Tang of Yin [Shang], Yu of Xia, and King Wen of Zhou were lords who received the Mandate [of Heaven]. They all feared Heaven and respected worthiness, and in theorizing the moral Way they made no error; so they were able to reap the aid of gods and men, and their children and grandchildren in turn received their prosperity.

洪興祖：道，治道也。 Hong Xingzu: The Way is the way of government.

83 舉賢而授能兮

循繩墨而不頗

jǔ xián ér shòu néng xi

xún shéng mò ér bù pō

[They] raised up worthies and received the skilled ——

Obeyed the inked line and didn't break [from] it

The ideal king rules by fulfilling his ritual function as intermediary between heaven and earth and entrusting virtuous ministers with the work of practical governance. His most important political role, in this theory, is to discern and employ virtuous, talented men.

84 皇天無私阿兮

覽民德焉錯輔

huáng tiān wú sī ē xi

lǎn mǐn dé yān cuò fǔ

Exalted Heaven is without selfishness ——

Appraising the common people's Virtue to thus arrange aid

The commentators agree that “the common people's virtue” in fact refers to the king, the one man above men who is entrusted with the Mandate of Heaven according to his virtue; thus I have capitalized “Virtue” as an honorific title.

王夫之：錯輔，立君以輔天養民。Wang Fuzhi: Arranging aid is establishing a lord to assist Heaven in nourishing the common people.

85 夫維聖哲以茂行兮

苟得用 [有] 此下土

fú wéi shèng zhé yǐ mào xíng xi

gǒu dé yòng [yǒu] cǐ xià tǔ

It's only sagely wisdom and flourishing activity ——

By which can be had this underlying earth

Easily attained thereby this underlying earth

Since its earliest history, China has been called 天下, the land “under heaven.”

錢澄之：此是泛論有德者能有天下。民德是民之有德，足以利賴萬民者。雖帝王，自天視之，亦民而已。Qian Chengzhi: This is a general discussion of how the virtuous can obtain the land Under Heaven. The common people's Virtue is [the one] among the common people who has virtue and is adequate to support the innumerable populace.

Although [that one] may be an emperor or king, from the perspective of Heaven, he is

still just one of the common people.

86 瞻前而顧後兮

相觀民之計極

zhān qián ér gù hòu xi

xiàng guān mín zhī jì jí

Gaze up ahead and turn to look behind —— Observe the common people's counted end
{schemed outcome/ultimate principles}

王逸：前謂禹湯，後謂桀紂。Wang Yi: Ahead refers to Yu and Tang. Behind refers to Jie and Zhòu (Lord Xin).

朱熹：前謂往昔之是非，後謂將來之成敗。Zhu Xu: Ahead refers to right and wrong in antiquity. Behind refers to the success and failure in the future.

錢澄之：前謂古也，後謂今也。Qian Chengzhi: Ahead refers to ancient times. Behind refers to the present.

87 夫孰非義而可用兮

孰非善而可服

fú shú fēi yì ér kě yòng xi

shú fēi shàn ér kě fú

O who is unprincipled yet could be relied on —— Who is unkind and yet could serve

王逸：言人非義則德不立，非善則行不成也。Wang Yi: This says that without principle virtue is not established, and without kindness efforts are not completed.

汪瑗：二句猶言無往而非義之所在，吾人所當體用；無往而非善之所在，吾人所當服行也。承上章而泛言之，則所以責當時之君臣，勵自己之節義，而湯武桀紂之興亡，古今之是非成敗俱見於言表矣。指而實之則狹矣。Wang Yuan: These two lines

say, wherever one goes there will be no place that is without principles, which one should embody and utilize; wherever one goes there will be no place that is without kindness, which one should receive and put to practice. This continues [the thought] from above but says it generally; thus that with which [he] holds the lords and ministers of that time responsible and encourages his own moderation, and moreover the rise and decline of Tang and Wu [Shang and Zhōu founders], Jie and Zhòu [Lord Xin], the right and wrong, successes and failures of ancient time and the present—all are visible in this expression. To [speculate] as to who this really refers to is narrow [i.e., a waste of time].

吳世尚：言我前瞻往古，後今茲，再四思維，其所以爲民之至計，決未有非義非善而可用行者。此固無論其爲君，爲臣，而其理皆莫之或易者也。 Wu Shishang: This says, ahead I gaze up to antiquity, and behind I turn to look at the present, considering at length. As to those who have made the best policies for the common people, they have never been unprincipled or unkind and yet reliable and effective. Whether taken in regard to the lord [ruler] or in regard to the ministers, surely this principle does not change for anyone.

88 沾余身而危死兮

覽余初其猶未悔

diàn yú shēn ér wēi sǐ xī

lǎn yú chū qí yóu wèi huǐ

Embrinking my body and risking death ——

Appraise my beginning; it is suchly without regrets

王逸：初世伏節之賢士 Wang Yi: [This refers to] the self-sacrificing worthy elites of the 初 early era.

汪瑗：初，初志也。Wang Yuan: 初 is his original aspiration.

蔣驥曰：初，指始之以好脩事君。Jiang Ji: 初 indicates the beginning when I served my lord with good cultivation.

夏大霖：Xia Dalin refers this 初 to 初服, “first habit.”

陳本禮：初，指被疏被替言。Chen Benli: 初 indicates the words about being distanced and being replaced.

龔景瀚：初，初度也。所謂昭質未虧也。Gong Jinghan: 初 is “first aspect.” It’s what is referred to by “shining substance without loss.”

89 不量鑿而正柄兮

固前脩以菹醢

bú liàng záo ér zhèng ruì xi

gù qián xiū yǐ zū hǎi

An unmeasured mortise and a correct tenon ——

Surely former cultivators were minced and sauced

Mortise and tenon are terms from carpentry; two pieces of wood can be securely joined if a hole (the mortise) in one piece is perfectly shaped to fit a corresponding projection (the tenon) on the other piece.

Most scholars believe this is the end of the presentation to Chonghua. But according to Wang Fuzhi, this is actually the end of the Woman’s speech; the presentation to Chonghua is hers, not Qu Yuan’s.

夏大霖：比君不向義善，不審量而諫正之，徒取危死也。Xia Dalin: If the lord does not turn to principles and kindness, the one who does not investigate the measure and still remonstrates chooses to risk death in vain.

馬茂元：這裡借以比喻苟合取容只知應付環境的處世的作風。菹醢，被菹醢，泛指極端不幸的結果。Ma Maoyuan: This is a metaphorical comparison for complaisant curriers for whom the only style of social conduct known of is to make do with their environment. To be minced and sauced generally indicates the most extreme negative result.

90 曾歔歔余鬱邑兮

哀朕時之不當

céng xū xī yú yù yì xī

āi zhèn shí zhī bù dàng

More choking sobs, I'm full of gloom —— Grieving that my time's not right

錢澄之：始因姊言而自疑，至是益自信，信非余之過，乃朕時之不當也。Qian

Chengzhi: At first my elder sister's words caused me to doubt myself, but at this point I increase my self-confidence. I am confident that [all this] is no fault of mine, it is just that my time is not not right.

王夫之：朕時不當，言不得逢舜禹湯武之時。Wang Fuzhi: My time is not right says that I can't meet the era of Shun, Yu, Tang [of Shang], and King Wu [of Zhou].

董國英：哀己并哀諸賢，故歔歔鬱邑且至涕泪之霑襟也。Dong Guoying: [He] grieves for himself and also grieves for the many worthies; thus, choking sobs and gloominess, and even clothes soaked with tears.

91 攬茹蕙以掩涕兮

霑余襟之浪浪

lǎn rú huì yǐ yǎn tì xī

zhān yú jīn zhī làng làng

[I] gather soft ocimum to cover [my] tears —— Soaking my clothes, their waves

{dab}

There is much disagreement about 茹: tender (Wang Yi); fragrant (Five Ministers); rotten (Hong Xingzu); sprouting (Wang Kaiyun); the verb “to eat” *and* a kind of edible leaf (Wu Renjie); 茹蕙 is a mistake for 茹蘼, a plant used for red dye and thus a metaphor for his “tears of blood” (Wang Yuan); or the entangled roots of rushes that have been pulled up (Zhu Ji). Some scholars include these four lines as part of Qu Yuan’s speech to Chonghua, while for Li Chendi the entire preceding section to this point, including the presentation to Chonghua, is all Qu Yuan’s reponse to the Woman.

王逸：言己自傷放在草澤，心悲泣下…… Wang Yi: This says I pity myself, that I am banished on the weedy marshes; my heart laments and tears fall...

呂延濟：蕙，香草。以喻忠貞之心。Lü Yanji: Ocimum is a fragrant plant; it is a metaphor for the loyal heart.

李陳玉：掩涕之泣，非爲一身泣也，爲國事泣也。柔茹之蕙，攬之在手，而人不愛，國事顛倒，尚忍言哉 Li Chenyu: The tears covered are not cried for one person, but are cried for the affairs of the kingdom. Tender ocimum, gathered in my hand; yet they don’t care; the affairs of the kingdom are topsy-turvy, how could [I] even endure to speak of it! [Li Chenyu seems to interpret ocimum as a metaphor for courtiers].

徐煥龍：陳詞甫畢，涕泗滂沱，遂于重華墓邊，跪陳之處，拔含根之蕙以掩涕，而已霑襟浪浪矣。此賦而無比，不同他句芳草。Xu Huanlong: The presentation [to Chonghua] concludes with this. Tears falling in torrents, here by the tomb of Chonghua, at the place where I kneel to state my case, I pull up ocimum, roots and all, to cover my

tears; but my clothes are already soaked in waves. This is narration without comparison; it is different than the other verses with fragrant herbs.

馬茂元：他是“百變而不離其宗”，決不可能放棄他的主張的。這種主張在現實環境中既然找不到出路，於是下文就進入了上下求索的幻境。Ma Maoyuan: He is one of those who “does not stray from his convictions even through a hundred changes,” and could never abandon his objective. But since he can’t find any outlet for this kind of objective in the real world, he enters the fantastic world of seeking high and low in the text below.

92 跪敷衽以陳辭兮

耿吾既得此中正

guì fū rèn yǐ chén cí xi

gěng wú jì dé cǐ zhōng zhèng

Kneeling [I] arrange [my] robe to state the case ——

Brightly I already have obtained this integrity

{inner uprightness}

徐煥龍：跪而敷布其衣衽，賦中有比，今予其敷心腹腎腸之意，言以赤心告帝舜也。

耿，光鑑也。舜之耿光，能鑑其得此中正之道也。Xu Huanlong: Kneeling and arranging his robe: within the narrative description there is a metaphor. Now he gives his intention to arrange his heart and viscera; it says that with a red [sincere?] heart he addresses Emperor Shun. “Brightly” is a shining mirror. The bright shining of Shun can reflect his attainment of the upright and centered way.

Or these lines are all just 賦, narrative description; or they describe a literal performance with metaphorical significance, like the removal of one’s cap in the presence of a lady in

Europe in those days.

93 駟玉虬 [虬] 以乘鷖兮

溘埃風余上徵

sì yù qiú yǐ chéng yì xī

kè āi fēng yú shàng zhēng

[I] team four jade dragonets and ride the yi [bird] ——

Suddenly in dust and wind I upward go

Suddenly awaited wind me upraises to go

王逸：有角曰龍，無角曰虬。鷖，鳳皇別名也。山海經云，鷖身有五彩，而文如鳳，鳳類也。以為車飾。……言我設往行游，將乘玉虬，駕鳳車，掩塵埃而上征。去離世俗，遠羣小也。Wang Yi: [Those] with horns are called dragons, [those] without horns are called dragonets. Yi is another name for the phoenix. The *Classic of Mountains and Seas* says the yi's body is multicolored, and patterned like a male phoenix; it is of the phoenix category. Here it is for the ornamentation of the chariot. ... This says I propose going for a journey, going to ride jade dragonets, drive a phoenix chariot, covered in dust [clouds] and rising to depart. [I] go away from the mundane world, far from this petty crowd.

洪興祖：山海經云，九疑山有五彩之鳥，飛蔽一鄉。五彩之鳥，鷖鳥也。Hong Xingzu: The *Classic of Mountains and Seas* says, Nine Doubts Mountain has a multicolored bird that blots out the whole countryside in flight. This multicolored bird is the yi-bird.

朱熹：然此以下，多假託之詞，非實有是物與是事也。Zhu Xi: From this point on, there are many fictional descriptions. It's not that there really are these things and these

events.

王夫之：虬鸞喻己所欲進之君者，施行之美，若乘龍駕鳳以登天。Wang Fuzhi: The dragonets and yi-bird are metaphors for what I want to advance to my lord: the beauty of my conduct is like riding dragons and driving phoenixes to climb to Heaven.

朱冀：人情于無可奈何，極無聊賴之時，往往有此奇思幻想，情文俱堪絕世。Zhi Ji: Human affections, in times of helplessness or of no resort, sometimes have such strange ponderings and fantastic thoughts. [This] [unity of] affection and literary form are truly rare in the world.

魯筆：此即馬遷所謂人窮返本，勞苦呼天之意。Lu Bi: This is what Sima Qian refers to with “When humans despair, they return to their roots”; it means crying out to heaven in bitter suffering.

吳世尚：自此以下，至忍與此終古，皆屈原跪而陳詞，重華冥冥相告，而原遂若夢非夢，似醒不醒。此一刻之間之事也。故其詞忽朝忽暮，倏東倏西，如斷如續，無緒無蹤，惝恍迷離，不可方物。Wu Shishang: From here down to “endure with this to the end” is all Qu Yuan kneeling and stating his case. Chonghua dimly seems to respond, and Yuan then is as if dreaming but not dreaming, like waking but not waking. This happens in an instant. So his descriptions are suddenly of the morning and suddenly of the evening, a line in the east and a line in the west, here broken and there continuous, without thread or trace [rhyme or reason], muddled and confused: it can't be distinguished [order can't be discerned].

胡文英：埃風，自然之風。Hu Wenying: Dusty wind is natural wind.

游國恩：此下大抵皆想象之詞。龔景瀚謂埃風以喻小人，謝濟世謂哭訴于懷王之墓，

劉夢鵬謂帝所寓言君側，皆迂鑿；朱冀魯筆之說大背文義；吳世尚說尤爲荒謬。

You Guoen: This and below are basically all descriptions of imagination. Gong Jinghan refers to the dusty wind as a metaphor for petty men, Xie Jishi refers it to crying his plaint at the tomb of King Huai, Liu Mengpeng refers to it as using the Emperor [of Heaven]’s residence as an allegory for the surroundings of his lord: all are forced interpretations. The explanations of Zhu Ji and Lu Bi greatly disregard the significance of the text; Wu Shishang’s explanation is especially absurd.

94 朝發軔於蒼梧兮

夕余至乎縣圃

zhāo fā rèn yú cāng wú xī

xī yú zhì hū xuán pǔ

Morning release the brakes at Cangwu — Evening I arrive at Xuanpu

王逸：蒼梧，舜所葬也。縣圃，神山，在崑崙之上。淮南子曰：崑崙縣圃，維絕乃通天。言己朝發帝舜之居，夕至縣圃之上，受道聖王，而登神明之山。Wang Yi:

Cangwu is the place where Shun was buried. Xuanpu is a sacred mountain in Kunlun.

The *Huainanzi* says: Kunlun Xuanpu is the last place, then [one] reaches heaven. This says, in the morning I depart from the abode of Emperor Shun, in the evening I arrive at the height of Xuanpu: I receive the way of the sage kings and climb the holy mountain.

洪興祖：崑崙之丘，或上倍之，是謂涼風之山，登之而不死；或上倍之，是謂縣圃之山，登之乃靈，能使風雨；或上倍之，乃維上天，登之乃神，是謂太帝之居。

Hong Xingzu: [Citing the *Huainanzi*]: What is even higher than the peaks of Kunlun is what is referred to as the mountains of cooling wind, and who climbs them will not die.

What is even higher is referred to as the mountains of Xuanpu, and who climbs gains

spiritual power, and can command the wind and rain. What is even higher is then Ultimate Heaven, and who climbs there is a deity: this is referred to as the abode of the Supreme Emperor.

汪瑗：蒼梧，楚之山名，謂自楚而啟行耳。Wang Yuan: Cangwu is the name of a mountain in Chu. It just refers to starting the journey from Chu.

徐煥龍：蒼梧縣圃，萬里遙程，朝發夕至，神速如此，誠之所通，無速弗屆也。

Xu Huanlong: Cangwu to Xuanpu is an inconceivable distance; to depart in the morning and arrive in the evening like this is godlike speed. If he is to do it, without [such] speed he will not arrive.

王闔運：縣圃，崑崙山上地，西極所屆，以喻謀秦也。Wang Kaiyun: Xuanpu is a place on the Kunlun range, the westernmost point where he goes, as a metaphor for attempting to forge an alliance with Qin.

95 欲少留此靈瑣兮

日忽忽其將暮

yù shǎo liú cǐ líng suǒ xī

rì hū hū qí jiāng mù

[I] want to briefly stay at this Spirit Engraving —— The sun swiftly is nearing sunset

王逸：靈以喻君。瑣，門鏤也，文如連瑣，楚王之省閣也。Wang Yi: Spirit is a metaphor for his lord. Engraving is the carving on the gate, patterned like links; it is the palace gate of the king of Chu.

陸善經：瑣門鋪道，言欲留君門側以盡忠規。Lu Shanjing: The engraved gates open the way: this says he wants to stay by his lord's gate in utmost loyal policy.

徐煥龍：瑣，門鏤也。靈瑣，則仙府神居矣。Xu Huanlong: Engraving is the carving

on the gate. Spirit Engraving is then the mansion of the immortals and the home of spirits.

胡文英：靈瑣，閭闔之瑣闔也。日將暮，托言時之晚也。蓋是時強秦吞并之勢已成，

若不早圖，噬臍無及也。Hu Wenying: Spirit Engraving is the carved doors of the Gate

of Heaven. The sun towards sunset is used to state the lateness of the time, implying that

at this time strong Qin already had the power to swallow all [the other kingdoms]. If a

plan is not made quickly, regret will gnaw at [the king's] guts without end!

游國恩：此言上天必自崑崙，今先經過崑崙之縣圃，仙人所居，擬暫留駐，而時已

晚，恐稽其曼曼修遠之程塗，而不能上下求索耳。You Guoen: This says that the

ascent to heaven must begin from Kunlun. Now first going past Kunlun's Xuanpu, the

abode of immortals, I plan to stop here for a short while, but the time is already late; I

fear if I stop on this long and distant road, then I will be unable to seek high and low.

96 吾令羲和弭節兮 望崦嵫而勿迫

wú lìng xī hé mǐ jié xi

wàng yān zī ér wù pò

I command Xihe to halt ——

Look to Yanzi and hurry [my] approach

Look to Yanzi and prevent [her] approach

Xihe is the female sun god and charioteer of the sun, mother of ten suns and the moon.

王逸：羲和，日御也。……崦嵫，日所入山也，Wang Yi: Xihe is the charioteer of

the sun. ... Yanzi is where the sun enters the mountains [at sunset]. [Hong Xingzu

verifies this with citations from the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and the *Huainanzi*.]

郭璞：止日之行，勿近昧谷也。Guo Pu: [I] stop the movement of the sun, so that it

does not enter the Valley of Dusk.

朱熹：羲和，堯時主四時之官，賓日餞日者也。Zhu Xi: [After asserting that the old interpretation was the explanation of those who love the bizarre; it has no principle and is not in accord with the classics] Xihe was an officer in charge of the Four Times in the time of Yao, who welcomed and dispatched the sun. [Wang Yuan points out that if this were so, the reference to Yanzi doesn't make sense.]

97 路曼曼其脩遠兮

吾將上下而求索

lù màn màn qí xiū yuǎn xī

wú jiāng shàng xià ér qiú suǒ

The road long, long, such vast distance —— I will go above and below in pursuit

王逸：……以求索賢人，與己合志者也。Wang Yi: ...to pursue worthy men who have the same aspiration as I.

朱熹：求賢君也。Zhu Xi: He seeks a worthy lord.

林雲銘：此一句作下文見帝求女總引。Lin Yunming: This stanza makes a summary preview of seeing the Emperor [of Heaven] and seeking women in the text below.

魯筆：旁求意外之遇合，先少抒其情愫，有何不可？本意只為叩帝，亦不妨旁及之。

Lu Bi: Searching on the side for an accidental encounter, [I] first relieve this feeling for a while—isn't that acceptable? The original intention was only to call on the Emperor [of Heaven], why not try to achieve it from the side?

王邦采：求天帝之所在也。Wang Bangcai: Seeking for the place where the Emperor of Heaven is.

98 飲余馬於咸池兮

總 [摠] 余轡乎扶桑

yìn yú mǎ yú xián chí xī

zǒng yú pèi hū fú sāng

Water my horses at the Xian pool ——

Tie my reigns at the Fusang [tree]

Gather my reigns at the Fusang [tree]

“Horses” may be the “jade dragonets” above

王逸：引淮南子：日出陽谷，浴乎咸池，扶 [拂] 于扶桑，是謂晨明；登于扶桑，爰始將行，是謂朏明。言我乃往至東極之野，飲馬于咸池，與日俱浴，以潔己身；

結我車轡于扶桑，以留日行，幸得不老，延年壽也。Wang Yi: [Citing the

Huainanzi]: The sun comes out of the Yang Valley and bathes in the Xian pool,

supported by the Fusang: this is referred to as dawn light. Climbing the Fusang, therefore

to begin my travel: this refers to early morning light. This says I am going to the wilds of

the eastern pole, to water my horse at the Xian pool and take a bath together with the sun

to purify my body. I tie my chariot reigns to the Fusang tree to stay the sun's travel; I

wish to not grow old, to extend my longevity.

朱冀：扶桑若木，東西遙隔，大夫豈真有千百億化身也耶？蓋此一章，專敘早行暮宿耳。咸池扶桑，非以地名，謂日浴咸池時便飲馬，日出扶桑時便總轡也。即星言

夙駕之意。總轡者，謂升車啟行，六轡在手也，注訓結，謬。Zhu Ji: The Fusang

and the Ruo tree are remotely distant east and west; could the Grand Master really have a

thousand hundred million transformations [化身, transformations, refers to the many

manifestations or emanations of deities such as the Buddha]? This stanza describes early

travel and late lodging, that's all. The Xian pool and Fusang are not used as place names,

they refer to watering his horse at the time that the sun takes its bath and taking the reigns

at the time when the sun emerges. This has the meaning of “stars about, early driving” [a *Shijing* quotation meaning “very early and quick travel”]. Taking the reigns refers to mounting the chariot and departing, with the six reigns in his hand. The commentaries gloss it as “tie”; that’s an error.

王闔運：咸池扶桑，皆在東方，以喻齊也。飲馬總轡，言欲結齊爲援。 Wang

Kaiyun: The Xian pool and Fusang tree are both in the east, as metaphors for Qi.

Watering the horse and tying the reigns says he wants to tie a pact of assistance with Qi.

99 折若木以拂日兮

聊逍遙以相羊

zhé ruò mù yǐ fú rì xī

liáo xiāo yáo yǐ xiāng yáng

Break the Ruo tree to whip the sun ——

For now unconstrained and lingering

Break the Ruo tree to block the sun ——

{beat back}

王逸：若木在崑崙西極，其華照下地。 Wang Yi: The Ruo tree is in the westernmost point of Kunlun; its flowers illuminate all below.

呂向：言我折取若木之枝，擊日御使迴，且相羊而遊也。 Lü Xiang: This says I break the branches of the Ruo tree to beat the sun’s charioteer and make her return, [so that I can] linger and roam.

周拱辰：言折若木之幹，上摩日光，藉其蔭以逍遙也。 Zhou Gongchen: This says [I] break off the branches of the Ruo tree to brush off the rays of the sun, using its shade for leisure.

錢澄之：吾既至西，猶當拂日，使不遽沉，得以逍遙相羊，庶可從容以求索耳。

Qian Chengzhi: I will go to the west, as if to beat the sun and make it not sink at once, gaining some [time for] unconstrained lingering; perhaps I can pursue my quest at ease.

王闔運：若木，日入所。拂木，以喻秦也。逍遙相羊，有所待也。懷王在秦，不可遽絕秦。Wang Kaiyun: The Ruo tree is where the sun goes in [to the mountains]. The Fu tree is a metaphor for Qin. Unconstrained lingering: he is waiting for something. King Huai is in Qin, [so he] can't immediately break with Qin.

100 前望舒使先驅兮 後飛廉 [廉] 使奔屬

qián wàng shū shǐ xiān qū xī

hòu fēi lián shǐ bēn shǔ

Ahead Wangshu [I] make to lead the advance ——

Behind Feilian [I] make to run in the following

王逸：望舒，月御也；月體光明，以喻臣清白也。飛廉，風伯也；風爲號令，以喻君命。言己使清白之臣，如望舒先驅求賢，使風伯奉君命於後，以告百姓。或曰駕乘龍雲，必假疾風之力，使奔屬於後。Wang Yi: Wangshu is the charioteer of the moon; the body of the moon is shining brightness, as a metaphor for the clear whiteness of the ministers. Feilian is the earl of the wind; the wind makes orders, as a metaphor for the lord's decree. This says I command the clear white ministers, like Wangshu leading the advance to seek worthies, and [I] command the earl of the wind to follow in upholding the lord's decree, to declare it to the common people. Or it could say that, driving the dragon clouds, I must borrow the strength of the fierce wind, and command it to run up behind.

洪興祖：呂氏春秋曰，風師曰飛廉。應劭曰：飛廉，神禽，能致風氣。晉灼曰：

飛廉，鹿身，頭如雀，有角，而蛇尾豹文。河圖曰：風者，天地之使，乃告號令。

Hong Xingzu: *The Spring and Autumn of Master Lü* says, the master of the wind is called Feilian. Ying Shao says, Feilian is a bird spirit who can control the wind and qi [air/energy]. Jin Zhuo says, Feilian has the body of a deer, a head like a sparrow, horns, and a snake tail patterned like a leopard. The “River Diagram” says, wind is the messenger of Heaven and Earth; it promulgates commands.

汪瑗：此二句如孔子將之荊，先之以子夏，又申之以冉有文法，前後二字要活看，非謂在己之前後也。……此謂使飛廉奔屬於望舒之後也 Wang Yuan: The literary construction of these two lines is like “When Confucius is about to go to Jing, he sent Zixia ahead, and then repeated [his message] by way of Ranyou” [a quotation from the *Record of Rites* 禮記檀弓上]. The two words “ahead” and “behind” must be taken not at their face value; they do not refer to my front and back. ...This refers to making Feilian run up behind Wangshu. [Both are in advance of Qu Yuan, as Zixia and Ranyou were in advance of Confucius.]

蔣驥：欲天神輔己，以道達叩闈之意也。Jiang Ji: Wanting the heavenly deities to assist me expresses my intention to knock at the imperial gate [to present my case].

夏大霖：望舒，月御，隱喻女后也。飛廉，風伯也，隱喻趨風承旨之臣。Xia Dalin: Wangshu is the charioteer of the moon, a veiled metaphor for the queen. Feilian is the earl of the wind, a veiled metaphor for the respectful and obedient ministers [a pun on 風 / 趨風: wind/respectful of power].

胡文英：前望舒，所以啓其明。後飛廉，所以致其遠。Hu Wenying: Ahead is Wangshu, lighting the way. Behind is Feilian, sending him the distance.

王闔運：望舒飛廉，皆喻諸侯也。欲合縱擯秦，故曰前驅後屬。 Wang Kaiyun:

Wangshu and Feilian are both metaphors for the feudal lords. He wants to make a vertical alliance against Qin, so he says ahead advancing and behind joining in.

101 鸞皇爲余先戒兮 雷師告余以未具

luán huáng wéi yú xiān jiè xī

léi shī gào yú yǐ wèi jù

Luan-phoenix is my fore-guard ——

Luan-phoenix gives me advance warning ——

Thunder Master tells me it is not yet complete

The word usually translated as “phoenix” is 鳳凰; strictly speaking, 鳳 is the male of this bird and 凰 is the female. To avoid wordiness I have simply translated 鳳, 凰 (皇), and 鳳凰 as “phoenix” throughout.

王逸：[鳥]以喻仁智之士。雷爲諸侯，以興於君。 Wang Yi: [The birds] are a metaphor for benevolent and wise elites. Thunder is for the feudal lords, as a prefatory allusion to their lord [the king].

陸善經：雷聲赫赫，以興於君也。 Lu Shanqing: The sound of thunder is majestic, as a prefatory allusion to the lord [king].

汪瑗：此章悉言風月雷鳥，以見其欲往之亟也。 Wang Yuan: This stanza details the wind, moon, thunder, and birds, to show the earnestness of his desire to go.

王夫之：鸞皇先戒，盡禮紹介以往求也。雷師告以未具，極言其情之迫也。 Wang Fuzhi: Luan-phoenix foreguard: totally [complying with] ritual propriety to introduce his suit. Thunder master tells it's not complete: admonishing that his affection is too urgent.

徐煥龍：先戒，先時約婚期也。Advance warning: setting a wedding date ahead of time.

夏大霖：鸞皇隱喻國瑞賢臣，雷師隱喻威嚴任法之官。言成浴日之功，固吾之志，然吾亦賴羣力爲我之地，而後能成。Xia Dalin: The luan-phoenix is a veiled metaphor for the kingdom's fortune, the worthy ministers; the Thunder Master is a veiled metaphor for the dignified and law-enforcing officials. This says, to complete the meritorious deed of bathing the sun is surely my aspiration, thus I will rely on the strength of the group for [the sake of] our land, and subsequently we can succeed.

王闔運：鸞皇，以喻結昏於齊也。雷師不喻諸侯，此蓋專謂齊王也。言離合縱，尤專恃齊也。Wang Kaiyun: Luan-phoenix is a metaphor for a marriage with Qi. Thunder Master is not a metaphor for the feudal lords; here it must exclusively refer to the king of Qi. This says that in forming a vertical alliance, [Chu] must exclusively rely on Qi.

102 吾令鳳鳥飛騰兮 繼之以日夜

wú lìng fèng niǎo fēi téng xī

jì zhī yǐ rì yè

I command the phoenix-bird to soar —— Continuing it by day and night

王逸：言我使鳳鳥明智之士，飛行天下，以求同志，續以日夜，冀相逢遇也。

Wang Yi: This states that I control the phoenix-wise elites; flying around under heaven to seek men of like aspiration, continuing it day and night, [I] hope [we will] encounter each other.

洪興祖：山海經云，丹穴之山有鳥焉，其狀如雞，五彩而文，曰鳳鳥。是鳥也，飲食則自歌自舞，見則天下大康寧。Hong Xingzu: The *Classic of Mountains and Seas*

states that the Mountain of Cinnabar Cave has a bird whose shape is like a chicken, multicolored and patterned, called the phoenix-bird. This bird dances and sings for itself while eating and drinking; when it appears it is an omen of great peace for [the land] under heaven.

蔣驥：使鳳之佐匹前戒，而雷師猶謂其使未備；故又使鳳鳥親行，而後諸神畢至也。

Jiang Ji: [He] sent the phoenix's support team as an advance guard, but the Thunder Master still said his envoy was not prepared; so he again sends the phoenix-bird to go itself, and after [that] all the spirits are finally complete.

夏大霖：此吾字有自任意。鳳鳥飛騰，有為國發祥意。繼之日夜，不自暇逸意。

Xia Dalin: This word "I" has the meaning of self-reliance. The phoenix-bird soars, which has the meaning of the founding prosperity of the kingdom. "Continued it day and night" means not taking his leisure.

103 飄風屯其相離兮

帥雲霓而來御

piāo fēng tún qí xiāng lí xī

shuài yún ní ér lái yù

Whirling wind assembling, separating ——

Whirling wind assembles this gathering —— Leading cloud rainbows to come welcome

Leading cloud rainbows to come defend

Leading cloud rainbows and approaching chariots

王逸：回風為飄，飄風，無常之風，以興邪惡之衆。屯其相離，言不與己和合也。

雲霓，惡氣，以喻佞人。御，迎也。言己使鳳鳥往求同志之士，欲與俱共事君，反

見邪惡之人，相與屯衆，謀欲離己；又遇佞人相帥來迎，欲使我變節以隨之也。

Wang Yi: A turning wind is a whirlwind, a whirlwind is an abnormal wind; this is a prefatory allusion to the crooked evil crowd. “Assembling, separating” says they don’t get along in harmony with me. Cloud rainbows are evil qi, as a metaphor for flatterers. 御 is to welcome. This says I make the phoenix-bird go seek elites of like aspiration, desiring to join with them in serving the lord, but instead I see crooked, evil men, joining together in a crowd, scheming their desire to distance me; then I meet flatterers, welcoming me in succession, desiring to make me change my tune and follow them.

朱冀：此二句皆描寫將到天門時，有此景象。Zhu Ji: These two lines both describe the time when he was going to the Gate of Heaven; this was the prospect [these are not negative metaphors].

104 紛總總其離合兮

斑陸離其上下

fēn zǒng zǒng qí lí hé xi

bān lù lí qí shàng xià

Abundantly collected in their joinedness — Speckledly variegated in their rise and fall

陸善經：言欲求賢輔君，而讒佞之人，聚相離絕，紛紛衆多，乍離乍合，斑然參差，

或上或下，言其盛也。Lu Shanjing: This says I desire to pursue worthies to assist my

lord, but instead [there are] slanderers and flatterers, joining together and setting one

against another, abundantly crowding, now apart and now together, in speckly

unevenness, some up and some down: it describes their flourishing.

汪瑗：二句總指上三章扈衛之形色言也。Wang Yuan: These two lines summarize the

above three stanzas about the form and appearance of his royal guard.

陳本禮：紛總總者，天門外之神祇衆多也。Chen Benli: “Abundantly collected” are

the many gods and spirits assembled outside the gate of Heaven.

馬茂元：這兩句寫途中情景，意思是說，就在這樣情況下，戰勝了一切困難，來到天國的門前。Ma Maoyuan: These two lines describe the circumstances [feeling and scene] of his journey; the significance is that it is in this condition, having triumphed over all difficulties, that I arrive before the gate of Heaven.

105 吾令帝閽開關兮 倚閽闔而望予

wú lìng dì hūn kāi guān xī

yǐ chāng hé ér wàng yú

I command the Emperor's doorguard to open the gate ——

Leaning on Heaven's Gate, [he] looks at me

Lean on Heaven's Gate, so [she/he may] look at me

王逸：言己求賢不得，疾讒惡佞，將上訴天帝，使閽人開關，又倚天門望而距我，使我不得入也。Wang Yi says: This says I seek worthies without success. Despising slander and hating flattery, I go above to inform the Emperor of Heaven. I make the doorguard open the gate, [but] then he leans on the gate of heaven looking and keeping me at a distance, refusing me entry.

洪興祖：文選注云，閽闔，天門也，王者因以為門。屈原亦以閽闔喻君門也。

Hong Xingzu: The commentary to the *Wenxuan* says 閽闔 is the gate of heaven, so it is the gate for kings. Qu Yuan also uses Heaven's Gate as a metaphor for the king.

汪瑗：言催促扈衛，日夜並進而求索者，蓋欲使閽者開關，而使天帝庶幾得以憑閽闔而望己之至也。Wang Yuan: This says I hasten my royal guard, day and night advancing in pursuit. [This] must mean that [I] want to make the doorguard open the gate,

so that the Emperor of Heaven will have a chance to lean on the Heaven's Gate and look upon my arrival. [Xu Huanlong also proposes that the speaker is presenting himself to be looked at, but by women, not by the Emperor of Heaven.]

奚祿詒：閽人不開關，猶斬尚等之排擠云。Xi Luyi: The doorguard doesn't open the gate; this is like Jin Shang and the rest excluding me.

王闔運：帝，懷王也。關，秦武關也。閽闔又在其西，倚望者帝也。Wang Kaiyun: The Emperor is King Huai. The gate is the Martial Gate [a pass] of Qin. Heaven's Gate is, again, in the West; the one who leans and looks is the Emperor.

馬其昶：望予，言欲令帝閽倚門覘望，以待己之至。Ma Qichang: "Looks at me" says that I want to command the Emperor's doorguard to lean on the doors and observe, to wait upon my arrival.

According to Wen Yiduo, the overall narrative of the poem suggests that the speaker has come to heaven not to complain to the Emperor of Heaven but rather to court a female deity. 司馬相如 Sima Xiangru's 《大人賦》"Rhapsody on the Great Man" contains the lines: "排閽闔而入帝宮兮，載玉女而與之歸 Open Heaven's Gate and enter the Emperor's palace, / Carry off the Jade Woman and with her return." So Wen speculates that the speaker came to court the Jade Woman. [The "Rhapsody," however, suggests rape rather than courtship.]

106 時曖曖其將罷兮

結幽蘭而延佇

shí ài ài qí jiāng bà xī

jié yōu lán ér yán zhù

Time dimly is coming to the end ——

Tie orchidaceae and prolong the wait

Is the knot-tying a pastime or a message?

王逸：言時世昏昧，無有明君，周行罷極，不遇賢士，故結芳草，長立有還意也。

Wang Yi: This says this era is dark; there is no enlightened lord. My travelling around runs out at this extreme. I do not meet worthy elites. So I knot fragrant herbs, long standing with the intention to return.

謝濟世：日暮途窮，惟有延佇嘆息而已。原在放所必嘗詣襄王行在，求見而不得，故託言如此。Xie Jishi: The sun is sinking and the road is coming to an end; I can only wait and sigh. In the place of his exile Yuan must have once come to the place where King Xiang resided while traveling. He sought to be seen but did not succeed, so he put it into words like these.

According to Wen Yiduo, sash ornaments were exchanged between courting men and women to express love and devotion in Chu and other parts of ancient China; moreover, the idea of “tying the knot” has similar symbolic significance in Chinese as in English (結婚, tying the marriage).

107 世溷濁而不分兮

好蔽美而嫉妒

shì hùn zhuó ér bù fēn xi

hào bì měi ér jí dù

The world is foul muddy and not distinguished —— Loving to block beauty and to envy

朱熹：蓋其意若曰，不意天門之下，亦復如此，於是去而它適也。Zhu Xi: The meaning of this must be like saying, “I didn’t expect that here, before the gate of Heaven, it would also be like this,” and so I leave for another place.

錢澄之：以上志在慕君，君如上帝，必當鑒其忠忱，而不意爲閹所阻，無怪乎王之

見疎也。以下志在求女，見舉世皆蔽賢嫉能，使主孤立於上，庶幾宮中得一賢媛，以爲內助，猶可以回主惑乎？因王寵鄭袖也。 Qian Chengzhi: Above the intention is to admire his lord; his lord is like the Highest Emperor [God], and must serve as a mirror for loyal sincerity. And yet I was unexpectedly blocked by the doorguard—how could the king be blamed for distancing me? Below the intention is to pursue women; [I] see that everyone in the world blocks beauty and envies talent, causing the Host [or ruler] to stand alone at the top. Perhaps in the palace I might find a worthy lady, to be a helper within, to bring the king back from where he has been misled? The reason for this is that the king favors Zheng Xiu.

朱冀：此一歎與前姊詈一歎，及求女，靈氛，巫咸章三歎互映。 Zhu Ji: This is a sigh, joined to the previous sigh of the elder sister's scolding. When it comes to the stanzas about the pursuit of women, Spirit Aura, and Shaman Xian, it is three sighs reflecting each other.

108 朝吾將濟於白水兮 登閬風而縶馬

zhāo wú jiāng jì yú bái shuǐ xī

dēng láng fēng ér yì mǎ

Morning I go to ford the White Water —— Climb Langfeng and tether the horses

王逸：淮南子言，白水出崑崙之山，飲之不死。閬風，山名，在崑崙之上。……言已見中國溷濁，則欲渡白水，登神山，屯車繫馬，而留止也。白水潔淨，閬風清明，言已脩清白之行，不懈怠也。 Wang Yi: The *Huainanzi* says, the White Water comes out of the Kunlun mountains, and who drinks it will not die. Langfeng is the name of a mountain in the heights of Kunlun. ... This says, I see the Middle Kingdom is muddied, so

I want to cross the White Water and climb the sacred mountain; I encamp my chariot and tie my horses, to stop and stay here. The White Water is pure and clean, Langfeng is clear and bright: this says that I cultivate clear white conduct, and am never idle.

劉夢鵬：閩風亦仙臺，西爲縣圃，北爲閩風，登閩風即至縣圃之變文耳。Liu

Mengpeng: Langfeng is the Pavilion of Immortals; to the west is Xuanpu, to the north is Langfeng. Climbing Langfeng is just changed wording for arriving at Xuanpu.

戴震：白水，謂河源。爾雅，河出昆侖虛，色白，是也。Dai Zhen: White Water refers to the source of the Yellow River. [According to] the *Erya*, the Yellow River comes out of the Kunlun mountains and its color is white; this is it.

109 忽反顧以流涕兮

哀高丘之無女

hū fǎn gù yǐ liú tì xī

āi gāo qiū zhī wú nǚ

Suddenly [I] turn [my] head with flowing tears ——

Grieving for the high hill's absence of women

王逸：楚有高丘之山。女以喻臣。Wang Yi: Chu has a High Hill mountain. Women are metaphors for ministers.

朱熹：女，神女，蓋以比賢君也。Zhu Xi: [These] women are goddesses; they must be comparisons for a worthy lord.

蔣驥：神女，喻賢諸侯也。Jiang Ji: Goddesses are metaphors for the feudal lords.

屈復：高丘，楚地名。楚國盡爲朋黨，丈夫中無可語者。女中或有，亦未可知。

Qu Fu: The High Hill is the name of a place in Chu. The kingdom of Chu is completely formed into cliques, [so that] among [all] the men there is not one to speak with [me].

Among the women perhaps there is one, but I can't yet be sure.

奚祿詒：高丘之無女，斷指君說，懷王留秦未返也。下面宓妃有娥二姚皆帝室之女，皆喻懷王。Xi Luyi: “The high hill is without a woman” definitely indicates his lord, to explain that King Huai stayed in Qin and has not returned. Below, Fufei and the Two Yao of Yousong all are women of the [divine] Emperors, all metaphors for King Huai.

張象津：高邱喻宮中尊位。若懷王正后有若姜后之脫簪，鄧曼之諫王者，王必不能如此之惑。Zhang Xiangjin: The high hill is a metaphor for the place of honor within the inner palace. If the wife of King Huai was like Consort Jiang who removed her ornaments [see 列女傳，周宣姜后], or like Deng Man who remonstrated with her king, then the king certainly could not have become so confused like this.

游國恩：此文所謂女者，非指君，亦非指臣，乃隱喻可通君側之人耳。You Guoen: When this text refers to women, it does not indicate lords, and it does not indicate ministers; it is rather a veiled metaphor for people who can communicate with the closest aids of the lord.

馬茂元：女，當然是指神女。無女，言沒有理想的神女可以追求，指下文求宓妃事。Ma Maoyuan: “Women” of course indicates goddesses. “Without a woman” says there is no ideal goddess whom [I] could pursue, indicating the matter of seeking Fufei in the text below.

In sum, is the speaker looking for a companion for himself [fellow ministers or a male or female friend], a helpmeet for himself [courtier-retainers], a companion for the king [ministers or consorts], or an ideal lover for himself [a true king]? And/or is he seeking something less concrete—recognition, power, spiritual love?

110 溘吾遊此春宮兮

折瓊枝以繼佩

kè wú yóu cǐ chūn gōng xī

zhé qióng zhī yǐ jì pèi

Swiftly I roam in this spring palace ——

Suddenly I'm roaming this spring palace ——

[I] break nephrite branch to lengthen [my] sash

My choice of “nephrite” over “jadeite” or simply “jade” is rather arbitrary, meant to distinguish 瓊 from 玉, “jade,” above. The spring palace may be a specific palace (for a heavenly or earthly king) or generally a palace in which women (divine or mortal) live.

王逸：春宮，東方青帝舍也。言已行游，奄然至於青帝之舍，觀萬物始生，皆出於仁，復折瓊枝以續佩，守仁行義，志彌固也。Wang Yi: The Spring Palace is the abode of the Green Emperor of the East. This says I travel around, and suddenly arrive at the abode of the Green Emperor; I observe the birth of the myriad things, all coming out of humaneness; again [I] break a nephrite branch to extend my sash, protecting humaneness and acting in righteousness: [my] aspiration is full and solid.

洪興祖：傳曰，南方有鳥，其名爲鳳，天爲生樹，名曰瓊枝，高百二十仞，大三十圍，以琳琅爲實。Hong Xingzu: The *Commentary* says, the South has a bird whose name is “phoenix”; heaven [or nature] grows a tree for it whose name is “nephrite branch,” as high as one hundred and twenty *ren*, as wide as thirty *wei*, with beautiful gems as its fruit.

夏大霖：春宮，東方青帝之舍，寓言少女所居，比王妃所居。Xia Dalin: The Spring Palace is the abode of the Green Emperor of the East, as an allegory for the home of virgins, a comparison for the home of the consorts of the king.

陳本禮：春宮，巽方青帝長女之宮。Chen Benli: The Spring Palace is the palace of the eldest daughter of the Green Emperor of the land of the *xun*-trigram [i.e., the south-east].

111 及榮華之未落兮

相下女之可詒

jí róng huá zhī wèi luò xī

xiāng xià nǚ zhī kě dài

While flowers and blossoms are yet unfallen ——

Mark the lower women's bequeathable [ones]

{Observe among the women below those to whom it could be bequeathed}

王逸：言己既脩行仁義，冀得同志，願及年德盛時，顏貌未老，視天下賢人，將持玉帛而聘遺之，與俱事君也。Wang Yi: This says I have already cultivated humanness and righteousness; hoping to obtain those of like aspiration, wishing that when my age is ripe with moral integrity and my appearance is not yet old I will view the worthy men under heaven and offer them jade and silk [royal gifts] as betrothal gifts, and join together in serving our lord.

洪興祖：下女，喻賢人之在下者。Hong Xingzu: The lower women are a metaphor for the worthy men who are below [the king].

朱熹：下女，謂神女之侍女也。欲及榮華之未落，而因下女以通意於神妃也。Zhu Xi: “Lower women” refers to the servant women of the goddesses. While the flowers [of youth] have not yet fallen, he wants to make use of the servant women to communicate with the goddess-consorts.

汪瑗：榮華，草木之英也，草曰榮，木曰華。榮華之未落，喻顏色之未衰也。

Wang Yuan: *Ronghua* 榮華 are the blossoms of plants and trees; those of the plants are called *rong* 榮 and those of the trees are called *hua* 華. “Flowers and blossoms are yet unfallen” is a metaphor for one’s appearance being not yet aged.

徐煥龍：榮華，喻美人顏色，又春宮景光，正榮華方發之候。 Xu Huanlong:

“Flowers and blossoms” is a metaphor for the appearance of the Beautiful One, and also is the scenery of the Spring Palace, which is in the season of flowers blossoming everywhere.

方苞：以衆女比讒邪，則下女乃喻親臣重臣，能爲己解於君者。……衆女雖多嫉妬，然下女中獨無好賢樂善，可詒以瓊枝之佩者乎？ Fang Bao: [Because] the assembled women are used as a comparison for slander and crookedness, then the lower women [must be] a metaphor for the [king’s] intimate ministers and powerful ministers, those who could explain me to my lord [i.e., intercede on my behalf]. ... Although most of the assembled women are jealous, yet among the lower women is there not one who loves worthiness and enjoys kindness, to whom could be given the gift of a nephrite branch sash ornament?

蔣驥：下女，指下宓妃諸人，對高丘言，故曰下。 Jiang Ji: the lower women indicates Fufei and the other people below; from the perspective of the High Hill, they are called “lower”.

林仲懿：榮華，即瓊枝之榮華。……蓋言求 [西] 王母之女。春宮，謂東王父所居。

Ling Zhongyi: “Flowers and blossoms” are the flowers and blossoms on the nephrite branch. ... This must say that [I] seek the daughters of the Queen Mother of the West. The Spring Palace refers to the abode of the King Father of the West. [The Queen Mother of the West was said to have many daughters named after flowers and jade.]

顧成天：大段在爭交鄰之失計，正言不得，故隱言之。蓋懷王結婚于秦，不智甚矣。

襄又忘大仇而迎娶于秦，君臣醉夢如此，國事尚可為耶？[高邱 = 秦，春宮 = 襄] 言

列國即無可求，榮華方盛，公卿民庶之女皆可為匹嫡也，何至求于虎狼之地乎？

Gu Chengtian: This passage [was composed] when [Chu] failed in the diplomacy struggle with neighbor [states]; it couldn't be stated directly, so he states it allegorically. It must

[refer to] King Huai's marriage with Qin, the epitome of his lack of wisdom. [King]

Xiang, again, forgot the great vengeance and welcomed a wife from Qin. With the lord

and ministers in a drunken dream like this, how could the affairs of state succeed? ...[The

High Hill is Qin, Spring Palace is King Xiang's palace]... This says there is nothing to be

sought in the other kingdoms; the blossoms and flowers are flourishing on all sides, the

daughters of the high ministers and common people all could be partnered in marriage—

why go on to struggle in the land of tigers and wolves [i.e., Qin]? [You Guoen considers

this the worst example of Gu's interpretation according to a complete and forced

application of Chu foreign affairs.]

112 吾令豐隆乘雲兮

求宓妃之所在

wú lìng fēng lóng chéng yún xi

qiú fú fēi zhī suǒ zài

I command Fenglong, riding the clouds —— [I] seek Fufei's abode

Fenglong is the Master of Clouds or the God of Thunder.

Many interpreters take care to avoid suggesting that Qu Yuan might be, in parts of this

sequence, courting another man's wife; in some cases they assert that she is the other

man's daughter or not yet his wife/concubine/consort, or they tactfully restrict their

emphasis to the woman's high rank and quality. Nevertheless, the legends about these women are primarily concerned with their marriages, and the "fei" of Fufei usually refers to a consort or a secondary wife of royalty.

王逸：言我令雲師豐隆，乘雲周行，求隱士清潔若宓妃者，欲與并心力也。Wang Yi: This says I command the Master of Clouds, Fenglong. Riding the clouds around, I pursue hermits as pure as Fufei, wanting to join our minds and strength.

呂延濟：慮妃，洛水神，以喻賢臣。Lü Yanji: Fufei is the goddess of the Luo River, a metaphor for worthy ministers.

洪興祖：洛神賦注云，宓妃，伏羲氏女，溺洛水而死，遂為河神。Hong Xingzu: The commentary to the "Luo Goddess Rhapsody" states that Fufei was the woman [daughter or wife] of Fuxi, who drowned in the Luo River and died, and subsequently became the goddess of the river.

夏大霖：言古來開國以聖女發祥者備聞之矣。Xia Dalin: Since ancient times the founding of kingdoms by the creativity of sage women is fully attested.

113 解佩纓以結言兮

吾令蹇脩以為理

jiě pèi xiāng yǐ jié yán xi

wú lìng jiǎn xiū yǐ wéi lǐ

Untie my sash cloth as a promise ——

I command Jianxiu to be the matchmaker

{to tie/knot/bind words}

I command music of drum and bell for the matchmaker

王逸：蹇脩，伏羲氏之臣也。……伏羲時敦朴，故使其臣也。Wang Yi: Jianxiu is a minister of Lord Fuxi. ...The time of Fuxi [husband or father of Fufei] was honest and

simple [i.e., primitive], so [Qu Yuan] sends [Fuxi's] minister.

Zhu Xi can't find the evidence for Wang Yi's attribution; most alternative interpretations are also speculative. David Hawkes translates Jianxiu as "Lame Beauty."

114 紛總總其離合兮 忽緯繡其難遷

fēn zǒng zǒng qí lí hé xi

hū wěi huà qí nán qiān

Abundantly collected in their joinedness ——

Disordered throughout is their scatteredness ——

Suddenly unreasonable in her difficulty to acquiesce

{weaving inclines/boundaries}

The first line is identical to a line above. Does it describe Qu Yuan or his quarry? Does the second line describe Jianxiu or Fufei?

李陳玉：紛總總其離合，所言無頭緒，忽離忽合，不能結言之狀也。Li Chenyu:

“Disordered throughout is their scatteredness”: what it describes is without organization, now apart and now together; [it is] the appearance of [one/those to whom I] cannot make promises.

王夫之：紛總總，來去無定之貌。Wang Fuzhi: Disordered throughout is the state of coming and going without settledness.

李光地：總總離合，亦蒙乘雲而言。Li Guangdi: “Collected joinedness” is his wild riding of the clouds.

陳本禮：紛總總，見媒理之往返也。離合，言辭未定之象。Chen Benli: Disordered throughout, [I] see the matchmaker going and returning. Scattered is the form of [her]

unsettled words.

115 夕歸次於窮石兮

朝濯髮乎洧盤

xī guī cì yú qióng shí xī

zhāo zhuó fà hū wěi pán

Evening returning to pass at the Last Rock ——

Morning washing [my/her] hair in the Weipan

And does this describe Fufei or Qu Yuan?

The Last Rock is the source of the Ruo River and/or the dwelling place of Hou Yi, a mythical archer who shot the River Earl (河伯, god of the Yellow River) and kidnapped the Earl's consort Fufei. The Weipan is also a mythical river.

王逸：言宓妃體好清潔，暮即歸舍窮石之室，朝沐洧盤之水，遁世隱居，而不肯仕也。Wang Yi: This says that Fufei's body is clean and pure. At sunset she returns to pass the night in her room at the Last Rock; in the morning she bathes in the water of the Weipan. Escaping the world and living in reclusion, [she] is not willing to serve [the government].

錢澄之：歸次濯髮，是女不見許，有此無聊之情。Qian Chengzhi: Going back to pass the night, washing her hair: this woman has refused to accept me, so I have this feeling of ennui.

林雲銘：見絕後來此，凡早起必理髮而沐之。Lin Yunming: After being rejected [I] come to this; every time [I] rise in the morning I must manage my coiffure and bathe it.

夏大霖：洛水在河南，洧水亦在河南，春秋時之鄭地，七國時屬魏。鄭袖乃鄭女，不可明指，故以宓妃為詞，更以洧盤指其地。Xia Dalin: The Luo River is in Henan,

and the Wei[ban] River is also in Henan; in the Spring and Autumn period this was the territory of [the kingdom of] Zheng, and during the period of the Seven [Warring] States it belonged to [the kingdom of] Wei. Zheng Xiu was a woman of Zheng, but she could not be explicitly pointed out, so [Qu Yuan] uses the words about Fufei, and uses the Weiban to point out her homeland.

劉夢鵬：西歸朝濯，即下淫遊之意。Liu Mengpeng: Returning to the west, morning washing: this is the meaning of “wanton roaming” below.

王闓運：窮石涓盤皆在西極，以喻秦也。Wang Kaiyun: The Last Rock and the Weipan are both in the extreme West, as metaphors for Qin.

David Hawkes: The “Heavenly Questions” refers to a legend (now lost) about Lord Yi, the Mighty Archer, shooting the River Earl (the god of the Yellow River) and carrying off the Luo goddess [Fu Fei] to be his wife. Since the River Luo is a tributary of the Yellow River, it would be natural to think of its goddess as the Yellow River god’s consort. Qiong-shi [the Last Rock] was traditionally the home of Lord Yi. In the passage which follows, the goddess’s vacillations between Qiong-shi and Wei-pan [Weipan] are, I think, meant to imply that she is carrying on simultaneously with both Lord Yi and the River Earl.

¹¹⁶ 保厥美以驕傲兮

日康娛以淫遊

bǎo jué měi yǐ jiāo ào xi

rì kāng yú yǐ yín yóu

Guarding her beauty in arrogance ——

Daily revelry in wanton roaming

Guarding one’s beauty with pride ——

Daily delighting in wandering travel

{depending on/conserving}

王逸：言宓妃用志高遠，保守美德，驕傲侮慢，日自娛樂以遊戲自恣，無有事君之意也。Wang Yi: This says that Fufei's effort and aspiration are lofty and broad, she preserves her moral beauty; [but] prideful and disdainful, she all day delights in play and indulgence, and never means to serve her lord.

汪瑗：保厥美謂處妃自守其顏色之美也。Wang Yuan: "Guarding her beauty" refers to Fufei's preservation of her own beautiful appearance.

黃文煥：驕傲淫遊，原之自道也。宓妃不我許，吾自保吾之內美而已。雖哀無女，豈肯喪志，未嘗不高自命也，未嘗不靜自樂也。保厥美以驕傲，日康娛以淫遊，姑玩世肆志焉可乎！Huang Wenhuan: "Pride" and "wandering" are Yuan speaking of himself. Fufei does not accept me, so I just save my inner beauty to myself. Although I mourn that there is no woman, how could I be willing to bury my aspiration? I never could consider myself unlofty, never could silence the joy I find in myself. Guarding one's beauty with pride, daily delighting in wandering travel—for now I can play in the world with easeful aspiration!

錢澄之：驕傲康娛，皆指現在楚之嬖人也。Qian Chengzhi: Arrogant and revelry: both indicate the favored persons of [Qu Yuan's] contemporary Chu.

林雲明：驕傲無禮等句，明刺鄭袖 Lin Yunming: The lines with "arrogance" and "without propriety" and so on clearly criticize Zheng Xiu.

朱冀：袖雖不善，王之寵姬也。臣子而求君之妃妾，是何言歟？Zhu Ji: Although [Zheng] Xiu was not kind, she was the king's favored concubine. How could this possibly say that the subject [Qu Yuan] pursues the consort of his lord [King Huai]?

117 雖信美而無禮兮

來違棄而改求

suī xìn měi ér wú lǐ xī

lái wéi qì ér gǎi qiú

Though surely beautiful yet without propriety ——

Come, abandon [her] and change the pursuit

洪興祖：此孔子所謂隱者，子路所謂潔身亂倫。Hong Xingzu: [Referring to the *Analects*, “Weizi” 論語，微子] This is what Confucius referred to as reclusion, and Zilu [Confucius’ disciple] referred to as the abomination of bodily purification. [In the story, Zilu criticizes some hermits for not following the righteous duty of actively serving the king.]

朱熹：言處妃驕傲淫遊，雖美而不循禮法，故棄去而改求也。Zhu Xi: This says Fufei is arrogant and wanton; although she is beautiful, yet she does not obey the laws of propriety, so [I] abandon [her] and change [my] pursuit.

徐煥龍：顏色雖信乎美好，然禮無往而不答。我解佩命媒，慙慙若此，而絕我已甚，是無禮也，不如來而違棄之，改求他女。此求處妃已不可得。Xu Huanlong:

Although [her] appearance is undoubtedly fine, still without propriety she wanders everywhere and does not reply. I untied my sash and ordered the matchmaker, as earnest as all this, but [she] has already rejected me completely. This is without propriety; it’s better to abandon her and pursue another woman. This pursuit of Fufei is already unattainable.

118 覽相觀於四極兮

周流乎天余乃下

lǎn xiāng guān yú sì jí xī

zhōu liú hū tiān yú nǎi xià

See, observe the four extremes ——

Circling around in heaven I then went down

王逸：言我乃復往觀視四極，周流求賢，然後乃來下也。Wang Yi: This says I then returned to look toward the four extremes, circling about in search of worthies, and after I came down.

Hong Xingzu finds the specific worldly kingdoms that are indicated by the four extremes in the *Erya* (Taiyuan in the east, Bin in the west, Puqian in the south, and Zhuli in the north), but others assert that “four extremes” is only a general reference to the most distant places, either on earth or in heaven.

119 望瑤臺之偃蹇兮

見有娥之佚女

wàng yáo tái zhī yǎn jiǎn xī

jiàn yǒu sōng zhī yì nǚ

[I] look to the Polished Jade Platform’s dizzying height ——

Catch sight of Yousong’s dusky women

{beautiful/wandering/lost/hidden/wanton/crowded women}

{woman}

王逸：謂帝嚳之妃，契母簡狄也。配聖帝，生賢子，以諭貞賢也。Wang Yi: This refers to Jiandi, the consort of Divine Ku and the mother of Xie. [The one who was] paired with the [divine] sage emperor and gave birth to a worthy son serves as a metaphor for chaste worthies.

汪瑗：屈子之意直取佚女之美以喻賢君耳，無關於嚳與契也。……又望瑤臺而媒佚女，猶遊春宮而求處妃耳。Wang Yuan: Master Qu’s meaning just directly takes the

beauty of the dusky woman as a metaphor for a worthy lord; it has nothing to do with [Divine] Ku and Xie. ... Moreover, looking at the Polished Jade Platform to seek a match with the dusky woman is just like roaming the Spring Palace to pursue Fufei.

李光地：佚女喻遊士也，遊士來自他邦，楚系高陽，與高辛別氏，故佚女以有娥言之。Li Guangdi: The dusky women are a metaphor for the wandering elites. The

wandering elites come from other countries; Chu is related to Gao Yang, who is of a different clan than Gao Xin, so the dusky women are said to be from Yousong.

夏大霖：有娥氏之女簡狄，爲殷之祖。商頌，天命玄鳥，降而生商。……言古來啟疆發祥，莫不賴有聖女以爲之助。Xia Dalin: Jiandi, a woman of the clan of Yousong,

made the ancestors of Yin [Shang dynasty]. The “Hymns of Shang” [in the *Shijing*] say that Heaven sent a dark bird, which descended and then [she] gave birth to Shang. ...

This says that since ancient times, as to the origination and rise of empires, not one has not depended upon on the help of sage women.

胡文英：有娥逸女，高辛世妃，皆不妬之人，故欲求而達吾忱。Hu Wenying: The lovely women of Yousong, consorts of Gao Xin, all are people who do not envy, so I want to pursue them and express my sincerity.

David Hawkes: This is Jiandi, the First Ancestress from whom the kings of the Shang dynasty [originally of the Yousong tribe] were descended. She was shut up in a tower like Danaë, but became pregnant by swallowing an egg brought to her by a swallow sent by “Heaven.” Later versions of the story make her one of the consorts of Di Ku [Divine Ku, Shang royal ancestor, also named Gao Xin]. [...] It seems probable that Gao Xin and Gao Yang were originally the sky gods of their respective peoples. Gao Xin is not mentioned in the earliest version of the legend because to the people who told it ‘Heaven’ was in

fact Gao Xin. For them Gao Xin was not an earthly king cuckolded by a bird ‘sent from God’ but God himself, who sent the bird. Qu Yuan must have been familiar with a version of the legend representing an intermediate stage in its evolution from myth into pseudo-history. In this version Gao Xin is now a human king, yet it is still he who sends the swallow which impregnated his wife. In Qu Yuan’s account the bird has become a phoenix. He naturally chooses a bird as messenger in presenting himself as Gao Xin’s rival for the lady’s hand; unfortunately the bird he chose proved an unreliable one. [I believe that for Qu Yuan and many of his ancient readers, there was not a clear distinction between heavenly/mythological and human/historical kings].

¹²⁰ 吾令鳩爲媒兮

鳩告余以不好

wú lìng zhèn wéi méi xi

zhèn gào yú yǐ bù hǎo

I command the zhen [bird] to be go-between ——

The zhen [bird] announces to me that it is not good

王逸：鳩，運日也。羽有毒，可殺人，以喻讒佞賊害人也。Wang Yi: The zhen-bird transports the sun. Its feathers contain poison that can kill a man. It is used as a metaphor for slanderers and flatterers who devastate men.

郭璞：凶人見欺也。Guo Pu: By cruel men [I] have been deceived. [Qu Yuan has been deceived].

洪興祖：廣志云，其鳥大如鴉，紫綠色，有毒，食蛇蝮，雄名運日，雌名陰諧，以其毛歷飲卮，則殺人。……夫鳩之不可爲媒審矣，屈原何爲使之乎？淮南言暉日知晏，陰諧知雨，蓋類小人之有智者。君子不逆詐，不億不信，待其不可用，然後棄

之耳。堯之用鯀是也。Hong Xingzu: According to the *Guangzhi*, this bird is as big as an owl, colored purple and green, poisonous, eats vipers, male named Sun-carrier, female named yin-harmonizer. If its feather is passed through a drinking cup it can kill a man. ... that this zhen-bird cannot serve as go-between is certain, so why did Qu Yuan make use of it? The *Huainanzi* says that the Sun-carrier knows clear skies, and the yin-harmonizer knows the rain, so it must be of the category of those among the petty men who [though petty, nevertheless] have some wisdom. The gentleman is not jealously suspicious, he does not conjecture and is not credulous; he waits until their ineffectiveness [is demonstrated] and [only] after that discards them. Such was Yao's use of Gun.

魯筆：奸似忠，佞似信，寫得刻酷。Lu Bi: Traitors seem loyal, flatterers appear trustworthy: this writes it with deep precision.

馬茂元：告余以不好，意指從中破壞。Ma Maoyuan: “Announces to me that it is not good” means that [the bird] ruined it from within [because the go-between is in the middle].

121 雄鳩之鳴逝兮 余猶惡其佻巧

xióng jiū zhī míng shì xī yú yóu è qí tiāo qiǎo

The male pigeon crying travels —— I so hate his frivolity

汪瑗：或曰，鳩不能爲巢，常逐鵲以居，是天下之鳥莫拙於鳩也。Wang Yuan: It is also said that the pigeon can't make a nest, but always drives the magpie out [of its nest] for a home; of the birds under heaven none is stupider than the pigeon.

朱冀：此四句皆描寫大夫百轉柔腸，左思右想，爲下章猶豫孤疑之根。Zhu Ji:

These four lines all describe the Grand Master's turning over a hundred times in his gut, his pondering here and considering there; it is the root of his irresolution and suspicion in the stanza below.

謝濟世：鳴鳩，雄者尤善鳴，人常養爲媒，以誘他鳩。然晴則呼雌，雨則逐之，故惡其佻巧。Xie Jishi: As to the crying pigeon, the male is exceptionally good at calling, and people often raise it to serve as a matchmaker [bait] to lure other pigeons. Then in clear weather he calls the female, and in rainy weather he sends her away. So [we] hate his frivolity.

龔景瀚：讒者如鳩，既險毒而無常；佞者如鳩，又佻巧而難信。Gong Jinghan: Slanderers are like the zhen-bird, they are venomous and inconstant; flatterers are like the pigeon, they are frivolous and untrustworthy.

122 心猶豫而狐疑兮 欲 [慾] 自適而不可

xīn yóu yù ér hú yí xi

yù zì shì ér bù kě

Heart irresolute and doubtful — [I] want to myself go and yet cannot

{monkey-predicting/dog-leading} {fox-doubting}

Yan Zhitui describes the way a dog runs out and turns back in front of his master to gloss 猶豫; or, according to ancient stories, a certain kind of monkey climbs up a tree at the sound of a distant human. As to 狐疑, it is said that a fox listens to the ice to hear if the water underneath is frozen or flowing before he decides to cross an iced-over river.

王逸：中心狐疑猶豫，意欲自往，禮又不可，女當須媒，士必待介也。Wang Yi: Within my heart is doubtful and irresolute; my desire is to go myself, but in propriety I

may not. Women should need matchmakers, and elites [courtiers] must wait for go-
betweens.

123 鳳皇既受詒兮

恐高辛之先我

fèng huáng jì shòu yí xi

kǒng gāo xīn zhī xiān wǒ

The phoenix has already been entrusted — [I] fear Gao Xin's before me

Who dispatched the phoenix?

王逸：高辛，帝嚳有天下號也。……言已既得賢智之士若鳳皇，受禮遺將行，恐帝
嚳已先我得娥簡狄也。Wang Yi: Gao Xin is the earthly appellation of Divine Ku. This
says I have already obtained worthy wise elites, like phoenixes; they have received my
gift and are about to go, [but I] fear that Divine Ku already obtained Jiandi of Song
before me.

呂延濟：帝嚳，喻諸侯國賢君。Lü Yanji: Divine Ku is a metaphor for the worthy
lords of the feudal kingdoms.

朱熹：鳳皇又已受高辛之遺，而來求之，故恐簡狄先爲嚳所得也。……舊以爲既受
我之禮而將行者，誤矣。審爾，則高辛何由而先我哉。正爲己用鳩鳩，而彼使鳳皇，
其勢不敵，故恐其先得之耳。

Zhu Xi: The phoenix now has already received Gao Xin's offering, and come to seek [her],
so I fear Jiandi was obtained by [Divine] Ku before me. ... The old [interpreters] who
believed this means [the phoenix] received my present and was ready to go were mistaken.
Examine [the words] closely; what is the reason that Gao Xin was before me? It is
certainly because I used the zhen-bird and pigeons, while he used a phoenix; his power is

unbeatable, thus I fear he has obtained [the lady] first.

蔣驥：鳳凰受詒，則既獲良媒矣，而恐高辛玄鳥之詒，已在我先，又中輟也。

Jiang Ji: The phoenix is entrusted, so [I] have already secured an excellent matchmaker; and yet [I] fear the dark bird of Gao Xin already made its offer before me, again breaking [my plan] off in the middle.

Ma Maoyuan (following Wen Yiduo) argues, based primarily on the evidence of this one line, that the “dark bird” referred to in the legend of Jiandi is in fact a phoenix, and that everyone has long believed the “dark bird” to be a swallow due to a historical misunderstanding.

124 欲 [慾] 遠集而無所止兮 聊浮遊以逍遙

yù yuǎn jí ér wú suǒ zhǐ xī

liáo fú yóu yǐ xiāo yáo

[I] want to distantly gather, but [there is] nowhere to stop ——

For now [I] drift about in unconstraint

王逸：言已求簡狄，復後高辛，欲遠集它方，又無所止之，姑且遊戲觀望以忘憂，

用以自適也。Wang Yi: This says I pursue Jiandi but come after Gao Xin. I want to

distantly fly and perch in other places, but then there is nowhere to stop. For the moment

I roam and observe to forget my cares, in this way to comfort myself.

劉良：言求忠賢不得，欲往遠方，又兼無所止，且浮觀而逍遙。Liu Liang: This

says I seek loyal worthies and do not attain them. I want to go to distant places, and again am without a place to stop, for the time being drifting, watching, and unconstrained.

錢杲之：鳳皇未有所止，姑且翱翔自得，不急於媒。Qian Gaozhi: The phoenix does

not have a place to stop, and for the moment soars self-satisfied, not hurrying to make the match.

吳世尚：宓妃不字，有娥適人，求而不得，則無無以成其相助之美。余雖欲遠去，而此心何以自安，故曰無所止也。欲去不能去，故浮遊逍遙而在此也。Wu

Shishang: Fufei doesn't [agree to a] contract, a marriage with Yousong is pursued but not attained—so there is absolutely no one to fulfill his wish of finding a help-meet.

Although I want to go far away, yet how could this heart be settled in me? So it says nowhere to stop. I want to go but can't go, so I'm here drifting and unconstrained.

125 及少康之未家兮

留有虞之二姚

jí shào kāng zhī wèi jiā xi

liú yǒu yú zhī èr yáo

While Shao Kang's yet unfamilied ——

[I] stay with Youyu's two Yao

There remains Youyu's two Yao

王逸：少康，夏后相之子也。有虞，國名，姚姓，舜後也。昔寒浞使澆殺夏后相，少康逃奔有虞，虞因妻以二女，而邑於綸，有田一成，有衆一族，能布其德，以收夏衆，遂誅滅澆，復禹之舊績。屈原設至遠方之外，博求衆賢，索宓妃則不肯見，求簡狄則又後高辛，幸若少康留止有虞，而得二妃，以成顯功，是不欲遠去之意也。

Wang Yi: Shao Kang was the son of Lord Xiang of Xia [dynasty]. Youyu is the name of a kingdom: [its people are] surnamed Yao; they are descendants of Shun. In ancient times Han Zhuo made Jiao kill Lord Xiang of Xia; Shao Kang escaped and fled to Youyu. Yu [lord of Youyu] then gave his two daughters [to Shao Kang] for wives, and land in Lun. With a portion of the fields and a clan gathered about him, he was able to promulgate his

virtue and receive the [trust of the] many of Xia. Then he executed Jiao, and restored the old legacy of Yu. Qu Yuan thinks of going beyond the distant places, to broadly seek and assemble worthies. He sought Fufei but she refused to be seen; he pursued Jiandi but was again later than Gao Xin; [but] with good fortune [he might be] like Shao Kang who stayed in Youyu and attained two consorts to complete his illustrious merit. This means he does not desire to go far away.

朱熹：言既失簡狄，欲適遠方，又無所向，故願及少康未娶於有虞之時，留此二姚也。Zhu Xi: This says, having already lost Jiandi, I want to go to distant places, but there is nothing toward which to go, so I wish to remain with these two Yao [women] in the time while Shao Kang has not yet married in Youyu.

汪瑗：留者，屈原謂及少康之未娶，欲有虞留止二姚以待己也。Wang Yuan: “Stay” is how Qu Yuan refers to his wish to stop the two Yao in Yousong to wait on him while Shao Kang has not yet married.

林仲懿：以刺鄭袖，而諷懷王也。Lin Zhongyi: [This is all] criticism of Zheng Xiu, and a satire of King Huai.

顧成天：其曰有虞二姚，則望襄之能為少康，不謂其竟忘不共也。Gu Chengtian: He speaks of the two Yao of Youyu; so [he] wishes [King] Xiang could be like Shao Kang; it does not refer to completely forgetting [his own country] and not serving.

You Guoen can't determine the tenor of this vehicle, due to what he perceives as logical incompatibility with the narrative and the biography.

¹²⁶ 理弱而媒拙兮

恐導言之不固

lǐ ruò ér méi zhuō xi

kǒng dǎo yán zhī bú gù

The matchmaker weak and the go-between stupid ——

[I] fear the introduction's not sure

林雲銘：求女不合者三。Lin Yunming: Pursuing women and not meeting them for the third time.

In the debate as to whether the preceding is a quest to find a mate for the speaker (according to 張象津 Zhang Xiangjin) or for the king (according to Li Guangdi), both sides argue on the basis of cosmological and social appropriateness.

127 世溷濁而嫉賢兮

好蔽美而稱惡

shì hùn zhuō ér jí xián xi

hǎo bì měi ér chēng è

The world is foul muddy and jealous of worth ——

Loving to block beauty and praise evil

王逸：再言世溷濁者，懷襄二世不明，故羣下好蔽忠正之士，而舉邪惡之人。

Wang Yi: This again says that the world is muddied; Huai and Xiang, two generations, are ignorant. Thus those of the crowd below love to block loyal and upright elites and to raise up crooked and evil people.

林雲銘：欲求與我同類之人，天上天下，或遇讒間，或乏任使，而所往皆不合。因思天上天下，溷濁嫉賢，亦與世無異也。Lin Yunming: I want to pursue people of the same kind as myself; [but] in heaven above and [on earth] below heaven, either I encounter slanderers, or I lack a position, and everything I go toward I fail to meet. So I

consider heaven above and all under heaven; muddled and jealous of worthiness, it is no different than this mudane world.

128 閨中既以邃遠兮 哲王又不寤

guī zhōng jì yǐ suì yuǎn xi

zhé wáng yòu bú wù

The cloister's interior is already remote — The wise king again does not awaken

{What's within the cloister gate is}

Cloister may refer specifically to the part of the palace where women live.

呂延濟：言宮中深遠，視聽難通，故哲智之主不能覺察忠佞。Lü Yanji: This says the inner palace is deep and distant, and it is difficult to see and hear there; thus the wise king can't perceive the loyal and the slanderous.

洪興祖：懷王不明而曰哲王者，以明望之也，太史公所謂冀幸君之一悟，俗之一改也。Hong Xingzu: That King Huai is ignorant and yet is called a wise king is to express hope for [the king's] enlightenment; the Imperial Historian [Sima Qian] referred to this as “hoping that his lord would completely awaken and convention would be completely reformed.”

朱熹：哲王不寤，蓋言上帝不能察司閹壅蔽之罪也。言此以比上無明王，下無賢伯。

Zhu Xi: “The wise king does not awaken” must describe how the Highest Emperor [God] can't observe the gatekeeper's crime of deception. He says this as a comparison for there being no wise king on high and no worthy feudal lords below.

李光地：羣女深藏，是閨中邃遠也。帝閨不開，是哲王不寤也。總上兩段之意，蓋至是原始絕望於本國，而有下文問卜之云。Li Guangdi: The crowd of women is kept

deeply hidden: this is the remote distance of the inner cloister. The Emperor's doorguard did not open [the gate]: this is the wise king not awakening. This summarizes the meaning of the above two passages; it must be at this point that Yuan begins to lose hope in his native country, and so there are the speeches in the text below about divination. Chinese history was written by the servants of the king. Whether the king or the ministers were ultimately to blame for failures of governance was a delicate subject, and scholarly commentary was one arena where it was debated.

129 懷朕情而不發兮

余焉能忍與此終古

huái zhèn qíng ér bù fā xi

yú yān néng rěn yǔ cǐ zhōng gǔ

[I] embosom my affection and don't express [it] ——

I how could endure with this to the end

司馬遷：雖放流，睠顧楚國，系心懷王，不忘欲反，冀幸君之一悟，俗之一改也。

其存君興國而欲反覆之，一篇之中三致志焉。然終無可奈何，故不可以反，卒以此

見懷王之終不悟也。人君無愚智賢不肖，莫不欲求忠以自為，舉賢以自佐，然亡國

破家相隨屬，而聖君治國累世而不見者，其所謂忠者不忠，而所謂賢者不賢也。懷

王以不知忠臣之分，故內惑於鄭袖，外欺於張儀，疏屈平而信上官大夫、令尹子蘭。

兵挫地削，亡其六郡，身客死於秦，為天下笑。此不知人之禍也。《易》曰：「井

泄不食，為我心惻，可以汲。王明，并受其福。」王之不明，豈足福哉！Sima

Qian [the following lines may be from Liu An's preface]: Though exiled, he still longed

for Chu's capital and felt a strong attachment to King Huai. He never lost his desire to

return. He hoped that his lord would awaken completely and convention would be

reformed completely. His desire to maintain his lord, to revive the state, and to reverse [the course of recent events] he expressed three times in one work. Yet in the end nothing could be done. Thus he was unable to return. Thus he finally realized that King Huai could never be awakened. The lords of men, whether foolish, intelligent, worthy or unworthy, all want to find loyal men to act on their behalf, to employ worthy men to assist them. But states fall and lineages are ruined one after another, and a state ruled by a sagely lord has not appeared for generations. This is because the men they call loyal are disloyal and the men they call worthy are unworthy. Because King Hui could not recognize the duty of a loyal vassal, he was deluded at home by Zheng Xiu and deceived abroad by Zhang Yi. He distanced himself from Qu Ping and trusted the senior Grand Master and the Premier, Zilan [Sir Eupatorium]. His weapons were blunted and his territories whittled away, he lost six commanderies and died abroad in Qin, becoming the laughingstock of the world. This was the misfortune of not being able to recognize men. *The Book of Changes* reads: Not to drink when the well has been dredged, / Causes my heart sorrow. / It can be drawn. / If the king is perspicacious, / All can receive blessings from it. If the king is not perspicacious, how could there be good fortune?

李陳玉：說不得，哭不得，笑不得，是謂懷情不發。Li Chenyu: Unable to speak it out, unable to cry it out, unable to laugh it out [or: unspeakable, uncryable, unlaughable]; this is referred to as embosoming one's affection and not expressing it.

吳世尚：泣而不得聲，如欲入而無門，悶而不得語，如倒懸而不解。萬無可奈，而忽然以醒，則尚是跪就重華而陳詞之一會也。嗚呼！其夢也耶？其非夢也耶？明明重華其告我也，歷歷我之所遊行也，而何為憶之若在目前，即之竟窅不可得哉！…
…又曰：……此千古第一寫夢之極筆也。而中間顛倒雜亂，脫離複疊，恍恍惚惚，

杳杳冥冥，無往而非夢景矣！Wu Shishang: Sobbing and yet unable to make a sound, like desiring to enter where there is no door; heavy of heart and yet unable to speak, like being strung up and never untied. Completely without a way out, and then suddenly awakening; this is still the same moment of kneeling before Chonghua and presenting his case. Alas! What is a dream? What is not a dream? So bright was Chonghua's announcement to me, so distinct were the places I travelled; and why can I recall it as if it were before my very eyes even though those scenes are unreachably remote! [...]

Also:this, of thousands of years of history, is the first supremely crafted dream-writing. And within it all is topsy-turvy and wildly chaotic, broken apart and heaped together, trance-like confusion, murky and dim—nowhere is it not the landscape of a dream!

馬茂元：第六段。寫幻想中的境界，借求愛的熾熱和失戀的苦痛來象徵自己對理想的追求。Ma Maoyuan: This is the sixth section. He writes of the world of fantastic thoughts, borrowing the fervor of the pursuit of love and the bitterness of romantic dissapointment to symbolize his own pursuit of [his] ideal[s]. [Ma moreover asserts that his quest is not only for love but for patriotism, and not only for a king but for good governance; and the ladies he pursues are not only beautiful but morally exemplary].

130 索萋茅以筵筮兮

命靈氛爲余占之

suǒ qióng máo yǐ tíng zhuān xī

mìng líng fēn wéi yú zhàn zhī

[I] gather calystegia stalks for divining sticks —— Order Spririt Aura for me to divine it

[I] gather calystegia and imperata for divining sticks ——

王逸：楚人名結草折竹以卜曰筮。靈氛，古明占吉凶者。Wang Yi: The people of Chu call tying herbs and breaking bamboo to prognosticate by the name 筮 *zhuān*. Spirit Aura was a brilliant diviner of fortune in ancient times.

周去非：南人茅卜法，卜人信手摘茅，取占者左手，自肘量至中指尖而斷之，以授占者，使禱所求，即中摺之，祝曰，奉請茅將軍，茅小孃，上知天綱，下知地理云云…… Zhou Qufei: This is the way that southerners divine with reeds: the diviner trusts his hands to [randomly] select a reed. He takes the left arm of the one who seeks the divination, measures the length from his elbow to his fingertips, and breaks off [the reed] there and gives it to him. He makes him pray for what he seeks and then fold it in the middle, and speaks an invocation such as “respectfully inviting the General of the reeds and the Little Maid of the reeds, who know the pattern of Heaven above and the order of the earth below...”

汪瑗：靈氛，巫祝之稱，或古有是號，或楚俗之言，或屈子設爲此名，今無所考也。Wang Yuan: Spirit Aura is the title of a shaman priest; either this is an ancient honorific, or the common language of Chu, or a name Qu Yuan invented; today there is no evidence to verify it.

陳第：取神草以代竹筮，使靈氛卜之也。Chen Di: [I] pluck sacred herbs to serve as divining sticks and make Spirit Aura divine them.

王夫之：楚人有此卜法，取瓊茅爲席，就上以筮卜也。靈氛，神也。Wang Fuzhi: The people of Chu had this method of prognosticating: they pluck calystegia stalks to make a mat, and then stand on it to divine with bamboo strips.

王邦采：注釋不必求奇，蕙茅同爲卜具，亦自無妨。至靈氛者，不必有其人，不必

無其人，總是假託之詞，亦或實有其事，無用喋喋也。Wang Bangcai: [Responding to earlier commentators who debated the specific plant or plants referred to and the identity of Spirit Aura] Commentary explanation doesn't need to pursue the bizarre. Calystegia and imperata are used alike as tools of divination, and neither impedes the other. As to Spirit Aura, this person doesn't have to have had existed, and this person doesn't have to have not existed; it's all allegorical rhetoric, and there's no need to chatter on and on about whether or not these things truly existed.

131 曰兩美其必合兮

孰信脩而慕之

yuē liǎng měi qí bì hé xi

shú xìn xiū ér mù zhī

[She] says: Two beauties must be joined —— Who trusts cultivation and adores it

Interpreters debate which lines in the following passage are spoken by Qu Yuan and which are spoken by Spirit Aura. Where does Qu Yuan's question to the diviner end, and where does the diviner's answer begin and end?

These four lines do not rhyme properly, which has troubled many commentators. Jiang Liangfu believes 占 is a mistake in transmission that was originally 卜 and 慕 is a mistake in transmission that was originally 莫. In that case, the fourth line could be rendered “Two beauties must be joined / Who trusts cultivation and yet does not [join with it]?”

王逸：靈氛言以忠臣而就明君，兩美必合，楚國誰能信明善惡，脩行忠直，欲相慕及者乎？已宜以時去也。Wang Yi: Spirit Aura says that if a loyal minister goes to an enlightened lord, two beauties must join; in the kingdom of Chu is there anyone who can faithfully illuminate good and bad, cultivating loyal forthrightness, [anyone who] I want

to admire and approach? For me the time is right to depart.

朱熹：兩美必合，此亦託於男女而言之。注直以君臣而爲說，則得其意而失其辭也。

Zhu Xi: Two beauties must join: this again makes use of [the relationship between] man and woman to say it. The commentary [of Wang Yi] explains it as [the relationship between] lord and minister, which captures its meaning but loses its rhetoric.

132 思九州之博大兮 豈惟是其有女

sī jiǔ zhōu zhī bó dà xī

qǐ wéi shì qí yǒu nǚ

Ponder the nine lands' broad vastness —— Could only here have women?

Could only here have you?

This couplet and the following end in 女, woman or women. But in classical Chinese poetry it is usually considered bad form to repeat a word in this way, and moreover it is not definite according to the context if the meaning of 女 is in both cases “women” or if in one or both cases the character 女 should be read as 汝, “you.”

朱熹：美女，以比賢君。Zhu Xi: Beautiful women are a comparison for a worthy lord.

錢杲之：女喻賢士。Qian Gaozhi: Women are a metaphor for worthy elites.

張鳳翼：女，亦汝也。言天下廣大，豈惟楚國有汝乎？Zhang Fengyi: 女 is also 汝.

This says the world under heaven is wide and vast, how could only the kingdom of Chu have [the likes of] you?

王闈運：不可斥言有君，故曰有女。Wang Kaiyun: One cannot directly say “have lords,” so he says “have women” [i.e., one can't directly state that one's king is not the only or greatest king].

133 曰勉遠逝而無狐疑兮

孰求美而釋女

yuē miǎn yuǎn shì ér wú hú yí xī

shú qiú měi ér shì nǚ

[She] says: Exert for a distant voyage and have no doubts ——

Who'd seek beauty yet let go of you?

Who'd seek beauty yet let go of women?

洪興祖：再舉靈氛之言者，甚言其可去也。Hong Xingzu: Again advancing Spirit

Aura's words, this strongly states that he can go [to another kingdom].

朱冀：大夫求女，是望折中于楚國之賢人。靈氛故告之以楚地無賢，何不向九州而

求索。大夫惟志不欲離宗國，所以下文又要巫咸再求折中也。Zhu Ji: The Grand

Master's pursuit of women is [his] hope of reaching a compromise with the worthy men

of the kingdom of Chu. Spirit Aura announces to him that the land of Chu has no

worthies; why doesn't he go out on the many continents and [continue his] quest? [But,]

the Grand Master's only aspiration is that he does not wish to leave his fatherland. So in

the text below he again wants to seek a compromise through Shaman Xian.

134 何所獨無芳草兮

爾何懷乎故宇 [宅]

hé suǒ dú wú fāng cǎo xī

ěr hé huái hū gù yǔ [zhái]

What place is alone without fragrant herbs —— You why yearn for these old eves?

徐煥龍：汝欲求美，美女隨方而產，猶芳草隨地而生，何所獨無？爾何懷乎故宇，

不思遠逝乎？Xu Huanlong: You want to pursue beauty—beautiful women are born in

every place, just as fragrant herbs grow in every place; what place is alone without it?

Why do you yearn for these old eves and not consider a distant voyage?

蔣驥：離騷以女喻賢君，以芳草喻賢臣，首尾一線，不相混淆。Jiang Ji: The “Li Sao” uses women as a metaphor for the worthy lord, and fragrant plants as a metaphor for worthy ministers: one thread from head to tail, they are not confusingly mixed together [i.e., the rhetorical structure is consistent].

135 世幽昧以眩 * 眩 曜兮 孰云察余之善惡

shì yōu mèi yǐ xuàn yào xī

shú yún chá yú zhī shàn è

The world is dark dim and dazzling —— Who is such to percieve my/our good and evil

Is 余 Qu Yuan or Spirit Aura speaking for Qu Yuan?

王逸曰：屈原答靈氛曰，當世之君，皆闇昧惑亂，不分善惡，誰當察我之善情，而用己乎？是難去之意也。Wang Yi: Qu Yuan replies to Spirit Aura, saying, the lords of this world are all dim and confused, not distinguishing good and evil; is there anyone to percieve my good character and make use of me? The meaning is that it's difficult to depart.

王夫之曰：世幽昧以下，極言楚君臣之不足有為，以見不可復留之意。Wang Fuzhi:

From “the world is dark dim” on down emphatically says that the lord and ministers of Chu are not worth considering, to demonstrate the idea that it is impossible to return and remain [in Chu].

136 民好惡其不同兮 惟此黨人其獨異

mín hào wù qí bù tóng xi

wéi cǐ dǎng rén qí dú yì

People's loves and hates are not the same — Only these clique-men are unique

Common people's loves and hates, are they not the same? —

王逸：黨，鄉黨，謂楚國也。言天下萬民之所好惡，其性不同，此楚國尤獨異也。

Wang Yi: Clique is a clique of countrymates, referring to the kingdom of Chu. This says that in the land under heaven the loves and hates of the innumerable populace are different in nature; this kingdom is even more uniquely different.

朱熹：言人性固有不同，而黨人爲尤甚也。Zhu Xi: This says that people's natures surely have differences, but the clique is even more [different].

張鳳翼：言好善惡惡，人豈不同者乎？而讒人之黨，獨與人殊也。Zhang Fengyi: This says that as to loving good and hating evil, how are people any different? But this clique of slanderers, they alone are different from [other] people.

137 戶服艾以盈要兮

謂幽蘭其不可佩

hù fú ài yǐ yíng yāo xi

wèi yōu lán qí bù kě pèi

Households wear artemisia to stuff at their waists —

Saying orchidaceae it can't be sashed

Artemisia is an extremely bitter herb. The dead metaphor of the modern word 佩服 is alive and relevant to translation in this line.

張銑：言皆好讒佞，謂忠正不可行於身。Zhang Xian: This says that everyone loves slander and flattery; it refers to loyal uprightness not being taken to heart [or put into practice; lit., close to one's body, like clothes].

138 覽察草木其猶未得兮

豈理美之能當

lǎn chá cǎo mù qí yóu wèi dé xī

qǐ chéng měi zhī néng dāng

See, perceive herbs and trees, what's still unattained ——

How could the jade pendant's beauty not be right

王逸：言時人無能知臧否，觀衆草尚不能別其香臭，其當知玉之美惡乎？以爲草木

易別於禽獸，禽獸易別於珠玉，珠玉易別於忠佞，知人最爲難也。Wang Yi: This

says that the people of this time don't know what to praise and what to blame; they

regard the crowd of plants and yet can't distinguish the fragrant from the foul, so how

could they know the beauty and ugliness of jade? Since plants and trees are easier to

distinguish than birds and beasts, and birds and beasts are easier to distinguish than pearls

and jade, and pearls and jade are easier to distinguish than loyalty and flattery, knowing

men is the most difficult of all.

李周翰：玉喻忠貞，言忠之難知也。Li Zhouhan: Jade is a metaphor for loyalty, to

describe the difficulty of recognizing loyalty.

汪瑗：理，屈子自喻也。Wang Yuan: The jade pendant is Qu Yuan's metaphor for

himself.

顧成天：理，美質也，所謂內美也。草木之芳，文也，外著者也。外著者且不能察，

何況內美？Gu Chengtian: A jade pendant is substantively beautiful; it is what is referred

to as inner beauty. The fragrance of plants and trees is adornment; it is an exterior

phenomenon. Even exterior phenomena can't be perceived, let alone inner beauty.

139 蘇糞壤以充幃兮

謂申椒其不芳

sū fèn rǎng yǐ chōng wéi xi

wèi shēn jiāo qí bù fāng

Taking shit and dirt to fill their sachets ——

Saying zanthoxylum is not fragrant

閔齊華：戶服艾以下，一節甚一節之意，艾與蘭猶不甚遠；辨草木與辨玉，分別已殊矣；至於糞壤申椒，倒置極矣。Min Qihua: From “households wear artemisia” on down, each section exceeds the meaning of the preceding section: artemisia and eupatorium are not very far apart, but distinguishing plants and distinguishing jade are already clearly distinct, and when it comes to manure and zanthoxylum, all is overturned in the extreme.

140 欲 [慾] 從靈氛之吉占兮

心猶豫而狐疑

yù cóng líng fēn zhī jí zhàn xi

xīn yóu yù ér hú yí

[I] want to follow Spirit Aura’s auspicious divination ——

[My] heart is irresolute and doubtful

The second line is repeated from above; see above for etymological stories.

王逸：言己欲從靈氛勸去之吉占，則心中狐疑，念楚國也。Wang Yi: This says that I want to follow Spirit Aura’s auspicious divination to depart, but there is doubt in my mind, and I think dearly of the kingdom of Chu.

洪興祖：靈氛之占，於異姓則吉矣。在屈原則不可，故猶豫而狐疑也。Hong Xingzu: Spirit Aura’s divination would be auspicious for [a nobleman of] a different surname [i.e., not one of the royal house of Chu], but in Qu Yuan’s case it is impossible,

so he is irresolute and doubtful.

王夫之：原不忍背宗國，且嘗受王之寵任，尤不忍絕君臣之義，故靈氛告以他適而不欲從。Wang Fuzhi: Yuan can't endure turning his back on his fatherland, and having once received the favored trust of the king he can even less endure breaking the righteous bond between lord and minister, so although Spirit Aura announced that [he should] go elsewhere, he doesn't want to follow [the divination].

¹⁴¹ 巫咸將夕降兮

懷椒糈而要之

wū xián jiāng xī jiàng xi

huái jiāo xǔ ér yào zhī

Shaman Xian will by evening descend ——

[I] fill my arms with zanthoxylum and sacrificial rice to attend her

According to 《國語：楚語下》“在男曰覡，在女曰巫”；and 《說文》“巫，祝也，女能事無形，以舞降神者也。” So I refer to Shaman Xian in the feminine. I presume Spirit Aura would also be a woman, but there is less need to supply gendered pronouns in her case.

Scholars have identified several possible Shaman Xians in ancient historical and mythological texts, including the *Shiji*, the orthodox Confucian *Shang Shu*, and the mythological miscellany *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. She may have been the founder of shamanism or divination, an early healer, and/or a Shang dynasty official in charge of prognostication; or Shaman Xian may simply have been a common name for Chu shamans. In the earliest times magic, medicine, religion, and politics were not as separate as they were in later historical development. Archeological findings of texts and

artifacts increasingly demonstrate that shamanism was an essential element of cultural life in early China but was gradually erased by Confucianism and its version of history.

王逸：巫咸，古神巫也，當殷中宗之世。Wang Yi: Shaman Xian was an ancient spirit-shaman in the time of [King] Zhongzong of Yin [Shang dynasty].

李陳玉：椒糝，即今粽子，以椒裹之，所以享神。Li Chenyu: Zanthoxylum and sacrificial rice is present-day *zongzi* [steamed leaf-wrapped rice dumplings offered during Duanwu, the “Dragon Boat Festival”; see Shen Yazhi’s “Unofficial Biography”] wrapped with zanthoxylum, which the deities enjoy.

朱冀：當殷中宗世者，巫姓咸名，非神巫也。此書引用古人處，大都借景生情，讀者須活潑潑地，不可執着。Zhu Ji: [He was] of the era of [King] Zhongzong of the Yin [Shang dyansty], surnamed Shaman, personal name Xian; not a spirit-shaman. Where this text alludes to ancient men, it always borrows a scene in order to create a feeling; the reader must be lively, and not be a stickler. [Has shamanism fallen into disrepute?]

142 百神翳其備降兮

九疑繽其並迎

bǎi shén yì qí bèi jiàng xi

jiǔ yí bīn qí bìng yíng

A hundred deities canopied in preparation to descend ——

Nine Doubts abounds in alignment to welcome

錢杲之：九疑，九疑山之神也。九疑，舜所葬也。時原南征在其地。Qian Gaozhi: “Nine Doubts” is the spirits of Nine Doubts Mountain. Nine Doubts is where Shun was buried. At the time Yuan was journeying in the south at that place.

李陳玉：九疑，二妃之神。女侍紛紛，故曰繽其并迎。Li Chenyu: “Nine Doubts” is

the spirits of the two consorts [Shun's consorts cried themselves to death upon learning of their husband's death at Jiuyi Mountain]. Their ladies-in-waiting are in numerous array, so it says "abounds in alignment to welcome."

王夫之：九疑山神，或曰舜之靈也。Wang Fuzhi: [It is] the god of Nine Doubts Mountain, also called the spirit of Shun.

錢澄之：百神皆降，巫咸與焉。百神降而九疑迎，九疑有地主之誼也。Qian Chengzhi: The hundred spirits all descend, Shaman Xian with them also. The hundred spirits descend and Nine Doubts welcomes them: Nine Doubts has the role of earthly host.

劉夢鵬：翳即鷲，言百神乘鷲而下也。Liu Mengpeng: 翳 [yì, a canopy made of feathers] is actually 鷲 [yì, a species of phoenix]. This says that the hundred spirits descend riding on phoenixes.

胡文英：百神備降，則可以決其疑。九疑并迎，則獻疑多而難決矣。故心須巫咸揚靈而致辭也。Hu Wenying: The hundred spirits prepare to descend; by them he could resolve his doubts. Nine doubts are aligned to welcome, posing questions many and difficult to resolve. Thus his heart has need of Shaman Xian to raise up the spirits and make an address.

David Hawkes: The host of Doubting Mountain appears in an almost identical line in one of the "Nine Songs"—a hymn addressed to the goddess of the River Xiang. As Shun was the goddesses's husband and Doubting Mountain quite near the source of her river, their appearance in that context is natural and to be expected; here it seems unaccountable and has in fact never been satisfactorily explained. The fact that this line is the only one in a poem of ninety-three couplets which does not rhyme with the other line in the couplet makes it extremely likely that it is either misplaced or corrupt.

143 皇剡剡其揚靈兮

告余以吉故

huáng yǎn yǎn qí yáng líng xī

gào yú yǐ jí gù

Exalted and glinting are the rising spirits ——

[She] announces it to me with auspicious stories

王逸：言皇天揚其光靈，使百神告我，當去就吉善也。Wang Yi: This says that exalted heaven raises its beaming spirits and makes the hundred deities announce to me that departure is auspiciously favorable.

李陳玉：靈氛說吉，不知其故，此下乃告之。Li Chenyu: Spirit Aura said it's auspicious, but I don't know the reason; below this [the shaman] announces [the reason] to me.

徐煥龍：感椒糝之精意，百神附巫咸，蔽日庶天，翳然備降；九疑之神，亦續然並來迎我，皆剡剡揚發其靈光，托巫咸之口，告余以靈氛所占之吉之故。Xu

Huanlong: Enjoying the sincere offering of zanthoxylum and sacrificial rice, the hundred spirits approach Shaman Xian, covering the sun and blotting out heaven, preparing to descend like a feathered canopy. The spirits of Nine Doubts, also abundantly lining up to come welcome me, all glintingly emit spiritual rays of light, and through the mouth of Shaman Xian they announce to me the reason for Spirit Aura's auspicious divination.

游國恩：吉故……非靈氛吉占之故也。巫咸之意與靈氛不一。You Guoen: The auspicious stories [below]... are not the reasons [lit., stories] for Spirit Aura's auspicious divination. Shaman Wu's meaning is not the same as Spirit Aura's.

144 曰勉陞降以上下兮

求渠獲之所同

yuē miǎn shēng jiàng yǐ shàng xià xi

qiú jǔ yuē zhī suǒ tóng

[She] says: Exert for going up and going down, above and below ——

Pursue the measure's match

{Pursue those who match the measure}

Again there is no consensus as to where Shaman Xian's speech begins and ends and where Qu Yuan's begins. 徐文靖 Xu Wenjing points out that if Spirit Aura and Shaman Xian were really Shang dynasty figures, they could not make the allusions below to historical events that occurred after their deaths; You Guoen responds that they are used here as fables so the chronology is not significant.

王逸：上謂君，下謂臣。Wang Yi: Above refers to the lord, below refers to the ministers.

道騫：曰，靈氛之詞。Daoqian: "Spake" means Spirit Aura's speech.

呂延濟：曰，巫咸之辭也。Lü Yanji: "Spake" means Shaman Wu's speech.

朱熹：陞降上下，陞而上天，下而至地也。Zhu Xi: Going up and going down, above and below, going up to ascend heaven, down to arrive on earth.

梅曾亮：靈氛勸其去而之他，巫咸則欲其留以求合。Mei Cengliang: Spirit Aura urges him to depart to another [kingdom], but Shaman Xian wants him to stay here and seek a mate. [According to You Guoen, Mei Cenglian is the first scholar to interpret it this way; everyone before him believed that Shaman Wu proposed the same course of action as Spirit Aura: go seek elsewhere.]

145 湯禹嚴而求合兮

摯咎繇而能調

tāng yǔ yǎn ér qiú hé xi

zhì jiù yáo ér néng tiáo

Tang and Yu solemnly pursued a meeting ——

Zhi and Jiuyao, then they could harmonize

Great Yu solemnly pursued a meeting —— Grasping Jiuyao he could harmonize

王逸：摯伊尹名，湯臣也。咎繇，禹臣也。言湯禹至聖，猶敬承天道，求其匹合，得伊尹咎繇，乃能調和陰陽，而安天下也。Wang Yi: Zhi is the name of Director Yi, a minister of [King] Tang. Jiuyao was a minister of Yu. This says that Tang and Yu were perfect sages; revering the Way of Heaven, they sought their partners, and obtained Director Yi [Zhi] and Jiuyao, and thus were able to harmonize yin and yang, pacifying the world under heaven.

朱冀：惟有湯禹之君，敬而求合德之士，伊皋遇之，桀夔既同，故能君臣相得，如琴瑟之調和耳。設君非湯禹，縱德如伊皋，誰能信用乎？Zhu Ji: Only the lords Tang and Yu respectfully sought to join with virtuous elites. Yi [Zhi] and Gao [Jiuyao] met them, and their measures were matched, so they were able to serve each other as lords and ministers, like the harmonious sounds of *qin* and *se* [stringed musical instruments]. If the lord was not Tang or Yu, then even [if you have] virtue like Yi or Gao, who would be able to trust and employ [you]?

146 苟中情其好脩兮

[+又] 何必用夫 [乎] 行媒

gǒu zhōng qíng qí hǎo xiū xi

[yòu] hé bì yòng fū [hu] xíng méi

As long as inner affection has good cultivation ——

[Then] why need [one] use these traveling matchmakers?

徐煥龍：苟中心情實，惟以好修，則君臣邂逅斯合，何必用夫行媒？摯咎繇說望戚皆未有爲之作合者，承上以起下也。Xu Huanlong: As long as [my] inner heart is sincere, dedicated only to good cultivation, then lord and minister will meet without any effort to meet—why must [I] make use of a matchmaker? Zhi, Jiuyao, Yue, [Lü] Wang, and [Ning] Qi [in the text above and below] all did not make use of anyone to arrange their meeting [with the king]. This continues from [the text] above and initiates what [is written] below.

蔣驥：又何必用夫行媒，將令帝閹，令蹇脩，令鳩鳩，鳳凰，及理弱媒拙等語，一掃都盡。下文武丁用說諸證，皆不媒而合者，文義相引如貫珠。若前爲理爲媒，皆作求賢士解，則此處直接武丁周文，不亦首尾衡決乎？Jiang Ji: Then why must [I] use a matchmaker? As to the language about ordering the Emperor's doorguard, ordering Jianxiu, ordering the pigeons and the zhen-bird, the phoenix, and the weak go-between and stupid matchmaker, and so on, in one sweep they are all eliminated. As [the stories] in text below about [King] Wu Ding using Yue [and the rest] all confirm, all were without a matchmaker and yet obtained their mate. [With this interpretation] the significance of the text flows together like a string of pearls. If, [on the other hand], all the foregoing on the use of go-betweens and matchmakers was composed with the explanation of seeking worthy elites, and then here he directly [refers to] [King] Wu Ding and Zhou [King] Wen, isn't it all head and tail discumbulated?

吳世尚：此中情好脩與前文異。前皆原之自謂；此中情以君之實心言，此好脩以君之好賢言。Wu Shishang: This inner affection and love of cultivation is different than

that in the text before. Before they all were Yuan's references to himself; this inner affection speaks of his lords's sincere heart, this love of cultivation speaks of his lord's love of worthy [ministers].

147 說操築於傅巖兮 武丁用而不疑

Yuè cāo zhù yú fù yán xi

wǔ dīng yòng ér bù yí

Yue pounded walls in Fuyan — Wu Ding made use [of him] and didn't doubt

王逸：說，傳說也。武丁，殷之高宗也。言傳說抱道懷德，而遭遇刑罰，操築作於傅巖。武丁思想賢者，夢得聖人，以其形象求之，因得傳說，登以為公，道用大興，

為殷高宗也。Wang Yi: Yue is Fu Yue. Wu Ding is the High Patriarch [founding king] of Yin [Shang dynasty]. This says that Fu Yue embraced the Way and cherished virtue, but he met with criminal punishment and had to pound earth [to build walls] at Fuyan.

Wu Ding, hopefully pondering worthies, dreamed of a sage, and sought for him by means of his image; in this way he obtained Fu Yue, and raised him up to be a duke. The Way thus greatly prospered, and [Wu Ding] became [posthumously known as] High Patriarch of Yin [Shang].

汪瑗：不疑，不以無媒而疑也；或曰，不以賤役為嫌也。Wang Yuan: “Didn't doubt” is [to say,] didn't take his lack of a matchmaker [i.e., introduction] to be doubtful; or we could say, didn't take his lowly occupation as a cause for suspicion.

In historical texts there are several accounts of the story of King Wu Ding and his dream of Fu Yue. Some scholars have gone to lengths to explain away Fu Yue's presence in the convict gang [and thereby legitimize the king's use of him]; for example, Kong Anguo

asserts that Fu Yue was in reclusion and voluntarily joined the convict laborers in order to share their meals. On the other hand, 游國恩: 且離騷天問述此均極明確，不容更有異解，注騷而多引曲說，徒亂人意，畢竟何預於闡釋本文耶？諸說之以築爲居，而以說爲聖之隱者，或謂其代胥靡刑人築道云云，蓋皆不信奴隸之中亦有賢者耳，噫，何所見之偏耶！ You Guoen: Although the “Li Sao” and “Heavenly Questions” both narrate this extremely clearly, with no room for other explanations, the commentators of the “Sao” have mostly cited erroneous accounts, creating confusion in people’s minds; in the end why is all that relevant in the interpretation of the original text? All the accounts that take “walls” to mean “his house” and say he was a sage recluse, or that refer to his serving “as a substitute” for a penal slave in building the roads and so on, it must be that they all simply can’t believe there could be a worthy among the slaves. Alas, how their views are prejudiced! [I am unable to find a reference to Fu Yue in the “Heavenly Questions,” although other stories of the same pattern, such as the story of Lü Wang in the next line, are narrated therein.]

148 呂望之鼓刀兮

遭周文而得舉

lǚ wàng zhī gǔ dāo xī

zāo zhōu wén ér dé jǔ

Lü Wang’s drumming of the blade ——

Met with Zhou [King] Wen and attained promotion

There are many versions of this story in historical texts, with variations in the details.

王逸：呂，太公之氏姓也。……或言呂望太公，姜氏也，未遇之時，鼓刀屠於朝歌也。言太公避紂，居東海之濱，聞文王作興，盍往歸之。至於朝歌，道窮困，自鼓

刀而屠，遂西釣於渭濱。文王夢得聖人，於是出獵而遇之，遂載以歸，用以爲師，言吾先公望子久矣，因號爲太公望。或言周文王夢天帝立令狐之津，太公立其後。帝曰，昌，賜汝名師。文王再拜，太公亦再拜。太公夢亦如此。文王出田，見識所夢，載與俱歸，以爲太師也。 Wang Yi: Lü is the family name of Grand Father. Others say that Lü Wang Grand Father was surnamed Jiang. When he had not yet met his time, he was drumming the blade as a butcher in Chaoge. It's said that when Grand Father [Lü Wang] was fleeing from Zhou [the evil last king of the Shang dynasty], living on the shore of the eastern sea, he heard that the work of King Wen [founder of the Zhou dynasty] was prospering, and hurriedly went to follow him. When he arrived in Chaoge he was in hard poverty, so he drummed the blade as a butcher, and went west to fish on the banks of the Wei River. King Wen dreamed of a sage, and then went out on the hunt and met him [Lü Wang]. Then [the king] brought him back, and used him as a leader, saying "My forefathers hoped [望, Wang] for you for a long time, so I will give you the title Grand Father Wang [望, hope]. Others say that Zhou King Wen dreamed that the Emperor of Heaven stood at the ford at Linghu, and Grand Father stood behind him. The Emperor said, Chang [the personal name of King Wen], I give you this man as a leader. King Wen bowed many times, and Grand Father also bowed many times. Grand Father also had a dream like this. King Wen went out in the field, and recognized the one he dreamed of, and took him back with his entourage, and made him a Grand Leader.

149 甯戚之謳歌兮

齊桓聞以該輔

níng qī zhī ōu gē xī

qí huán wén yǐ gāi fǔ

Ning Qi's chanting of a song —— Qi [Duke] Huan heard and accorded service

王逸：甯戚脩德不用，退而商賈，宿齊東門外，桓公夜出，甯戚方飯牛，叩角而商歌，桓公聞之，知其賢，舉用爲客卿，備輔佐也。Wang Yi: Ning Qi cultivated virtue but was not employed, so he withdrew and worked as a merchant [the lowest social class in ancient China: 士農工商], living outside the east gate of Qi. When Duke Huan went out at night, Ning Qi was feeding the cows, and he knocked on their horns and sang a plaintive song. Duke Huan heard it, and knew [the singer] was a worthy man, so he raised him up to be employed as a guest minister, and he was of great assistance in governance.

洪興祖：屈原舉呂望傳說甯戚之事，傷今之不然也。Hong Xingzu: Qu Yuan advances the stories of Fu Yue, Lü Wang, and Ning Qi, sorrowing that today it is not so.

吳世尚：又何待左右爲之先容，先達，爲之薦引，如女之必用夫行媒乃相知名也哉。是故傳說操築，武丁用之；呂望鼓刀，周文舉之；甯戚牛歌，齊桓任之。蓋君求士，士無求君，自古而然矣。Wu Shishang: Then why wait on those around to make a place for me, to speak for me, to recommend me, like women who must use matchmakers to let their name be known? This gives a reason: Fu Yue was pounding walls, Wu Ding made use of him; Lü Wang was drumming the blade, Zhou [King] Wen raised him up; Ning Qi sang with the cows, Qi [Duke] Huan employed him. It must be that the lord seeks for elites, the elites do not seek for lords; it has been thus since antiquity.

David Hawkes: Wu [Shaman] Xian offers all these examples of men who were “discovered” by powerful and virtuous rulers as a means of encouraging the poet: let him look around elsewhere; some enlightened ruler is sure sooner or later to recognize his talents and give him the employment he deserves.

On the other hand, You Guoen believes that the above historical examples are meant to encourage Qu Yuan to bide his time in Chu and wait for the king to discover him.

The *Huainanzi* offers a colorful account of the meeting of Ning Qi and Duke Huan.

150 及年歲之未晏兮 時亦猶其未央

jí nián suì zhī wèi yàn xī shí yì yóu qí wèi yāng

While years' age is not yet late — Time is still not yet run out

Wang Yi and others take these lines to be Qu Yuan's words expressing his hope to meet a good king while his is still youthful; Qian Chengzhi and others take them to be Shaman Xian's words urging Qu Yuan to depart at once.

151 恐鶉鴂 [鶉] 之先鳴兮 使夫百草爲之不芳

kǒng tí jué/guī zhī xiān míng xī shǐ fú bǎi cǎo fāng wéi zhī bù fāng

[I] fear the tijue [bird]'s early call — Will make these hundred herbs to be unfragrant
{shrike/cuckoo/magpie}

楊雄：反騷：恐鶉鴂之先鳴兮，顧先百草爲不芳。or 徒恐鶉鴂之將鳴兮，顧先百草爲不芳 Yang Xiong's "Anti-Sao" has the line: "Fear the cuckoo's early call / Turn back before the hundred herbs become not fragrant."

王逸：鶉鴂，一名買鶉，常以春分鳴也。言我恐鶉鴂以先春分鳴，使百草華英摧落，芬芳不得成也。以喻讒言先至，使忠直之士蒙罪過也。 Wang Yi: The tijue-bird is the cuckoo. It always calls at the Vernal equinox. This says I fear the cuckoo will call

before the vernal equinox, making the hundred herbs and flowers hasten their decay, so that their perfume will not be completed. It is used as a metaphor for the words of slanderers arriving first, causing the loyal and forthright elites to meet with blame.

道騫：文釋曰，鷓鴣一名鷓，今謂之伯勞，順陰氣而生，賊害之禽也。 Daoqian:

The *Explanation of Graphs* says that the tijue-bird is a kind of shrike, today called the butcherbird. It appears following *yin* energy [i.e., in autumn or winter], and it is a cruel predatory bird. [Some shrikes or butcherbirds impale their prey on thorns to save them for later consumption.]

呂向：鷓鴣，鳥名，秋分前鳴，則草木彫落。 Lü Xiang: Tijue is the name of a bird. It calls before the Autumnal equinox, and then the plants and trees wither and decay.

林雲銘：若再遲待老，則世道日趨於壞，正人凋謝，天下事益不可爲矣。此勉其速于求君，行道以救世也。 Lin Yunming: If [you] continue to delay and wait on old age, then the way of the world will become more broken with each passing day, the upright men will wither and fade, and the affairs of the world under heaven will become increasingly untenable [beyond your ability to change]. This encourages him to make haste in seeking a lord, to pursue the Way in order to save the world.

游國恩：巫咸蓋勉其保身以待時，非勸其及時速去之謂也。下文自念辭中，何可淹留一節，正對此而發。 You Guoen: Shaman Xian must be encouraging him to preserve his body and bide his time; this does not urge him to quickly depart right away. In the text below where he ponders himself, the section “how could I momentarily stay” is expressed directly in regards to this.

152 何瓊佩之偃蹇兮

衆夔然而蔽之

hé qióng pèi zhī yǎn jiǎn xī

zhòng ài rán ér bì zhī

What of nephrite sash's magnificent length — The crowd densely conceals it

林雲銘：言有美德，被衆人爭壅，使君不得聞。Lin Yunming: This says [I] have beautiful virtue but have been stymied by the crowd, causing my lord to be unable to hear [of me].

Many scholars (Zhu Xi et. al.) consider this and everything below to be Qu Yuan's expression of his own thoughts. Others (such as 王萌 Wang Meng and Zhang Xiangjin) believe this is still Shaman Xian's voice. Given that the theme here clearly changes from how men encounter kings to how virtue is in decline, and that the imagery changes from historical allusions and returns to the original imagery of plants and adornment, I suspect a return to Qu Yuan's own voice.

153 惟此黨人之不諒兮

恐嫉妒而折之

wéi cǐ dǎng rén zhī bú liàng xī

kǒng jí dù ér zhé zhī

Thinking of these clique-men's intolerance —

[I] fear [they will] be envious and break it

張鳳翼：言此讒佞之黨，不信忠直，吾恐其妬我而折挫也。Zhang Fengyi: This says that this clique of slanderers and flatterers do not trust loyalty and forthrightness; I fear they are jealous of me and will break [me] down.

汪瑗：不諒謂不信己瓊佩之美也。Wang Yuan: Intolerance refers to not trusting the

beauty of my nephrite sash.

154 時繽紛其變易兮

又何可以淹留

shí bīn fēn qí biàn yì xī

yòu hé ké yǐ yān liú

Time, profuse in its transformations —— Then how could [I] momentarily stay

呂延濟：言世亂變易，不可住也。Lü Yanji: This says the world is chaotic and changeful; [I] can't abide [in it].

155 蘭芷變而不芳兮

荃蕙化而爲茅

lán zhǐ biàn ér bù fāng xī

quán huì huà ér wéi máo

Eupatorium, angelica, changed and not fragrant ——

Acorus, ocimum, transformed and become reeds

王逸：言蘭芷之草，變易其體，而不復香。荃蕙化而爲菅茅，失其本性也。以言君子更爲小人，忠信更爲佞僞也。Wang Yi: This says the plants eupatorium and

angelica have changed their form and are no longer fragrant. Acorus and ocimum have transformed into reeds, losing their original nature. This is to say that the gentlemen have now become petty men, and the loyal and trustworthy have become slanderers and liars.

洪興祖：當是時，守死而不變者，楚國一人而已，屈子是也。Hong Xingzu: At that time, there was but a single man in the kingdom of Chu who would persevere unto death rather than change, and that was Master Qu.

156 何昔日之芳草兮

今直爲此蕭艾也

hé xī rì zhī fāng cǎo xi

jīn zhí wéi cǐ xiāo ài yě

Why the ancient days' fragrant herbs ——

Today are valued as wormwood and mugwort are

Wormwood and mugwort are common names of plants in the genus artemisia, extremely bitter, with medicinal properties, of absinthe infamy.

王逸：以言往日明智之士，今皆佯愚，狂惑不顧。Wang Yi: This is to say that the wise elites of former days now are all hypocrites and fools, confused and careless.

汪瑗：直者，變易太甚之意。……蕭艾，茅之醜也，所喻亦同。二句怪而嘆之之詞。

Wang Yuan: "Valued" signifies that the transformation is too extreme. Wormwood and mugwort are ugly reeds; that for which they serve as metaphors are the same. These two lines are the diction of reproach and sighs.

姜亮夫：這是從古代人民風習中對這兩種草的地位來說，不是從它們的芳香與否來說，古祭祀鬯酒用草，諸侯用薰，大夫用蘭芝，士用蕭，庶人用艾，可以看出蕭艾的等第。Jiang Liangfu: This is stated from the perspective of the status accorded to these two kinds of plants in the customs of the ancient people; it is not stated from the perspective of whether or not they have fragrance. The scented wine used in ancient sacrifices was made with herbs: the fuedal lords used [the herb called] *xun*, the Grand Masters used eupatorium [orchid] and ganoderma lucidum [reishi mushroom], the servicemen used wormwood, and the commoners used mugwort; we can see the [low] rank of wormwood and mugwort.

157 豈其有他故兮

莫好脩之害也

qǐ qí yǒu tā gù xī

mò hào xiū zhī hài yě

Could this have its reason? ——

Not loving cultivation's harm this is

{this is the harm that comes of not loving cultivation}

Nothing [compares] to loving cultivation's harmfulness

洪興祖：時人莫有好自修潔者，故其害至於荃蕙爲茅，芳草爲艾也。Hong Xingzu:

Among the men of this time there are none who love cultivating their own purity; thus the harm [they cause] extends even to [valuing] acorus and ocimum as reeds, and fragrant plants as artemisia.

朱熹：世亂俗薄，士無常守，乃小人害之，而以爲莫如好修之害者，何哉？蓋由君子好修，而小人嫉之，使不容於當世，故中材以下，莫不變化而從俗，則是其所以致此者，反無有如好修之爲害也。Zhu Xi: This world is chaotic and its morals are flimsy; the elites are without moral constancy, so petty men [can] harm them—and yet, could it be that [their injury] does not compare to the injury of those who love cultivation? How so? It must be that due to the gentleman's love of cultivation, petty men are jealous of him and cause him to be unaccepted in his own era, and consequently the people of middling skill and below all transform and follow the vulgar world; and so, for those who have been brought down by this, in fact nothing is as harmful as loving cultivation.

王夫之：好脩，君志正而樂賢也。羣臣一旦靡然從邪佞而爲黨，唯君德不脩之故。

Wang Fuzhi: "Loving cultivation" is [to say that] when the lord's aspiration is upright it is the joy of the worthies. If ever the many ministers are swayed to follow crooked flattery and form cliques, only their lord's virtue being uncultivated is to blame.

蔣驥：莫好修之害，言莫如好脩者之被害也。Jiang Ji: “Not loving cultivation’s harm”

says that nothing compares to the injury received by those who love cultivation.

吳世尚：[巫咸言] 上無好賢之君，下安得有守正之士乎？Wu Shishang: [Shaman

Xian says that] if there is no cultivation-loving lord above, then how could there possibly be right-guarding elites below?

158 余以蘭爲可恃兮 羌無實而容長

yú yǐ lán wéi kě shì xī

qiāng wú shí ér róng cháng/zhǎng

I took eupatorium to be trustworthy —— Ah, without substance yet in appearance grand

王逸：蘭，懷王少弟，司馬子蘭也。恃，怙也。實，誠也。言我以司馬子蘭懷王之弟，應薦賢達能，可怙而進，不意內無誠信之實，但有長大之貌，浮華而已。

Wang Yi: Eupatorium is King Huai’s little brother, the Minister of War Sir

Eupatorium. ... This says the Minister of War Sir Eupatorium, brother of King Huai, should recommend worthies and advance the talented. [I thought he] could be relied on to advance me; I did not expect that within he has no trustworthy substance. Although his appearance is grand, it is merely ostentation.

朱熹：此即上章蘭芷變而不芳之意。容長，謂徒有外好耳。Zhu Xi: This is the meaning of the above stanza about eupatorium and angelica changed and not fragrant. “In appearance grand” refers to only being good on the outside.

錢杲之：蘭喻所收賢才也。Qian Gaozhi: Eupatorium is a metaphor for the talented worthies he has gathered.

汪瑗：可恃，謂始而信其節之不改也。無實容長，謂無蘭之實，而有蘭之名，九辯

曰何曾華之無實是也。以喻在位者無君子之德，而有君子之飾也。君子之飾，爵祿軒冕是也。Wang Yuan: “Trustworthy” refers to having begun with trust in his unchangeable integrity. “Without substance” and “in appearance grand” refer to not having the substance of eupatorium, yet having the name of eupatorium; this is stated in the “Nine Pieces” as “how the former flowers are without substance.” It is a metaphor for the one on the throne who is without the virtue of a gentleman, yet has the decorations of a gentleman. The decorations of a gentleman are his rank and salary, his chariot [entitlements] and cap [insignia].

159 委厥美以從俗兮

苟得列乎衆芳

wěi jué měi yǐ cóng sú xi

gǒu dé liè hū zhòng fāng

Distorting its beauty to follow the common ——

Ill-attaining lineup with the assembled fragrances

By this attaining lineup with the assembled fragrances

王逸：委，棄。言子蘭棄其美質正直之性，隨從諂佞，苟欲列於衆賢之位，無進賢之心也。Wang Yi: Distorting is discarding. This says Sir Eupatorium discards his beautiful character and upright nature, following flattery, lusting to be ranked with the assembled worthies, not of a mind to advance worthies.

徐煥龍：以比毫無志節，衣冠偉然，一味磨稜，盜虛聲以附君子之列。Xu

Huanlong: [This is used] as a comparison for [those] completely without moral aspiration, [with their] robes and caps so outstanding, always cutting corners, stealing hollow reputations in order to be numbered among the gentleman.

160 椒專佞以慢慆兮

楛又欲 [慾] 充夫佩幃

jiāo zhuān nìng yǐ màn tāo xi

shā yòu yù chōng fú pèi wéi

Zanthoxylum expert in flattery, arrogant and dissolute ——

Cornus also wants to fill his/the sash sachet

王逸：椒，楚大夫子椒也。楛，茱萸也，似椒而非，以喻子椒似賢而非賢也。幃，盛香之囊，以喻親近。Wang Yi: Zanthoxylum is Sir Zanthoxylum, a Grand Master of Chu. Cornus is dogwood. It looks like zanthoxylum but is not, so it is a metaphor for Sir Zanthoxylum seeming to be worthy and yet not worthy. A sachet is a scented perfume bag, as a metaphor for the close familiars [of the king].

劉良：言子椒專佞而慢淫，列大夫位，在君左右，不為忠正之行，如茱萸之香囊，妄充佩帶，而無芬芳。Liu Liang: This says Sir Zanthoxylum is expert in flattery and wanders wantonly, ranking with the Grand Masters on the right and left of the lord, but not working for the advancement of the loyal and upright. As if with sachets of dogwood, he blindly fills his sash and yet has no perfume.

朱熹：椒亦芳烈之物，而今亦變為邪佞；茱萸固為臭物，而今又欲滿於香囊。Zhu Xi: Zanthoxylum is a richly scented thing, but now it too changes to crooked flattery. Dogwood is a stinking thing, but now it is desired for filling perfume bags.

錢澄之：古者重九佩茱萸，以辟惡，則楛亦椒類，非臭物也。Qian Chengzhi: On the Double Ninth Festival the ancients wore dogwood on their sashes in order to avert evil, and moreover cornus is of the zanthoxylum category; it is not a stinking thing.

王遠：此二節言蘭椒，必指當時楚士之賢者，原所樹立，前所謂蒞時乎吾將刈者也，

今皆不能不變矣。Wáng Yuan: These two sections discuss eupatorium and zanthoxylum; they must point out worthies among the contemporary elites of Chu—those Yuan established, whom are referred to above as “awaiting ripeness’ time when I will reap.” Now they all are unable to not change [with the times, for the worse].

蔣驥：楸本椒類，亦辛香之物，非謂不足充幃也，罪在欲耳。Jiang Ji: Cornus is actually of the zanthoxylum category, also a spicy fragrant thing. This does not refer to it as being inadequate for filling sachets; the fault is in their wanting.

林仲懿：充佩幃，楸以椒充佩幃也，言私暱也。Lin Zhongyi: “Fill his sash-sachet” is Cornus filling his sash-sachet by way of Zanthoxylum. It says there is private favoritism [in the court].

Zhang Fengyi and You Guoen believe eupatorium and zanthoxylum in this passage do not refer to Sir Eupatorium and Sir Zanthoxylum, because the other flowers mentioned in this part of the poem are not likewise identified with specific historical persons

161 既干進而務入兮

又何芳之能祇

jì gān jìn ér wù rù xī

yòu hé fāng zhī néng zhī

[They've] already striven to enter and served to get in ——

Then what fragrance can be respected

Then how can fragrance possibly be respected

王逸：言子椒苟欲自進，求入於君，身得爵祿而已，復何能敬愛賢人，而舉用之也？

Wang Yi: This says Sir Zanthoxylum wrongly desires to advance himself, seeking to get in with his lord, but only to physically obtain the salary and rank. Then how could he

ever revere worthy people, and promote them?

朱熹：但知求進，而務入於君，則又何能復敬守其芬芳之節乎？Zhu Xi: Although they know how to seek advancement, and serve to get in with their lord, yet how could they also respectfully maintain their perfumed [moral] principles?

錢杲之：意在求進，雖有才美如芳草，誰能敬之？Qian Gaozhi: [If their] intention is to seek to advance [themselves], then even if [they] are as talented and beautiful as fragrant herbs, who will respect them?

汪瑗：此四句言人之急於爲惡而不足敬，其詞極痛切而可警也。Wang Yuan: These four lines say that people are hasty to do evil and are not sufficiently respectful. His diction is intensely sorrowful, and can serve as a warning.

徐煥龍：芳，原自比。Xu Huanlong: Fragrance is Yuan's comparison for himself.

游國恩：言昔日有才德者，今則皆以干進務入爲事矣，尚何能振其固有之芳哉。You Guoen: This says that those who in the old days had talent and virtue are today all concerned with striving to enter and serving to get in; how could they ever revive their original fragrance?

162 固時俗之流從兮

又孰能無變化

gù shí sú zhī liú cóng xī

yòu shú néng wú biàn huà

Surely this time's custom's current flows ——

Then who could be without transformation

張鳳翼：言世俗詭隨，賢者如此，況衆人乎？Zhang Fengyi: This says that the custom of this world is to blindly follow others; if even the worthies are like this, that

what of the crowd?

林雲銘：水之流下，從而不能逆反。Lin Yungming: Water flows downward, and can never flow back against its current.

163 覽 [賢] 椒蘭其若茲兮

又況揭車與江離

lǎn [xián] jiāo lán qí ruò zī xī

yòu kuàng jiē jū yǔ jiāng lí

See zanthoxylum and eupatorium are even like this ——

Worthy zanthoxylum and eupatorium are even like this ——

Then what of lysimachia and cladophora

Ma Maoyuan's edition has “覽察椒蘭……”

王逸：言觀子椒子蘭變志若此，況朝廷衆臣，而不爲佞媚以容其身邪？Wang Yi:

This says, observe Sir Zanthoxylum and Sir Eupatorium changing their aspirations like this—as to the assembled ministers of the court, how could they not flatter and fawn to make themselves accepted?

朱熹：Zhu Xi says that if Wang Yi's and Hong Xingzu's interpretation are correct and eupatorium and zanthoxylum are Sir Eupatorium and Sir Zanthoxylum, “則又當有子車，子離，子楸之儔，蓋不知其幾人矣 Then they also ought to have for companions Sir Lysimachia, Sir Cladophora, Sir Cornus, and who knows how many other people.” Xu Wenjing 徐文靖 responds that the authoritative historian Ban Gu recorded the names of Zilan [Sir Eupatorium] and Zijiao [Sir Zanthoxylum]—how could their historicity be doubted? Wu Shishang counters with “夫離騷通首俱是托物陳詞，比興達意，不應於

此而忽實指二人之名，乖通篇之體也 The “Li Sao” from the beginning is a consistent allegorical presentation, [using] comparisons and prefatory allusions to express its meaning; it ought not to be [the case] that here it suddenly really indicates two people’s names, distorting the form of the whole work.”

周拱辰：此一段正答上巫咸恐鶉鷓之先鳴，使百草不芳句也。言君子正恐已非芳草耳。苟真芳草，何惜鶉鷓？ Zhou Gongzhen: This section directly replies to Shaman Wu’s line above about “fearing the tije-bird’s early calling / Will make these hundred herbs to be unfragrant.” This says the gentleman in fact fears that [they were] already not fragrant herbs. If they were truly fragrant herbs, why begrudge the cuckoo?

馬茂元：尋繹屈原作品以及有關紀載，在當時楚國政治鬥爭中有兩個派系。屈原代表進步勢力，與之相對立的，則是以子蘭，子椒和上官大夫靳尚（一說上官與靳尚是兩個人）為核心的代表楚國腐化貴族的惡劣勢力。這兩派的鬥爭，一開始就非常鮮明而且尖銳。在鬥爭過程中，原來屬於屈原這一派系所辛勤培植引以為同志的，並不乏其人。可是在個人功名利祿的引誘和不良的思想影響下，他們都一一變而與惡劣勢力合流了。 Ma Maoyuan: Investigating Qu Yuan’s works and related records, [we can see that] in that time there were two factions involved in the political struggle of the kingdom of Chu. Qu Yuan represented progressive power; standing against him were Zilan [Sir Eupatorium], Zijiao [Sir Zanthoxylum], and the senior Grand Master Jin Shang (it’s also said that the senior [Grand Master] and Jin Shang were two different people), the core representatives of the evil power of Chu’s corrupt aristocracy. In the beginning the struggle of these two parties was extremely clear and acute. While there was originally no lack of people who had been drawn in and laboriously fostered as comrades

for the faction that belonged to Qu Yuan, during the course of the struggle, due to the temptation of individual fame and profit and the influence of harmful ideology, they all one by one changed over and merged with the evil power. [So the 蘭 and 椒 in this passage do not refer to Sir Eupatorium and Sir Zanthoxylum but to the flowers that the speaker cultivated in the beginning of the poem.]

164 惟茲佩之可貴兮

委厥美而歷茲

wéi zī pèi zhī kě guì xī

wěi jué měi ér lì zī

Think of this sash's treasurableness ——

Only this sash is treasurable ——

Distorting its beauty, and undergoing this

Discarding its beauty, and undergoing this

王逸：言己內行忠正，外佩衆香，此誠可貴重，不意明君棄其至美，而逢此咎也。

Wang Yi: This says, I inwardly am loyal and upright and outwardly wear assembled fragrances on my sash; this is truly treasurable. I did not expect the enlightened lord would abandon his perfect beauty [i.e., me, Qu Yuan], and meet with this [negative] result.

呂延濟：惟此，原自屬也。Lü Yanji: Only this: Yuan refers to himself.

洪興祖：上云委厥美以從俗，言子蘭之自棄也。此云委厥美而歷茲，言懷王之見棄也。Hong Xingzu: Above, “distorting their beauty to follow the common” says that Sir Eupatorium has abandoned himself. This “discarding its beauty, and undergoing this” says [Qu Yuan] has been abandoned by King Huai.

朱熹：故彼雖苟得一時之勢，而惡名不滅；此雖失其一時之利，而芬芳久存，二者

之間，正有志者所當明辨而勇決也。Zhu Xi: So although they may ill-attain a moment of power, the evil fame will never be extinguished; although I [Qu Yuan] may lose a moment of profit, but the perfume will endure forever. Between the two, those of true aspiration must distinguish clearly and decide heroically.

汪瑗：委厥美而歷茲，是屈原自言已有瓊佩之美，而為黨眾憂然而蔽之，嫉妬而折之，其棄之一至於此也。Wang Yuan: “Distorting its beauty, and undergoing this” is Qu Yuan saying he himself has the beauty of the nephrite sash ornament, but the clique and crowd have obscured and blocked it, jealously broken it—their rejection of him goes even to this.

錢澄之：芳以表行，玉以表德，蘭蕙既以變易，故所重者玉。自此以下，但稱瓊玉，絕口不及蘭蕙。Qian Chengzhi: Fragrance represents conduct, and jade represents virtue. Eupatorium and ocimum have already changed, so what can be highly valued is jade. From here on down, although it names nephrite and jade, it never again mentions eupatorium and ocimum.

徐煥龍：惟茲可貴，非原自誇，謂羣小意中惟恨茲佩獨貴，相形舉朝之陋賤，是以必不見容，委棄其美而歷於今茲。Xu Huanlong: “Only this is treasurable” is not Qu Yuan praising himself; it refers to the resentment in the minds of the petty crowd that this sash alone is treasurable, revealing the meanness of the entire court. Like this he surely can't be accepted, so his beauty is discarded and he undergoes this present [hardship].

165 芳菲菲而難虧兮

芬至今猶未沫

fāng fēi fēi ér nán kuī xī

fēn zhì jīn yóu wèi mèi/mò

Fragrantly aromatic and difficult to damage ——

The scent to this day is still not yet dispersed

劉良：言己芳菲之盛，誠難損歇，雖遭棄逐，至今猶未已也。Liu Liang: This says the flourishing of my fragrant perfume is truly difficult to destroy. Although I have encountered abandonment and banishment, to this day I am still not finished.

166 和調度以自娛兮 聊浮游而求女

hé tiáo dù yǐ zì yú xī

liáo fú yóu ér qiú nǚ

[I] soften [my] style to myself please —— For now drifting about to pursue women

和調度 suggests harmony, rhyme, tune, mode, musical or literary style.

王逸：言我雖不見用，猶和調己之行度，執守忠貞，以自娛樂，且徐徐浮游，以求同志也。Wang Yi: This says that although I am not made use of, still I temper my conduct and defend my loyalty in order to enjoy myself. For a while I solemnly drift about in order to seek those of like aspiration.

朱熹：言我和此調度以自娛，而遂浮游以求女，如前所言處妃，佚女，二姚之屬，意猶在於求君也。Zhu Xi: This says I soften this style of right conduct in order to please myself. As to then drifting about to pursue women, those like Fufei, the dusky women, and the Two Yao spoken of before, the intention is still to seek a lord.

黃文煥：和調度以自娛者，原自有原之聲調，自有原之制度也。Huang Wenhuan: “Soften style to myself please”: Yuan has Yuan’s own tune and Yuan’s own method.

錢澄之：至是猶言求女者，悟主之事，不能望之於臣，猶可望之於女，故終未能忘

情也。Qian Chengzhi: At this point it also speaks of seeking women. The matter of awakening the ruling king can't be hoped for among the ministers, but still might have a hope among the women. To the end he cannot forget his affection.

林雲銘：不但不求君，即求女亦付之意外之遇，以世道變易，勢不可必得也。Lin Yunming: Not only does he not seek a lord, his pursuit of women is also entrusted to an accidental meeting. Because the way of the world is transformed, power can't be attained by necessity.

朱冀：自娛不過去其憤疾，浮游謂浮生，如物在水上，優游而任其所之也。憤疾則憂來必致傷人，自娛則浮生且游塵世云爾。Zhu Ji: Pleasing himself is nothing more than expelling his indignation. Drifting about refers to the floating life: like a thing on the surface of the water, he leisurely roams and indulges in whatever place he goes. As to indignation, when suffering comes it must cause harm to a person; as to pleasing oneself, it is described with the floating life, the temporary roaming in the dusty world.

魯筆：此答巫咸半段，與前答靈氛半段相應，彼小人毀君子，此君子變小人，一層逼近一層，方趕得去國出。Lu Bi: This replies to the half section about Shaman Xian, corresponding to the previous half-section reply to Spirit Aura. In the former, petty men ruin the gentleman. In this one, the gentlemen change into petty men. Each level presses upon the next level, finally driving him to leave the kingdom.

167 及余飾之方壯兮

周流觀乎上下

jí yú shì zhī fāng zhuàng xī

zhōu liú guān hū shàng xià

While my adornment is full robust —

[I] circle around regarding above and below

王逸：上謂君，下謂臣也。言我顧及年德方盛壯之時，周流四方，觀君臣之賢，欲往就之也。Wang Yi: Above refers to the lords, below refers to the ministers. This says I look back while my virtuous years are just at the time of flourishing robustness, circling around the four directions, observing the worthies among the lords and ministers, desiring to go there [where they are].

朱熹：余飾，謂瓊佩及前章冠服之盛。方壯，亦巫咸所謂年未晏，時未央之意。周流上下，即靈氛所謂遠逝，巫咸所謂陞降上下也。Zhu Xi: “My adornment” refers to the magnificence of the nephrite sash ornament and to the cap and robes of the previous stanzas. “Full robust” is what Shaman Xian refers to as “years not yet late” and “time not yet run out.” “Circling around above and below” is what Spirit Aura referred to as “a distant voyage,” and Shaman Xian referred to as “going up and going down, above and below.”

王夫之：周流觀上下，游神物外，體天地之和也。Wang Fuzhi: Circling around, observing above and below, roaming in spirit beyond material things, [he] experiences the harmony of heaven and earth.

胡文英：余飾方壯，喻學力方富，足以有爲也。Hu Wenying: “My adornment is full robust” is a metaphor for the abundance of his academic ability, sufficient for great accomplishments.

168 靈氛既告余以吉占兮

歷吉日乎吾將行

líng fēn jì gào yú yǐ jí zhàn xi

lì jí rì hū wú jiāng xíng

Spirit Aura already announced to me an auspicious divination ——

Choosing an auspicious day, I will go

The scholars have found that the absence of Shaman Xian in these lines needs to be accounted for; their different interpretations of what Shaman Xian's advice was led to different ways of explaining his absence.

賀貽孫：因巫咸之語，復信靈氛。He Yisun says: He Yisun: Because of Shaman Xian's advice, [I] return to trust Spirit Aura.

李光地：巫咸但告吉故而無占，故此止舉靈氛而爲言。Li Guangdi: Shaman Xian did not make a divination but only announced the auspicious reason [for Spirit Aura's divination], so here he sticks with advancing the words of Spirit Aura.

蔣驥：吉占指兩美必合言，舉靈氛以概巫咸也。Jiang Ji: The auspicious divination indicates “two beauties must join”; it advances Spirit Aura's [divination] by including Shaman Xian's [advice].

張象津：不從巫咸之求君，而從靈氛之遠逝也。Zhang Xiangjin: [I] don't follow Shaman Xian's [advice to] pursue a lord, but follow Spirit Aura's [advice to] go on a distant voyage.

王闔運：楚士盡變，留國無益，故仍從靈氛吉占決去也。Wang Kaiyun: The elites of Chu have all completely changed and staying here is without benefit, so I will follow Spirit Aura's auspicious divination, take my leave, and depart.

游國恩：前既設爲問卜求神兩段，以決其所以自處，靈氛勉其遠逝以求女，巫咸則勸其姑留以待時，去歟，留歟？一時狐疑不決。終以楚俗大變，勢難再合，故不聽巫咸之言，而決從靈氛之占也。You Guoen: Above, [Qu Yuan] has two propositional sections—on questioning the diviner and on requesting the spirits—in order to decide

how he will make his way. Spirit Aura encouraged him to distantly voyage in pursuit of women, while Shaman Xian urged him to temporarily stay in order to await his time. To go, or to stay? For a moment he hesitates indecisively. In the end, since the custom of Chu has changed greatly, and the political situation would be difficult to reunify, he does not heed Shaman Xian's words, but decides to follow Spirit Aura's divination.

169 折瓊枝以爲羞兮

精瓊靡以爲糧

zhé qióng zhī yǐ wéi xiū xī

jīng qióng mí yǐ wéi zhāng

[I] break nephrite branch to be dried meat —— Refine nephrite chips to be provisions

洪興祖：周禮有食玉，注云，玉，陽精之純者，食之以禦水氣。Hong Xingzu: The *Zhou Ritual* mentions eating jade; the commentary says jade is the pure essence of yang, eat it to ward off water energy [water qi is an idea from Five Phases cosmology and medicine].

錢澄之：昔者餐英，今且餐玉，惡衆芳之變易，美玉乃無瑕也。Qian Chengzhi: Formerly [he] dined on blossoms, now he dines on jade. He hates the transformation of the assembled fragrances, but beautiful jade is truly flawless.

魯筆：瓊枝瓊靡，仙靈品味，比芳潔，非濁世所有。Lu Bi: Nephrite branch and nephrite chips, the flavors of immortals and spirits, are a comparison for fragrant purity, not something that exists in the muddy world.

170 爲余駕飛龍兮

雜瑤象以爲車

wéi yú jià fēi lóng xī

zá yáo xiàng yǐ wéi jū

For me drive flying dragons —— Varied polished jade and elephant to be the chariot(s)

{Mixed}

象, elephant, is a synecdoche for the elephant's tusk, i.e., ivory.

王逸：象，象牙也。言我駕飛龍，乘明智之獸，象玉之車，文章雜錯，以言己德似龍玉，而世莫之識也。Wang Yi: Elephant is elephant tusk [ivory]. It says I drive flying dragons, riding the beast of enlightened wisdom. The chariot of ivory and jade, patterned in elaborate variety, is to say my virtue is like that of dragons and jade, although the world does not recognize it.

劉良：飛龍喻道。瑤，玉名，以比君子之德。言我遠遊，但駕此道德以為車。Liu Liang: Flying dragons are a metaphor for the Way. Polished jade is a comparison for the virtue of the gentleman. This says I roam far, only driving this Way of Virtue as a chariot. 張鳳翼：龍，神物。象與玉間雜而為車，喻神氣為馭，道義為車也。Zhang Fengyi: Dragons are a spiritual thing. Ivory and jade are mixed together for the chariot. This is a metaphor for qi [spiritual energy] as [my] driver and the Way of Righteousness as [my] chariot.

汪瑗：此言所乘之美也，然皆無所取義，舊註譬喻之說非是。Wang Yuan: This describes the beauty of my vehicle, with no deep significance to be taken from it. The metaphors that the old commentaries find are all untrue.

王夫之：駕飛龍而乘象玉之輅，所以自旌高貴而殊於俗也。Wang Fuzhi: Driving flying dragons and riding a carriage of ivory and jade is how he commends his lofty status and his difference from the common.

夏大霖：飛龍，良馬之稱。象，象牙車，用寶飾也。Xia Dalin: Flying dragons is a

name for fine horses. Elephant is elephant tusk; [he] uses treasures for ornaments.

王闔運：飛龍，喻懷王也。……雜之者，合從諸侯以拒秦也。Wang Kaiyun: Flying dragons are a metaphor for King Huai. ... “Mixed” is joining with the fuedal lords to resist Qin.

171 何離心之可同兮

吾將遠逝以自疏

hé lí xīn zhī kě tóng xi

wú jiāng yuǎn shì yǐ zì shū

How can separated hearts possibly match ——

I will distantly voyage to keep myself apart

王逸：言賢愚異心，何可合同，知君與己殊志，故將遠去自疏，而流遁於世也。

Wang Yi: This says the worthy and the foolish have different minds, how could they be fit together? [I] know my lord and I have unlike aspirations, so I will go far to distance myself, and roam to escape this world.

汪瑗：言黨人之離心不可與同，將從吉占遠逝，而自疏遠此輩，以別求矩矱之所同

者也。Wang Yuan: This says those of the clique are at odds and can't be matched

together. [I] will follow the auspicious divination and distantly voyage, keeping myself far distant from this generation, in order to pursue those who match the measure.

王夫之：君心已離，不可復合，則尊生自愛，疏遠而忘寵辱，修黃老之術，從巫咸

之詔，所謂愛身以全道也。以下皆養生之旨，與遠遊相出入。Wang Fuzhi: The

heart of my lord is already distant, and can't be rejoined. Then reverence gives birth to self-love. Keeping far away and forgetting favor and disgrace, cultivating the techniques of The Yellow Emperor and Laozi [Daoism], following the decree of Shaman Xian: this

is what is referred to as caring for the body in order to complete the Way. Below is all the idea of nourishing life [Daoist hygiene]. It has some differences from “Far Roaming.” [“Far Roaming” is another *Chuci* poem, which has been interpreted as a work about nourishing life.]

徐煥龍：君臣上下并皆與我離心，何可與之同居一國，故將遠逝以避其禍，不待彼之疏我，我自疏之。Xu Huanlong: Lord(s) and ministers above and below are all of different minds than me; how could I live together with them in one kingdom? So I will distantly voyage in order to flee their disaster. Not waiting for them to distance me, I distance myself.

陳本禮：此託爲遠逝自疏之說，其實欲往求西方之美女也。以下躔崑崙，發天津，至西極，行流沙，遵赤水，至西海，亦猶上征之意。上征以上帝喻君，此以西方美人喻君也。Chen Benli: Although this makes use of the explanation “distantly voyaging to keep myself apart,” in fact he wants to go pursue the beautiful women of the west. Below, turning to Kunlun, departing from Heaven’s Ford, arriving at the Western Limit, walking the flowing sands, following the Red Water, and arriving at the western sea, [all] still have the meaning of the journey above. The journey above used the Highest Emperor [God] as a metaphor for his lord; this uses the beauties of the west as a metaphor for his lord.

172 躔吾道夫崑崙兮

路脩遠以周流

zhàn wú dào fú kūn lún xī

lù xiū yuǎn yǐ zhōu liú

Winding my way now to Kunlun ——

On the road a vast distance in circling about

In the ancient mythology, the sacred Kunlun Mountains in the northwest were a pillar of heaven, a high place of gods and spirits, of jade trees and magical waters.

錢澄之：原自序其生曰降，居然以列星嶽神自命矣。所遊必在崑崙懸圃之間，扈從必以飛龍鳳凰，羽儀必以雲霓玉鸞，則其自處之高，俯視一切，豈能苟同於時俗乎？

Qian Chengzhi: Yuan introduced his birth by saying he “descended”; now he considers himself as [one among] the stars and mountain gods. Where he travels must be between Kunlun and Xuanbu, his royal retinue must be flying dragons and phoenixes, his pennant standard must be cloud rainbows and jade luan-birds; from the height at which he places himself, looking down over everything, how could he possibly join with the custom of the era?

王邦采：篇內一言懸圃，再言閩風，三言崑崙，大夫一舉念，即注想於此，豈以其爲天柱，呼吸之間，上通帝座，故惓惓寓意歟？若曰浪迹求仙，埋名遯世，非大夫之本懷矣。Wang Bangcai: In the text it first says Xuanpu, next says Langfeng, thirdly says Kunlun: once the Grand Master has a thought, he surely attends upon it like this.

Could he, by way of the Pillar of Heaven, in the space of a single breath, ascend to reach the throne of the [divine] Emperor—isn't it his constantly harbored intention? If you say [he's] aimlessly searching for immortality, or burying his name and hiding from the world, that's not the Grand Master's original cherished intention.

戴震：戰國時言仙者，託之昆侖，故多不經之說，篇內寓言及之，不必深求也。

Dai Zhen: In the Warring States era those who spoke of immortals borrowed “Kunlun” [as a metonymy]; since most of them are unattested statements, when this text allegorically touches upon it, we mustn't seek profound [significance].

Ma Maoyuan points out that, from the geographic perspective of Chu, the northwest

would be the cradle of Chinese civilization and cultural origin of many of the mythological and historical stories in this poem.

173 揚雲霓之晻藹兮

鳴玉鸞之啾啾

yáng yún ní zhī yǎn ǎi xi

míng yù luán zhī jiū jiū

Raising the cloud rainbow's dark shade —— Sounding the jade luan-bird's chirping

李周翰：雲霓，虹也，畫之於旌旗。晻藹，旌旗蔽日貌。Li Zhouhan: Cloud

rainbow 雲霓 is the rainbow 虹, painted on the flags. Dark shade is the appearance of the flags blocking out the sun.

According to Hong Xingzu's texts, luan is the name of a special chariot bell. Perhaps it sounds like a luan-bird? Or: 汪瑗：鸞者，乃車上之鈴，以玉雕成，象鸞鳥之形象耳。

或曰，此指旌旗上之鈴耳，謂旌旗揚則玉鸞鳴，與上句相喚。爾雅曰，有鈴曰旂。

則旌旗之上亦有鈴也。Wang Yuan: The luan are bells on the chariot, made of jade

carved in the shape of luan-birds. Or we could say, this indicates bells on the flags,

referring to the raising of the flags causing the jade luan to ring, an echo with the line

above. The *Erya* says, [the flag] that has bells is called 旂 [this word is used in the lines

below]. So the flags also have bells.

王邦采：雲霓為天地之陰氣，晻藹喻黨人之障蔽也。Wang Bangcai: Cloud rainbows are the yin qi [energy] of heaven and earth. Dark shade is a metaphor for the obstructions of the clique.

夏大霖：晻藹乃昏慘之色，啾啾乃悽慘之聲。聲色之悲喜隨人心之悲喜相感應，此

壯行而心實悲，故字法如此寫。 Xia Dalin: Dark shade is the color of gloominess; chirping is the sound of misery. The grief or joy of the color and sound follow the inter-responding grief or joy in the heart of man. This is robust activity with a heart truly grieving, so the diction is written like this.

174 朝發軔於天津兮

夕余至乎西極

zhāo fā rèn yú tiān jīn xī

xī yú zhì hū xī jí

Morning [I] release the brakes at Heaven's Ford ——

Evening I arrive at the Western Limit

Heaven's Ford is the ford of the Milky Way, the heavenly river.

王逸：天津，東極箕斗之間，漢津也。言已朝發天之東津，萬物所生，夕至地之西極，萬物所成，動順陰陽之道，且亟疾也。 Wang Yi: Heaven's Ford is at the Eastern Limit between the *ji* and *dou* constellations: the Han Ford [the Milky Way]. This says in the morning I depart from Heaven's eastern ford, where the ten thousand things are born, and in the evening I arrive at the earth's western limit, where the ten thousand things are completed. My movement complies with the Way of yin and yang, even in such earnest haste.

徐煥龍：朝發天津，夕至西極，與日輪而竝馳矣。 Xu Huanlong: Morning [he] departs from Heaven's Ford, evening [he] arrives at the Western Limit, galloping together with the solar disc.

朱冀：天津，借天上之漢津，指楚地之漢水也。西極，楚西境之極也。言朝從漢水起程，夕盡楚之西境，甚言其行之速也。 Zhu Ji: "Heaven's Ford" borrows the Han

Ford of heaven to indicate the Han River of the land of Chu. The Western Limit is the farthest point on the eastern border of Chu. This says in the morning [he] follows the Han River to set out, and in the evening finishes at Chu's western border; it emphasizes the speed of his movement.

175 鳳皇翼其承旂兮

高翱翔之翼翼

fèng huáng yì qí chéng qí xī

gāo áo xiáng zhī yì yì

Phoenixes winging their uplifted banners ——

On high soaring, wing to wing

{respectful}

{harmoniously, evenly, assisting}

朱熹：凡旂屬皆建於車後也。Zhu Xi: Ordinarily banners and such are erected on the back of the chariot.

黃文煥：鳳皇翱翔，向所屢託以爲同志者，故隨所往而思與偕也。求女之非鳳皇不可使，獨行亦非鳳皇不可偕也。Huang Wenhuan: Phoenixes soaring are what [he] time and again cast as [or uses to represent] men of like aspiration, so [he] follows what he goes toward and hopes to get along with them. In pursuing women, he won't dispatch anything except phoenixes, and likewise in walking alone, he won't get along with anyone except with phoenixes.

林雲銘：此周流平路之詞。Lin Yunming: These are words about travelling about on level roads. [This may be my favorite comment of the entire poem.]

奚祿詒：此於遠遊篇大不同，遠遊是希訣長生，以須楚國之治，此是環轍四方，以望懷王之歸。Xi Luyi: This is very different from the "Far Roaming" piece. "Far Roaming" wishes for mastery of the techniques of longevity in order to continue the

governance of the kingdom of Chu; this [on the other hand] rings ruts around the four directions in order to await King Huai's return.

姜亮夫：這鳳凰是指的旂下旃飾。Jiang Liangfu: These phoenixes indicate fringe ornaments on the bottom of the pennants.

176 忽吾行此流沙兮 遵赤水而容與

hū wú xíng cǐ liú shā xī zūn chì shuǐ ér róng yǔ

Quickly I traverse these flowing sands — Following the Red Water and easing along

{ ? }

The Flowing Sands is a desert in the far west; the Red Water is a river with its origin in the Kunlun range.

王逸：容與，游戲貌。Wang Yi: 容與 is the aspect of enjoyment.

錢杲之：容與，雍容暇豫也。Qian Gaozhi: 容與 is graceful and unhurried.

林雲銘：容與，亦自娛之意。Lin Yunming: 容與 also means to please oneself.

林仲懿：容與，從容也。Long Zhongyi: 容與 is free and easy.

劉夢鵬：容與，徘徊貌。Liu Mengpeng: 容與 is the aspect of pacing in hesitation.

177 麾蛟龍使梁津兮 詔西皇使涉予

huī jiāo lóng shǐ liáng jīn xī zhào xī huáng shǐ shè yú

Flag river dragons to make a bridge crossing —

Decreeing the Western Emperor to wade me across

王逸：以蛟龍爲橋，乘之以渡，似周穆王之越海，比鼉龜以爲梁也。……言我乃麾蛟龍，以橋西海，使少皞來渡我，動與神獸聖帝相接，言能渡萬民之厄也。Wang Yi: Making a bridge of river dragons and riding them to cross over is like Zhou King Mu crossing the sea using giant sea turtles as a bridge. ...This says, I then flag the river dragons to bridge the Western Sea, making Shao Hao [the Western Emperor] come to ferry me. I move to meet with spiritual beasts and sage emperors: this says I am able to ferry the innumerable populace across their hardships. [The journey described in the “Li Sao” has similarities to Zhou King Mu’s western journey as recounted in the *Liezi*.]

洪興祖：少皞以金德王，白精之君，故曰西皇。Hong Xingzu: Shao Hao is the Metal Virtue King, the lord of the essence of white, so he is called the Western Emperor. [In Chinese cosmology the color of the west is white and its element is metal.]

汪瑗：二句亦參錯文法，本謂詔西皇麾蛟龍以梁津，使渡己也。或曰，麾者，屈子自麾之也，詔西皇使迎己而涉也，亦通。Wang Yuan: These two lines again have a composition method of mutually referring to each other. Primarily they refer to decreeing the Western Emperor to flag the river dragons in order to make a bridge crossing, making [him] ferry me. Or we could say the one who flags is Master Qu himself flagging them, and decreeing the Western Emperor to welcome him and wade—that also works.

林仲懿：津，謂流沙。Lin Zhongyi: The “crossing” refers to the flowing sands.

游國恩：二語分承上文，蓋平列詞，言麾蛟龍使爲流沙之梁，告西皇使濟赤水之渡也。You Guoen: These two phrases separately continue the text above; they ought to be [read as] parallel diction. It says I flag the river dragons to serve as the bridge over the flowing sands, and I order the Western Emperor to take the ferry across the Red Water.

Some commentators have taken pains to explain that the “Li Sao” does not criticize the king (if to do so would be perceived as disloyal); here Qu Yuan orders about the very gods without providing any justification.

178 路脩遠以多艱兮

騰衆車使徑待 [侍]

lù xiū yuǎn yǐ duō jiān xī

téng zhòng chē shǐ jìng dài [shì]

The road a vast distance with many hardships ——

Driving ahead assembled chariots, [I] make [them] on the path to wait [on me]

黃文煥：騰車使徑待，既渡水而就陸，預爲之備也。Huang Wenhuan: Driving ahead the chariots and making them wait on the path is [to say] they have already crossed the water and attained dry land, and are ready for him in advance.

林雲銘：藉衆力隨路而持其危，不使車敗，所以渡之。舊本持誤待字。Lin

Yunming: [He] borrows the strength of the crowd to to support him through danger along the road, not allowing the chariot to overturn: so he is crossed over. The old editions mistook 持 (support) for 待 (wait).

龔景瀚：衆車飛騰徑過，以待屈子。Gong Jinghan: The assembled chariots fly up ahead to wait for Master Qu.

179 路不周以左轉兮

指西海以爲期

lù bù zhōu yǐ zuǒ zhuǎn xī

zhǐ xī hǎi yǐ wéi qī

[I] pass the Unfitted by leftward turning —— Indicate the Western Sea to be the date

The Unfitted is the name of a mountain. The Middle Kingdom of ancient mythology was located in the middle of a central continent, the continent was surrounded by seas, and beyond the seas were the pillars of the sky. The Unfitted was the pillar in the northwest.

王逸：過不周者，言道不合於世也。左轉者，言君行左乖，不與己同志也。Wang

Yi: As to passing the Unfitted, it says [my] way does not accord with the world. As to leftward turning, it says my lord's conduct is perverse; he is not of the same aspiration as I.

呂延濟：左轉者，君子尚左。Lü Yanji: As to leftward turning, the gentleman esteems the left side.

洪興祖：此云路不周以左轉，不周在西北海之外，自右而之左，故曰指西海以爲期也。Hong Xingzu: This says "I pass the Unfitted by leftward turning": The Unfitted is beyond the Northwest Sea, and [I'm] going from right to left, so [consequently] it says "I indicate the Western Sea to be the date." [In Chinese cosmology the ruler sits in the north, facing south, with the east at his left hand and the west at his right hand; maps were also drawn in this orientation. Therefore, from right to left is from west to east; in the case of Qu Yuan, who is already in beyond the western sea, he is heading east back toward the land of the west. Other commentators have found different ways to explain why he is going left on a westward journey.]

汪瑗：此上四章雖爲周流上下四方之詞，然曰夕余至乎西極，曰詔西皇使涉予，曰指西海以爲期，篇中所言上下四方之處亦多且廣矣，而獨惓惓於西方者，篇中以此結遠遊諸章，而且將爲願息肩弛擔之所者，要不爲無意也。蓋彭咸當殷之亂世，西逝流沙而隱去，屈子此數章之意，雖曰勉承氛咸吉占以復求，而遁逸之志已見於此

矣。不然胡爲乎獨指西海以爲期哉？一則曰願依彭咸之遺則，二則曰吾將從彭咸之所居，其意可知也。奈何後世以投水解之哉？Wang Yuan: The four stanzas above, in spite of the words about circling about above and below in the four directions, in fact say “Evening I arrive at the Western Limit,” they say “Decreeing the Western Emperor to wade me across,” they say “Indicate the Western Sea to be the date”; in the work as a whole places describing above and below and the four directions are both many and broad, but as to [this part] only dwelling upon the west, it concludes the distant journey stanzas of the whole work, and moreover it goes to where he wishes to lay down the burden—it couldn’t be unintentional. It must be that Peng Xian, in the chaotic times of the Yin [Shang dynasty], journeyed west to the Flowing Sands and went into reclusion. This is Master Qu’s meaning in these stanzas; although it says he exerts himself to carry out [Spirit] Aura and [Shaman] Xian’s auspicious divination and repeat his quest, yet here his aspiration to hide away in reclusion is already visible. If it were not like this, then why would he indicate only the Western Sea to be the date? First he says he wishes to rely on the legacy of Peng Xian, secondly he says he wishes to follow Peng Xian to where he abides: his meaning is obvious. How could later generations explain this as “casting himself in the water” [to drown]?

徐煥龍：西海茫茫，日入之處，生也有涯，同歸于盡，有不西海爲期者乎？……篇中終而曰至西極，詔西皇，指西海，皆矢死之詞，投江志已決也。Xu Huanlong: The Western Sea is vast and vague, it is where the sun goes in; life also has its shore, and all must return in the end. Is there anyone who does not have a date with the Western Sea? ...The whole work ends by saying “arriving at the Western Limit,” “decree the Western Emperor,” “indicate the Western Sea”; these are all the words of a death vow.

His aspiration to cast himself into the river is already decided.

李光地：是以覽觀大勢，屬意于斯，所過山川，悉表西路。然父母之邦可去，而仇讐之國不可依，中途回望，僕馬悲鳴，況貴戚之卿，義與國共者哉。卒之死而靡他，爲亂章以自矢。嗚呼，淮南所謂日月爭光者此也。Li Guangdi: [At the time Qin was the most powerful state.] This is how he observes the grand political situation, concentrating his mind on it; the mountains and rivers he has passed fully represent his western road. But while one can leave the country of one's father and mother, one cannot rely on the kingdom of one's enemies. He returns his gaze in the middle of the journey; even servants and horses cry out in grief—what then of a noble of the royal family who is sworn to live and die together with the kingdom. In the end there is no alternative to death, which is made into a vow to himself in the coda stanza. Alas! This is the one whom Huainan [Liu An] referred to as “vying for brilliance even with the sun and moon.”

蔣驥：專言西者，因懷楚中止也。遠遊自西而南，亦云睨舊鄉而不行，於此正同。但遠遊以渡世言，故仍抑志而遐舉。此以求君言，故遂返舊而不移，語各有當也。……王薑齋訓浮游求女爲求汝，遘道崑崙以下皆寓意鉛汞妙訣，西指魄宮，殆被黑風吹墮矣。Jiang Ji: As to only discussing the west, it is because he stopped midway out of love for Chu. “Far Roaming” goes from west to south, and also speaks of glimpsing the old country and not going, just like this. But “Far Roaming” is about surpassing this world, so [he] suppresses his aspiration and rises far. This is about seeking a lord, so [he] instead returns to the old [home] and doesn't leave. Each has its suitable language. ... Wang Jiangzhai glosses “drifting about to pursue women (女)” as “pursuing you (汝),” and “winding the way to Kunlun” and below as all allegories for the alchemy of

quicksilver and lead, and [asserts] “the west” indicates the palace of the soul—he must have been blown over by a demon wind.

龔景瀚：遠逝自疏，四方何所不可，而必曰西者，秦在楚之西也。屈子知楚之必爲秦所滅也，觀於西而楚之亡決也。Gong Jinghan: On a far voyage to distance myself, anywhere in the four directions is possible, and yet he must speak of the west. Qin is to the west of Chu. Master Qu knows that Chu must be extinguished by Qin; he observes the west and then [knows] for certain [that] Chu will perish.

游國恩：蓋浮遊本屬幻想，若有若無，亦真亦假，於迷離惝怳之中，寫仙蹤縹緲之境，此境宜莫西方崑崙若也，豈真有若何深意如後人云云者哉！You Guoen: This drifting journey must be considered as primarily a fantasy: as if existing and as if not existing, also true and also false, while lost in a daze, he writes a scene of the indistinct traces of the immortals, and no place is more suitable for this scene than Kunlun. How could it really have some profound significance like later people have chattered about! David Hawkes: “*Bu-zhou Mountain* [the Unfitted]: somewhere ‘west of Kun-lun’. *Bu-zhou Mountain* was the north-western of the eight pillars which once supported the sky. According to the legend, Gao Yang contended with a demon called Gong Gong for mastery of the world and in the course of the struggle Gong Gong butted against this pillar and broke it, thereby causing the earth to tilt up and the sky to tilt down on the north-west side. This is the reason why Chinese rivers mostly flow in an easterly or south-easterly direction. It is also, presumably, the reason—thought the version of the legend which has come down to us omits to say so—why the constellations revolve. The shock which dislodged the sky from its supporting pillars must have caused it to spin, and it has been doing so ever since. *Bu-zhou* means literally ‘not fit’, ‘not correspond’. The

original intention of the legend must have been to explain why the center of the sky is not, as it ought to be, straight overhead. At one time it *was*, was are told: when the sky was firmly propped up on its eight pillars. At that time the fixed stars would have stood still and the whole universe have been perfectly symmetrical.”

180 屯余車其千乘兮

齊玉軼而並馳

tún yú chē qí qiān shèng xī

qí yù dài ér bìng chí

[I] gather my chariots, their thousands of carriages ——

Line up [their] jade hubs and together gallop

劉良：車所以載己，言君子以德自載，亦如車焉。聚千乘者，言道德之多，並運於

己，所在可馳走也。Liu Liang: A chariot is that which carries me; this says the

gentleman carries himself with virtue, as if it is a chariot. The assembled thousand

vehicles say [my] virtues are many, and are lined up to transport me, so that I can gallop anywhere.

李陳玉：天上無孤立之聖賢，天上無排擠之仙人。Chen Benli: In heaven there is no isolated sage worthy. In heaven there is no crowded-out immortal.

181 駕八龍之婉婉兮

載雲旗之委蛇

jià bā lóng zhī wǎn wǎn xī

zǎi yún qí zhī wēi yí

[I] drive eight dragons' sinuousness —— Carry cloud-pennants' winding twists

{docile}

王逸：駕八龍者，言己德如龍，可制御八方也。載雲旗者，言己德如雲，能潤施萬物也。Wang Yi says: “Drive eight dragons” says my virtue is like dragons, [I] can control the eight directions. “Carry cloud-pennants” says my virtue is like clouds, [I] can nourish the myriad things.

張鳳翼：八龍者，八方之龍也。雲旗者，雲從龍也。Zhang Fengyi: As to the eight dragons, they are the dragons of the eight directions. As to the cloud pennants, clouds follow dragons.

夏大霖：此言富貴尊重，致千乘而遂其驅駕之從容如此。Xia Dalin: This describes wealth and honor. [He] causes the thousands of carriages to obey his casual orders like this.

182 抑志而弭節兮

神高馳之邈邈

yì zhì ér mǐ jié xī

shén gāo chí zhī miǎo miǎo

[I] suppress my aspiration and halt the progress —— Spirits on high galloping, distantly
[I] lower the flag and halt the progress

王逸：言己雖乘雲龍，猶自抑按，弭節徐行，高抗志行，邈邈而遠，莫能迫及。

Wang Yi: This says that although I ride cloud dragons, still I restrain myself, halt the progress and slow my pace, nobly maintaining my aspiration and conduct, so distantly far [above]; it wouldn't do to arrive in haste.

朱冀：言雖按節徐行，然神猶高馳，邈邈然而逾遠，不可得而制也。Zhu Ji: It says although I pull in the progress and slow my pace, after all my spirits are galloping on high, so distantly they are far away; they can't be controlled.

汪瑗：抑志，謂按抑其西涉之志也。弭節，謂弭止其旌節之屬也。Wang Yuan:

“Supress my aspiration” refers to holding back his aspiration to go westward. “Halt the progress” refers to stopping his banners and insignia and the like.

徐煥龍：然吾志雖抑，吾神則已高馳于邈邈之鄉，蓋志終不可降耳。Xu Huanlong:

Although my aspiration is suppressed, my spirit is already galloping high in the distant country. It must be an aspiration that could never be brought down.

朱冀：抑志而弭節者，言日已暮矣，放下前進念頭，今宵且暫駐行旌耳。此一句專

寫日暮止宿，但將下章陟陸皇句兩相對照，便令文義了然。Zhi Ji: “Suppress my aspiration and halt the progress” says that the sun is already near the end of the day, so let go of the idea of advancing ahead and stop the entourage for the night. This couplet is exclusively written about stopping to rest at sunset, but it and the “upward, onward, divinity’s [brightness]” stanza below mutually contrast one another, making the literary significance abundantly clear.

魯筆：志即憂君念國之志。Lu Bi: “Aspiration” is [his] aspiration of concern for his lord and longing for his country.

陳本禮：高馳而忽曰神者，恍若魂入夢中矣，屈子志在致君舜禹而不能，故作此夢

中語也。Chen Benli: High galloping and suddenly speaking of spirits—in a flash it’s as if his spirit has entered a dream. Master Qu’s aspiration is to cause his lord [to become like] Shun and Yu, but it isn’t possible; so he composes this dream language.

183 奏九歌而舞韶兮

聊假日以媮樂

zòu jiǔ gē ér wǔ sháo xī

liáo jià rì yǐ yú lè

[1] perform the Nine Songs and Dance the Shao ——

For now borrowing the day for joyful pleasure

For now a leisure day with joyful pleasure

For now borrowing the day for stolen music

王逸：九歌，九德之歌，禹樂也。韶，九韶，舜樂也。尚書簫韶九成是也。言己德高智明，宜輔舜禹以致太平，奏九德之歌，九韶之舞；而不遇其時，故假日游戲媮樂而已。Wang Yi: The Nine Songs are the songs of the nine virtues, the music of Yu.

The Shao are the Nine Shao, the music of Shun. They are the nine pieces of the “Xiao Shao” in the *Esteemed Documents*. This says my virtue is lofty and my wisdom bright, suitable for assisting Shun and Yu in effecting great peace. He performs the songs of nine virtues and the dances of the nine Shao; yet he does not meet his time, so he just whiles the day in games and pleasure.

Wang Yuan was concerned that Yu’s music is mentioned before Shun’s music, when Shun, as the elder, should be mentioned first; he justifies Qu Yuan’s syntax by saying that the dances also originally belonged to Shun. Also: 汪瑗：屈子之所以歸休西海之上，奏九歌而舞九韶者，蓋以爲周流四方上下，而既無賢君之可遇，於是乎退居林泉之下，寂寞之濱，以樂吾道焉而已矣。Wang Yuan: As to Master Qu’s retirement on the Western Sea and his performing of the Nine Songs and dancing of the Nine Shao, it must be that even after circling about high and low in the four directions there was still no chance of meeting a worthy lord, and because of that he retires to live by the forests and springs, on the quiet and solitary bank, just to take pleasure in his own Way.

錢澄之：周流有盡，歲月難消，向恐日之暮，今苦日之永矣。其惟奏歌舞韶，假此日以媮樂乎？蓋不復以國事關心矣。然歌舞必取於舜禹，其所樂在此，此志固未泯

也。Qian Changzhi: Circling about has its end, and the years and months are difficult to pass; before [he] dreaded the setting of the sun, now [he is] embittered by the eternity of days. Is his performance of the songs and dancing of the Shao merely [a way] to borrow this day for pleasure? It must be that he cannot but resume his concern for the affairs of the kingdom. So the songs and dances must be selected from Shun and Yu, and this [noble origin] is what pleases him. This aspiration surely has not been extinguished.

王邦采：奏九歌，舞韶舞，其思治世之音乎？假日偷樂，反言以解嘲，一寄託其無聊之況云爾。Wang Bangcai: Performing the Nine Songs, dancing the Shao dances: isn't he pondering the sounds of governing the world? "Leisure day" and "joyful music" are ironic language to absolve himself of mockery; it is all an allegory for his condition of ennui.

劉夢鵬：言己方遠逝周流，而古音希夷，神思飄忽，假日自愉，蓋極言周流之樂，以起下文反顧之悲也。Liu Mengpeng: This says I have distantly voyaged and circled about, but the ancient sound is neither truly seen nor truly heard. My spirit floats, and I while away the day in pleasing myself. It must state the joy of circling about to the utmost in order to initiate the sorrow of the backward glance in the text below.

陳本禮：奏歌舞韶，豈大夫所敢僭越以取樂者，蓋大夫之高馳邈邈，原欲上探美人之宮，雖未敢徑叩宮門，然耳中之所聞者，居然大夏之九調，目中之所見者，恍是有虞之韶舞。舜禹往矣，此美人宮中寂寞，所假以為暇日之愉樂者，悉原生平意想所不能得，不意今一旦遇之。特恨徘徊宮外，殿階崇深，無由得達，不足以罄寤寐本懷。然陟陞赫戲，天庭咫尺，可藉此以通帝座，無慮天閭之拒我矣。Chen Benli: Performing the Songs and dancing the Shao: could the Grand Master dare to exceed his

place and take this music? It must be that during the Grand Master's distantly high galloping, while he originally wanted to go up and seek in the palace of the beauties, yet, although he doesn't dare approach and knock on the palace gate, suddenly what his ears hear is the Nine Songs of Great Xia, and in a flash what his eyes see is Shao dances of Yu. Shun and Yu have departed; the beauties within this palace are lonely, and the pleasure they borrow for a day of leisure expresses what Yuan desired throughout his lifetime but could not attain—unexpectedly today he happens to meet it. What special sorrow, pacing outside the palace; the steps to the hall are mighty and deep, there is no way to reach it, nothing adequate to ring out this feeling that fills my chest waking and sleeping. Then upward, onward, to divinity's brightness—the court of heaven is close by; I can count this as reaching the throne of the [divine] Emperor, and not worry about the gatekeeper of Heaven rejecting me.

馬茂元：聊假日以媮樂是說姑且尋找時日來快樂，足見內心憂悶，實際並無可以媮樂的時日。Ma Maoyuan: “For now borrowing the day for joyful pleasure” is to say temporarily finding time to be happy; from this we can clearly see his inner heart's heaviness, as in fact it's not really a time when one could take pleasure.

184 陟陞皇之赫戲兮

忽臨睨夫舊鄉

zhì shēng huáng zhī hè xì xi

hū lín nì fú jiù xiāng

Upward, onward, to divinity's brightness ——

Upward to the Ascending Divinity's brightness ——

Suddenly [I] look down and glimpse the old country

I have translated 皇 as variously “exalted,” “imperial” “emperor” or “divinity,” depending on the context. It is very similar to 帝, which I have rendered as “divine” or “emperor”; both demonstrate the difficulty of parsing the religious from the political in ancient Chinese discourse.

王逸：言己雖升崑崙，過不周，渡西海，舞九韶，陞天庭，據光曜不足以解憂，猶顧視楚國，愁且思也。Wang Yi: This says although I ascend Kunlun, pass the Unfitted, cross the Western Sea, dance the Nine Shao, and go up to the court of Heaven, still the glorious light is not enough to undo my sorrow, and again I look back and see the kingdom of Chu, anxiously pondering.

朱冀：皇，君也。日，君象也。陞皇者，初日出之名也。日有君象，而臨照萬方，今世俗稱西墜之日爲落照，則東陞之日名陞皇，確切不移，堪爲絕對矣。Zhu Ji: Divinity is the lord [king]. The sun is the symbol of the lord. Ascending Divinity is a name for the early risen sun. The sun has the image of the lord, shining down and illuminating every place. Today it is the custom of the world to call the western setting sun the Falling Illumination, while the eastern rising sun is called the Ascending Divinity. It's so exact there can be no doubt [about this]; [it] is a perfect match.

陳本禮：忽字，正夢中驚醒時也。Chen Benli: The word “suddenly” is the precise moment of being startled awake from a dream.

馬茂元：幻想終於破滅，這樣就結束了全篇。Ma Maoyuan: The fantasy is finally shattered, in this way concluding the whole work.

185 僕夫悲余馬懷兮

蜷局顧而不行

pú fū bēi yú mǎ huái xī

quán jú gù ér bù xíng

Servants grieve, my horses yearn —— Curling up, turning back, and not going

朱熹：屈原託爲此行，而終無所詣，周流上下，而卒反於楚焉。亦仁之至，而義之盡也。Zhu Xi: Qu Yuan proposes this course of action, but in the end it comes to naught; circling about above and below and ultimately coming back to Chu. This is the perfection of humaneness and the completion of righteousness.

林雲銘：總是忠君愛國之心，鬱結不解，除死之外，無第二條路也。Lin Yunming: All along his is the heart of a loyalist and patriot. This suppressed anxiety can't be undone; other than death, there is no second road.

徐煥龍：人是舊鄉之人，馬亦舊鄉之馬。臨睨其處，馬尚懷思，而況于人乎？Xu Huanlong: The people [servants] are people of the old country, the horses too are old country horses. Looking down and glimpsing their place, the horses even harbor a longing; what need is there to say about the people?

寥平：經中言反顧回車歸者共若干見。因上有招魂，故故鄉反在上，非謂楚國，并非謂世界。聖人天生屬星辰。生有自來，沒有所歸，故反以上，天爲故鄉。Liao Ping: In this classic [the “Li Sao”], words about turning back and turning the chariot around and returning are all seen so many times. Because above [someone] is summoning his soul, so his native place is in fact above; it does not refer to the kingdom of Chu, and does not even refer to this world. The sage is born of heaven and belongs to the stars. [His] birth has its origin, and does not have any place to which to return; rather, heaven above is his native place. [“Summoning the Soul” is another *Chuci* poem; it imitates an ancient ritual of summoning.]

馬茂元：留既不能，去又不可，最後所接觸到的一個問題，那就是個人的遠大的政治抱負和深厚的愛國主義情感的不但無法統一，而且引起了正面衝突的問題；這樣就把矛盾推進到最高峯，而無可避免地使得馳騁在雲端裡的幻想又一次掉到令人絕望而又無法離開的土地上。Ma Maoyuan: Staying is no longer an option, going also is impossible: in the end he has reached a problem, and that is that his individual great political responsibility and his profound patriotic sentiment can never be unified. The problem this raises is a head-on collision. In this way the contradiction is pushed ahead to its highest peak, unavoidably causing the fantasy of galloping among the clouds to again crash down onto the hopeless and yet unescapable earth.

亂曰

已矣哉

luàn yuē

yǐ yǐ zāi

Coda:

Done —— !

{Pacification, resolution}

Enough is enough

It's over

The Coda is a typical feature of Chu-style poetry. It is unclear how many, if any, of the words 已矣哉 are meaning-bearing and how many are strictly emotive or emphatic; it's approximately "it's finished!" or "alas" or "aiyaaaaaaaa~~~"

朱熹：已矣，絕望之詞。Zhu Xi: "It's over" are words of despair.

186 國無人莫我知兮

又何懷乎故都

guó wú rén mò wǒ zhī xī

yòu hé huái hū gù dū

In the kingdom not a man, none me knows ——

Then why yearn for the old capital

子曰：不患人之不己知，患不知人也。 Confucius: Do not be anxious that other men do not know you; be anxious that you do not know other men (*Analects*, “Xue er”).

司馬遷：長子頃襄王立，以其弟子蘭爲令尹。楚人既咎子蘭以勸懷王入秦而不反也

[……劉安……] 令尹子蘭聞之大怒，卒使上官大夫短屈原於頃襄王，頃襄王怒而遷之。屈原至於江濱，被髮行吟澤畔。顏色憔悴，形容枯槁。漁父見而問之曰：

「子非三閭大夫歟？何故而至此？」屈原曰：「舉世混濁而我獨清，眾人皆醉而我獨醒，是以見放。」漁父曰：「夫圣人者，不凝滯於物而能與世推移。舉世混濁，

何不隨其流而揚其波？眾人皆醉，何不鋪其糟而啜其醪？何故懷瑾握瑜而自令見放爲？」屈原曰：「吾聞之，新沐者必彈冠，新浴者必振衣，人又誰能以身之察察，

受物之汶汶者乎！寧赴常流而葬乎江魚腹中耳，又安能以皓皓之白而蒙世俗之溫蠖乎！」 Sima Qian: [King Huai's] eldest son, King Qingxiang (r. 298-263 B.C.) was

enthroned. He made his younger brother, Zilan [Sir Eupatorium], the Premier. The people of Chu blamed Zilan for urging King Huai to go to Qin and his failure to return. [... Liu An?...] The Premier was enraged when he heard this. In the end he had the senior Grand

Master relate Qu Yuan's shortcomings to King Qingxiang. The king was angered and banished Qu Yuan. When Qu Yuan arrived at the banks of the long river, he let down his

hair and walked singing along the water's edge. His face was filled with distress, his form withered and wizened. A fisherman saw him and asked, "Aren't you Grand Master of the

Three Wards? What has brought you to this?" Qu Yuan said: "The whole world is

muddied, only I am pure. All men are drunk and only I am sober. For this reason I was exiled.” The fisherman said, “The sagely man is not encumbered by things but can move with the world. If the whole world is muddied, why not follow its current and float on its waves? If all men are drunk, why not dine on their dregs and sip their sweet wines? Why hold a fine jade to your bosom and another in your hand and get yourself banished?” Qu Yuan said, “I have heard it said that one who has just washed his hair should brush his cap, one who has just bathed should beat [the dust from] his clothes. What man could then accept the smudges of the material world on the pure brightness of his body? I would rather throw myself into the long river and be buried the in the belly of a river fish. How then can I suffer the world’s dust on my brightest whiteness?”

呂向：言時代無知我之忠正者，有何須歸於楚國。Lü Xiang: This says, in this era no one knows my loyal uprightness, so what need is there to return to the kingdom of Chu?

錢澄之：靈氛所云爾何懷乎故宇，勉詞也；原云又何懷乎故都，憤詞也。Qian Chengzhi: Spirit Aura’s statement about “you why yearn for these old eves” was words of encouragement; Yuan’s statement “then why yearn for the old capital” is words of resentment.

顧成天：故都指郢都言，楚世都也。懷王二十一年秦拔郢而楚徙陳，原望襄之恢復至是更無望矣，故曰又何懷乎也。Gu Chengtian: The old capital indicates Ying, the capital of Chu. In the twenty-first year of King Huai’s reign Qin captured Ying and Chu moved [the capital] to Chen. Yuan’s hope that [King] Xiang would revive [the capital] there [at Ying] was all the more hopeless, so he says “then why yearn.”

陳本禮：蓋屈子一生，正為舊鄉不忍去，故都不能忘，所以戀戀於茲者，君臣之誼，無所逃於天地之間也。Chen Benli: It must be that Master Qu for his whole life truly

could not bear to leave his old country and could not forget the old capital. For those with such loving affection, there is no place in heaven and earth where one could escape the bond between lord and minister.

王闔運：雖睨舊鄉，不可懷也。Wang Kaiyun: Although [he] glimpses the “old country” [possibly a name for the land of immortals], he musn’t yearn for it.

187 既莫足與爲美政兮 吾將從彭咸之所居

jì mò zú yǔ wéi měi zhèng xī

wú jiāng cóng péng xián zhī suǒ jū

There’s no one adequate with whom to make fair governance ——

I will follow Peng Xian to his abode

I will follow Peng and Xian to their abode

The debate as to whether or not Qu Yuan is here declaring his intention to immediately commit suicide or an intention to depart in some sense and presumably commit suicide at some point in the future—that is, the debate about at what point in his life he composed the “Li Sao” and his immediate goal in writing it—is one of the most vigorous in the tradition. Wang Yuan even proposed that Qu Yuan was not intending to commit suicide at all, but was going to live out his days as a hermit—a position echoed by Wang Kaiyun and the contemporary Sinologist and translator Gopal Sukhu. The evidence available for each side consists primarily of the poems attributed to Qu Yuan and Sima Qian’s biography. The arguments are exceedingly tedious so I have not included them here; see You Guoen for a fuller analysis.

司馬遷：乃作懷沙之賦。其辭曰：…… [……] ……於是懷石遂自（投） [沈] 汨羅以死。屈原既死之后，楚有宋玉、唐勒、景差之徒者，皆好辭而以賦見稱；然皆祖屈原之從容辭令，終莫敢直諫。其後楚日以削，數十年竟為秦所滅。 Sima Qian: Then he wrote the rhapsody “Huai Sha” (Embracing Sands) which goes:… […] … Then he placed a rock in [the folds of] his robe, threw himself into the Miluo and died. After Qu Yuan had died, there were [writers] like Song Yu, Tang Le, and Jing Cuo, all known for their fondness of writing and their rhapsodies. Though they all modeled themselves on [the style in which] Qu Yuan naturally expressed veiled criticism, in the end none ventured to employ his straightforward admonitions. After this Chu daily went downhill, to the point that in several decades it was annihilated by Qin. And: 太史公曰：余讀離騷、天問、招魂、哀郢，悲其志。適長沙，觀屈原所自沈淵，未嘗不垂涕，想見其為人。及見賈生弔之，又怪屈原以彼其材，游諸侯，何國不容，而自令若是。讀服鳥賦，同死生，輕去就，又爽然自失矣。 His Honor the Grand Scribe [Imperial Historian] says: “When I read ‘Li Sao’ (Encountering Sorrow), ‘Tian Wen’ (Heaven Questioned), ‘Zhao hun’ (Summoning the Soul), and ‘Ai Ying’ (A Lament for Ying), I was moved by Qu Yuan’s resolve. Whenever I go to Changsha and see the place where Qu Yuan sunk into the depths, I weep and wish that I might have seen what sort of man he was. When I saw how Scholar Jia lamented for him, on the other hand, I wondered how a man with Qu Yuan’s talents, who could not have failed to find a welcome in any of the states if he had chosen to consort with the feudal lords, brought himself to such a pass. When I read ‘The Rhapsody on the Owl’ which equates life and death, makes light of leaving or taking political position, I was dumbfounded and dazed!”

王逸：言時世之君無道，不足與共行美德，施善政者，故我將自沈汨羅，從彭咸而居處也。Wang Yi: This says the lords of this era are without the Way; they are not adequate to join together with for carrying out beautiful virtue and effecting good government, so I will drown myself in the Miluo River, following Peng Xian, and live there.

趙南星：屈原以同姓之臣，坐視宗國之敗亡，不得出一言，雖沈江不亦可乎？且非獨此也，天下之勢，已將一于秦，虎狼統人羣，此魯連所以蹈海也。屈子之沈江，其即魯連之志乎？而班固輩以為露才揚己，非明哲之器，此懷王之諧臣，而靳尚之知己也！夫士君子苟有愛國家，扶世教之心，亦何忍譏屈原哉！Zhao Nanxing: Qu Yuan was a minister of the same name [as the royal clan], sitting by and watching the collapse of his patriarchs' kingdom, unable to get a word out—could he do anything other than drown in the river? And he was not alone in this. The power of all under heaven was already consolidating in Qin, tigers and wolves were governing the multitudes—that is why Lu Lian [Lu Zhonglian of the Warring States kingdom of Qi] leapt into the sea. Isn't Master Qu's drowning in the river just Lu Lian's aspiration? Yet Ban Gu and his generation believed [Qu Yuan] “flaunted his talent and aggrandized himself,” was “not an enlightened vessel”: these are King Huai's favorite ministers and the kindred spirits of Jin Shang! Now if any scholar or gentleman has a heart that loves his nation and supports the orthodoxy, then how could he bear to mock Qu Yuan!

林雲銘：已上把與國存亡之義，結出本旨。晦翁謂原忠而過，嗚呼！忠豈有慮其過之理乎！Lin Yunming: Above he has already conclusively expressed his principle of surviving or perishing together with his kingdom. Huiweng [Zhu Xi] referred to Yuan as

“loyal but excessive”—alas! When it comes to loyalty, how could one worry about exceeding the ideal?

顧成天：依彭咸之遺則，明志也，結懷世也；從彭咸之所居，遂志也，結襄世也。

鋪敘隱然，頭尾顯然。Gu Chengtian: “To adhere to Peng Xian’s legacy” is to illuminate his aspiration, which was formed in the reign of [King] Huai. To “follow Peng Xian to his abode” is to accomplish his aspiration, which was formed in the reign of [King] Xiang. The narrative is hidden, but its head and tail are obvious.

龔景瀚：太史公于其本傳終之曰，其後楚日以削，數十年竟為秦所滅，言屈子之死得其所也，是能知屈子之心者也。千古以下，善讀離騷者，太史公一人而已。

Gong Jinghan: At the end of his true record the Imperial Historian states, “After [Qu Yuan’s death] Chu was daily pared away, to the point that in several decades it was annihilated by Qin”: this says Master Qu’s death attained its deserved place. This is one who understands Master’s Qu’s heart. From the most ancient times on down, the Imperial Historian is the first and only good reader of the “Li Sao.”

王闔運：言欲還秭歸，依舊都，終隱以老也。Wang Kaiyun: This says I want to return to Zigui, cleave to my old hometown, and finally grow old in seclusion.

畢大琛：原以不從己諫，故引彭咸以自況，此時非即欲投水也。Bi Dachen: Since Yuan’s remonstrance was not followed he alludes to Peng Xian to describe himself. At this time he did not want to immediately cast himself in the water.

馬茂元：這五句是全篇的總結和尾聲，在上面八段外具有其獨特的意義。它高度地概括了全篇的主要內容，簡要而深刻地闡明了屈原以身殉國這一偉大悲劇的真實歷史意義。Ma Maoyuan: These five lines are the summary and coda of the entire work; in

addition, they are full of a unique significance beyond the above eight sections [all the rest of the poem]. They generalize the essential content of the whole work to a high degree, and concisely and profoundly expound the true historical significance of the heroic tragedy of Qu Yuan's self-sacrifice for his nation.

游國恩：屈子之效法彭咸而水死，二千年來無異辭。 You Guoen: That Qu Yuan followed the example of Peng Xian and died in the water, for two thousand years there has been no word of dissent.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: UTOPIAN PEDAGOGY

Digital technology is a new opportunity for the teaching of texts in translation. As an outgrowth of this dissertation, I am developing an interactive digital teaching platform for my translation of the “Li Sao.” It is intended to make the most of our increasingly multicultural, diversely abled, and polyglot college classrooms. The digital “Li Sao” is an experiment in teaching an ancient Chinese poem in translation along with “21st century literacies.” It models critical reading and historicized interpretation while providing a space for students to collaboratively and creatively apply these skills. The proposed form of digital translation, more than paper translations, can take advantage of students’ diverse interests, foster academic community, and help teachers offer a finer understanding of the unique aesthetic form and cultural legacy of a traditional poem. This is a utopian project in that it assumes every student will be able to contribute something meaningful to the collective interpretation of the “Li Sao.” But it is also traditional, in that the material, the format, and the mode of engagement are rooted in the particular history of the poem.

A prototype of the present digital text, created using open source blogging software, is available at <http://lisao.digress.it>. In the future I intend to collaborate with a programmer to create a new database-driven application with a different structure that is designed particularly for the “Li Sao,” although the structure could be easily and

fruitfully applied to other texts. Below I will illustrate what I have done so far using existing software and then describe my vision for future development.

An oft-touted benefit of digital text is its capacity for interactive learning, and my goal in presenting a digital “Li Sao” is to foster an interactive reading experience. I apply Noah Wardrip-Fruin’s concept of interaction: “While there are many definitions of *interaction*, for the purposes of this model I define it as a change to the state of the work, for which the work was designed, that comes from outside the work.”¹ Merely clicking to follow a hyperlink is not necessarily interaction; purposeful modification is interaction. Thus the digital “Li Sao” does not only present readers with choices about how they view the poem and its commentaries, it also provides a space for the modification of the poem by the addition of new commentary and other material.

By providing a space for students to modify the text, I also intend to teach basic skills of digital literacy that transcend the specific content of the text (be it the “Li Sao” or another text in this platform). Howard Rheingold notes that “one of the most important challenges posed by the real-time, ubiquitous, wireless, always-on, often alienating interwebs are the skills required for the use of media to be productive and to foster authentic interpersonal connection, rather than waste of time and attention on phony, banal, alienated pseudo-communication. Know-how is where the difference lies.”² In response to this challenge, which appears to all people who use the internet as much as it does to our undergraduate students, Cathy Davidson and Howard Rheingold have proposed that teachers at all levels of instruction prioritize teaching “Twenty-first-

¹ In *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, online edition.

² Sic. “Twitter Literacy.” *City Brights: Howard Rheingold*. SFGate. 11 May 2013. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.

Century Literacies.”³ Rheingold’s fundamental digital literacies are attention, participation, collaboration, critical consumption of information, and network smarts.⁴ The digital “Li Sao” is designed to facilitate teaching of these digital literacies. The home page is pictured in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Screen shot of “Li Sao” home page.

The digital “Li Sao” is a platform for building discussion and critical inquiry; it will be a model for teaching traditional texts through online interaction and collaboration. My intention is to create a database and application that can be shared in a limited way through course management systems such as Blackboard. It will allow teachers to create structured reading and response assignments for their classes, and the students of each

³ Davidson, Cathy N. *Now You See It: How the Brain Science of Attention Will Transform the Way We Live, Work, and Learn*.

⁴ Introductory chapter of *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online*.

class to develop their own interpretive dialogue around the bilingual text. The platform enables students to comment on the poem, on the poem's traditional commentaries, and on each other's comments. It also allows for the addition of background material, essays, multimedia, annotated bibliographies, and so on. I am designing this digital tool to offer both an image of the traditional interpretation of the "Li Sao" and a variety of modes of engagement with it. This model makes the most of classroom diversity, for different students may contribute in different ways. It can foster truly interactive reading. It teaches digital literacy as well as close reading, critical cultural comparison, and awareness of translation issues.

This dissertation has demonstrated that interpreters have responded to the translatability of the "Li Sao" with writing, with some mode of annotation or paraphrase; that is, with kinds of translation. And to translate, or to compose a commentary, is to perform a very close reading, "the most intimate act of reading" in Spivak's words. The most important feature of my digital format is that it provides a structure for writing about the poem, as pictured in Figure 4. In selecting the software I considered the kind of writing that my students engage every day. They are comfortable with writing on Facebook and Tumblr, with text messaging, and with online assignments through Blackboard. To bridge the traditional textual world of the Chinese poem and the digital world of my students, I chose a basic blog format. At this stage of development I am using WordPress with a digress.it plugin. Like Facebook, this design allows a conversation to develop among a limited group of participants through comments attached to a source text.

Unlike Facebook or Social Book (a project of the Institute for the Future of the Book), my design includes models of interpretation in the form of translated selections of traditional commentary. The English version and the commentary selections are arranged in interlinear format as in the Chinese tradition. It is designed to facilitate collaborative learning with guidance from the instructor. For example, a guided reading and response assignment could encourage students to think critically about how the commentators justify their interpretations.

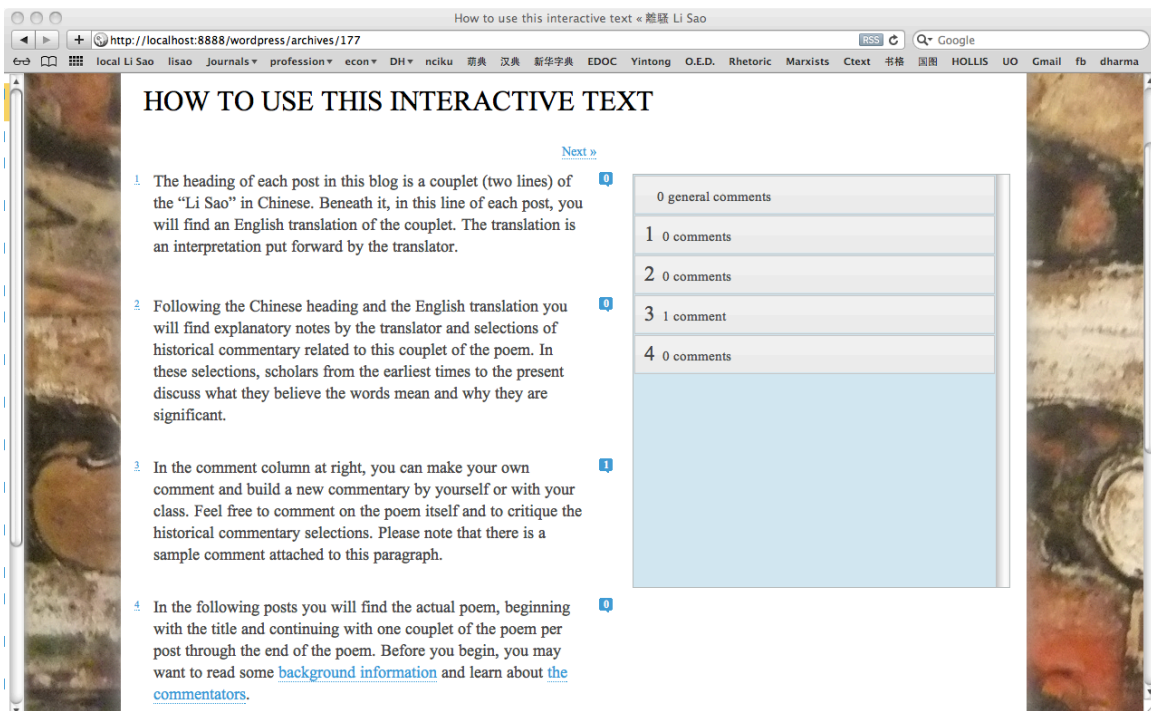


Figure 4. Screen shot of instructions for participatory reading.

The visual form of the digital translation is derived from traditional editions of the “Li Sao,” in which the poem appears in large font with commentary interspersed between the lines in smaller font. However, while traditional editions present the editor’s preferred interpretation, this version presents a wide variety of different interpretations from different historical periods, and it provides space for students to record their own

interpretation in a new commentary. The translation in this format could be infinitely “thick,” in Appiah’s sense of the word, but to make it manageable for undergraduate courses, I am instead presenting a limited selection of commentary that exemplifies the range of possibilities that have been derived from the text.

The home page includes the full text in Chinese; each line of the poem is a post in the blog. This format allows readers to move through the poem like a codex—clicking across from line to line—or through the commentaries like a scroll—scrolling down the page to delve into the interpretations. To the right of the text is a space for comments. When a section of the text is selected, participants can use the affiliated comment box to annotate it, as pictured in Figure 5. They can comment on the poem, the commentary selections, or their classmates’ comments.



Figure 5. Screen shot of commentary and comment input field.

This format also allows for the inclusion of extensive supplementary material; for example, I have provided short biographies of the commentators. It is very easy to add new pages, so an instructor could upload assignments or resources, and students could upload their work, such as essays or research papers. WordPress is designed for ordinary people, not tech specialists, so it is easy to track the pages, posts, and comments, and to add and edit material. A literature teacher can use the dashboard (see Figure 6) to define student roles as administrator, editor, author, contributor, or subscriber, depending upon the kind of assignments she envisions.

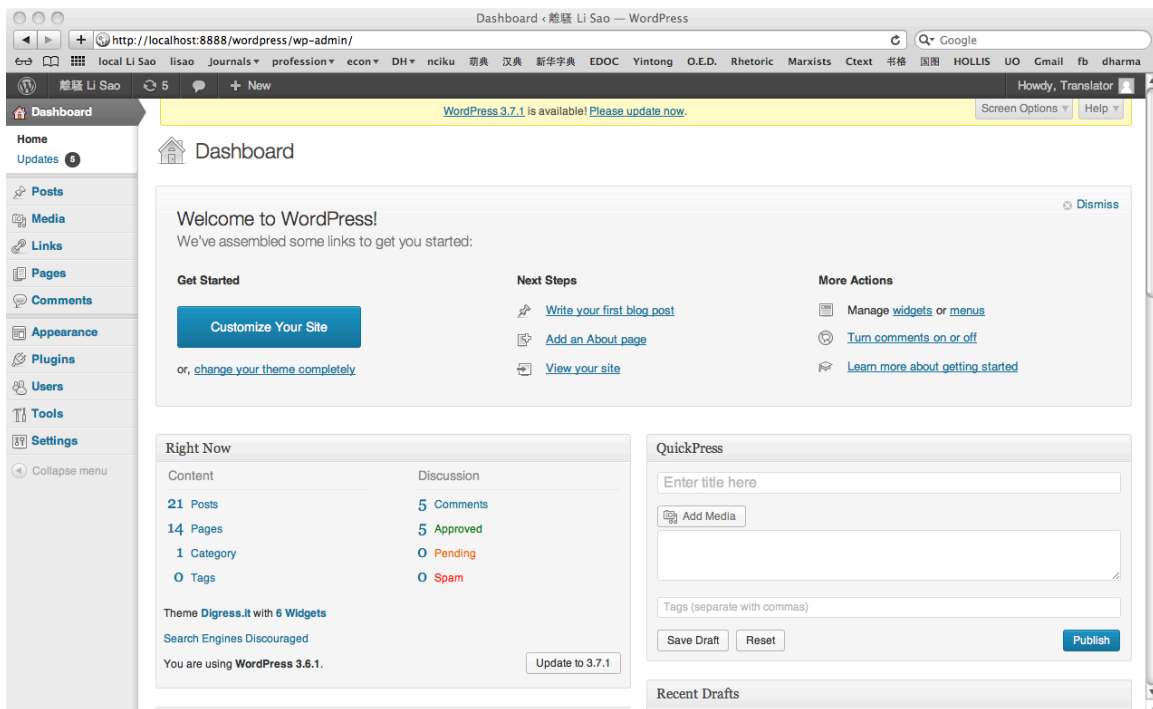


Figure 6. Screen shot of dashboard.

This digital format doesn't require much digital expertise from teacher or students, but it can teach digital literacies. It can teach attention by requiring students to process the reading through writing. It can teach participation through engagement in the dialogue of the poem's interpretation as a member of a classroom community. It can

teach collaboration through working together with teacher and classmates to produce a new commentary to the poem. It can teach critical consumption of information through the evaluation of the commentator's interpretations and through the compilation and criticism of secondary sources; moreover, students will be using this application to create their own study guide, so it is in their interest to examine their sources and the teacher can offer guidance in that regard. Finally, it can even teach network smarts. Students will have to help produce a meaningful dialogue to achieve a good grade, which will mean reflecting on their contributions in relation to their classmates' contributions and finding their own areas of strength within the classroom network.

I propose that this digital format can offer the approachable mediation of a textbook or a conventional translation while avoiding the unilateral assertion of an interpretation that those kinds of texts represent. It can demonstrate methods and possibilities of reading while making the text accessible to undergraduates and leaving space for practice and collaboration. This digital "Li Sao" is an open-ended endeavor. It offers multiple paths of engagement and inquiry: students could add supplementary material, create new commentaries, critique the translation(s), create new translations, and/or apply new methods of digital scholarship. This mode of digital translation, more than a paper translation, can take advantage of our students' diverse interests and skills, foster academic community, and help teachers offer a finer understanding of the unique aesthetic form and cultural legacy of a traditional poem. Moreover, it holds the "Li Sao" open to further experimentation and unanticipated new uses. The utopian element is this: the digital format can facilitate writing back to the text and its tradition, as Mr. Liberation has done using Chinese social media (see Chapter II).

This digital format will be a window to the tradition of Chinese poetry and will also facilitate the development of a utopian teaching environment where students do not merely receive a poem's interpretation but actively participate in it.

Future Development

With the support of a programmer, the text could be transformed beyond the digress.it platform into a unique digital "Li Sao" teaching tool. Following are my guidelines for the appearance and functionality of such a text.

The text will exist in a database-driven application that allows students to freely supplement the text with their own research and interpretation, and in a location that allows teachers to download and share it exclusively with their classes via course management systems such as Blackboard. A class will use the application to produce its own "in-house" interpretive dialogue around the text.

Teachers should be able to edit the primary content if they wish and be able to choose the level of writing and editing power they want to give to their students.

Teachers and students will be able to build on the content by adding new pages as well as commentary. For example, a page could be added for the teacher to post assignment instructions and pages for students to present their research. Students with advanced Chinese language skills could add new translations of secondary material to the primary text.

The poem will appear as a scrolling text with unfoldable layers of interpretation and the freedom to add commentary anywhere. The layers could be collapsed and expanded like an accordion as the reader scrolls down the poem.

The first layer will be the Chinese poem with textual variants in between the words in smaller font. A simple menu will allow the reader to change the script of the primary text from bronze script, seal script, clerical script, running script, grass script, standard script, or simplified script. The reader can also listen to audio files of the poem being recited in modern Mandarin and in dialects.

The second layer—which can unfold with a click—will be the whole first layer with English translations between the lines in smaller font. The reader can easily choose to view one translation at a time or all variant translations at once. This layer will also contain a sub-layer with Romanized pronunciation in pinyin and reconstructed ancient Chinese.

The third layer will be the first two plus traditional commentaries in smaller font between the lines. This layer will have the option to display all the commentaries or only a selected set of commentaries. Commentators, words, images, and themes will be tagged so that selected commentary could be filtered according to the reader's research goal.

The reader will be able to add a new comment anywhere—between the lines, in the margin, overlaying the text—creating a new layer. Comments will function like sticky notes OR marginalia. The comment layer can be hidden or revealed while the other layers of the text are in any state of infoldedness/unfoldedness, and the reader can create the comment space wherever it is needed. The comments can be private, as reading aids to a particular student, or public, to contribute to the “in-house” commentary that is being developed and shared among all the students of the class. Readers and teachers can also comment on their classmates'/students' comments.

The digital “Li Sao” is not a picture of the text, but the text itself (although it could include pictures of editions as background material). It is not an imitation of the text’s bamboo/silk/paper/scroll/codex history, but its next stage of development. It should be open to the new practices of reading and engagement that are only now taking shape for digital culture.

APPENDIX
“GOING SHOPPING”

Following is the complete text of “Going Shopping for the 18th Time” as it appeared in *The Atlantic* online. The Chinese text was originally posted in a blog on *Renren.com*, a social network, under the title “第十八次逛街” by Wu Suran 吴肃然, and was shared over 29,000 times.¹

Today is the eighteenth time I have accompanied my girlfriend to go shopping. Whenever my girlfriend goes shopping, she tends to get overly serious and way more than just fidgety about the whole thing. It always interferes with my usual pace of life. Anyway, she calls the shots at home, so can’t complain. As my girlfriend stipulates, when it approaches her shopping date, I can only make working plans for up to three days, and if I go on a business trip, I need to get her approval first. These past few days I’ve been sitting on pins and needles, praying to God that I don’t do anything wrong to ruin her good shopping mood.

The main focus of her shopping is cosmetics. She usually purchases seven or nine varieties. This time, she crossed the name of a very famous brand off her shopping list, because there have been some problems with this brand, which causes it to have lost its original reputation [referring to “Mao Zedong thought,” Bo Xilai, ~~not mentioned in official 18th Congress propaganda~~]. But she’s not willing to admit [those problems] and

¹ Xiaoying Zhou. “A Coded Rant About China’s Government Goes Viral” *The Atlantic*. Nov. 15, 2012. Web. Also posted in *Tea Leaf Nation* under the title “A Hilarious Coded Riff on China’s Government: Going Shopping for the 18th Time.” For Chinese text: Wu Suran. “Dishibaci guangjie.” *Wu Suran de rizhi*. Renren. Web. Accessed 23 Nov. 2012.

grins at me: “Am I not getting more and more thrifty?” Fine. Whatever her reason. Sometimes she also buys me things, though I have no say in what she buys me. She often says to me, “You see, officials always wear this brand, company bosses, too. Singers and sport stars love this brand. I even consulted the views of a few workers! All these different opinions are sufficient to represent you, aren’t they? I always solicit opinions in an advanced and reasonable manner.” Why can officials, bosses, singers, sport stars, and workers represent me? I don’t understand. But I guess as long as she buys things for me, I shouldn’t complain too much.

She does ask for my take on things, of course, if only occasionally. She usually takes out her iPhone, aims the camera at me, and asks me in a very journalistic or television host-like tone: “Now that I’ve bought all these things for you, are you glad? Are you happy?” Seeing my own face show up on her iPhone, hearing her iron-like interrogation, I can’t help sweating and nodding: “I lack nothing right now and life is so blissful—all because of you!”

She usually doesn’t pay attention to me when she shops. Well, you do your shopping, and I’ll tend to my own business, I think to myself. So I take out my phone to surf the net a bit. But before I can open even one page, she pops up immediately: “You can’t just get online like this when I shop! What emails are you checking? If you dare check one more, I’ll deactivate your Gmail account!”² Yup, she’s such a woman: she can forget about you when she shops, but when you are too tired to give her your undivided attention, she creates problems for you from time to time, to remind you of her existence.

This time when she shops, the grandma from the neighborhood is also shopping. Look at how she shops! She is picking over the merchandise and talking over the phone

² An allusion to the rumor that the Party was monitoring Gmail accounts during the National Congress.

at the same time: “What style do you want, hubby? Oh this is not very good. Listen, I’ll explain to you... Oh that’s not so good either. I’ll analyze it for you... Yeah okay. I’ll take your advice this time!” She seems quite fake, but the way she does it is novel. It’s interesting.³ But suddenly my girlfriend walks over and taps me on the shoulder: “What are you looking at? You think they are doing it right in her household? It’s such a waste of time and money, and it’s not clear they’ll do a better job of buying things than I do. Last time, she had such a long discussion with her husband it made her four-year-old child cry!”⁴

Assistants in the shop always compete with each other to sing my girlfriend’s praises. I remind her numerous times to take heed and not to believe them, but she never listens. When people call her a “beauty” or tell her, “This fits you so well. Only people in a good shape can achieve this effect when they wear it” she’ll fly to the heavens. Her shopping process is always filled with these flatteries, from start to end. I’ve long been numb to them. She always takes great delight in listening to that.

Many guys of dubious character like to flatter her, write her love letters and do all kinds of things for her. They simply want to take advantage of her, but she can never see through it. ... and when they hear that she is going shopping for the eighteenth time with her boyfriend, put out a big pattern for “eighteen” on the sports ground, “SB” [Chinese short-hand for “18,” but also a Chinese curse-word]. She is really proud of it and even shows me pictures of the pattern. Oh God, do you really [think] they love you?

Despite all these headaches she’s been giving me, she has made some progress over the years nonetheless. She still has many shortcomings, but she’s more and more

³ An allusion to the Chinese reception of Obama’s acceptance speech.

⁴ An allusion to a viral meme.

open to my criticism now. I've known her for such a long time, from the first time we went shopping together to this eighteenth time. There have been sweet moments, but there were also moments of despair. She once tortured me [horribly] and made my life worse than death. She also took it upon herself to take care of me when I met with natural disasters.

What will our future be like? She told me many times that she wanted to be a "dear mom," a "tender mother." But as far as I'm concerned, only when she's really willing to listen to me, when she has less vanity, and when she isn't afraid of facing her own mistakes, will I marry her willingly. When will that be?

Some people might say: "What do you have in you though? You're not afraid of her dumping you?" I really don't worry about this question. I've known her for so long, and no matter how she treats me, she always vows to be my girlfriend. Why? I think it's because without me, she loses her soul.

This is the eighteenth time I have accompanied my girlfriend to go shopping, as recorded above.

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