

TO LEAVE OR NOT TO LEAVE: THE
CHU CI 楚辭 (VERSES OF CHU) AS
RESPONSE TO THE *SHI JING* 詩經
(CLASSIC OF ODES)

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Abstract

Contra the consensus view of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (Classic of Odes) and *Chu ci* 楚辭 (Verses of Chu) as the products of two distinct literary cultures, one northern and one southern, this article argues on the basis of intertextual analysis that the *Chu ci* developed in direct response to the *Shi jing*. The foremost poem in the anthology, the “Li sao” 離騷 (Parting’s Sorrow) emerges as a metadiscursive journey through various *Shi jing* archetypes, the goal of which is to authorize its hero to say farewell to his ruler and homeland—a possibility denied by *Shi jing* poetics. A final section explores the relationship between the oppositional poetics of the “Li sao” and the rest of the *Chu ci*. The article concludes with some reflections on the limitations of the north–south model for historians of early Chinese literature.

In the reception of classical Chinese literature, no texts loom larger than the verse anthologies of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (Classic of Odes) and *Chu ci* 楚辭 (Verses of Chu). Amid the diversity of opinions regarding the origin and interpretation of these classics, most in the modern era have imagined *Shi*- and *Chu ci*-style verse as the products of two distinct cultures, one northern and one southern.¹ Needless to say, this view is entirely reasonable

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1. Martin Kern, “Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings Through Western Han,” in *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Stephen Owen, 1–115 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 76; Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: WW Norton, 1996), 155; Gopal Sukhu, *The Shaman and the Heresiarch* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 1–3; Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 84; Wang Ping and Nicholas Williams, “Southland as Symbol,” in *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 1–18 (2–7).

given the ways in which these anthologies advertise their regional character. The *Shi jing* assigns the “Guo feng” 國風 (Airs of the States) to fifteen different regions within the Western Zhou 周 domain, while the *Chu ci* is named after the southern state of Chu 楚, which is outside of the *Shi jing*’s northern purview. Add to this their different themes, imagery, language, and meters, and the anthologies appear as artifacts of two different literary milieus, albeit with some intermingling. Thus, Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈 in *An Outline of Chinese Literature* follows Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) in noting the “very pronounced regional characteristics” of the two anthologies, his foremost examples of the “regional nature of Chinese literature,” while acknowledging that the *Chu ci* “absorbed some northern literary nourishment.”² David Hawkes described the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* as the “dual ancest[ors]” of Chinese poetry:

The Southern ancestor is less ancient than the Northern one and can, in a very roundabout sort of way, be derived from it; but the differences between them are so great that it is more convenient to think of them as two separate sources ... The *Chu ci* poems, however popular, belonged to no canon, dealt in matters that were outlandish and unorthodox, and originated outside the area of sanctified Western Zhou tradition.³

Such is the prevailing view: the differences between the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* are fundamental and regional in nature, their similarities superficial.⁴

This was not the consensus among ancient authorities on the *Chu ci*—or, more precisely, on the “Li sao” 離騷 (Parting’s Sorrow) as its flagship text.⁵ Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179–122 B.C.E.), the king of Huainan 淮南 and the earliest known commentator on the “Li sao,” asserted that it combined the edifying qualities of the “Guo feng” and “Xiao ya” 小雅 (Lesser Court Odes) divisions of the *Shi*.⁶ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (d. c. 87 B.C.E.) implicitly endorsed this view when he listed the “Li sao” alongside

2. Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈 (trans. Paul White), *An Outline of Chinese Literature I* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 37–38.

3. David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 15, 26.

4. Exceptions include Zhu Dongrun 朱東潤, “Lisao di zuozhe” 離騷底作者, in *Chu ci yanjiu lunwen ji* 楚辭研究論文集, ed. Zuoqia chubanshe bianjibu, 368–71 (Beijing: Zuoqia, 1957), and Geoffrey Waters, *Three Elegies of Ch’u: An Introduction to the Traditional Interpretation of the Ch’u Tz’u* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 12–14.

5. For this debate, see especially Michael Schimmelpfennig, “The Quest for a Classic: Wang Yi and the Exegetical Prehistory of his Commentary to the ‘Songs of Chu,’” *Early China* 29 (2004), 111–62.

6. *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 84.2482. For the identification of this passage as Liu An’s commentary, see Ban Gu’s 班固 (32–92) preface preserved in Hong Xingzu 洪興祖, *Chu ci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 49.

the *Shi* in his list of tragically authored texts.⁷ Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.–18 C.E.) read the “*Li sao*” as a text that endorsed suicide in response to political alienation and thus deviated from canonical norms.⁸ Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) acknowledged the text’s literary merit but criticized Liu An’s commentary on similar grounds, arguing that the “*Li sao*” author was more interested in showing off and criticizing his king than in promoting good government.⁹ The compiler of the received *Chu ci*, Wang Yi 王逸 (89–158) defended the “*Li sao*” by arguing that it “relied on the *Shi* for its evocative imagery” (依詩取興) and was “composed in accordance with the principles of the *Shi* poets” (依詩人之義而作), which he then demonstrated by juxtaposing various “*Li sao*” lines with their *Shi jing* counterparts.¹⁰ Crucially, however, the question of regional identity was not a focus of these early debates.¹¹ All parties seem to have assumed that the *Shi jing* and “*Li sao*” were part of the same tradition even if they associated the “*Li sao*” with the Chu region.

The argument of this article is that Wang Yi more or less got it right: the influence of the *Shi jing* on the “*Li sao*” is much more profound, and much less “roundabout” (Hawkes), than the modern consensus has recognized. Intertextual analysis reveals *Chu ci* poetics to have developed in direct, even self-conscious, opposition to *Shi* poetics.

The hallmark of both anthologies is a preoccupation with the dynamics of social, political, and spiritual union. The *Shi* are a poetry of belonging that present idealized images of fully integrated communities on the one hand, and alienated personas who yearn to *gui* 歸 (return) to those communities on the other. Individuation in the *Shi* is a by-product of alienation; every persona who speaks in the first person would prefer to trade the melancholy “I” for the happy “we.” In contrast, *Chu ci* verse is premised on alienation and the impossibility of reintegration.

7. *Shi ji* 130.3300.

8. *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 3515–21: Yang Xiong “believed that if a noble man gets his chance he proceeds grandly, but if he doesn’t he [hides away like a] dragon or snake. Whether one meets with the proper time is a matter of fate—why did [Qu Yuan] have to drown himself?!” (以為君子得時則大行，不得時則龍蛇，遇不遇命也，何必湛身哉). This section of Yang Xiong’s biography includes the text of his *Fan Lisao* 反離騷 (Counter *Lisao*), which draws a contrast between Qu Yuan and Kongzi 孔子 (Confucius): “Before when Zhongni left Lu, he left reluctantly to travel around [the Central States] but in the end turned back to his old capital. Why should he have [thrown himself in] the depths and roiling rapids of the Xiang [River]?” (昔仲尼之去魯兮，萋萋遲遲而周邁，終回復於舊都兮，何必湘淵與濤瀾).

9. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.49.

10. Wang Yi includes two examples in a postface to the “*Li sao*” (*Chu ci buzhu* 1.49) and a dozen more throughout his commentary, several of which are noted below.

11. Wang Yi in his commentary identifies only seven instances of Chu dialect throughout the whole of the “*Li sao*,” accounting for less than 0.4 percent of the text.

The protagonists of the “Li sao” and other pieces are heroic precisely because, unlike *Shi* personas, they are able to “forget about returning” (*wang gui* 忘歸), to borrow a phrase repeated throughout the anthology.¹² Crucially, the “Li sao” uses allusion to highlight the generic limits of the *Shi* even as it steps beyond them. By the end of the poem, the hero also transcends the *Shi* as he leaves the mundane world behind.

In short, *Chu ci* verse is distinct from *Shi* verse but not in the way most have imagined. On the literary map of early China, the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* are not disconnected territories but contiguous domains whose boundaries are mutually constitutive—think Virginia and West Virginia more than New York and Alabama. Like Attic tragedy and comedy, the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* are two sides of the same cultural coin, not different currencies.

In parallel with Galal Walker’s analysis of the use of *Shi jing* rhymes in the earliest strata of the *Chu ci*,¹³ this conclusion challenges the view of the *Chu ci* as an artifact of a distinctly southern culture, thus making a literary contribution to debates among archaeologists and historians regarding Chu cultural identity.¹⁴ To quote Lothar von Falkenhausen, the most forceful critic of the southern culture hypothesis:

Chu during the Spring and Autumn period [was] a polity very much in the Zhou mold. As in the case of Qin, the choice of Zhou royal rhetoric to assert for Chu rulers the privileges of kingship presupposes the

12. See below.

13. Walker, “Toward a Formal History of the *Chu ci*,” Ph.D. dissertation (Cornell University 1982), chap. 4. Walker nevertheless emphasized the differences between the *Shi jing* and *Chu ci* more than the similarities: “While the *Chu ci* shares this habit of repeating language with the *Shi jing*, the two texts do not share their stocks of repeated phrases and sentences. The repeated language of the two traditions form two distinct inventories. This as much as any other feature of the two marks the separateness of their traditions and strongly suggests the futility of joining the two together or attempting to derive the *Chu ci* tradition from the earlier *Shi jing* poetry” (116).

14. A recent study with a parallel conclusion is Yuri Pines, “Chu Identity As Seen from its Manuscripts: A Reevaluation,” *Journal of Chinese History* 2 (2018), 1–26. Pines searches in vain for evidence of local Chu identity in various looted manuscripts from the region. But even for Pines, those parts of the *Chu ci* that “display a strongly pronounced Chu identity” (p. 24) stand in sharp contrast to the historical writings he considers in his study. On the difficulty of defining Chu, see Constance A. Cook and Barry B. Blakeley, “Introduction,” in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, ed. Constance A. Cook and John S. Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 5. In her 1990 Ph.D. dissertation, “Auspicious Metals and Southern Spirits: An Analysis of the Chu Bronze Inscriptions” (University of California, Berkeley), Constance Cook showed that the ritual rhetoric preserved in Chu bronze inscriptions was directly related to that preserved on Western and Eastern sacrificial bronze vessels. Cf. Xiaofei Tian, *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502–557)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 313: “[T]he construction of the North and South as two large cultural terms fundamentally began in the Northern and Southern Dynasties.”

universal recognition of the Zhou system. This would tend to negate strongly the currently fashionable image of a “Chu civilization” that was radically different from that of the Zhou; such a distinction was certainly not operative at the ritual and the political level during the middle to late Spring and Autumn period. Of course, the possibility remains that the folk culture of the Chu region different from that of northern areas, but this is impossible to verify at present through textual or archaeological materials. The situation may have changed somewhat during Warring States times, when Chu, like other polities, tried its utmost to distinguish itself from rival contenders for supreme power; but even then, its deliberate emphasis on regionally specific trappings of rulership was pursued with the Zhou system as an implicit point of reference.¹⁵

In the realm of literature no less than in ritual or politics or material culture, the Zhou system was the framework within and against which Chu identity was articulated. As the literary linchpin of that system, the *Shi* are what made the *Chu ci* possible.

Of Homesick Drivers and Road-Weary Horses

The first piece within the *Chu ci* anthology, the “Li sao” opens with the dramatic “descent” (*jiang* 降) of an aristocratic hero who ostentatiously proclaims his quasi-divine ancestry (from the god-king Gaoyang 高陽), auspicious names, and “inner beauty” (*nei mei* 內美). Festooning himself with aromatic plants, he sets out to woo/persuade a “Fair One” (*meiren* 美人) only to be rebuffed when s/he—the gender is unclear—heeds slanderers instead. Resolving to maintain his purity, the hero “withdraws” (*tui* 退; l. 112) from society and embarks on a cosmic quest for a true mate. Along the way, he makes a series of failed love connections and encounters various interlocutors who criticize or applaud his high-mindedness. Ultimately encouraged by the last of these authorities, a Shaman Xian 巫咸, he travels into increasingly mythological territory and ascends higher and higher into the heavens with an expanding

15. Von Falkenhausen, “The Waning of the Bronze Age: Material Culture and Social Developments, 770–481 B.C.,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 450–544 (525). See also his *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA, 2006), 264–71, and “The Regionalist Paradigm in Chinese Archaeology,” in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, ed. Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 198–217, the latter of which discusses the modern institutional and political context for such views. For a parallel critique from a literary perspective, see Waters, *Three Elegies of Ch’u*, 12–13.

retinue of chariots and spirits. The entire poem is composed of 368 lines or 92 quatrains (plus a coda) in the *sao* style, consisting of rhymed couplets of five- or six-syllable lines separated by strong *xi* 兮 caesurae.¹⁶

Thus far I have omitted certain key details that, from the Han 漢 period onward, were the most important things to know about the “Li sao”: its author and backstory. According to his *Shi ji* 史記 biography, Qu Yuan 屈原 (aka Qu Ping 屈平) was a member of the Chu royal family and a loyal minister to King Huai of Chu 楚懷王 (r. 328–299 B.C.E.) who fell victim to slanderers and was banished, after which he drowned himself in the Miluo 汨羅 River.¹⁷ Qu Yuan was said to have composed “Li sao” after falling out of favor with his king, whom he sought to advise on various occasions. Frequent references to Qu Yuan and various elements of the legend in later layers of the *Chu ci* indicate that this origin story eventually became integral to *Chu ci* poetics. However, as the “Li sao” itself makes no mention of Qu Yuan or Qu Ping, King Huai, the Miluo River, or even the state of Chu, the legend’s relevance to the poem is doubtful.¹⁸ Regardless, the Qu Yuan question does not figure into my discussion as it has no bearing on the analysis of *Shi-Chu ci* intertextuality.¹⁹

A second topic that features more prominently in *Chu ci* scholarship than in this article is shamanism. Defended most vigorously in recent years by Gopal Sukhu, the shamanistic interpretation of the “Li sao” grows out of a reading of the (earlier)²⁰ “Jiu ge” as ritual hymns narrating “the descent and ascent of a spirit who has some sort of love affair with

16. There is some confusion in the literature over what constitutes a “line” of *sao* poetry. Do we follow Walker (“Toward a Formal History of the *Chu ci*,” 118) and adopt Wang Li’s distinction between *ju* 句 (sentence) and *hang* 行 (line), with the former defined by meter and the latter by rhyme? See Wang Li 王力, *Hanyu shilixue* 漢語詩律學 (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu, 1962), 11, 17. If so, then a “Li sao” line consists of two hemistichs divided by *xi* 兮. Or do we follow the arrangement of Wang Yi’s commentary, which breaks the poem up into five- or six-character chunks? As I rely on the *Chu ci buzhu* edition in this paper, I have adopted the latter approach.

17. *Shi ji* 84.2481–91. This biography is notoriously problematic. See Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 51–60; Walker, “Toward a Formal History of the *Chu ci*,” 75–108; and Martin Kern, “The ‘Biography of Sima Xiangru’ and the Question of the Fu in Sima Qian’s *Shiji*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123.2 (2003), 303–16 (306–7).

18. Possible exceptions include the words *jiao* 椒 and *lan* 蘭, identified by Wang Yi as “Zilan, the Overseer of Horses and younger brother of King Huai” (懷王少弟司馬子蘭) and “Zijiao, the Chu grandee” (楚大夫子椒), two antagonists in the Qu Yuan legend; see *Chu ci buzhu*, 40–41.

19. Walker, “Toward a Formal History of the *Chu ci*,” 80: “This debate [over Qu Yuan’s historicity and authorship] is a hot-air balloon ride over whose direction we [outsiders] have no control, and since it quickly leaves the poetry behind, we must let it depart without us.”

20. Scholars who have dated the “Jiu ge” prior to the “Li sao” include Hu Shi 胡適, Lu Kanru 陸侃如, and You Guoen 游國恩. For the relevant citations and the most con-

someone on earth," i.e., the shaman or spirit medium (*wu* 巫).²¹ Numerous resonances with the "Jiu ge" have led Sukhu and others to argue that the logic of the "Li sao" is primarily shamanistic, and secondarily lyrical or allegorical. The fundamental weakness of this interpretation was pointed out by Geoffrey Waters some three decades ago: to identify the "Jiu ge" as primary sources of (Chu) shamanistic practice requires reliable sources of shamanistic practice to identify them against. In the absence of such sources, Waters argued, it is better to read "the shamans in the *Chu ci* [as] literary devices, and the *Chu ci* [as] only tangentially ethnographic."²² This is the approach adopted here.

The point of departure for this essay is the final quatrain (ll. 365–68) and coda of the "Li sao," when the hero begins his final ascent into the heavens. From his encounter with Shaman Xian up until the very end of the poem, the hero's flight is described in increasingly fantastic terms. Flying dragons pull him, phoenixes bear his banners, spirits act as his escorts, and a thousand chariots join his retinue. But then the crescendo hits a snag:

陟陞皇之赫戲兮	Ascending the heavens so dazzlingly brilliant
忽臨睨夫舊鄉	I look down suddenly and spy my old haunts
僕夫悲余馬懷兮	My driver grieves, my horses long to return
蜷局顧而不行	Craning their necks back they go no further
亂曰：已矣哉	Coda: Enough!
國無人莫我知兮	There is no one in the realm who recognizes me
又何懷乎故都	So why long for my former capital?
既莫足與為美政兮	Since there is no one worthy of joining me in fine rule
吾將從彭咸之所居	I will follow Peng and Xian where they reside ²³

With this, the hero declares his intent to cross over into the heavenly realm from which Shaman Xian and his retinue of spirits "descended"

vincing version of the argument, see Walker, "Toward a Formal History of the *Chu ci*," 134n7, and chaps. 3–4.

21. Sukhu, *The Shaman and the Heresiarch*, 78. This line of interpretation has a long history. See, e.g., Hawkes, "The Quest of the Goddess," and *Songs of the South*, 42–51; Arthur Waley, *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955); and the "Leipzig school" scholars August Conrady, Eduard Erkes, and Bruno Schindler discussed in Schimmelpfennig, "Qu Yuan's Transformation from Realized Man to True Poet: The Han-Dynasty Commentary of Wang Yi to the 'Lisao' and the *Songs of Chu*," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Heidelberg, 1999), 68–100.

22. Waters, *Three Elegies of Ch'u*, 19.

23. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.47. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

(*jiang* 降; l. 279) earlier in the poem, thus capping his own descent from the opening quatrain.²⁴

In the aristocratic and supernatural milieu of the “*Li sao*,” a world peopled with spirits, shamans, sages, and “Fair Ones,” the appearance of a lowly “driver” or “servant” (*pufu* 僕夫) in the final quatrain is surprising. Even more surprising is the text’s willingness to cede emotion and agency to such a figure. Throughout the poem we are told that the hero is a “singular” or “solitary” (*du* 獨) individual, the raptor that “does not flock” (不群; l. 97) with lesser birds.²⁵ Yet here he is a corporate entity who, like the ideal rulers of early didactic literature, must depend on others. Echoes elsewhere in the *Chu ci* indicate that this moment was by no means anomalous within the tradition, as when the hero of “Yuan you” 遠遊 (Distant Roaming) pauses before his final ascent: “My driver longs for home, my heart grieves; the outside horses look back and go no further” (僕夫懷余心悲兮，邊馬顧而不行).²⁶

Even if this moment was somewhat incongruous within the “*Li sao*,” I suspect that the homesick driver and road-weary horses would have been familiar to early audiences as stock figures from the *Shi*. One of the most common scenarios in the received *Shi jing*, the *zheng fu* 征夫 or “man on the march” theme accounts for more than thirty odes across all four divisions and roughly 10 percent of all stanzas.²⁷ Most of these pieces focus on a single stage (the departure, the march, or the return) of the campaign from a particular point of view (a general, his men, their loved ones at home) in a single mood (the homesickness of the men, the longing of the women, or the celebration of martial prowess); a handful narrate a complete campaign from beginning to end. The parallels

24. The controversy over the interpretation of the coda is long and convoluted; see *Chu ci jijiao jishi* 楚辭集校集釋 (*Chu cixue wenku* 楚辭學文庫, vol. 1), ed. Cui Fuzhang 崔富章 and Li Daming 李大明 (Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu, 2003), 699–708. Wang Yi identifies “Peng Xian” as a single figure, a Shang grandee who drowned himself after failing to earn his ruler’s trust (*Chu ci buzhu* 1.13). However, this idea is not attested prior to Wang Yi’s commentary. In the *Liushi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Annals of Lü Buwei), Shaman Peng 巫彭 and Shaman Xian 巫咸 appear as two different figures; see Chen Qiyu 陳奇猷, *Liushi chunqiu xin jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋新校釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2002), 17.4/p. 1088. For this argument, see also Sukhu, *The Shaman and the Heresiarch*, 103–4.

25. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.16. Contrast *Shi jing* 204/7.1–2: “Would that I were an eagle or a falcon / That I might soar to Heaven” (匪鶉匪鳶 · 翰飛戾天). For this and all subsequent *Shi jing* citations, see *Mao Shi zhuzi suoyin* 毛詩逐字索引, ICS Ancient Text Concordance Series, vol. 10 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2006). “204/7.1–2” refers to ode #204, stanza 7, lines 1–2.

26. *Chu ci buzhu* 5.172. See also “Dong jun” 東君 (2.74), “Zun jia” 尊嘉 (15.275) “Li shi” 離世 (16.288), “Xi xian” 惜賢 (16.296), and “You ku” 憂苦 (16.301).

27. See *Shi jing* 3, 19, 31, 36, 40, 66, 68, 73, 110, 121, 156–57, 162–63, 167–69, 177–79, 181–82, 203, 205, 207, 227, 230, 232, 234, 260, 262, 263, and 299.

between some of these odes and the “Li sao” conclusion are striking.²⁸ Consider the female persona of “Juan er” 卷耳 (Cocklebur, 3/1, 3-4) and the campaigners of “Chu ju” 出車 (Bring out the Carts, 168/1-2, 4):

采采卷耳 不盈頃筐	Thick grows the cocklebur / But even a shallow basket I did not fill
嗟我懷人 真彼周行	Sighing for the man I love / I laid it there on the road
...	...
陟彼高岡 我馬玄黃	I am climbing that high ridge / My horses are sick and spent
我姑酌彼兕觥	And I stop for a little while to drink from that horn cup
維以不永傷	To still my heart's pain
陟彼砠矣 我馬瘠矣	I am climbing that shale / My horses founder
我僕痛矣 云何吁矣	My driver is stricken / Oh, woe, oh, misery
<hr/>	
我出我車 于彼牧矣	We bring out the carts / On to those pasture grounds
自天子所	From where the Son of Heaven is
謂我來矣	Orders have come that we are to be here
召彼僕夫 謂之載矣	The drivers are told / To get the carts loaded up
王事多難 維其棘矣	The king's service brings many hardships / It makes swift calls upon us
我出我車 于彼郊矣	We bring out our carts / On to those outskirts
設此旒矣 建彼旄矣	Here we set up the standards / There we raise the ox-tail banners
彼旒旒斯 胡不旒旒	The falcon-banner, and the standards / That flutter, flutter
憂心悄悄 僕夫況瘁	Our sad hearts are very anxious / The drivers are worn out
...	...
昔我往矣	Long ago, when we started
黍稷方華	The wine-millet and cooking-millet were in flower
今我來思 雨雪載塗	Now that we are on the march again / Snow falls upon the mire
王事多難	The king's service brings many hardships /
不遑啟居	We have no time to rest or bide
豈不懷歸 畏此簡書	We do indeed long to return / But we fear the written command ²⁹

28. For these connections, also see the commentaries of Yu Yue 俞樾 and Shen Zhumian 沈祖緜 at *Chu ci jijiao jishi* 698, including Yu Yue's conclusion that “the verses of the *sao* poets were based on the *Shi*” (騷人之辭卽本之詩也).

29. These and all other *Shi* translations in this paper are adapted from Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs*, edited with additional translations by Joseph R. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1996).

Like the “Li sao” protagonist, the persona of “Juan er” attempts to “ascend” or “climb” (*chi* 陟) up high with a “driver” (*pu* 僕) and “horses” (*ma* 馬) who are not up to the task.³⁰ In all three pieces, the dominant theme is *huai gui* 懷歸, the unfulfilled “longing for return,” with the associated feelings of *bei* 悲 (grief) in “Li sao” and *you* 憂 (anxiety) and *qiaoqiao* 悄悄 (unsettledness) in “Chu ju.”

Other *Chu ci* pieces amplify these connections. In the “Jiu ge” 九歌 (Nine Songs), the concluding couplet of “Yunzhong jun” 雲中君 (Lord of Yunzhong) echoes the oft-repeated phrase “our anxious hearts are so vexed” (憂心忡忡) from “Chu ju” and elsewhere: “I think of that lord and deeply sigh; it pains my heart so grievously” (思夫君兮太息·極勞心兮忡忡).³¹ In the “Jiu zhang” 九章 (Nine Pieces), the hero’s “chariot overturns and the horses founder” 車既覆而馬顛兮; in “Ai shi ming” 哀時命 (Lamenting My Lot), his “chariot breaks down and the horses are worn out” 車既弊而馬罷兮.³² Twice in Liu Xiang’s 劉向 (77–6 B.C.E.) “Jiu tan,” the driver is described as *cui* 悴 (*wan*), a loan character for the *cui* 瘁 of “Chu ju.”³³ Also in “Jiu tan,” three pieces lament the plight of “men on the march” (*zheng fu* 征夫), a term that appears very rarely in early sources outside of *Shi* quotations.³⁴

Writing in 1974, David Hawkes famously suggested that *Chu ci* poems could be analyzed into two parts: the “tristia” in which the protagonist vents his sorrows and the “itineraria” in which he embarks on a quest.³⁵ Given his interest in the shamanistic origins of the *Chu ci*, Hawkes devoted more space to the latter than the former without offering a convincing account of why the two parts were combined in the first place. His tentative suggestion was that the tristia “derives from the characteristic note of melancholy and frustration which shamanistic tradition prescribed for the hymns which they addressed to their fickle and elusive deities.”³⁶ The present analysis suggests another explanation. Hawkes looked to Latin to label the hero’s movement through the “Li sao” despite the poem’s own nomenclature: *zheng* 征 (ll. 143, 184).³⁷ At the conclusion of the “Li sao,” the itineraria that mattered was not a

30. The *chi bi* X 陟彼X (climb that X) formula appears in 13 stanzas across eight odes (3/1–3, 14/2–3, 54/4, 110/1–3, 169/3, 205/1, 218/4, 305/6).

31. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.59. For similar examples, see 14.262 and 17.315.

32. *Chu ci buzhu* 4.147, 14.261.

33. *Chu ci buzhu* 16.296, 302.

34. *Chu ci buzhu* 16.289, 292, 301, 306.

35. Hawkes, “The Quest of the Goddess,” reprinted in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed. Cyril Birch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 42–68.

36. “The Quest of the Goddess,” 54. Hawkes revisited this problem in *Songs of the South*, 50, where he outlined four possible explanations.

37. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.20, 26.

shamanistic spirit journey but the paradigmatic “campaign” of the *Shi*. And in *Shi* poetics, campaigns occasioned tristia.

A Meta-Journey Through the *Shi*

Zooming out from the “*Li sao*” conclusion, the *zheng* theme appears first in the sixth quatrain and in almost half of all quatrains thereafter. As with so much of the “*Li sao*,” tracing the hero’s movement through the poem is complicated by the many abrupt shifts in theme, mood, and voice. Unlike “*Chu ju*,” the “*Li sao*” does not follow a literal *zheng* from departure to homecoming.³⁸ Instead, its *zheng* is a metadiscursive movement through various roles associated with the “men on the march” odes of the *Shi*. As he struggles to rationalize his plight over the course of the poem, the hero assumes the roles of the *pufu*, the *zhengfu*, the woman left behind, and the victorious king on the march only to abandon each in turn.

In other words, the “*Li sao*” has a structure akin to that of Mei Cheng’s 枚乘 “*Qi fa*” 七發 (Seven Stimuli), in which a performer dramatically recreates a series of superlative experiences for a sheltered and ailing prince.³⁹ (Looking farther afield, this sort of episodic structure can be found in the Book of Job, which considers and rejects various rationalizations for Job’s suffering, and in Plato’s *Symposium*, which offers a series of monologues on love.) Both texts are framed as solutions to a problem: in “*Qi fa*,” how to cure the prince’s physical malaise; in “*Li sao*,” how to cure the hero’s “alienated heart” (*li xin* 離心, l. 339). The protagonists of both texts performatively embody culturally significant domains of experience: in “*Qi fa*,” the pleasures appropriate to a ruler; in “*Li sao*,” various *Shi* archetypes. And in both texts, each successive performance fails until the very end, when the sufferer arises and leaves the source of his suffering behind: in “*Qi fa*,” the prince “rises up” (*qi* 起) to follow the guest out of the inner palace; in “*Li sao*,” the hero turns his back on the world.

When dealing with a text as difficult as the “*Li sao*” that is most likely the product of multiple authors and editors over time, one cannot expect a single interpretation to solve every problem. That is especially true of the reading presented here, which does not explain how every line in the “*Li sao*” fits together. Nevertheless, the advantage of this reading is that it offers a meta-structure that (1) make sense of the poem’s

38. Cf. Hawkes, “The Quest of the Goddess,” 62–63.

39. For a translation and study, see David R. Knechtges and Jerry Swanson, “Seven Stimuli for the Prince: The *Ch’i-fa* of Mei Cheng,” *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970–71), 99–116. See Chen Hongtian 陳宏天 et al., *Zhaoming Wenxuan yizhu* 昭明文選譯注, vol. 4 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi, 1992), 90–117.

modularity, and (2) shows how each module or stage in the poem contributes to a larger poetic vision. Moreover, it is a structure that admits a degree of flexibility or adaptability. Like “Qi fa” and other Western Han *fu* 賦 (rhapsodies), it is not a narrative or itinerary so much as a serialized exposition or catalogue of roles, which helps to explain the bewilderingly abrupt transitions from one section to the next. With such a structure, it is easy to imagine different authors or editors adding or subtracting elements as they saw fit.

ROLE #1: THE DRIVER

The “Li sao” introduces the *zheng* theme in lines 23–24, where the hero first woos the “Fair One” (a term also found in the *Shi*)⁴⁰:

乘騏驥以馳騁兮	Mount your piebald steeds, gallop away
來吾道夫先路	Come! I'll lead you in the forward chariot ⁴¹

Although not labeled as such, here the hero plays the role of the Fair One's *pufu*.⁴² As the driver of the “forward chariot,”⁴³ he avoids “careening down twisted trails” (捷徑, l. 32), he “rushes ahead and behind” (奔走以先後, l. 37), and he plots a course in “the footsteps of former kings” (前王之踵武, l. 38).⁴⁴ The exhortation to the Fair One to mount up and ride also suggests that he is responsible for harnessing the horses. When expressing his “fear that the royal carriage might topple” (恐皇輿之敗績; l. 36) should the Fair One follow “a road dark and gloomy through dangerous passes” (路幽昧以險隘; l. 34), the hero echoes an admonishment from “Zheng yue” 正月 (The First Month, 192/10):

無棄爾輔 員于爾輻	Do not toss your side-boards away / Or all will fall into your spokes
屢顧爾僕 不輸爾載	If you take heed of your driver / Your load will not tumble over
終踰絕險 曾是不意	And you will pass by dangerous places / Have you not considered this?

40. *Shi jing* 38/4.4–5 and 42/3.4. In the *Shi* as well, the term can apply to either gender.

41. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.7.

42. Shen Zumian (*Chu ci jijiao jishi* 698) notes the connection between the *pufu* here and at the end of the poem.

43. For the *xianlu* 先路/先輅, see *Liji jijie* 禮記集解, ed. Sun Xidan 孫希旦 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), 25.670.

44. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.8–9. Following in the “footsteps” (*wu* 武) of former kings is the theme of “Xia wu” 下武 (Footsteps Here Below, 243).

Here we might also note the connection between the use of *xiu* 脩/修 (prepare, arrange; cultivate; fine; long) in the two anthologies. A key term appearing eighteen times in the “Li sao” and nearly fifty times in the *Chu ci*, *xiu* is often taken to refer to the “fine” or the “cultivation” of fine things. Of the ten appearances of *xiu* in the *Shi jing*, all but three refer to the length of horses in campaigns or to the “preparation” of equipment prior to a campaign, as in “Wu yi” 無衣 (No Wraps, 133/1.3–5): “The king is raising an army / I have made ready both spear and axe / You shall share them with me as my comrade” (王于興師，脩我戈矛，與子同仇). Given the wealth of campaign imagery in the “Li sao,” the militaristic connotations of *xiu* would seem to be active in that poem as well.

As it happens, the transitions of the first six quatrains—the listing of auspicious omens, the descent, the botanical imagery, the introduction of the *pufu*, and the theme of moral rectitude—closely mirror the structure of “Ding zhi fangzhong” 定之方中 (The Ding-Star in the Middle of the Sky, 50), one of only two odes in the received *Shi jing* to refer to a locale named “Chu” 楚:⁴⁵

定之方中 作于楚宮	The Ding-star is in the middle of the sky / We build the temple at Chu
揆之以日 作于楚室 樹之榛栗 椅桐梓漆	Orienting it by the sun / We build the house of Chu Planting hazels and chestnuts / Catalpas, paulownias, lacquer-trees
爰伐琴瑟 升彼虛矣 以望楚矣 望楚與堂 景山與京	That we may make zithers great and small We climb that hill / To look down upon Chu To look down upon Chu and Tang / and the Jing hills and citadel
降觀于桑 卜云其吉	We go down and inspect the mulberry / We take omens; they are lucky
終然允臧 靈雨既零 命彼倌人 星言夙駕 說于桑田	All of them are truly good A magical rain is falling / We order the grooms By starlight, early, to yoke our steeds / To rest in the mulberry orchards
匪直也人 秉心塞淵	Those are men indeed! / They hold hearts staunch and true
騶牝三千	With their tall mares numbering three thousand

45. This poem appears in the “Yong feng” 鄘風 (Airs of Yong), an area eventually absorbed by the Wei 衛 state. The Mao commentary identifies this Chu as Chuqiu 楚丘 in modern-day Henan; see *Mao Shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (Beijing: Beijing daxue, 2000), 232. I see no reason not to trust the Mao commentary on this point. For my purposes, the name “Chu” need only have triggered an association with the Chu state. The other ode to mention Chu is “Yin wu” 殷武 (Warriors of Yin, 305/1.2 and 2.1), which celebrates a campaign against “Jing Chu” 荆楚. For this section of the “Li sao,” see *Chu ci buzhu* 1.3–7.

The astronomical omens of the first stanza recall the omens of “Li sao” lines 1–4, just as “the house of Chu” recalls the hero’s claim that he is descended from Gaoyang, the Chu progenitor. Both poems feature the “inspection” (*kui* 揆; l. 5) of these omens together with additional verbs of “surveying”: *guan* 觀 and *wang* 望 in the ode and *lan* 覽 (l. 5) in the “Li sao.” Both poems feature a “descent” (*jiang* 降; l. 4) and a “falling” (*ling* 零; l. 19). Both include the word *ling* 靈 (divine, numinous); the “magical” rain that falls in the ode and the name “Divine Balance” (*ling jun* 靈均; l. 8) that is bestowed on the descended hero. “Building” (*zuo* 作) gives way to “planting” (*shu* 樹) in the first stanza of the ode just as the arising (*zuo* 作) of the “Li sao” hero in §1–2 gives way to the botanical imagery of lines 11–12. The final stanza of the ode introduces the faithful “grooms” or “drivers” (*guanren* 信人)—a synonym for *pufu*—just as the “Li sao” transitions to the *pufu* theme in line 23. There is also some evidence of aural overlap. The “auspicious names” (*jia ming* 嘉名; *krâi-men) bestowed on the hero by his father in line six echo the “command” (*ming* 命; *mren) to “yoke” (*jia* 駕; *krâih) the horses.⁴⁶ Finally, both pieces open with rhymes on *-ung/-ong.

ROLE #2: THE MAN ON THE MARCH

After the Fair One “puts his faith in slanderers” (*xin chan* 信讒, l. 40), another phrase from the *Shi*,⁴⁷ the *pufu* fantasy bursts and the hero enters his first triste. Describing himself as a man of singular virtue, he becomes his own driver when he “turns his chariot around and retraces [his] path” (回朕車以復路兮, l. 107) away from the Fair One. In this section, the hero adopts the persona of a toiling “campaigner” or “man on the march” (*zhengfu* 征夫) who sheds the “tears” (*ti* 涕, l. 77) and experiences the “loneliness” (*du* 獨, ll. 94, 126), “sorrow” (*ai* 哀, l. 78), “fear” (*kong* 恐 or *wei* 畏, l. 64), and “many hardships” (*duo jian/duo nan* 多艱/多難, l. 78) described in odes like “Xiao ming” 小明 (Minor Bright, 207/2) and “Jie nan shan” 節南山 (High-Crested Southern Hills, 191/7):⁴⁸

昔我往矣	Long ago when we set out
日月方除	The days and months were just becoming mild
曷云其還 歲聿云莫	When shall I get back? / The year is drawing to a close.
念我獨兮 我事孔庶	When I think I am single-handed / And my affairs very many

46. For these and all other Old Chinese reconstructions in this paper, see Axel Schuessler, *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to “Grammata Serica Recensa”* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009).

47. *Shi jing* 197/7.1, 198/2.4, 219/1.4.

48. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.12–16.

心之憂矣 憚我不暇 Oh, the sadness of my heart! / Truly I cannot get
leave
念彼共人 睠睠懷顧 Thinking of those that nurtured me / Full of longing I
look back and gaze
豈不懷歸 Indeed, I long to come home
畏此譴怒 But I am afraid of the wrath that would ensue

駕彼四牡 Driving forth those four steeds
四牡項領 Four steeds with thick necks stretched
我瞻四方 I look out over the four quarters
蹙蹙靡所騁 Increasingly troubled, I have no place to ride

Note the “looking back” (*gu* 顧) in “Xiao ming” and the “looking out” (*zhan* 瞻) in “Jie nan shan.” In the *Shi*, such gestures are among the few outward signs of soldiers’ distress (along with sighs and tears). The king’s service does not permit them to return or rest, but nothing stops them from gazing in the direction of their loved ones. “Li sao” lines 121–22 depict both types of looking:

忽反顧以遊目兮 Suddenly I turned and looked back, let my eyes wander
將往觀乎四荒 I will go and survey the four reaches of the world⁴⁹

But there is also a crucial difference between the *Shi* and “Li sao” on this point. In the *Shi*, the soldiers experience homesickness as a result of the campaign. In the “Li sao,” it is the “estrangement” (*li bie* 離別, l. 47) with the Fair One and the resulting melancholy that prompt the hero’s solo journey.⁵⁰

ROLE #3: THE WOMAN LEFT BEHIND?

In the next section, the “Li sao” hero’s aloofness earns him a scolding from Nüxu 女嬰 (the Sister), who introduces the next *zheng*-based role from the *Shi*: “Men of this era stand together and love their fellows / so why [act] widowed and childless? Why not hearken to me?” (世並舉而好朋兮，夫何孳獨而不予聽, ll. 139–40).⁵¹ As noted by Wang Yi, the phrase *qiong du* 孳獨 (widowed and childless; *gweŋ-dôk) appears in the thirteenth stanza of “Zheng yue” 正月 (The First Month, 192/13.5–6): “The rich are doing well indeed / but pity the widowed [*qiong* 孳; *gweŋ] and childless” (智矣富人，哀此孳獨). “Hong yan” 鴻鴈 (Wild geese,

49. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.18; for a parallel line, see 1.30.

50. For *li bie*, see *Chu ci buzhu* 1.10.

51. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.20.

181 / 1.2–5), another ode about long-suffering men on the march, includes a close parallel of the same line:

之子于征 劬勞于野	The soldiers are on the march / Painfully they struggle through the wilds
爰及矜人 哀此鰥寡	In dire extremity are the strong men / [But] pity the wives, left all alone

Nüxu's question is thus a devastating criticism. Despite the hero's efforts to portray himself as a noble man who chooses to walk a lonely path, ultimately he is no better than a widowed wife or childless parent, the most vulnerable and pathetic victims of a king's campaigns. (Other early sources likewise identify the widowed and childless as the weakest members of society and thus the most requiring of a ruler's mercy.⁵²) The message is something like: you are a wretched victim of circumstance, not a master of your own fate. This reading may also explain the choice of interlocutor. Who better to call the hero a forsaken wife than a woman whose name can be read as "Woman Waiting" (removing the radical from 嬰 to yield *xu* 須)?⁵³

ROLE #4: THE KING ON THE MARCH

In rebuttal, the hero puffs himself up into a figure of royal proportions. Professing to "rely on the former sage-kings for restraint and balance" (依前聖以節中兮, l. 141), he journeys southward to the sage-king Shun 舜 to "state his case" (*chen ci* 陳詞/陳辭, ll. 144, 181), which is essentially a list of rulers who did and did not "follow the plumb line without swerving" (循繩墨而不頗, l. 164).⁵⁴ Prompted by the examples of ancient sage-kings, the hero proceeds to adopt the trappings of a triumphant king or general on the march. He creates a fabulous royal equipage ("I team jade dragons and mount phoenixes" 駟玉虬以禦驚兮, ll. 183–84) and acquires an increasingly fantastic entourage of gods and, eventually, an army of a thousand chariots (ll. 357–60):

屯余車其千乘兮	I gather chariots, a thousand strong
齊玉軻而並馳	Line up jade axles, rush forward as one
駕八龍之婉婉兮	Yoke eight dragons, wending and winding
載雲旗之委蛇	Fly cloud banners, twisting and turning ⁵⁵

52. See, e.g., "Hong fan" 洪範, "Da dao" 大誥, "Kang gao" 康誥 (*Shang shu zhengyi* 尚書正義 [Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1999], 308, 346, 359), and Mengzi 1B/5 (Jiao Xun 焦循, *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987], 136), which quotes "Zheng yue."

53. For *xu* 須 as "waiting," see, e.g., *Shi jing* 34/4.4 and *Chu ci buzhu* 2.72.

54. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.20–23.

55. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.25, 46.

This shift is accompanied by the first appearance of verbs of command: *wu ling* 吾令 (I order, ll. 189, 201, 207, 221, 224, 237), *shi* 使 (make, ll. 197–98, 300, 351–52, 354), *ming* 命 (command, l. 258), and *zhao* 詔 (decree, l. 352).

The correspondence with the kingly *zheng* of the *Shi* is far from perfect. The entourages of the *Shi* do not include spirits or gods, nor do they travel to mythical locales. But the points of overlap are many: “dragon” (*long* 龍) and fantastic bird (*luan* 鸞) imagery;⁵⁶ opulent ornaments and fittings;⁵⁷ flags and banners (*qi* 旂 [*gəi], *qi* 旗 [*gə]);⁵⁸ “flying” (*fei* 飛, ll. 201, 337), “flowing” (*liu* 流, ll. 332, 342), “galloping” (*chi* 馳, ll. 358, 362), and “rushing” (*qu* 驅, l. 197) movements;⁵⁹ “cloud” (*yun* 雲, ll. 221, 343, 360) imagery;⁶⁰ and orderly hosts numbered in the thousands. Consider “Cai qi” 采芑 (Plucking White Millet, 178/2) and “Chang wu” 常武 (Always Mighty in War, 263/5):

薄言采芑 于彼新田	Lo, we were plucking the white millet / In that new field
于此中鄉 方叔蒞止 其車三千 旂旐央央	In this middle patch / When Fang-shu arrived With three thousand chariots / With banners shining bright.
方叔率止 約軼錯衡	Yes, Fang-shu came / With leather-bound nave and metal-studded yoke
八鸞瑄瑄 服其命服 朱芾斯皇 有瑄蔥珩	His eight <i>luan</i> -bells jingling / Wearing his insignia The red greaves so splendid / The tinkling onion-stones at his belt.
<hr/>	
王旅嗶嗶 如飛如翰	The king's hosts swept along / As if flying, as if winged
如江如漢 如山之苞 如川之流 綿綿翼翼	Like the River, like the Han / Steady as a mountain Flowing onward like a stream / Rank on rank, in serried order
不測不克 濯征徐國	Immeasurable, unassailable / Mightily they marched through Xu

There is no hint in these stanzas of the longing or hardship experienced by common soldiers. Kings on the march were to be celebrated, not

56. For *long* (“Li sao” ll. 337, 351, 359), see 128/2.5, 283/1.3, 300/3.7, 303/1.13; for *luan* (ll. 199, 344), see 127/3.3, 178/2.9, 260/7.6 & 8.2, 261/4.7, 291/1.6, 302/1.14.

57. *Shi jing* 47, 128, 167/5.6, 238/5.1–2.

58. *Qi* 旗 (ll. 347, 360) does not appear in the *Shi jing*, but *qi* 旂 (l. 349) is quite common: 168/3.4, 178/2.6, 182/3.5, 222/2.4–5, 262/2.7, 283/1.3, 299/1.4–5, 300/3.7, 303/1.13.

59. *Shi jing* 54/1.1, 115/1.6, 163/2–5.3, 254/8.4.

60. *Shi jing* 93/1.2–3, 104/1.4, 261/4.10.

lamented. So, too, in the “*Li sao*,” the adoption of the royal persona precludes a triste. Ultimately, however, the hero is no more successful as a king than as a *pufu* or *zhengfu*. The first royal *zheng* (ll. 181–206) ends when he approaches the gates of Heaven and finds the way barred:

吾令帝閽開關兮	I order the Lord’s gatekeeper to open the barrier
倚閽闔而望予	But he leans on the gate and looks down on me

Clearly, the royal persona is not as empowering as the hero had hoped.

ROLE #5: THE SUITOR

In classical Chinese thinking, a virtuous ruler requires a virtuous adviser. Perhaps that is why the adoption of the kingly persona transitions in ll. 213–16 into a search for a mate:

朝吾將濟於白水兮	In the morning I set out to cross the White Water
登閽風而繫馬	Climb Lofty Wind peak and tether the horses.
忽反顧以流涕兮	Suddenly I turn and look back, streaming tears
哀高丘之無女	Sad that this high hill has no woman for me ⁶¹

As the kings of the *Shi* did not go on campaigns looking for love, the *Shi* allusions in this section shift away from campaign odes to odes of “seeking” (*qiu* 求) or wooing. The transformation from victorious king into hopeful lover also reopens a space for tristia, hence the “looking back,” “tears,” “sadness,” and hill-climbing of ll. 213–16.

The poem’s debt to the wooing theme of the *Shi* is apparent in the very next stanza:⁶²

溘吾遊此春宮兮	Straightaway I travel to this Spring Palace
折瓊枝以繼佩	I break off sprays of garnet to add to my pendants
及榮華之未落兮	While the blossoms’ beauty has yet to fall
相下女之可詒 ⁶²	I look for a woman below to whom gifts can be given

Whereas earlier in the poem (ll. 1112) the hero adorns himself with aromatic plants, here the ornament changes to garnet. “Gifting” (*yi* 詒 ll. 220, 243; *yi* 貽 in the *Shi*)⁶³ a friend or beloved with a (garnet)

61. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.30.

62. *Chu ci buzhu* 30–31.

63. For *yi* 貽, see *Shi jing* 42/2.2 and 3.4, 74/3.4, 137/3.4, and 275/1.5.

pendant is a stock gesture in the *Shi*, seen here in “Mu gua” 木瓜 (A Quince, 64/1):

投我以木瓜 報之以瓊瓊琚	She threw a quince to me / In requital I gave her a garnet pendant
匪報也 永以為好也	No, not just as requital / But meaning I would love her forever ⁶⁴

Also note the mixing of botanical and mineral imagery in both poems.

Perhaps the most obvious point of overlap in this section is the figure of the “matchmaker” (*mei* 媒; ll. 237, 240, 290), a role filled by multiple characters beginning in lines 224–49: Jianxiu 蹇脩, a minister to Fuxi to who approaches Lady Fu 宓妃, the consort of Fuxi 宓羲; the toxic bird (*zhen* 鴆) who approaches Jiandi 簡狄 of the Yousong 有娥 clan, the mother of the Shang 商 progenitor and a figure referenced in the *Shi* (304/1.7); and the unnamed figure who approaches the two wives of Shaokang 少康, a king of the Xia 夏 dynasty.⁶⁵ All fail in one way or another: Lady Fu is proud and wanton; the toxic bird reports back (dishonestly?) that Jiandi does not care for the hero, and the third matchmaker is “weak” (*ruo* 弱) and “inept” (*zhuo* 拙). The second failure prompts a mini-triste in which the hero expresses his “doubts” (*yi* 疑) and laments the need for a matchmaker: “I wished to go myself but was not allowed” (欲自適而不可; l. 241).⁶⁶ In a poem that gives its hero the power to command the gods, who or what prevents him from acting as his own matchmaker? The answer lies in the *Shi jing*—specifically, in the fourth stanza of the “Nan shan” 南山 (Southern Hill, 101) ode:

析薪如之何 匪斧不克	How do we cut firewood? / Without an axe it is impossible
取妻如之何	How does one take a wife?
匪媒不得	Without a matchmaker he cannot get her ⁶⁷

64. *Shi jing* 134/2.3–4 (for the giving of garnet pendants as gifts), 83/1.4 and 98/1–3.3 (for garnet pendants), and 82/3 (for the giving of pendants as gifts). On this connection between the “Li sao” and the *Shi jing*, see Zhu Ji’s 朱冀 commentary at *Chu ci jijiao jishi* 473.

65. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.31–34.

66. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.33.

67. For a close parallel, see “Fa ke” 伐柯 (Axe-Handle, 158/1).

Several early sources caution against seeking a mate without a matchmaker.⁶⁸ The *Shi jing* version is both the most canonical and the most unequivocal. Given this connection, it is probably not a coincidence that the phrase *wu liang mei* 無良媒 (without a fine matchmaker) from “Meng” 氓 (A Simple Peasant, 58/1.8) appears verbatim in the “Jiu zhang” (ll. 49–50) section of the *Chu ci*: “widowed, childless, alone / and without a fine matchmaker by my side” (既惻獨而不群兮，又無良媒在其側).⁶⁹

The hero’s failure to find a mate leads him to seek the advice of Divine Fen 靈氛 (ll. 258–66) and Shaman Xian 巫咸 (ll. 279–300) in the next section of the poem. The first encourages him to continue his search while the second authorizes him to forgo a matchmaker altogether:

苟中情其好脩兮	If in your heart of hearts you love the fine,
又何必用夫行媒	Why must you rely on a matchmaker?

To justify this break with tradition, Shaman Xian recites the examples of four rulers (Yu 禹, Wuding 武丁, King Wen 文王, Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公) who found their own advisers. If these rulers did not require matchmakers, Shaman Xian argues, then neither do you—the petty morality of the *Shi* be damned.⁷⁰

ROLE #4 REVISITED: THE KING ON THE MARCH

Like the first list of ancient exemplars (ll. 145–62), the second list of sage-kings prompts a return to the kingly *zheng* in ll. 337–40:

為余駕飛龍兮	For me are harnessed flying dragons
雜瑤象以為車	A chariot blended with jasper and ivory
何離心之可同兮	How can an estranged heart ever be joined?
吾將遠逝以自疏	I will go far away and keep myself apart

From here the hero proceeds to the end of the poem, where the *zheng* once again sputters to a halt. Whereas earlier his progress was thwarted by his own limitations in relation to Heaven’s gatekeeper, in the final lines he is thwarted by the limitations of his driver and horses in relation to himself. To continue on, he must abandon his entourage and shed the trappings of a king on the march.

68. See, e.g., *Mengzi zhengyi* 3B/3/p. 426, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注 2.45 (“A woman who acts as her own matchmaker is ugly and faithless” 自媒之女，醜而不信) and 64.1188, and “Fang ji” 坊記 (*Liji jijie* 50.1294).

69. *Chu ci buzhu* 4.139.

70. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.37–38.

I opened this section with the suggestion that the hero's progress through the "Li sao" is not a literal *zheng* but a movement through different roles associated with the *zheng* (and *qiu*) theme of the *Shi*. After the descent of the opening quatrain, the hero offers to serve as the Fair One's *pufu* only to be slandered and rebuffed. Resolving to maintain his purity, he sets off as a wandering *zhengfu* only for the Sister to flip the script and treat him as the abandoned wife of a *zhengfu*. He responds to the accusation that he is among the weakest and most pathetic members of society by adopting the role of a super-empowered king—only to find himself barred and mocked by Heaven's gatekeeper. Transitioning out of a *zheng* into a *qiu*, he seeks a mate but fails because of his reliance on flawed matchmakers, whom he is encouraged to abandon. He resumes the kingly *zheng* only to be thwarted by *pufu* and horses mired in a *Shi* triste. The poem concludes with the hero turning away from his homeland once and for all.

Where does he go at the end of the poem? Much ink has been spilled on the identity of Peng and Xian (or Pengxian) and whether Qu Yuan commits suicide.⁷¹ But the poem itself is mostly uninterested in such questions. What matters is not where the hero ends up but what he leaves behind. Beginning with the bursting of the *pufu* fantasy in line 39 and ending with the abandonment of the homesick *pufu* at the very end, the poem takes up these *Shi* archetypes in order to move beyond them. Those people in the *Shi* are always yearning for home and companionship, the "Li sao" hero seems to say, but I am not like those people. I do not need a Fair One, a ruler, a mate, a matchmaker, a *pufu*, or anyone else. Here in this poem, I can say goodbye and leave the world (of the *Shi*) behind forever.

A Poetry of Belonging

If the "Li sao" is the product of an oppositional poetics, then what exactly is it opposed to? To answer this question, below I offer a provisional theory of *Shi* poetics, albeit with a major caveat. Thus far I have spoken of "the *Shi*" and quoted the *Shi jing* as if the latter were an unproblematic record of the former, which it most certainly is not.⁷² Not only was the received *Shi jing*, the *Mao Shi* 毛詩, one of four versions of the classic circulating in the Han period, it was the only one not to have received imperial

71. *Chu ci jijiao jishi* 703–8.

72. Martin Kern, "Excavated Manuscripts and their Socratic Pleasures: Newly Discovered Challenges in Reading the 'Airs of the States,'" *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 61.3 (2007), 775–93.

recognition during the period when the *Chu ci* was first anthologized.⁷³ Even in Wang Yi's Eastern Han commentary, *Shi* citations do not always follow the received *Shi jing*.⁷⁴ The situation is even worse when dealing with earlier manuscript finds, whose *Shi* quotations exhibit significant variations on the level of individual characters, lines, stanzas, and entire odes. Especially when considering a possible pre-Han context for the earliest strata of the *Chu ci*, one cannot assume that the received *Shi jing* provides direct access to the pre-imperial *Shi* repertoire. But we may be on slightly firmer ground if we set the pre-imperial period aside and read the received *Shi jing* as a guide to *Shi-Chu ci* intertextuality in a Han context.

The *Shi* are a poetry of belonging that explore the dynamics of social, political, and spiritual integration. In the aggregate, they present a vision of society seamlessly integrated from top to bottom, from periphery to center, from outside the court to inside the court, and from living to dead. "Belonging" is my translation for *gui* 歸 (to return, to go home, to pay allegiance to), which I situate at the core of *Shi* poetics. Not only do *gui* and its synonyms (*huan* 還, *fu* 復, etc.) appear throughout the received *Shi jing*, as a heuristic it unites various themes and situations throughout the corpus.

Gui in a political context is the foundational conceit of the Chinese intellectual tradition—that virtue is power (*de* 德). A true ruler need only cultivate his virtue because virtue has gravity; people within the orbit of a virtuous ruler inexorably *gui* (return, pay allegiance) to him: "All happiness to our prince, to whom the people return" (豈弟君子，民之攸歸).⁷⁵ As described in the eulogies of the "Da ya" 大雅 (Greater Court Odes), his people naturally follow his example (243/4, 244/6.2–4, 256/2), they build him towers unbidden (242/1.5–6), and even his enemies pay him homage (263/6).

Gui in a social context is the promise of social belonging, of "going home" and being fully integrated within one's family and community. The hallmark of such odes is that they are uttered in the voice of the collective, as in this agricultural scene from "Fu yi" 采芣苢 (Plantain, 8/1):

采采芣苢 薄言采之	Thick grows the plantain / Here we go plucking it
采采芣苢 薄言有之	Thick grows the plantain / Here we go gathering it ⁷⁶

73. For a discussion of the *Chu ci*'s early history, including the hypothesis that Liu Xiang 劉向 based his version on an earlier version compiled by Liu An, see Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 28–41, and Kern, "Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings Through Western Han," 76–77.

74. See, e.g., the commentary to "Li sao" 1. 37 (*Chu ci buzhu* 9), which substitutes *yu* 聿 for *yue* 曰 in the Mao *Shi* version of "Mian" 綿 (Spreading, 237/9.4): 予曰有奔走，予曰有先後。

75. 251/4–5.

76. Other examples include *Shi jing* 4, 191, 290.

The formal features of the *Shi* enhance this communal spirit: rhyme “bind[s] together and identifi[ies] things that under other circumstances tend to fly apart—nature and social life; gift and unequal counter-gift; peasantry and aristocracy”;⁷⁷ repetition reinforces a community’s sense of “identity through time.”⁷⁸

Of course, the *Shi* do not just present images of fully integrated communities. Many pieces depict first-person personas who yearn to *gui* but cannot. Individuation, the movement from the communal “we” to the singular “I,” is a symptom of one’s alienation from the collective. Crucially, the tragic character of these odes is not simply a matter of disaffection or physical separation. At the heart of *Shi* poetics is a fascination with personas who, through no fault of their own, are caught between conflicting modes of *gui*. If the *Shi* in the aggregate present an idealized vision of Zhou society, odes of alienation explore glitches or breakdowns in the system of belonging.

Men on the march are one such glitch. As in “Chu ju,” campaigning soldiers experience a conflict between their allegiance to the king and their desire to return home to their loved ones. They perform “the king’s service” but at a high cost to themselves and their community. Another set of alienated voices are the elite men of the “Xiao ya” who suffer as a result of misrule. These personas experience alienation but obey the dictates of political *gui* to offer loyal advice to their superiors, as in “Jie nan shan” (#191/8):

方茂爾惡 相爾矛矣	When your cruelty is in full form / We will indeed meet your spears
既夷既憚	But if you are constant and kind to us
如相酬矣	Then we shall pledge ourselves to you

Married women are another glitch in the system. When a woman is newly married, she technically “goes home” (*gui*) for the first time to her husband’s family. As this entails leaving the family of her birth, neither the bride nor her maiden family necessarily experience *gui* as a happy homecoming. As in “Yan yan” 燕燕 (Swallow, Swallow, 28/1.3–6), it is also an occasion for tears:

之子于歸 遠送于野	Our lady that goes home / Far we escort beyond the fields
瞻望弗及 泣涕如雨	Gaze after her, cannot see her / And our tears flow like rain

77. Haun Saussy, “Repetition, Rhyme, and Exchange in the Book of Odes,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.2 (1997), 519–42 (532).

78. Stephen Owen, “Reproduction in the *Shi jing* (Classic of Poetry),” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61.2 (2001), 287–315 (288). See also Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 117.

Some of the most tragic and poignant voices in the *Shi* belong to women who suffer at the hands of their new families, as in “Meng” (58/5):

三歲為婦 靡室勞矣 Three years I was your wife / I never neglected my work
 夙興夜寐 靡有朝矣 I rose early and went to bed late / Never did I idle
 言既遂矣 至于暴矣 First you took to finding fault with me / Then you became rough with me
 兄弟不知 咥其笑矣 My brothers disowned me / “Ho, ho,” they laughed

Such women are trapped by the dictates of *gui*, as the persona of “Bai zhou” 柏舟 (Cypress Boat, 26/5.5–6) laments: “Silently I ponder [my lot]; I cannot rise up and fly away” (靜言思之，不能奮飛).

Romantic longing in general is a dis-integrating force in the *Shi*. So long as one is longing for a mate, a sense of wholeness or belonging is impossible. However, as the proto-almanac “Qi yue” 七月 (The Seventh Month, 154/2.10–11) makes clear, the separations occasioned by courtship are normal and necessary features of community life: “A girl’s heart is sick and sad / Till with her lord she can go home” (女心傷悲，殆及公子同歸). Heartache anticipates and reinforces the marriage bonds through which communities reproduce themselves.

Spiritual communion is a special case. In odes like “Chu ci” 楚茨 (Thorny Caltrop, 209/2.9–12), interactions with the spirits are restricted to the ancestral sacrifice, in which the living propitiate their ancestors and the ancestors reward their descendants with blessings:

神保是饗 The Spirits and Protectors have accepted [the offerings]
 孝孫有慶 The pious descendant shall have happiness
 報以介福 They will reward him with great blessings
 萬壽無疆 With span of years unending

During the sacrifice, the dividing line between living and dead is blurred as the spirits inhabit the body of the “Dead One” or “Impersonator” (*shi* 尸), the living descendant who physically imbibes the offerings. But the dead cannot reside permanently with the living and so the communion is necessarily temporary: “Bells and drums see the Dead One off / The Spirits and Protectors have gone home” (鼓鍾送尸，神保聿歸; 209/5.8–9). To quote the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Traditions), “When a ghost [*kwəi?] has a place to return [*kwəi] to, it does not become vengeful” (鬼有所歸，乃不為厲).⁷⁹ The spirits *gui* but are still bound to the living by blood and the logic of “reward” or “reciprocity” (*bao* 報).

79. Adapted from Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition (Zuo Zhuan): Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals”* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), vol. 3, 1425.

The one thing a person cannot do in the *Shi* is say goodbye forever.⁸⁰ Sundered personas do not abandon the hope for reunion as they (literally or metaphorically) gaze back toward “the one(s) they long for” (*huai ren* 懷人; “Juan er”). The disaffected elites of the “Xiao ya” bitterly complain about their lords’ conduct but do not turn their backs on them; like mistreated wives, they “cannot fly away.”⁸¹ This is the ideology of the *Shi* in its most distilled form, a worldview premised on the impossibility of not belonging, and in which separation only emphasizes an individual’s ties to his or her community.

Framed in this way, the poetics of the *Shi* went hand in hand with its social function in the early context. It is no accident that a corpus of verse predicated on an imperative to belong was, to quote Michael Nylan, “one of few available sources upon which elites could build a shared lingua franca accepted across the entire Central States cultural horizon.”⁸² As attested by a wealth of quotations, references, and allusions in transmitted and excavated texts from the Warring States period, knowledge of the *Shi* more than any other (proto-)canonical tradition marked a person’s membership in a class of cosmopolitan elites and licensed his participation in a shared Panhuaxia culture rooted to the Zhou ritual order.⁸³ In the words of Martin Kern, the *Shi jing* “was not merely a particular text used by the classicist tradition; it was the text around which this tradition arranged itself.”⁸⁴

Thus, to suggest that the “Li sao” hero transcends the world of the *Shi* at the end of the poem is not so far-fetched. In a very real sense, the *Shi* defined the literary ecumene for early authors and their audiences. In a roundabout way, the “Li sao” reaffirms the cultural significance of the *Shi* in the lengths it goes to authorize its hero’s departure. After the homesick *pufu* halts the ascent of the final quatrain, the coda begins and the hero

80. The lone exception may be “Shuo shu” 碩鼠 (Big Rat, 113/3): “Big rat, big rat / Do not eat our rice-shoots / Three years we have slaved for you / Yet you did nothing to reward us / At last we are going to leave you / And go to those happy borders / Happy borders, happy borders / Where no sad songs are sung” (碩鼠碩鼠，無食我苗。三歲貫女，莫我肯勞。逝將去女，適彼樂郊。樂郊樂郊，誰之永號)。

81. A possible exception is “Wan liu” 菀柳 (Leafy Willow-Tree, 224/3), which seems to question the wisdom of advising a superior who might punish you: “There is a bird flying high / Yes, soars to Heaven / But that man’s heart / Never could it reach / Why should I rebuke him / Only to be cruelly slain?” (有鳥高飛，亦傳于天。彼人之心，于何其臻。曷予靖之，居以凶矜)。

82. Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 84. See also Owen, “Reproduction in the *Shi jing* (Classic of Poetry),” 296.

83. For “Panhuaxia,” see Alexander Beecroft, *Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China: Patterns of Literary Circulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8–10.

84. Kern, “Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings Through Western Han,” 19.

exclaims, “Enough!” 已矣哉。A threshold is crossed, and it feels momentous. The entirety of the “Li sao” up until this moment is an accumulation of rationales for escaping the gravitational pull of *Shi* poetics. Despite his inherent nobility, the hero must earn the right to say goodbye.

The Partings of *Chu*?

Insofar as the “Li sao” established a template for other poems and drove interest in the anthology as a whole, how did its oppositional poetics play out in the *Chu ci* anthology? The answer is complicated. On the one hand, there is an obvious and superficial sense in which the *Chu ci* presents a contrast with the *Shi*. Where the *Shi* are premised on the imperative to *gui*, *Chu ci* pieces are premised on “separation” (*li* 離; 77 times in 35 pieces), “parting” (*bie* 別; 7/7), “leaving” (*qu* 去; 28/21), “departing” (*shi* 逝; 24/19), “being sent away” (*fang* 放; 19/12), “seeing off” (*song* 送; 5/5), and “going off” (*wang* 往; 32/21) and “not turning back” (*bu fan* 不反; 9/5). The *Chu ci* are not just the “Verses” or “Lyrics” of *Chu*; thematically, they are also the “Partings” (*ci* 辭) of *Chu*.⁸⁵

The theme of separation may account for the inclusion of the most un-“Li sao” texts in the anthology: “Tian wen” 天問 (Heavenly Questions), the three “Summons” (*zhao* 招), and the anecdotal “Bu ju” 卜居 (Divining Whether to Stay) and “Yu fu” 漁父 (Fisherman). “Tian wen” poses a series of questions whose answers are unknowable: “At the beginning of things in ancient times, who was there to pass down the story?” (遂古之初，誰傳道之).⁸⁶ Whatever its original context, within the *Chu ci* it reads as an epistemological version of the disconnect between the seeker and the sought.

“Zhao hun” 招魂 (Summoning a Soul), “Da zhao” 大招 (Great Summons), and “Zhao yinshi” 招隱士 (Summoning a Hidden Man), adopt the perspective of those whom the departed have left behind. Especially when repeating the refrain of “Zhao hun” and “Da zhao” (“Soul! Come back!” 魂兮歸來/徠), these voices resemble the bereft personas of the *Shi* who long for reunion with their loved ones, as in “Yin qi lei” 殷其雷 (Deep Rolls the Thunder, 19/1–3, 5–6): “O my true lord / Come back to me, come back” (振振君子，歸哉歸哉). Of course, the key difference in the *Chu ci* is that the summoned do not return; they are either dead or hidden away. No one in the *Shi* needs to be summoned to know to come home.

85. For this use of *ci* 辭 in the *Chu ci*, see “Jiu ge”: “he comes in without speaking and leaves without saying goodbye” (人不言兮出不辭).

86. *Chu ci buzhu* 3.85.

The anecdotal “Bu ju” and “Yu fu” feature Qu Yuan asking a sagely figure for guidance. “Yu fu” ends with the fisherman laughing at Qu Yuan’s question as he “leaves and never speaks with him again” (去不復與言).⁸⁷ Similar to the aporia of “Tian wen,” “Bu ju” concludes with the diviner “putting aside the [milfoil] stalks and taking his leave” (釋策而謝), telling Qu Yuan that “the tortoise and milfoil truly cannot know what will happen” (龜策誠不能知事).⁸⁸

The dilemma of “Bu ju”—to stay or not to stay—suggests a more meaningful answer to the question that opened this section. The poems and anecdotes of the *Chu ci* are much too disparate to constitute a single genre or follow a single organizing principle. But insofar as the anthology has an internal logic, we might look for it not in any theme or formal feature but in a particular moral quandary. Like the “Li sao,” the *Chu ci* ups the ante on the *Shi*: what if a *truly* noble figure suffered the *most* profound “alienation” (*li* 離), what then? Would such a person be justified in turning his back on the collective? Or does the imperative to *gui* apply to him as well?

Beginning with the “Jiu zhang” and continuing with “Yuan you,” “Xi shi” 惜誓 (Lament for [a Broken] Oath), the “Qi jian” 七諫 (Seven Remonstrations), “Ai shi ming,” “Jiu huai” 九懷 (Nine Longings), “Jiu tan” 九歎 (Nine Laments), and “Jiu si” 九思 (Nine Pinings), most *Chu ci* pieces take up this dilemma and follow the “Li sao” template in one form or another. They present personas who fail to woo the object of their affections, experience alienation, mourn their predicament, and/or go on a *zheng*. But adopting the “Li sao” template does not entail an endorsement of the “Li sao” solution. Throughout these pieces, there is a profound ambivalence about the possibility and propriety of saying goodbye.

Like the “Li sao,” a number of poems build to a final departure:

“Jiu zhang” • “Xi song” 惜誦 (Sorrowful Plaint, *Chu ci buzhu* 4.127)

願曾思而遠身 I wish to mull my thoughts and take myself far
away

“Yuan you” (5.175)

超無為以至清兮 I surpassed the effortless and arrived at purity
與泰初而為鄰 To join the precinct of the Great Beginning

“Xi shi” (11.123)

彼聖人之神德兮 The sage with his divine virtue
遠濁世而自藏 Distances himself from the turbid world and hides
away

87. *Chu ci buzhu* 7.180.

88. *Chu ci buzhu* 6.178.

These personas are heroic insofar as they maintain their agency and succeed in transcending the source of their suffering. (In “Yuan you,” there is also the idea that one can enter a higher, non-human communion with Heaven.) At the other end of the spectrum are pieces that leave their personas mired in tristia with no hope of escape:

“Qi jian” • “Miu jian” 謬諫 (Foolish Remonstrance, 13.256)

悲精神之不通 I grieve that my spirit has no way out

“Jiu huai” • “Kuang ji” 匡機 (Straightening the Doorstop, 15.269)

撫檻兮遠望 With my hands on the railing I gaze into the distance
念君兮不忘 I think of my lord; I will not forget him
怫鬱兮莫陳 Miserable, with nothing to say
永懷兮內傷 Endlessly longing, tormented within

“Jiu huai” • “Xu ying” 蓄英 (Gathered Blossoms, 15.276)

身去兮意存 My body has left but my thoughts remain
愴恨兮懷愁 Despairing I long for [my lord]

“Jiu tan” • “Yuan shi” 遠逝 (Going Off Into the Distance, 16.295)

舒情嗽詩 By unfolding my feelings and reciting this song
冀以自免兮 I had hoped to free myself
頹流下隕 [Instead] I fall to ruin
身日遠兮 And become more distant by the day

“Jiu si” • “Shang shi” 傷時 (Pained by the Times, 17.325)

咸欣欣兮酣樂 All are happy, drunk with joy
余眷眷兮獨悲 I am pensive, alone with my grief
顧章華兮太息 I look back at Zhanghua [Palace] and heave a great sigh
志戀戀兮依依 My thoughts filled with longing, with yearning

Such figures are not so different from the trapped personas of the *Shi* who gaze back with longing in the direction of their loved ones. Insofar as they reaffirm the impossibility of not belonging, these pieces are *Shi* in “Li sao” clothing. At least one *Chu ci* author even went so far as to deny the premise of the “Li sao” quandary. After expressing his desire to “depart” (*bieli* 別離) on a heavenly journey, the “Jiu bian” persona promises a final return: “Relying on august Heaven’s great power, I will return to my lord in good health” (賴皇天之厚德兮，還及君之無恙).⁸⁹ As in the *Shi*, alienation in the “Jiu bian” turns out not to be an existential threat after all.

89. *Chu ci buzhu* 8.196.

Still other pieces take their cue from the Qu Yuan legend to end in (implied) suicide:

“Jiu zhang” • “Huai sha” 懷沙 (Embracing Sand, 4.146)

知死不可讓 I know that death cannot be denied

願勿愛兮 I wish only to not begrudge it

“Qi jian” • “Ai ming” 哀命 (Lamenting My Fate, 13.252)

遂沒身而不反 I will drown myself and never return

“Jiu tan” • “Yuan si” 怨思 (Resentful Thoughts, 16.292)

長辭遠逝 Prolonging my farewell I go off into the distance

乘湘去兮 Riding away on the Xiang River

These personas stand somewhere between the heroic and the pathetic. An option not countenanced in the *Shi*, suicide grants the persona a degree of agency while sidestepping the ethical and political implications of turning one's back on a ruler (Yang Xiong's critique, mentioned above, notwithstanding). As a classic response to intractable moral conundrums, suicide highlights the tragic nature of the Qu Yuan narrative.

The “Jiu ge” 九歌 (Nine Songs) are a special case both because of their heterogeneity and the possibility that they pre-date the “Li sao.”⁹⁰ Perhaps the simplest explanation for why the “Jiu ge” were included in the *Chu ci* is that they have so many obvious points of overlap with the “Li sao.”⁹¹ Thematically, too, it is possible to read the “Jiu ge” as texts premised on a certain kind of alienation, one that is explicitly spiritual and implicitly social.

A fundamental difference between the “Jiu ge” and the ritual liturgies of the *Shi* is that the *Shi* are concerned with ancestor spirits, the “Jiu ge” nature spirits (and the non-ancestral dead of “Guo shang” 國殤 [The Realm's Dead] and “Li hun” 禮魂 [Honoring Souls]). This difference tracks a distinction drawn by von Falkenhausen in his survey of the role of *wu* 巫 (spirit mediums) in the *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Rites of Zhou*), wherein “ritual activities were divided into nature worship and ancestral ritual, each requiring a different sort of mediating agent ... [T]he part of the spirits was represented in different ways: by the non-specialist *shi* 尸 (aided by specialist diviners) in ancestral rituals, and by the specialist *wu* at other occasions.”⁹² Von Falkenhausen further observes that the “conservative

90. Wang Yi was the earliest commentator to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the “Jiu ge.” See *Chu ci buzhu* 1.55.

91. Walker, “Toward a Formal History of the *Chu ci*,” 138–39, 224–27.

92. Von Falkenhausen, “Reflections on the Political Role of Spirit Mediums in Early China: The *Wu* officials in the *Zhou li*,” *Early China* 20 (1995), 279–300 (298).

ritualists" who produced texts like the *Zhouli* were "deeply suspicious of, and hostile toward, mediumistic forms of worship," in part due to the non-aristocratic status of spirit mediums.⁹³ Against the dominant ritual poetics of ancestor worship and its disdain for spirit mediums, perhaps the proper rubric for understanding the place of the "Jiu ge" in the *Chu ci* is not shamanism per se but interactions with non-ancestor spirits, including southern (e.g., the "Lady of the Xiang" 湘夫人) and non-southern deities (e.g., the solar "Lord of the East" 東君 and the "[Yellow] River Earl" 河伯). Ancestor spirits are bound to the living by blood and the dictates of sacrificial reciprocity. Take away blood and one's connection with the spirits becomes much more tenuous. This tenuousness, I submit, is thematically consistent with the alienation of the "Li sao."

A few "Jiu ge" pieces ("Donghuang taiyi," "He bo," "Li hun") resemble *Shi* liturgies insofar as they describe orderly and successful ritual performances.⁹⁴ But the human personas of other pieces are beset by anxiety, uncertainty, and longing. The comings and goings of the gods are entirely unpredictable: the "Yunzhong jun" 雲中君 (Lord of the Clouds) "descends" (*jiang* 降) like an ancestor spirit but then "rushes up and away into the clouds" (淼遠舉兮雲中) in the very next line; similarly, the "Shao siming" 少司命 (Lesser Master of Fate) "arrives abruptly and goes off suddenly" (儻而來兮忽而逝).⁹⁵ Sometimes the spirits do not come at all: in "Xiang jun" 湘君 (Lord of the Xiang) the deity "does not come" (*bu xing* 不行); in "Xiang furen" 湘夫人 (Lady of the Xiang) she is the "distant one" (*yuanzhe* 遠者).⁹⁶ The fallen soldiers of "Guo shang" 國殤 (The Realm's Fallen) "went out but did not come back in, left but never returned" (出不入兮往不反).⁹⁷ Humans offer enticements and gifts but generally receive no confirmation that the spirits "enjoyed" (*xiang* 饗) the offerings or will "reward" (*bao* 報) the supplicants, as in the "Chu ci" ode above, not even when the persona of "Xiang furen" goes so far as to "build [the goddess] a house in the waters" (築室兮水中).⁹⁸ A few poems take this sense of precariousness to an extreme, as when the persona of "Guo shang" complains that "Heaven's luck has fallen away, the awesome spirits are angry" (天時墜兮威靈怒).⁹⁹ The major exception is the

93. Von Falkenhausen, "Reflections," 298–99.

94. Martin Kern, "'Shi jing' Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of 'Chu ci' (Thorny Caltrop)," *Early China* 25 (2000), 49–111 (103–6).

95. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.58, 72.

96. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.59, 68.

97. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.83.

98. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.66. For *zhu shi* 築室, see also *Shi jing* 189/2.2, 195/4.6, and 237/3.6.

99. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.83.

final line of “Donghuang taiyi,” where the god “merrily enjoys himself” (欣欣兮樂康) like a sated ancestor spirit.¹⁰⁰

Von Falkenhausen’s observation that “Spirit Mediums’ principal functions are tied up with averting evil and pollution”—in a word, exorcism—suggests another way of understanding the relevance of the “Jiu ge” to the *Chu ci*.¹⁰¹ Building on this observation, Gilles Boileau points to passages in the *Liji* 禮記 (Ritual Records), *Yili* 儀禮 (Etiquette and Ritual), and *Zuozhuan* to suggest that the *wu* exorcist “was not welcome in human dwellings,” particularly the funeral chamber, because contact with evil spirits rendered him/her “too dangerous to be permitted entry.”¹⁰² Boileau concludes,

In the received texts of the Zhou era, even if the ritual order still could use the *wu* when times required, they were considered to belong more to nature (in its negative aspects) than to culture. A civilization determines itself by its limits. It seems that in late Zhou times, the boundaries of humanity excluded the *wu*, but at the same time one cannot say that the *wu* were not part of civilization: they were so to speak among the “official” outcasts and were put in charge of dealing with chaos ... I think that the *wu* were one of the tools the Zhou period used to deal with such matters.¹⁰³

“Official outcasts” is a perfect label for the type of alienation that most fascinated *Chu ci* authors. In the *Shi*, no persona exists outside of Zhou society. But the exorcist *wu* who may have inspired the “Jiu ge” performed a service that necessitated their removal from regular society. Like the “Li sao” hero, their very nature precluded belonging.

Despite their obvious differences, linguistically the “Jiu ge” also have a great deal in common with the *Shi*.¹⁰⁴ As demonstrated by Walker, “Jiu ge” phonology conforms more strictly to *Shi jing* rhyme categories than any other section of the *Chu ci*, including the “Li sao.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, of the thirty or so onomatopoeic binomes in the “Jiu ge,” at least two-thirds have direct parallels in the *Shi*. One of these is *xinxin* 欣欣 from

100. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.57.

101. Von Falkenhausen, “Reflections,” 293, and Gilles Boileau, “Wu and Shaman,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 65.2 (2002), 350–78 (361).

102. Boileau, “Wu and Shaman,” 362.

103. Boileau, “Wu and Shaman,” 376. Cf. K.C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 48.

104. See especially Waters, *Three Elegies of Ch’u*, for his effort to read the “Jiu ge” against the *Shi*.

105. Walker, “Toward a Formal History of the *Chu ci*,” 415.

“Donghuang taiyi” (see above);¹⁰⁶ another is the final line of “Xiang jun” (“[Let us] drift about free and easy” 聊逍遙兮容與), which echoes the first stanza of “Gao qiu” 羔裘 (Lamb’s Wool, 146/1):

羔裘逍遙 狐裘以朝	In your lamb’s wool sauntering / In your fox-fur at court
豈不爾思 勞心忉忉	Oh, how can I help thinking of you? / My heart throbs with pain

A more interesting case is the phrase *dan wang gui* 愴 ... 忘歸, which appears first in “Dong jun”: “The sights and sounds delight a person / The spectator, transfixed, forgets to go home” (羌聲色兮娛人，觀者愴兮忘歸).¹⁰⁷ As it happens, *dan wang* 愴忘 (*dâm?-maŋ) is homophonous with *zhan wang* 瞻望 (look out and gaze; *tam-maŋ^Δ) from “Yan yan” (see above) and “Zhi hu” 陟岵 (Climb the Wooded Hill, 110/1), yet another ode on the “man on the march” theme:

陟彼岵兮 瞻望父兮	I climb that wooded hill / And look toward where my father is
父曰嗟予子行役	My father is saying, “Alas, my son is on service”
夙夜無已	Day and night he knows no rest
上慎旃哉	Grant that he is being careful of himself
猶來無止	So that he may come back and not be left behind”

As we have seen, gazing in the *Shi* is a manifestation of longing, with the direction of the gaze indicating the path of return. The “Jiu ge” take this trope and turn it on its head: the pleasure of the encounter is so intense as to overwhelm any sense of belonging, at least temporarily. This is another respect in which interactions with non-ancestor spirits challenge *Shi* ideology.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion and Postscript

In summary, this analysis of *Shi–Chu ci* intertextuality suggests a new way of framing the *Chu ci*’s place in Chinese literary history—new from a modern but not an ancient perspective. For all its differences, the “Li sao” is a text steeped in the *Shi* tradition. From the opening quatrains to the failed ascent of the homesick *pufu* at the very end, the

106. *Shi jing* 248.5.

107. *Chu ci buzhu* 2.74; see also 2.77, 2.80–81, 5.171, 16.288.

108. There is a hint of this dynamic in the *Shi* itself, in odes that lament the cruelty of Heaven in sending down droughts and other disasters; see, e.g., “Yun Han” 雲漢 (River of Stars, 258).

“Li sao” unfolds as a series of confrontations with various *Shi* archetypes. Can a noble man alienated from his ruler and society find solace in the conventional roles of the *Shi*? Can he be a *pufu*? A *zhengfu*? An abandoned wife? A suitor? A king? Again and again, the answer is no. Having exhausted the menu of *Shi*-based social options, in the end the “Li sao” hero does what no one in the *Shi* ever could: he says goodbye. Not all poems in the *Chu ci* pieces endorse the “Li sao” solution, but they do explore the dynamics of non-belonging in one way or another.

There are still many unresolved questions regarding the origins and early history of the *Chu ci*. What is clear is that the southern culture hypothesis cannot account for the complex relationship between *Chu ci* and *Shi jing* poetics. Even if composed in the Chu region—say, at the court of Liu An in Huainan—by those eager to forge a distinctively Chu identity, the “Li sao” neither reveals a distinctively Chu culture nor suggests a conflict with a northern culture. In keeping with von Falkenhausen’s observation that “deliberate emphasis on regionally specific trappings of rulership was pursued with the Zhou system as an implicit point of reference,” the “Li sao” author(s) broadcast their own membership in the elite Panhuaxia culture of the *Shi* even as they crafted a literary persona who could move beyond it. The connection between the opening quatrains of the “Li sao” and the “Ding zhi fangzhong” ode are suggestive in this context, as if the “Li sao” author(s) sought to anchor their text to one of the very few odes to mention Chu. They may have even intended to create a new “Airs of Chu” (**Chu feng* 楚風) to fill the Chu-sized gap within the “Airs of the States” of the *Shi jing*. Speculation aside, I submit that the *Chu ci* does not provide evidence of the “dual ancestry” (Hawkes) of Chinese poetry. If we must speak of ancestors in this context, then Chinese poetry has a single ancestor—the *Shi jing*—with a profoundly influential descendant—the *Chu ci*—that dramatically expanded the range of literary possibilities from the Han period onward.

As a postscript, I would like to conclude with a poem. “Jie li” 介立 (Standing Alone), section 12/3 of the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Annals of Lü Buwei), recounts the tragedy of Jie Zhitui 介之推 (aka Jie Zitui 介子推), one of a handful of men who followed Prince Chong’er 重耳 into exile and helped him win back the throne as Duke Wen of Jin 晉文公. When the time came for Chong’er to reward his followers in the *Zuozhuan* version of the story, Jie Zhitui alone “did not speak of remuneration and remuneration did not come to him” (不言祿·祿亦弗及).¹⁰⁹ Angered, he chose to die in self-imposed exile rather than “eat

109. Year 24 of Duke Xi’s 僖公 reign, in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981), vol. 1, 417–19.

[the lord's] food" (不食其食). In the *Lüshi chungqiu* version, he is said to have "recited an ode" (*fu shi* 賦詩) and "hung a written version from [Chong'er's] gates" (懸書公門) prior to hiding away (*yin* 隱) in the mountains:

有龍于飛 周遍天下	A dragon is flying / He circles the world
五蛇從之 為之丞輔	Five serpents escort him / They give him assistance
龍反其鄉 得其處所	The dragon comes home / And claims his position
四蛇從之 得其露雨	Four serpents escort him / And claim condensation
一蛇羞之	One serpent ashamed
橋死於中野	Dies parched in the wilds ¹¹⁰

The poem is a curious blend. Not only is the meter that of a standard *Shi* poem, the opening line (*XX yu fei* 于飛) echoes the opening lines of "Yan yan" and several other odes: "Swallow, swallow on your flight / Wing high, wing low" (燕燕于飛，差池其羽, 28/1.1–2).¹¹¹ On the other hand, the flying dragon, the drinking of "dew" (*lu* 露, see "Li sao" l. 65),¹¹² "parched" or "withered" (*qiao* 橋, a loan for *gao* 槁) as a description of lifelessness or sadness,¹¹³ the obvious allegory, and—most strikingly—the righteous adviser who turns away from his lord and dies alone, all smack of the *Chu ci*.¹¹⁴ Like Qu Yuan, Jie Zhitui also became the focus of a local cult into the medieval period and beyond.¹¹⁵ Also common to both anthologies are the figure of the *fu* 輔, a removable wheel-guard and a metaphor for "adviser," and the verb of "return" (*fan* 反).¹¹⁶

Is Jie Zhitui's lament more akin to the *Shi* or the *Chu ci*? Although the *Lüshi chungqiu* labels it a *shi* 詩, it violates the *Shi*'s quotidian sensibilities too flamboyantly to qualify as a capital-S *Shi*.¹¹⁷ If it is possible

110. *Lüshi chungqiu xin jiaoshi* 12.3/pp. 634–35. *Shi ji* 39.1662 includes another, rather different, version of the poem. In the *Shuiyuan* 說苑 version, the lone snake cuts meat out of his thigh to feed the starving dragon. See *Shuiyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), 6.118–22.

111. See also 33/1–2.1, 181/1–3.1, 252/7–8.1, and 278/1.1.

112. *Chu ci buzhu* 1.12.

113. *Chu ci buzhu* 4.158, 5.163, 7.179 (where it is said of Qu Yuan himself), 15.276, 16.290, 16.295 (where it is combined with *cui* 悴, discussed above in relation to the *pifu*), 17.319.

114. A weaker connection is the phrase *zhong ye* 中野 (in the wilds), which appears at *Chu ci buzhu* 16.283 and 17.316.

115. Donald Holzman, "The Cold Food Festival in Early Medieval China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46.1 (1986), 51–79.

116. For *fu*, see *Shi jing* 192/9.4 (and above), 192/10.1, and 300/2.17; see also "Li sao" ll. 166, 296 (*Chu ci buzhu* 1.23, 1.38).

117. Several *Chu ci* pieces also refer to themselves as *shi*; see *Chu ci buzhu* 2.75, 4.157, 14.259, 15.279, and 16.295.

to read certain *Chu ci* pieces as *Shi* in *Chu ci* clothing, then Jie Zhitui's poem might qualify as a *Chu ci* poem in *Shi* clothing: like the "Li sao," it authorizes its persona to turn his back on his lord and homeland. Of course, one problem with this interpretation is that the poem has no connection to Chu.¹¹⁸ Jie Zhitui was a man of Jin 晉, so *Jinci* 晉辭 (Verses of Jin) might be a better label than *Chu ci*. Then again, Jie Zhitui also spent years away from Jin accompanying his lord on his travels around the Central States, and his story appears in one text ostensibly composed in Lu 魯 (the *Zuozhuan*) and another that is a proto-imperial compilation from Qin 秦 (the *Lǐshì chungiu*). In both of these works, the Jin-ness of the story seems entirely irrelevant. Another problem is that we lack corroborating evidence for the existence of any *Chu ci* text prior to the Han period. The Jie Zhitui story might just as well have influenced the development of the *Chu ci* tradition as vice versa.¹¹⁹

However we situate it on the literary map of early China, Jie Zhitui's lament further exposes the tenuousness of the southern culture hypothesis—or, in this case, a possible Jin culture hypothesis. Instead, I propose that we read this poem and the *Chu ci* as parallel responses to the dominant poetics of the *Shi*. As we have seen, *Shi* poetics complemented the elite cosmopolitan culture of the Warring States period and, eventually, the imperial culture of the Qin and Han. But as the Jie Zhitui story and the *Chu ci* attest, the imperative to belong was subject to various forms of negotiation and resistance, perhaps all the more so under a Han legal system that punished "abscondence" (*wang* 亡) from imperial authority.¹²⁰ As important as the north–south model has been for scholars of Chinese literature, reorienting the history of early Chinese poetry around the centripetal and centrifugal tensions inherent in the *Shi*-based literary regime is likely to open more fruitful lines of inquiry.

118. Although *Shi ji* 28.1378–1379 speaks of a *wu* 巫 tradition in Jin, that connection also seems irrelevant to the interpretation of the poem.

119. For references to Jie Zhitui in the *Chu ci*, see *Chu ci buzhu* 4.151, 4.161, and 16.297.

120. See the "'Statutes on Abscondence' (Wang lǜ 亡律)" in Anthony J. Barbieri-Low and Robin D.S. Yates, *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China: A Study with Critical Edition and Translation of the Legal Texts from Zhangjia Shan Tomb no. 247* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), vol. 2, 574–93. For *wang* in the "Li sao," see *Chu ci buzhu* 1.15 (where it follows *liu* 流, a legal term for refugees; see Barbieri-Low and Yates, 1411–12) and 1.19. For other instances in the *Chu ci*, see, e.g., 3.110, 3.115, 4.132, 4.138, 4.150–51, and 4.158.

離開還是留下：《楚辭》作為《詩經》的回應

胡明曉

提要

傳統觀點認為，《詩經》與《楚辭》分別是中國北方和南方兩種迥異文化的產物。與此相反，本文以文本互涉分析為基礎，主張《楚辭》發展於對《詩經》的直接回應。作為《楚辭》中最重要的篇目，〈離騷〉對《詩經》的諸多原型話題進行衍生，其目的是賦予主人公與君王和故國告別的權利。而在《詩經》的詩學體系中，這一選擇是不存在的。本文最後一部分探討了〈離騷〉與《楚辭》其他篇章相反的詩學關係。在結論部分，本文反思了早期中國文學史研究領域傳統中南北模型的局限性。

Keywords: *Shi jing*, Odes, poetry, *Chu ci*, Chu, intertextuality, “*Li sao*”, 詩經, 楚辭, 離騷, 楚,