

We Are the *shi*: What Has Cui Yin Done with Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule"?

Among the extant works of Cui Yin 崔駰 (AD ?-92), the only *fu*-style piece to be included in his *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 biography is the poetic work there titled "Penetrating the Meaning" ("Da zhi" 達旨). While this piece is not labeled a *fu*, it nevertheless makes use of several stylistic features of *fu* poetry: parallel prose, rhyme, excessive (to us) allusions to stories or earlier literature, ostensibly learned language, deliberate shifts in meter and hypermetric conventions that are used to divide the text into sections or "stanzas," and extravagance of expression.¹ But the piece was never labeled a *fu*. In fact, Cui Yin himself probably never gave his poetic piece any title other than "Penetrating the Meaning." He was not interested in tying this work to the tradition of the Han *fu*, though he did write many *fu* which survive in fragments; rather he positioned his own piece within a different tradition, that which came to be called the *shelun* 設論.²

In awareness of the fledging literary conventions of the Western Han and of other great *fu* composers before him, Cui Yin modeled his "Penetrating the Meaning" on Yang Xiong's 楊雄 (53 BC-AD 18) "Dissolving Ridicule" ("Jie chao" 解嘲). Thus Cui Yin made himself a part of the *shelun* generic tradition, under which heading "Dissolving Ridicule" appears in the celebrated anthology of early and early medieval Chinese literature, namely the *Wenxuan* 文選 of Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531).

Xiao Tong's anthology makes its selection of the finest examples of the *shelun* genre in chronological sequence, beginning with Dongfang Shuo's 東方朔 (154-93 BC) "Response to a Guest's Objections" ("Da ke nan" 答客難), then Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule," and ending with the "Response to a Guest's Criticism" ("Da bin xi

答賓戲) by Ban Gu 班固 (AD 32-92), a contemporary of Cui Yin.³ In these prime examples we find that the usual staging of a *shelun* piece is between an unnamed "guest" (*ke* 客) who pillories the author and the author, sometimes called a "host" (*zhu* 主), who takes his chance to respond in the first person. Indeed, not only the staging of the *shelun* but other shared formal features to be discussed below give the impression that these pieces, composed centuries apart, are closely connected.

Moreover, a reading of Xiao Tong's selections reveals that the guest of a *shelun* invariably impeaches the author for not achieving great merit or distinction in the imperial court. This we may call the "allegation." Then the author gives his "response," usually defending his decision to remain in the shadows of the empire and to take lightly matters of distinction and worldly promotion, while being careful not to insinuate that the relative unimportance of the official advancement in the mind of the author is in any way the emperor's fault.

Such is the most basic outline of the *shelun* form. However, problems of interpretation arise even before we begin reading the *shelun* pieces themselves. That the *shelun* are closely tied to the life of their composers is proven by the fact that they are most often included in the biographies of the standard histories. Of the Han dynasty examples of *shelun* that survive, the *Han shu* 漢書 provides *shelun* works by Dongfang Shuo, Yang Xiong, Ban Gu; the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 provides *shelun* by Cui Yin, Cui Shi 寔, Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133-192), and Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139). The composition of the *shelun* always originates with some form of slander or derision, putatively endured by the author before he set out to compose his response. The

implication is that the occasion upon which a *shelun* is written is not merely ancillary to the poetic piece: hence the *shelun* cannot be read properly in a vacuum.⁴

However, even if we suppose the derision putatively endured by the author to be true in some sense, there is an inevitable distance between suffering the criticism of one's contemporaries and composing an ornate, often rhymed, response. One has the impression that the *shelun* as they have been traditionally recorded in writing convey little if any historical reality, as far as the "response" is concerned. But however great the discrepancy between the real exchange that took place, leading up to the composition of a *shelun*, and the account given in the final product, the effect produced by the *shelun* is an image of a righteous composer responding to unfair criticism; indeed, the survival of the *shelun* almost forces us to come down on the side of the composer. Here we find a righteous man pilloried by his petty contemporaries, responding with just indignation.

Yet other questions arise: were the *shelun* ever really delivered or performed as a response to derision—or are they even reflections of a delivered response? As Dominik Declercq points out, an example of such different possibilities of interpretation survives for us in the two biographies of Dongfang Shuo, one found in the *Shiji* and the other in the *Han shu*.⁵ In the *Shiji* section on "Jesters" 滑稽, composed by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (fl. c. 50 BC), Dongfang Shuo is accosted by all the erudites (*boshi* 博士) gathered together in the palace. There they challenge him, and then Chu Shaosun's narrative leads directly into the so-called "Response to a Guest's Objections," though in an abbreviated form.⁶ From this account Dongfang Shuo appears to extemporaneously respond with linguistic prowess and sharp wit. But contrast this with the *Han shu* of Dongfang Shuo's "Response to a Guest's Objections":

A while after [Dongfang Shuo had been demoted to gentleman-in-attendance], he handed up a letter explicating a strategy to strengthen the state with farming and warfare.⁷ Therein he made an appeal for himself, claiming he alone had not been granted a high official position, in hopes to be employed. His words focused on the sayings of Shangyang and Hanfei. His point was outrageous, even to the point of being jocular. The composition amounted to ten thousand words, but it was never used. Shuo then composed a treatise, in which he set up a guest challenging him. He made a consoling explanation for the fact that his position was low.⁸

九之，上書陳農戰疆國之記，因自訟獨不得大官，欲求試用。其言專商鞅韓非之語也，指意放蕩，頗復詼諧。辭數萬言，終不見用。因著倫設客難己，用位卑以慰諭。

Whereas Chu Shaosun presents Dongfang Shuo as responding heroically to a group of hostile erudites, Ban Gu, writing over a century later, presents the "Response to a Guest's Objections" as a consolatory piece—his view amounts to something imaginary, an outlet to vent the emotions. Whether Chu Shaosun or Ban Gu gives the correct circumstances of Dongfang Shuo's composition is left for us to judge. But following Ban Gu's interpretation, the "Response to a Guest's Objections" becomes another specialized subspecies of literature on the theme of the unemployed and neglected scholar, a ubiquitous focus of early and early medieval Chinese literature.⁹ The combined legend and poetry of men like Qu Yuan 屈原 and Jia Yi 賈誼 are only the crystallized prototypes of a tradition that spread into diverse currents. James Robert Hightower's study of the formal aspects of the predecessors of Tao Qian's 陶潛 *fu* shows how enduring the tradition of the lament for the unappreciated righteous scholar was.¹⁰ Yet, in

form, the diverging streams that gave vent to the righteous and frustrated scholar's emotions remained distinct. So the *shelun* maintained its own formal conventions that separate it from the rest.

Ban Gu's interpretation, accurately or inaccurately conceived, reflects the way scholars of the Eastern Han read *shelun* as a mode of literary composition. Indeed, setting aside the ambiguities of interpretation, these writers appropriated the *shelun* as a mode for their own literary expressions. So conceived, the *shelun* becomes something close to what we might call a genre in the Eastern Han, permitting change within constancy, or variation on a standard theme within formal conventions.

This paper concentrates on the way one author of the *shelun*, Cui Yin, reads Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule" and then takes up "Dissolving Ridicule" as a model for his own *shelun* piece. When Cui Yin composed "Penetrating the Meaning" he was studying at the Academy 太學 together with Ban Gu and Fu Yi 傅毅, and was said to equal them in fame. From the account given in the *Hou Han shu*, we learn that Cui Yin was reproached for his reclusiveness—or for his "great mysterious dark" 太玄靜, a phrase harkening back to Yang Xiong—as he was too busy with the classical texts to pay any attention to matters of official promotion.¹¹ His response to such mockery, "Penetrating the Meaning," is high-minded and defends his own detachment from the worldly concerns of official promotion and his insistence upon uncompromising moral goodness as the unchanging way of the gentleman (*shi* 士).¹²

However, "Penetrating the Meaning" should be read not only as a response to the person or people who reproach Cui Yin, but also as a response to Yang Xiong. This point would be difficult to establish, were it not for Cui Yin's critical remarks on Yang

Xiong's piece that have been preserved for us in the early Tang *leishu*, the *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (completed c. AD 620).¹³

Cui Yin reads "Dissolving Ridicule" as a creative work in which Yang Xiong himself rejects his "guest's" ridicule and proclaims the way of the gentleman (*shi*). Cui Yin judges Yang Xiong's piece as a moral critic, and objects to the presence in "Dissolving Ridicule" of certain examples of men that are supposed by Cui Yin to represent the true gentleman. In his own *shelun*, Cui Yin provides corrective to Yang Xiong's infelicities, and takes his turn to proclaim the way of the true gentleman with all the right historical examples. Cui Yin claims the gentleman's position as his own, with all its connotations of uprightness and superiority, and declares that his guest is deceived. This becomes the purpose of Cui Yin's *shelun*, to show that he is the true gentleman, aligned with the right selection of men of antiquity, and that the guest is deceived and concerned only with worldly promotion and self-gain. Whatever the purpose of Yang Xiong's piece—whether it was primarily composed as a true defense does not matter—for Cui Yin, the "response" functions mainly as a staging of his attempt to identify the counterpart of the gentleman (*shi*) in his own times. His reputation for his "great mysterious dark" is simply the rationale, or even the credentials, to create such a high-minded response.

In the following pages, first I show how the poetic genre *shelun*, developed certain formal conventions that served to bind individual pieces together into a single poetic tradition. That tradition grew beyond the Han dynasty up until at least the Eastern Jin.¹⁴ But the texts considered here are exclusively those extant from the Han dynasty.

Second, I discuss the way in which Cui Yin reads Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule" and objects to the illicit praise therein of certain historical figures identified by Cui Yin as opportunists seeking self-promotion. This reflects an understanding that one can play with earlier poetic pieces and, within the same form, innovate and critique the form itself. Cui Yin's interpretation and rejection of Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule" has potential to corroborate the notion of a shift in the conception of literature—depending on what that conception was before his time—and further stands as a prime example of the self-awareness of the literary man as someone who engages with texts by reading them and responding to them in a conventional form.

Third, I give an annotated translation of Cui Yin's "Penetrating the Meaning." The purpose of this is to provide a case study in the self-reflection of Eastern Han *shelun* authors who saw themselves as writing within a genre. Additionally, the reader is advised to consult the excellent English annotated translations of "Dissolving Ridicule" by David Knechtges and Dominik Declercq, as well as the latter's translation of "Response to a Guest's Objections," for further appreciation of the early *shelun* texts.¹⁵ It is hoped that the present essay will contribute to our understanding of an interesting genre of poetry, with insight into the way texts were read and textual traditions were developed in early and early medieval China.

Finally, a word should be said about the Cui clan. Patricia Ebrey's study of the Boling 博陵 Cuis is a case study of a prominent aristocratic family with generally undisputed lineages from antiquity into the Tang. For an in depth study of the Cui clan, the reader is referred to her work.¹⁶

In deep antiquity, the Cuis boasted a lineage going back to a grandson of Taigong Wang 太公望, a righteous recluse who acted as a faithful advisor to the sage ruler Shun 舜. The Cui clan name reputedly comes from the fief he was granted in the state of Qi.¹⁷ Several generations later, Cui Shu 杼, a minister of Qi slaughtered his overlord, Duke Zhuang 莊, and made himself prime minister.¹⁸ Although it is unclear whether these connections with the Cui clan were recognized before the Tang, both Taigong Wang and Cui Shu are alluded to in "Penetrating the Meaning."

The Cui clan was renowned for its literary learning and Confucian scholarship which spanned generations during the Eastern Han dynasty. Collectively, an impressive corpus has been left behind by Cui Zhuan 篆, Cui Yin, Cui Yuan 瑗, and Cui Shi 寔, the most notable literary figures of the family.¹⁹ In the Han, our earliest historical records indicate that the great-great-grandfather of Cui Yin, Cui Zhao 朝, was the first of the clan to gain official recognition. Around 81 BC, he was promoted for having advised the inspector of You 幽 province against communicating with Prince La 刺 of Yan who was geared up for his second attempt at wresting the throne from his younger brother (whom he claimed was not a true clansmen) Emperor Zhao 昭 (r. 86-74 BC).²⁰ Cui Zhao's son Cui Shu 舒 was, under unclear circumstances, appointed as Grand Administrator (*taishou* 太守) of the Four Commanderies 四郡, where he was said to have a competent repute.²¹

During Wang Mang's 王莽 short-lived Xin dynasty, the house of Cui was divided. On the one hand, Cui Shu's 舒 wife, née Shi 師, was honored with the title Madame of Uprightness Perfected 義成夫人 and was given a golden seal cord and purple banner,

distinction worthy of only the highest officials.²² It is worth noting that the Madame of Uprightness Perfected was appreciated for her mastery of the classical studies (*jingxue* 經學) and the sayings of the hundred schools (*baijia zhi yan* 百家之言). The eldest son of Cui Shu, Cui Fa 發, became appointed as Grand Minister of Works (*tai sikong* 太司空), one of the Three Excellencies (*sangong* 三公) who were the closest advisors to the emperor.²³

On the other hand, Cui Zhuan 篆, younger brother of Cui Fa, resisted appointment under Wang Mang in opposition to his corrupt new dynasty. After refusing promotion to a post in the army on grounds that it violated his Confucian principles, Cui Zhuan returned to his home where he hoped to go unnoticed. However, when Wang Mang appointed Cui Zhuan as Grand General (*dayin* 大尹) of Jianxin 健新, he could only reluctantly accept. His participation in the corrupt administration of Wang Mang is lamented in his "Consoling My Intention *fu*" ("Wei zhi fu" 慰志賦), composed towards the end of his life after the restoration of the Han dynasty. He additionally composed a work in 64 *pian* on the *Classic of Changes*, called the *Zhouyi lin* 周易林, which Cui Yin may have used as a divination manual handed down within the family.²⁴

About Cui Zhuan's son Cui Yi 毅 we know nothing except that he did not serve in office and that he was father to Cui Yin. When Cui Yin was young, he mastered the *Classic of Odes*, *Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, together with the instructions and glosses of ancient and modern script (*gujin xungu* 古今訓詁), and the sayings of the hundred schools. He was broadly learned and talented at writing. When he went to study at the Academy and was a peer of Ban Gu and Fu Yi, he made the

canonical texts his constant occupation, to the extent that he isolated himself from his peers. It was at this time that he was reportedly ridiculed for his "great mysterious silence."

The implications of this smear, going back to Yang Xiong, have already been mentioned above. But the following anecdote serves to illustrate more concretely what kind of scholarly life, removed from the light of his peers, Cui Yin pursued; it also shows what the consequences might be for harboring a "great mysterious silence." Sometime at the Academy, Cui Yin and his friend Kong Xi 孔僖 were reading in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* about King Fuchai 夫差 of Wu, whose near victory over the state of Yue was foolishly lost because the king granted the armies of Yue amnesty. Kong lifted his head and remarked: "In that case, when we say someone 'paints a dragon but fails to complete it,' we really mean that man is a dog!" 若是，所謂畫龍不成反為狗者。²⁵ Cui Yin heartily agreed and compared Fuchai's unconsummated victory to Emperor Wu, who he said wisely governed the empire at the beginning of his reign but lost his restraint towards the end. A fellow student overheard Cui Yin's remark and asked: "So are you saying that Emperor Wu was such a dog?!" 如此武帝亦是狗邪。²⁶ The student resented Cui Yin, whose ponderous character we can glimpse from this account, and informed on him for slandering an emperor of the Han. The result was a trial for Cui Yin, who may have faced death, but Kong Xi brilliantly defended him and was accordingly promoted.

This gives us a good idea of what "great mysterious silence" means, and how being singled out as a non-conformist could tend towards trouble. The Academy was a divisive environment, and Cui Yin had his enmities with his peers. In the most extreme case, smearing someone's name could result in having one's life on trial before the

emperor. Under such circumstances it is understandable why Cui Yin would respond to an apparently innocuous term of derision with a sense of urgency. However, it does not follow that we should view Cui Yin's "Penetrating the Meaning" as disingenuous praise or mere flattery of the Han in order to clear his blame and perhaps gain promotion. Indeed, there is something to the fact that Cui Yin himself says "It is not the case that [the gentleman] does not want to serve as an official, but he is ashamed of fawning to obtain promotion" 非不欲仕也，恥夸毗以求舉。²⁷ The message that Cui Yin conveyed to his schoolmates was not one of contentious sycophancy, but superior righteousness.

After emperor Zhang 章 completed his tours to the five marchmounts in the Yuanhe period (84-87), Cui Yin composed his "Eulogy on the Four Tours" ("Si xun song" 四巡頌) proclaiming the virtue of the Han. In an account reminiscent of Emperor Wu's admiration for Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 "Sir Vacuous *fu*" 子虛賦, the emperor personally summons Cui Yin to an audience upon reading his eulogy.²⁸ However, as we have seen, this was not Cui Yin's first encounter with the emperor, who personally judged his case concerning his statement about Emperor Wu; so the following information must be fictionalized and exaggerated to enhance our view of Cui Yin as a man of great literary talent:

The Emperor had a refined appreciation for literature, and, after reading Yin's eulogy, for a long time sighed over it and asked Dou Xian, "Do you happen to know Cui Yin?" He replied, "Ban Gu has mentioned him on many occasions, but I have yet to meet him." The Emperor said, "You are partial to Ban Gu and have overlooked Cui Yin—this is like the Duke of Ye's partiality for dragons!"²⁹ Try to bring him for an audience."

帝雅號文章，字鍵駟頌後，常嗟歎之，謂侍中竇憲曰：卿寧知崔駟乎？對曰：班固數為臣說之，然未見也。帝曰：公愛班固而忽崔駟，此葉公之好龍也。試請見之。

Dou Xian then ushered Cui Yin as an honored guest on the emperor's behalf.

Before Emperor Zhang was able to grant Cui Yin an official post, the emperor died in 88.³⁰ As the Empress Dowager Dou began to elevate her own family in the imperial court, Cui Yin sent up petitions to warn Dou Xian that this would eventually lead to disaster for his entire clan. Cui Yin was made a subordinate under Dou Xian's jurisdiction in the northern expedition against the Xiongnu. As Master of Records (*zhubo* 主博), he continued to admonish Dou Xian for his increasing unruliness, and apparently annoyed him so much that Dou Xian created an excuse to promote Cui Yin to Chief of Changcen 長岑, on the north-eastern peninsula in modern day Liaoning province. Cui Yin took the hint and retired to his home in Anping. He died there in AD 92.³¹

Some Formal Trends in the Early *shelun* Tradition

So far nothing has been said of the term *shelun*, often translated by the English "hypothetical discourse."³² The term "hypothetical discourse" highlights the imaginary nature of these texts. They are pieces written with "imagined" or "made up" (*she* 設) dialogues between guests and their host. When Xiao Tong, or the tradition that Xiao Tong was following, chose to label Dongfang Shuo, Yang Xiong, and Ban Gu's writings as *shelun*, he (or they) probably had the introduction to Dongfang Shuo's piece in his *Han shu* biography in mind. It says there when he failed to gain promotion beyond the status of Gentleman-in-Attendance, "Shuo thereupon composed a discourse, setting up a guest objecting to him" 朔因著論設客難已.³³ We already know that Xiao Tong saw Dongfang

Shuo's piece as the first model form of *shelun*, and that the version of "Response to a Guest's Objections" is taken from the *Han shu*, not from the abbreviated version found in the *Shiji* 史記. Hence it is reasonable to suppose that Xiao Tong recalled the language of Ban Gu and his use of the word *she* when devising the category *shelun* in his anthology. Here I ambiguously translate *she* as "setting up," in order to make clear its basic meaning. The word *she* refers to the set-up of the guest which makes the dialogue possible between him and his host. Therefore an alternative way of thinking about *she* in *shelun* is as a reference to the formal feature that is instantly most notable; that is, the interlocutory setting between a guest and the author. In this sense, *shelun* could perhaps be understood as "discourses in a setting" or "situated discourses." But this no doubt assumes that the guest is not a real guest in waking life, but a guest subject to the will of its author in the text. The image of Dongfang Shuo creating a discourse (*lun* 論) with a guest "set up" as the voice of the antagonist suggests that what Xiao Tong meant when applying the generic name to these pieces was to convey that (1) these pieces are in fact discourses, and (2) they are executed by means of making up a fictionalized dialogue between a guest and someone else. It has already been noted above how starkly this notion of so-called "*shelun*" contrasts with Chu Shaosun's account of Dongfang Shuo's "Response to a Guest's Objections." But, for convenience, I nevertheless make use of the term *shelun* in order to discuss the genre as a group of texts that share the same formal features.

A comparison of some of the formal features of these *shelun* shows how closely each one follows another. In the examples below, I compare certain similarities in form between the four earliest extant *shelun*, those of Dongfang Shuo, Yang Xiong, Cui Yin and Ban Gu. Additionally, because Ban Gu's interpretation of Dongfang Shuo probably

represents the view that prevailed in the *shelun* tradition, I give examples from the "Response to a Guest's Objections" in accordance with his version. It was the continuation of the *shelun* form, not merely its initial conception, that made it a genre. It would be unnecessary and tedious to show all the similarities in vocabulary, meter, parallelism, and phrasing that is scattered throughout the *shelun* texts presented here; many isolated phrases that match are embedded in forms that do not pair up, and *vice versa*. Therefore the following is a sampling of some of the most basic formal similarities. Indeed, many occur at the crucial points of transition, the opening, the allegation, the transition to the author's defense, and the closing of the piece.

To begin with, the opening of a *shelun* introduces the guest's accusation:³⁴

Dongfang Shuo:	客難東方朔曰	"A guest challenged Dongfang Shuo."
Yang Xiong:	客嘲楊子曰	"A guest mocked Master Yang."
Ban Gu:	賓戲主人曰	"A guest derided his host."
Cui Yin:	或說己曰	"Someone criticized me."

The "guest" (*bin* 賓 or *ke* 客) is an anonymous accuser. The purpose of this is to bring the derision or mockery experienced by the author into a fictionalized setting. The guest is all along a puppet of the author: his words are chosen by the author and he is made a caricature of the petty official. One imagines that there must have been certain pleasure in portraying one's enemies or rivals in a position which will be inevitably defeated.

Next, the guest quotes tradition, something reported or "heard," to prove that the way of the great scholar-gentleman lies in seeking promotion:

Yang Xiong:	吾聞	"I have heard..."
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Ban Gu: 蓋聞 "Surely you have heard..."

Cui Yin: 易稱 "The *Classic of Changes* says..."

Dongfang Shuo's piece is formally different here, though it achieves the same effect: "Su Qin and Zhang Yi encountered a ruler of a myriad chariots, and they occupied positions of ministers and chancellors" 蘇秦張儀壹當萬乘之主而身都卿相之位. Su Qin and Zhang Yi, the famous persuaders of the Warring States, serve in the guest's argument as ancient examples of men who took advantage of their situation to rise to powerful positions. The argument from tradition explains why the author, in his rejoinder to the guest, makes ample use of examples of great men of antiquity.

Next the guest singles out the victim of his criticism, the author, by addressing him "Now you" (*jin zi* 今子) or "Now my sir" (*jin wu zi* 今吾子). He charges the author with smugly remaining in the shadows of the empire during a great age of peace.

Doubtlessly this criticism is presumptuously pointed to make it seem that, by not striving to achieve great distinction at court, the author fails to appreciate the great harmony that the sagely emperor has established. Here, again, the later authors notably follow the earlier examples. I pair Ban Gu with Yang Xiong, and Cui Yin with Dongfang Shuo, to show the proximity of their compositions:

Yang Xiong: 今吾子幸得遭明盛之世 Now my sir you are fortunate to
encounter an age of enlightened fullness!

Ban Gu: 今吾子幸遊帝王之世 Now my sir you are fortunate to
roam in the age of an august king.

Now compare Dongfang Shuo and Cui Yin, whose guests deride them for keeping to themselves and clinging to the narrow learning of the classics alone:

Dongfang Shuo: 今子大夫，脩先王之術，慕聖人之義，諷誦詩書百家之言，不可勝記...服膺而不可釋。

Now you, Great Master, cultivate the arts of the former kings,
emulate the principle of the sages, chant the *Odes* and *Documents*,
with the words of the hundred experts, more than can ever be
counted... you submit them to heart that they can never be
forgotten.

Cui Yin: 今子韞櫝六經，
服膺道術，
歷世而游，
高談有日。

Now you stow away the Six Classics,
You submit to heart the arts of the Dao;
You roam about our world,
Speaking lofty words all your days.

When Ban Gu's guest has his chance at rebuttal, he laughs, like Yang Xiong
before him:

Yang Xiong: 楊子笑而應之曰

Master Yang laughed and responded.

Ban Gu: 主人適爾而笑曰

The host placidly laughed and said:

The responses of Cui Yin and Yang Xiong to their guests are furthermore remarkably similar:

Yang Xiong: 客徒欲朱丹吾轂，
不知一跌將赤吾之族也。

This guest vainly wishes to vermilion and cinnabar my hubs,³⁵

But you don't know one slip will redden my clan!

Cui Yin: 子苟欲勉我以世路，
不知其跌而失吾之度也。

You would recklessly encourage me to take the path of the world,

But you don't know that a slip will make me lose my place.

Not only does each poet create a rhyme between lines, but the two examples even rhyme together on *gu* 轂, *zu* 族, *lu* 路, and *du* 度. Both guests "vainly" (*tu* 徒) or "recklessly" (*gou* 苟) advise their target to take the path of worldly promotion. Moreover, Cui Yin has chosen to describe the guest's error as a "slip" (*die* 跌) in direct imitation of Yang Xiong. It is interesting to note that Yang Xiong is concerned with the mortal danger of officialdom, the fear that high positions bring with them increased potential for disaster and hence a bloody red end to one's entire clan—punishment by implication or association was not uncommon in ancient China. Cui Yin, on the other hand, is concerned with straying from his place; his fear is that official success may lead him to compromise his principles. However, we are not concerned here with the content of these pieces *per se*, except insofar as they demonstrate the close formal link between the early examples of the *shelun*.

The response of the author or the victim of the guest's criticism occupies the largest part of the *shelun*, what may be considered the "body" of the piece. In the body we find mostly a rejoinder argued by means of copious historical examples of the idealized *shi* 士 of the past, and thus the focus is on the argument or content, which adheres less to a certain style or form. However, for our purposes of discovering the form adhered to in the *shelun*, let us finally turn to the closing form found in three of the four pieces considered.

When Yang Xiong concluded his "Dissolving Ridicule" he ended with a list of what he regarded as gentlemen and declared himself unworthy to be counted among them. Thus Yang Xiong supercedes Dongfang Shuo, who ends the "Response to a Guest's Objections" with a declaration that he has proved that the guest is deceived, and Ban Gu and Cui Yin follow his model:

Yang Xiong: 僕誠不能與此數子並，故默然獨守吾太玄。

I truly cannot be included in this list of masters,
Therefore I just silently keep to my *Great Dark*.

Ban Gu: 走亦不任廁技於彼列，故密爾自娛於斯文。

I surely am unfit to be extraneously inserted into this list [of men],
Therefore I concentratedly entertain myself with these texts.

Cui Yin: 僕誠不能編德於數者，竊慕古人之所序。

I truly cannot match in virtue with these examples,
I only admire the order the ancients have established.

In following Yang Xiong's model as a way to close their pieces, Ban Gu and Cui Yin both create the illusion of a standard formal feature of the *shelun*. The cry of false

modesty at the end becomes a given. It loses even the little sincerity it once had when Yang Xiong first used it: it becomes a convention.

Yang Xiong's Illicit Praise for the Warring States Persuaders

It is a good question whether Ban Gu's account of Dongfang Shuo's "Response to a Guest's Objections" was an anachronism, projecting his own conception of composing poetry upon Dongfang Shuo who lived over a century earlier, or a more realistic account than Chu Shaosun's in the *Shiji*, which perhaps mixes an artfully staged poetic composition with historical fact. Even Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule" may be read as either a man's attempt to exculpate himself from being labeled a clandestine dissenter or a poetic artifact proving to later generations that he was equal to the great men of antiquity. But by the time of Cui Yin, a contemporary of Ban Gu, there can be no question that this mode of staging a discourse between an unnamed guest and the author was grasped as a literary production not only to deflect criticism, but also to be read in later times. Moreover, Cui Yin reflects that he is writing in a mode started by Yang Xiong and proposes to make corrections to what was remiss in Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Criticism."

Let us begin with Cui Yin's biography in the *Hou Han shu*. Fan Ye 范曄 (398-446), Cui Yin's biographer, gives the background and occasion upon which Cui Yin crafted his "Penetrating the Meaning" during his years at the Academy:

When [Cui Yin] was young he went to the Academy and was a contemporary and equal in fame to Ban Gu and Fu Yi 傅毅. He always made the canonical texts his occupation, so that he allowed no time for matters of official advancement. One of his contemporaries ridiculed him for his "great mysterious silence," which

would distort the truth of his name in later ages. Cui Yin composed “Penetrating the Meaning” modeled on Yang Xiong’s “Dissolving Ridicule,” in order to respond to him.

少游太學，與班固傅毅同時齊名。常以典籍為業，未遑仕進之事。時人或譏其太玄靜，將以後名失實，駟擬楊雄解嘲作達旨以荅焉。

The criticism of Cui Yin's "great mysterious silence" takes us immediately back to Yang Xiong. When Yang Xiong was keeping to himself and working on his *Taixuan* 太玄, or "Great Dark," someone reportedly ridiculed him, saying that his "Dark was still white" 玄尚白.³⁶ "White," the opposite of "black" or "dark" (*xuan* 玄), is a pun that also has the meaning of "blank," like a white page waiting to be filled. The implications are that Yang Xiong has failed to accomplish anything and instead prefers to smugly keep to himself. All this is suggested to Cui Yin by the use of the phrase "great mysterious silence," and so it is quite appropriate that he "models" (*ni* 擬) his response on Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule."

Indeed, it is worth asking whether even in Cui Yin's biography there is a mixing of poetic creation and historical reality. One would perhaps assume that the connections between Cui Yin and Yang Xiong were purely fictional—he is mocked like Yang Xiong, with a phrase recalling Yang Xiong, and responds like Yang Xiong—were it not for Cui Yin's own comments on the circumstances and the purpose of composing his "Penetrating the Meaning."

The *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 preserves a bit of text supposed to be the words of Cui Yin introducing his "Penetrating the Meaning." We have no reason to suppose these words are a forgery:

In the past, Yang Xiong set up a story: a guest objected that his *Dark* was still white. He responded with [examples of] gentlemen of the Warring States, such as Fan [Ju], Cai [Ze], and Zou Yan, who took advantage of the time to dispute with others and deceived the various lords in order to win the favor of a foul world.³⁷ Now someone had also observed that I was reticent. Therefore I made an analogy [of the situation] with him challenging me with questions, and I relied completely on the instructions of the past in order to respond to him.

往者楊雄設言，客有難玄之尚白，應以戰國之士，若范蔡鄒衍，乘釁相傾，誑曜諸侯以干濁世之寵。或人亦有覩我之澹泊，故比方問以難余。余略依前訓以報焉。

Here Cui Yin is speaking as a critic of Yang Xiong; however, he is interested in critiquing the moral examples of Yang Xiong's piece, rather than the artistry. He reads "Dissolving Ridicule" as a "set up story" (*she yan* 設言) between an imaginary guest and Yang Xiong, and objects to the questionable figures of the Warring States, namely Fan Ju, Cai Ze, and Zou Yan. In Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule," these figures serve as examples of men who encountered the right time to rise to high positions in powerful states. According to Yang Xiong,³⁸

Fan Ju was a refugee from Wei,

With cracked ribs and broken pelvis,

He escaped from ropes and fetters.

With hunched shoulders and someone stamping on his back,

He crawled into a bag.

He provoked the ruler of a powerful state, estranged him from Jingyang, and attacking from the flank, replaced the Marquis of Rang.

范雎，魏之亡命也，
 折齧拉__，
 免於徽索，
 翕肩蹈背，
 扶服入橐，
 激印萬乘之主界涇陽抵穰侯而代之。

Fan Ju, who was honored as Chancellor (*xiang* 相) of Qin, was later replaced by Cai Ze:

Cai Ze was a commoner from east of the mountains.

With a crooked chin and broken nose,

Tears and spittle poured down his face.

In the west he bowed to the chancellor of mighty Qin.

Then seizing him by the throat, choking him with his eloquence,

He slapped him on the back and took his position.

蔡澤，山東之匹夫也，
 鎖頤折頰，
 涕闌流沫，
 西揖彊秦之相，
 搯其咽，
 炕其氣，
 附其背而奪其位。

Yang Xiong emphasizes again and again that the "gentlemen" (*shi* 士) of antiquity met with the right circumstances and seized the right opportunities. This is the chief difference between them and us. Now the true gentlemen, the counterparts to these great men of antiquity, are just waiting for the right opportunity—just as Yang Xiong. However, Cui Yin disapproves of the notion that a true gentleman could ever behave as outlandishly as these Warring States persuaders in "Dissolving Ridicule." It becomes his purpose in "Penetrating the Meaning" to show who the "true" gentleman is, by using only

appropriate examples from antiquity. Cui Yin says he will do this by relying upon the "instructions of the past" (*qianxun* 前訓). Although it is unclear what tradition the "instructions of the past" alludes to, we can assume they provide knowledge of the moral paradigm which Cui Yin upholds in his "Penetrating the Meaning."³⁹

Li Xian provides a note from the *Hua Qiao shu* 華嶠書, a third century text which corroborates this interpretation of Cui Yin's "Penetrating the Meaning" as a corrective to "Dissolving Ridicule" and probably draws from the same text partially preserved for us in the *Yiwen leiju* quoted above, though in a more complete form.⁴⁰ Li Xian's gloss of the *Hua Qiao shu*, however, is doubtlessly incomplete and patchy. I use quotation marks to indicate what I read as the different level of texts (either Li Xian or Hua Qiao is quoting Cui Yin who quotes Yang Xiong several times):

Cui Yin ridicules Yang Xiong, [saying]: "[Yang Xiong] uses Fan [Ju], Cai [Ze], and Zou Yan, who took advantage of their times to dispute with others and deceived the various lords. Then [Yang Xiong] says, 'they are of a time different from us.' Elsewhere, he says '[Sima Xiangru] steals the dowry from Mr. Zhuo, and [Dongfang Shuo] cuts meat for his wife.' This is certainly improper action for a gentleman (*shi*), and yet [Yang Xiong] says, 'I cannot be numbered together with these lords.'" [Yin] thought [Yang Xiong's piece] was indecorous and so he corrected it.⁴¹

駟譏楊雄，以為范蔡鄒衍乘釁相傾誑曜諸侯也，而云彼我異時。又曰：竊貲卓氏，割炙細君，斯蓋士之贅行，而云不能與此數公者同。以為失類而改之。

Here again, Cui Yin censures Yang Xiong for his illicit praise of action unsuitable for the gentleman (*shi*). The improprieties that Yang Xiong praises are, according to the *Shiji*,

when Sima Xiangru eloped with a daughter of a wealthy merchant from Shu, Zhuo Wangsun, and convinced the father to offer a dowry despite the circumstances; and when Dongfang Shuo allegedly could not wait for the butcher to arrive for the sacrificial meat-cutting ceremony on the day of concealment (*furi* 伏日) and so took a slice himself.⁴² Cui Yin aims to correct these infelicities in his own work, and to show us who is the real *shi*.

However, before moving forward we should ask: what is the point of these figures in Yang Xiong's piece for Yang Xiong? One cannot help but wonder whether Cui Yin misses the irony of Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule" and faults the author for praising men and actions which were only meant to be caricatures of Yang Xiong's accusers. At any rate, Yang Xiong could have found less heinous examples than Fan Ju hiding himself in a sack or Dongfang Shuo stealing a slice of sacrificial meat for himself, if his purpose was to exalt the uncompromising gentlemen of antiquity. Cui Yin, it seems, misreads "Dissolving Ridicule," or at least mistakes the caustic humor in it for egregious errors. In Cui Yin's own work, he eliminates the sarcasm thrown in by Yang Xiong—corrects Yang Xiong, he says—and aims to exploit the literary mode of "Dissolving Ridicule" to prove a new purpose: to proclaim the true way of the gentleman.

Penetrating the Meaning

1 Someone criticized me, saying:
 "The *Classic of Changes* says 'prepare things in order to make use of them,'
 'when things are brought into view then they can be applied.'⁴³

"Thus it is that
 One departs on the basis of *yang*,
 5 And enters in accordance with *yin*.⁴⁴
 Spring produces its flowers,
 And autumn collects its fruit.
 Everything that has a beginning has its end,
 And thereby can perfect its nature.

"But now sir,
 10 You stow away the Six Classics,
 You submit to heart the arts of the Dao;
 You roam about our world,
 Speaking lofty words all your days.
 Below you fish for the profound in the layered deep,
 15 Above you seek the distant in the Ninefold Heaven.⁴⁵
 You explore the concealed subtleties of the highest principle,
 And imagine the bottomless source of the hidden.

"Yet,
 On the lower ranks, you haven't set foot in the court of ministers,
 Nor, in the upper level, ascended to the gates of nobility.
 20 You don't put yourself forward to garner praise for yourself;
 And in retreat you won't sully yourself with the common people.

或說己曰：
 易稱備物致用
 可觀而有所合

故能
 扶陽以出
 順陰而入
 春發其華
 秋收其實
 有始有極
 爰登其質

今子
 韞積六經
 服膺道術
 歷世而游
 高談有日
 俯鉤深於重淵
 仰探遠乎九乾
 窮至蹟於幽微
 測潛隱之無源

然
 下不步卿相之廷
 上不登王公之門
 進不黨以贊己
 退不黷於庸人

"Simply,
 The virtue of the Dao is your friend and teacher,
 As you match yourself with the Truth of yore.
 You squander your light standing alone,
 25 And you associate with no one.

獨
 師友道德
 合符曩真
 抱景特立
 與士不群

"Indeed,
 Your trunk is tall with no branches,⁴⁶
 Just a tree, but no forest.
 You "go along with what's fitting for the moment,"⁴⁷
 Leading forth the worthy but following the common.

蓋
 高樹靡陰
 獨木不林
 隨時之宜
 道貴從凡

"Nowadays our Great Sovereign
 30 Circulates heaven's virtue to lord the world;⁴⁸
 He ratifies the cabinet of the Kings and diffuses offices;⁴⁹
 He condescends to the Circular Moat and Shared Palace to enhance the Ru;⁵⁰
 He distributes cap and carriage to exalt the worthies;
 He commands pure virtue to encourage the loyal and filial;
 35 He elevates abundant transformation to hone humaneness and propriety;
 He selects useful functionaries from among the good and talented;
 He seeks Moye from among the perspicacious and wise.⁵¹

於時太上
 運天德以君世
 憲王僚而布官
 臨雍泮以恢儒
 疏軒冕以崇賢
 率惇德以厲忠孝
 揚茂化以砥仁義
 選利器於良材
 求鑄鄒於明智

"Failure to use these times
 To strive to the Steps,⁵²
 To peer into the Purple Chamber,⁵³
 40 To ride on an exalted carriage,
 To behold the vermillion gates—

不以此時
 攀台階
 窺紫闥
 據高軒
 望朱闕

"This is like being about to travel a thousand miles but not even moving a foot. I for one am confused at such behavior! In the past, outstanding men would get with the times, like retiring birds rushing to their deep grove, like mosquitoes going their great marsh. Why do you insist on being bogged down so smug?"

夫欲千里而咫尺未發，蒙竊惑焉。故英人乘斯時也，猶逸禽之赴深林，蠹蚋之趣大沛，胡為嘿嘿而久沉滯也？

My response:

"You have this to say? You would recklessly encourage me to take the path of the world, But you don't know a slip will make me lose my place.

答曰：有是言乎？子苟欲勉我以世路，不知其跌而失吾之度也。

"In the past,

Yin and *yang* were separated at the origin,

Heaven and earth were endowed with order from the beginning;

50 The august's guide rope was set,

And the thearch's control strands were established;

Men transmitted the order several times,

And three generations rose and fell.⁵⁴

"Of old,

When Da'ting was long gone,

55 And of Hexu no record remained;⁵⁵

Purity and simplicity scattered,

And human beings went awry.

Ever since Gaoxin descended upon us,

One man's purport has differed from another.⁵⁶

60 The Dao is not permanently fixed,⁵⁷

古者
陰陽始分
天地初制
皇綱雲緒
帝紀乃設
傳序歷數
三代興滅

昔
大庭尚矣
赫胥罔識
淳樸散離
人物錯乖
高辛攸降
厥趣各違

It tightens and slackens with the times.
 Losing humaneness is wrong,
 But gaining principle is right.⁵⁸
 The Gentleman comprehends the transformations,
 65 And watches where each one moves.

 As for the gentlemen of the past:
 One covered his eyes and dove into a pool,⁵⁹
 One washed his ears and took rest in the mountains;⁶⁰
 One tilled soil to plant crops, quite satisfied,⁶¹
 One fed on tree bark and, after long, died of hunger;⁶²
 70 One was repeatedly invited to court but never came,⁶³
 One was often dismissed but never went away;⁶⁴
 One endured shame in order to seek advancement,⁶⁵
 One flashed her colors and then rose up;⁶⁶
 One, acting as a laborer, was found in a dream of a regal lord,⁶⁷
 75 One, dressed as a fisherman, was prefigured on the primordial turtle shells.⁶⁸

 When at times,
 Confusion abundantly fills our path,
 When disaster violently swells our stream;
 When men are in danger of catastrophes,
 While rulers worry, "who can give consultation?"⁶⁹
 80 —Like branches hanging in an entangled mess,
 Those above and below require each other.

道無常稽
 與時張弛
 失仁為非
 得義為是
 君子通變
 各審所履

故士
 或掩目而淵潛
 或盪耳而山棲
 或草耕而僅飽
 或木茹而長饑
 或重聘而不來
 或屢黜而不去
 或冒詢以干進
 或望色而斯舉
 或以役夫發夢於王公
 或以漁父見兆於元龜

若夫
 紛__塞路
 凶虐播流
 人有昏墊之戾
 主有疇咨之憂
 條垂藟蔓
 上下相求

<p>At this point, The worthy man lends his hand, He rescues the troubles of the world. Unyielding, he rushes to the common folk—⁷⁰</p>	<p>於是乎 賢人授手 援世之災 跋涉赴俗 急斯時也</p>
<p>85 In times that are so urgent!</p> <p>In the past, Yao was distressed and Gaoyao devised a plan;⁷¹ Gaozu sighed and Zifang plotted a strategy.⁷² Against relentless adversity Cao and Jiang fought on;⁷³ Chen Ping took control when the ranks could not be breached.⁷⁴</p>	<p>昔 堯含戚而戲陶謨 高祖歎而子房慮 禍不散而曹絳奮 結不解而陳平權</p>
<p>90 Only after one united policy and followed the Dao, After one defeated chaos and suppressed strife— Only then did one engrave the dark jade, Then did one record illustrious merits;⁷⁵ Then did one inscribe the bronzework of Kunwu,⁷⁶</p> <p>95 Then did one carve the bells of Jing and Xiang.⁷⁷</p>	<p>及其 策合道從 克亂弭冲 乃將 鏤玄珪 冊顯功 銘昆吾之冶 勒景襄之鐘</p>
<p>When there is trouble, Then one doffs his robes and wets his feet; He hangs up his hat without looking back. (It is inhumane not to save a drowning man!)</p> <p>When there are no problems, 100 Then straighten your capstrings and adjust your lapel; Take proper demeanor in your stride. (One who doesn't practice virtue and humility will not be loyal!)</p>	<p>與其有事 則褰裳濡足 冠掛不顧 人溺不拯則非仁也 當其無事 則躡纓整襟 規矩其步 德讓不修 則非忠也</p>

Therefore,
 In danger one saves the common folk,
 When in peace he maintains the rites;
 105 He acts on the public mind,
 And loves not himself.

As for the way our sagely majesty nurtures his people now:
 He bases them in the august matrix,
 And carves them according to Tang's pattern.⁷⁸
 110 The Sixfold Convergence is content,⁷⁹
 And its households are made humane.
 He unifies all the differences in the world,
 Ordering the myriad diversities of all sorts of beings.
 The chaotic and confused are made to accord in likeness,
 115 The clay is baked in a single kiln.
 All beings obtain orderliness,
 All achievements coalesce.
 Each family rejoices in harmony,
 And the people prosper naturally.

120 Mighty weapons are stored away, the ritual platters passed out.
 The six charges are dispersed and the nine punishments are set aside.⁸⁰

是以
 險則救俗
 平則守禮
 舉以公心
 不私其體

今聖上之育斯人也
 樸以皇質
 雕以唐文
 六合怡怡
 比屋為仁
 壹天下之觸異
 齊品類之萬殊
 參差同量
 壤冶一陶
 群生得理
 庶績其凝
 家家有以樂和
 人人有以自優
 威械減而俎豆布
 六典陳而九刑厝

To save these people would be to depart from a leveled and ordered road!

How could one use Cai Ze and Fan Ju even when we have the stratagems of Li Mu and
 the strength of Lü Shang, not to speak of Yi Yin and Gao Yao?⁸¹

濟茲兆庶出於平易之路，雖有力牧之略，尚父之厲，伊皋不論，奚事

范蔡？

Truly,
 125 Expansive buildings are complete and the flourishing woods is pleasurable,
 Our distant objects are attained and the goodly steeds are roped down.
 The control of *yin* ends and the water constellations go into hiding,
 Land plots are established and the Great Fire appears.⁸²

夫
 廣廈成而茂木暢
 遠求存而良馬繫
 陰事終而水宿滅
 場功畢而大火入

At this interval,
 Retired scholars heap up like mountains,
 130 Students flow like rivers.
 Official-robed ones project over [the city] like a blanket,⁸³
 Capped and coached ones float like clouds.

方斯之際
 處士山積
 學者川流
 衣裳被宇
 冠蓋雲浮

[The empire] can be compared to the grove on the sunny slope of Mount Heng, or the
 shady sward of Mount Tai. Hewing down a span of trees wouldn't make the forest
 135 smaller, and planting a fistfull of seeds wouldn't add to its number.

譬猶衡陽之林，岱陰之麓，伐尋抱不為之稀，藝拱把不為之數。

[The forest] extends on without end,
 And each man pursues his own profit.
 You pick its flowers,
 And I collect its fruit.
 140 "If one is unemployed, then he preserves himself,"⁸⁴
 This is what I have learned.

悠悠罔極
 亦各有得
 彼采其華
 我收其實
 捨之則滅
 己所學也

Therefore,
 If one engages in action by means of the Dao,
 Then he forfeits not the Jadekeeper office and takes charge as Pillar of State.⁸⁵

故
 進動以道
 則不辭執珪而秉柱國

If one turns to quietude by means of Truth,
145 Then he savors lees and dregs and lives on brambles.

復靜以理
則甘糟糠而安藜藿

As for the Gentleman,
It is not the case that he does not want to serve as an official,
But he is ashamed of fawning to obtain promotion.⁸⁶
It is not the case that he does not want a wife,
But he disdains scaling the wall to drag away the virgin.⁸⁷

夫君子
非不欲仕也
恥夸毗以求舉
非不欲室也
惡登牆而擽處

150 Calling for attention and vaunting yourself, hoisting your banner to make yourself
known—this is not the jewel of Sui He.⁸⁸ Dazzling the world by flaunting your wisdom,
and obtaining office through twisted means⁸⁹—this is not the way of Zhongni.
叫呼衒鬻，懸旌自表，非隨和之寶也。暴智耀世，因以干祿，非仲尼
之道也。

You roam about with superficial cliques,⁹⁰
And recklessly scheme for yourself;
155 With sweat and blood you vie to seize the times,
And befriend others only when your profit is included.

游不倫黨
苟以徇己
汗血競時
利合而友

You may laugh at my being "bogged down," but I, too, disdain your unending pettiness.

子笑我之沉滯，吾亦病子嘿嘿而不已也。

Men of former times upheld a model, and I don't deviate from it.
There is a crooked path to walk, but I won't follow it.
160 To preserve or not is up to me—yea, let the world be my judge!

先人有則而我弗虧
行有枉徑而我弗隨
臧否在予
唯世所議

Firmly,

I rely on the self-so of Heaven's substance,

Praising the eminent teachings of the Supreme Wise One.

I hymn the pleasant airs of great peace,

And act in accord with the world's perfect confluence.

165 I fear whether I establish virtue of shame for myself,

I toil in the fields of my soul left unweeded.⁹¹

I guide my horse's reigns along a safe journey,

And look out for what fate has in store.

In the past,

Confucius displayed his might in Jiagu;⁹²

170 Yan Ying showed his bravery in an instance with Cui Shu;⁹³

Cao Hui acted righteously against the covenant of Ke;⁹⁴

Bian Yan fought victoriously against the formidable forces;⁹⁵

Fan Li devised his stratagem in Kuaiji;⁹⁶

Wu Yuan established his merits in Baiju;⁹⁷

175 Lu Lian drove out Yan with well composed language;⁹⁸

Baoxu relied only on words to preserve Chu;⁹⁹

Tang Ju awakened Qin with his spotted head;¹⁰⁰

Gan Luo attacked Zhao with his baby teeth;¹⁰¹

Yuan Shuai showed himself pure [by abstaining from] drink and food;¹⁰²

180 Xuan Meng garnered virtue by distributing bundles of jerky;¹⁰³

Zha of Wu bound his faithfulness upon a tree-shaded tomb;¹⁰⁴

Zhan Ji proved his chastity against the girl at his door;¹⁰⁵

Yan Hui flashed his humaneness before the passing hubs;¹⁰⁶

Cheng Ying demonstrated his principle against Zhao Wu.¹⁰⁷

Verily,
 185 I truly cannot match in virtue with these examples,
 I only admire the order the ancients have established.

僕誠 不能編德於數者 竊慕古人之所序

¹ Interestingly, alliterative or rhyming binomes do not feature prominently in these pieces, though they are one of the hallmarks of *fu* poetry.

² Dominik Declercq has an entire monograph on the subject of the *shelun*, surveying its evolution from its beginnings in the Han through medieval China. The term *shelun* seems to originate in the transmitted literature with Liu Xie (d. c. AD 520) and Xiao Tong (501-531). Alternatively, the term *duiwen* 對問 is used by Liu Xie to refer to the same style of writing, though Xiao Tong has reserved a special section in his *Wenxuan* for the *duiwen* and *shelun*. See Dominik Declercq *Writing Against the State* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1-2. I apply the term *shelun* to the Han dynasty examples of the genre discussed here not as an anachronism but as a convenience. Let it be observed that terminology is a necessity for talking about literature, even in our own times!

³ The earliest instance of the title "Response to a Guest's Objections" applied to Dongfang Shuo's composition is found in Fan Ye's 范曄 (398-446) biography of Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133-192) in *HHS*. 60.1980. However, there it is called only "A Guest's Objections" ("Ke nan" 客難). The other titles are all to be found in the official histories where the compositions so named are introduced.

⁴ It is strange, then, that Xiao Tong only gives the occasion for two pieces out of three in his *shelun* section of the *Wenxuan*.

⁵ See Declercq, *Writing Against the State*, 33-35.

⁶ *Shiji*, 126.66.3206.

⁷ Dongfang Shuo's position was lowered from Senior Councilor of the Palace (*taizhong dafu* 太中大夫; 1000 or 2000 bushels) to the level of Gentleman-in-Attendance (*shilang* 侍郎; 600 bushels). Notably he would have been a jester of equal salary to the erudites who accost him in Chu Shaosun's version. See note 11 in Declercq, *Writing Against the State*, 23-24.

⁸ *HS*. 65.35.1863-1864.

⁹ See Declercq's discussion of Chu Shaosun and Ban Gu's competing interpretation of "Response to a Guest's Objections," in Declercq *Writing Against the State*, 20. It seems reasonable to question whether the *shelun* in fact display any "frustration" or lack of appreciation on the part of the author at all, and hence whether they can be grouped together with the so-called "frustration *fu*." Notably the *shelun* are free from lamentation. On the frustration *fu* see Helmut Wilhem, "The Scholar's Frustration: Notes on a Type of *fu*," in John K. Fairbank, ed., *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 310-319.

¹⁰ James Robert Hightower, "The *Fu* of T'ao Ch'ien," *HJAS*, vol. 17, no. 1/2 (June, 1954): 169-230. Hightower treats the "shi bu yu" 士不遇 poems of Sima Qian, Dong Zhongshu, and Tao Qian as a subset of literature on the theme of the unemployed sage and neglected scholar. See his comments and translations in Hightower, "The *Fu* of T'ao Ch'ien," 196-209.

¹¹ *HHS*.52.1708-1709.

¹² I translate *shi* 士 as "gentleman" throughout the present paper, instead of "scholar."

For the sake of transparency, where "gentleman" translates *shi* instead of *junzi* 君子, I indicate so in parentheses. For Cui Yin, both *junzi* and *shi* carry almost identical connotations.

¹³ *Yiwen leiju*, 25.9.458-459.

¹⁴ Declercq says the *shelun* died out after the Eastern Jin. See Declercq, *Writing Against the State*, 2.

¹⁵ See David Knechtges, *The Han shu Biography of Yang Xiong*, 45-52; Declercq, *Writing Against the State*, 26-32, 41-55.

¹⁶ Cui Yin is identified in the *Hou Han shu* as being of Anping 安平 district in Zhuo 涿 commandery (in modern-day Hebei province). After the county of Anping was eventually designated a part of Boling 博陵 commandery, sometime between AD 146 and the inception of the Jin dynasty in AD 265, the Cui family became known as the Boling Cuis. See Patricia Ebrey, *Aristocratic Families*, 35.

¹⁷ Ebrey, *Aristocratic Families*, 34; XTS 72.2729.

¹⁸ See Ebrey, *Aristocratic Families*, 34-35. Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 ed., *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan gu* 春秋左傳詁 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 4.130; James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes: The Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, vol. 5 (Second edition reprint of Oxford University Press, 1972), 509, 513.

¹⁹ For a survey of the Eastern Han Cuis and their impact on literature of the Eastern Han, see Xu Zongwen 徐宗文, "Cui wei wenzong, shi shan diaolong—lun Dong Han Cui shi

zhi cifu chuanguo” 崔為文宗,世禪雕龍—論東漢崔氏之辭賦創作, *Wenxue yichan* (1998: 4): 16–24. The "Eulogy" (*zan* 讚) attached to the Cui biography in the *Hou Han shu* says "the Cuis were a literary legacy; over generations they transmitted the art of carving dragons" 崔為文宗/世禪雕龍; the "Treatise" (*lun* 論) there says of the Cuis "being immersed in the canonical texts, they made a grove of Ruist literature" 兼以沈淪典籍, 遂為儒家文林. See *HHS* 52.1732-1733.

²⁰ Prince La of Yan, or Liu Dan 旦, was one of the six sons of Emperor Wu. He prided himself as a bastion of the state against the Xiongnu of the northern regions, where he was granted a principality. Upon the death of his father, he disputed the legitimacy of the establishment of his younger brother Fuling 弗陵 (later Emperor Zhao) as heir-apparent, and putatively led a phony revolution, with hopes to call himself emperor. This attempt failed, but he was pardoned. A second time, which is alluded to here, the Prince of Yan involved himself in the rivalry between his sister Princess Gai 蓋 and Shangguan Jie 上官桀, on one side, and the powerful Huo Guang 霍光 on the other side (*HS* 63.33.2754). The prince exploited the former party's contempt for Huo Guang, who had been guiding the child emperor, in order to garner support for a second attempt at revolution. In 81 BC the Prince of Yan's plans were foiled. All involved were put to death and the prince hanged himself together with his consorts. See Burton Watson, *Courtier and Commoner in Ancient China: Selections from the History of the Former Han by Ban Gu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 54-65; *HS* 63.33.2750-2759. Burton Watson apparently mistakes the character for the prince's posthumous title La 刺 for the more

common character *ci* 刺. Hence he is not the "Piercing King" but rather the "Disloyal King" (Burton Watson, *Courtier and Commoner*, 64).

²¹ This probably refers to the four commanderies of Chaoxian, modern day Korea. After 108 BC the country of Chaoxian was divided into four commanderies, Zhenfan 真番, Lintun 臨屯, Yuelang 樂浪, and Xuantu 玄菟, although according to Yan Shigu's note, it is suggested that the four commanderies were "made open" (to the empire) only after 105 BC (*HS* 95.3867; *HS* 27.1435). Though in most cases a Grandee Secretary was in charge of only one commandery, the Four Commanderies seem to be an exception, or else were thought of as a single administrative unit. See Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 48.

²² According to the official tables in the *Han shu*, the gold seal cord and purple ribbon was held by the Chancellor (*chengxiang* 丞相) or Grand Commandant (*tai wei* 太尉), members of the Three Excellencies. See *HS* 19.724.

²³ *HS* 99.4186.

²⁴ *HHS*.52.1704-1705. Cui Yin relies on a so-called *Family Grove [of Changes]* (*jialin* 家林) to prognosticate for his friend Kong Xi 孔僖. Kong Xi defies the prognostication and dies (three years later) in AD 87 or 88, proving the efficacy of the manual. See *HHS* 79.2562-2563. The *Zhouyi lin* by Cui Zhuan is still attested in the monograph on literature in *XTS* 59.1552.

²⁵ "Painting a dragon but not completing it" is an idiom that describes all but succeeding with a great plan. The King Fuchai of Wu surrounded King Goujian 勾踐 of Yue, who had retreated to Kuaiji 會稽. However, a minister of Yue persuaded the king of Wu to

spare them, on grounds that the people of Yue would swear allegiance to Wu. But Yue regained its strength and overtook Wu in the end. See *HHS* 79.2560.

²⁶ *HHS* 79.2560.

²⁷ *HHS* 52.1715.

²⁸ Emperor Wu reportedly sighed upon reading the "Zi Xu fu" of Sima Xiangru and lamented, "If only I lived at the time of this man!," assuming the author is deceased. To the Emperor's surprise, his attendant informs him that he personally knows Xiangru, and agrees to bring him to the court (*SJ* 117.3002; *HS* 57.2533).

²⁹ In Liu Xiang's 劉向 *Xin xu* 新序, Confucius' disciple Zizhang 子張 travels from afar and waits over seven days to have an audience with Duke Ai of Lu 魯公哀, but his audience is denied. Zizhang compares Duke Ai's liking of "scholar-gentlemen" (*shi* 士) to Duke Zigao of Ye's 葉公子高 liking of dragons. The story goes that Zigao would carve images of dragons all over his house, but when a real dragon appeared, Zigao fled in fear. See Lu Yuanjun 盧元駿, *Xinxu jinzhu jinyi* 新序今註今譯 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1984), 190.

³⁰ *HHS*. 52.42.1719.

³¹ *HHS*. 52.42.171721-1722.

³² The English rendering "hypothetical discourse" comes from David Knechtges, trans., *Wenxuan, or Selections of Refined Writings; Volume One: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitols* (Princeton University Press, 1982), 24.

³³ *HS* 65.2864.

³⁴ With the exception of quotations from Cui Yin, the following quotations come from the *shelun* section in Xiao Tong, *Wenxuan* (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), vol. 5, 45.2000-2022. The quotations from Cui Yin comes from *HHS* 52.42.1709-1716.

Translations are my own responsibility, unless otherwise noted.

³⁵ *Yu* 欲 here is emended from *HS* 87.3566.

³⁶ *HS* 87.3566.

³⁷ The *Yiwen leiju* has *chui* 垂 where Li Xian's gloss in Cui Yin's biography has *cheng* 乘. Since *chengxin* 乘釁 is a set phrase, I have emended the *Yiwen leiju* version accordingly.

³⁸ Here the translation taken from Knechtges, *The Han shu Biography of Yang Xiong*, 51.

³⁹ *Cf.* the term *qianxun* in the biographies of Hu Huang and Zhang Heng, both close friends of Cui Yin's second son Cui Yuan 瑗. See *HHS*. 44.1506; *HHS* 59.1908. The latter instance occurs in a *shelun* text by Zhang Heng.

⁴⁰ The *Hua Qiao shu* or "[*Hou Han*] *shu* of Hua Qiao (d. 293)" was greatly damaged during the period of Yongjia (307-313). Only a little over 30 *juan* of 97 *juan* survived. Fan Ye relied on this history of the latter years of the Han dynasty to compose the *Hou Han shu*, but the *Hua Qiao shu* has been totally lost now. See *Jin shu*, 44.1264-1265.

⁴¹ *HHS* 52.1709.

⁴² Knechtges, *The Han shu Biography of Yang Xiong*, 134-135.

⁴³ The first reference is to the *Xici* 繫辭 commentary to the *Changes*, the second to the *Xugua* 序卦 commentary. Cui Yin's critics cite the *Changes* for authority to argue that Cui Yin is slanted and unbalanced, only studying the obscure and never bringing his occupations into the light of the world for use. This is held to be contrary to the nature of

things. Cf. *Xici* in Li Daoping 李道平 ed., *Zhouyi jijie zuanshu* 周易集解纂疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 8.604: "As for preparing all things and making use of their functions, and establishing instruments to aid all under heaven, there is none greater than the sage" 備物致用立成器以為天下利莫大乎聖人. The idea of the sage as agent, if indeed the Cui Yin had this passage in mind, suggests that (in the eyes of his accusers) Cui Yin is not merely slanted but even recalcitrant, i.e. contrary to the will of the sage ruler. The *Xugua*, which attempts to explain the sequence of the hexagrams by interpreting each hexagram title as a significant and inevitable link in the concatenation of the sixty-four hexagrams, connects *guan* 觀 "viewing" and *shihe* 噬嗑 "bite together," by reading *he* 嗑 as a *jiajie* for *he* 合.

⁴⁴ *Yin* and *yang* are the basic factors of the cosmic dynamic process that stand for elemental opposites, such as "light" and "dark," "warm" and "cold," etc. Apparently, *chu* 出 "departing" is associated with *yang*, which is "male," "active" and "bright"; whereas *ru* 入 "entering" is associated with *yin*, which is "female," "inchoate," and "dark." *Chu* also has strong connotations of public life, versus *ru* which stands for private.

⁴⁵ The language used here is similar to that found in the *Xici*: "For seeking the underlying principle and roping in the hidden, fishing the profound and attaining the distant, in order to determine the fortunate and disaster of all under heaven, to perfect the endless labor of all under heaven, nothing can compare with yarrow stalks and turtle [shells]" 探賾索隱鉤深致遠以定天下之吉凶成天下之亹亹莫善乎蓍龜 (Li Daoping, *Zhouyi*, 8.604).

⁴⁶ *Hua Qiao shu* has *bu bi* 不庇 for *mi yin* 靡蔭. See Li Xian's note in *HHS* 52.1710.

⁴⁷ The commentary to the judgment of *sui* 隨 "following" includes the statement, "it is great to go along with what is proper for the time" 隨時之義大矣 (*Zhouyi*, 3.210). The close semantic relationship between the words *yi* 宜 "to be proper" and *yi* 義 "that which is proper," hence "principle," is reflected by the proximity of their Old Chinese pronunciations * ___ and * ___. For phonetic reconstructions I use Axel Schuessler, *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: a Companion to Grammata Serica Recensa* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ Li Xian interprets "our great sovereign" (*taishang* 太上) as referring to Emperor Ming 明 (r. AD 58-75). See *HHS* 52.1710.

⁴⁹ The former kings referred to are probably the legendary founders of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, Yu 禹, Tang 湯, and kings Wen 文 and Wu 武.

⁵⁰ The Circular Moat (*biyong* 辟雍), which derives its name from being round like a "jade disk" *bi* 辟, was one of the Three *Concordiae* (*san yong* 三雍) of the eastern capitol where the emperor would perform ritual ceremonies. See Knechtges, "To Praise the Han: The Eastern Capitol *fu* of Ban Gu and His Contemporaries," in W. L. Idema and E. Zürcher, eds., *Thought and Law in Qin and Han China: Studies presented to Anthony Hulsewé on the occasion of his eightieth birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 124-125. The Shared Palace (*pan gong* 泮宮) refers to the part of the Circular Moat nobles would use for school. According to the *Han guan yi* 漢官儀, the Shared Palace was the part of the Circular Moat surrounded by water to the east, south, and west (*HHS* 1.84; *HHS* 52.1710). See Ying Shao 應劭 (fl. AD 197), *Han guan yi* 漢官儀, *CSJC* ed. 2.43.

⁵¹ Moye 鑞 (=莫邪) is the name of a legendary sword forged by Ganjiang 干將, a skilled swordsmith of Wu. Gan Jiang made two swords, one named after himself, and the Moye named after his wife. See: *Wu Yue Chunqiu* 吳越春秋, *SBBY* ed. 4.1.b-2.a.

⁵² The Stairway is probably an allusion to the Threestep Terrace *santai* 三台, which was taken as a heaven-earth correspondence between the stars in Ursa Major and the Three Excellencies (*san gong* 三公) in the Han administration. See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 72.

⁵³ The Purple Chamber (*zi ta* 紫闈) is another heaven-earth correspondence between the imperial throne and the dwelling chamber of a great celestial divinity. Instead of the Purple Tenuity (*ziwei* 紫微), as it is often called, the word *ta* is necessitated by the rhyme. See Schafer, *T'ang Approaches to the Stars*, 47.

⁵⁴ *San dai* 三代 here cannot refer to the first three dynasties of China, the Xia, Shang, and Zhou. As Cui Yin says below, the decay of the Dao begins already with Diku 帝嚳, a contemporary of Yao and Shun.

⁵⁵ Here Da'ting 大庭 (the insertion of an apostrophe is to avoid confusion with the English word "dating") is another name for the Divine Farmer 神農, and Hexu 赫胥 for the Fiery Thearch 炎帝, both men of legendary times preceding the Xia.

⁵⁶ Gaoxin 高辛 is another name for Diku 帝嚳.

⁵⁷ My translation follows the suggestion of Fei Zhengang 費振剛, taking *ji* 稽 in the sense of "stopping, reaching a final end," i.e., the opposite of *zuo* 作, "starting," "putting

into motion." See Fei Zhengang 費振剛 ed., *Quan Han fu jiaozhu* 全漢賦校注 (Guangzhou: Guangdong jiaoju chubanshe, 2005), 448. Literally, "The Dao lacks a constant configuration" 道無常稽. Li Xian's reading (if I understand him well) seems forced "[men] examine [things] without relying on the constant Dao." Even if we took *ji*, as he does, as meaning "to examine," it would miss the point. Cui Yin is making a statement about *the Dao*, not about people whose duty it is to locate the Dao in reality, and hence the second line continues to describe the Dao as sometimes slackening, sometimes tightening.

⁵⁸ Cf. Yang Xiong's "Dissolving Ridicule": "He who obtains the *shi* became rich, he who lost the *shi* became poor" 得士者富失士者貧. See *HS.87.3567*.

⁵⁹ Cf. Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi jinzhū jinyi* 莊子今注今譯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), vol. 3, 768. When the sage ruler Shun offered his friend Wuze 無澤 ("Antiglory") control of the world, the latter dove into a pool and never returned. Li Xian's note here has the character 澤 where most modern editions have 擇. See translation in A. C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1986), 231.

⁶⁰ Declercq calls Xu You "the classic recluse" (Declercq, *Writing Against the State*, 393). When the sage ruler Yao attempted to transfer control of the world to Xu You, he felt that the news had defiled his ears, and so he washed them out in a stream. His friend Nest Master 巢夫 was having his calf drink from the stream nearby. When he saw Xu You washing his ears, he cursed him for contaminating the water, and led his calf further downstream. See Chen Guying, *Zhuangzi*, 744-746; Graham, *Chuang-tzu*, 224,

⁶¹ Bocheng Zigao 伯成子高, a vassal lord during the time of Yao and Shun, gave up his fief for the plough when Yu took control of the empire. Yu was disturbed by this, and when he went to check on Zigao, he found him completely content. A. C. Graham points out that the *Zhuangzi* version of the story is insignificant for the fame that Bocheng Zigao acquired as a noble recluse. Why would taking up the plough during relatively peaceful times be laudable to later generations? Instead, the *Xinxu* version of the story says that Bocheng Zigao's main objection is to hereditary succession, which began in the Xia by the transferal of the throne to Yu's son Qi 啟 (Graham, *The Chuang-tzu*, 175; quoted in Declercq, 344; *Xinxu*, 213). However, the tradition that Cui Yin most likely alludes to is that found in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋. When Yu questions Bocheng Zigao about why he served as a feudal lord under Yao and Shun but retired under Yu, Bocheng Zigao replies that the people under Yao and Shun were obedient without the presence of rewards and punishments, but now people only quarrel about rewards and punishments. For Bocheng Zigao, the decline of the realm's Power (*de* 德) begins with Yu's *realpolitik* government. See Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷 ed., *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Xuelin chubanshe, 1984), 20.1336; John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, trans., *The Annals of Lü Buwei: A Complete Translation and Study* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 515.

⁶² This line refers to the legendary dendrophile Bao Jiao 鮑焦. Besides learning that Bao Jiao clothed himself in treebark and ate fruit from the trees, we learn that he supposedly died on the bank of the Luo 洛 river. (Li Xian's note seems to quote a bit of text from the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 that is not in modern versions. See note in *HHS* 52.42.1712). Even Bao Jiao's death was arboreal, as he died standing up: Hanfei says, "Bao Jiao

withered like a tree" 鮑焦木枯. See Wang Xianshen 王先慎, *Hanfeizi jijie* 韓非子集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 424.

⁶³ Li Xian supposes this is a reference to the *Zhuangzi's* telling of a story about Madman Jieyu 狂接輿, who refused an offer from the King of Chu to take charge of the south of the Changjiang. However, there is no account of Jieyu being approached *repeatedly* for appointment in the king's service in the *Zhuangzi*. See Declercq, 368.

⁶⁴ Liuxia Hui 柳下惠 was reportedly dismissed three times from office, but never left. When asked why he wouldn't actually leave, he said "How can one serve others by upholding the Dao and not be dismissed three times?" (*Lunyu*, 18.2.715).

⁶⁵ Cui Yin seems to refer to the story of Yi Yin 伊尹 successfully gaining the attention of Tang 湯 and eventually becoming his most trusted advisor. Although there are differing accounts, the story of Yi Yin's success that is alluded to here goes that he gained recognition by initially working as Tang's cook. Yi Yin took advantage of his culinary skills to get close to Tang and prove his wisdom, so that he was finally trusted as his advisor. Cf. Wang Xianshen, *Hanfeizi*, 4.92; Declercq, *Writing Against the State*, 402-403.

⁶⁶ The allusion seems to be to a female pheasant in *Analects* 10.25. The passage from the "Xiang dang" 鄉黨 chapter has long puzzled translators and commentators. However, the context and parallelism in Cui Yin's text provides a strong basis for interpreting the text as somehow mirroring the previous line, as I have attempted to render it here. If one were to translate the *Analects* passage with this interpretation in mind, it would read:

"[The bird] rises, flashing its colors; it must first soar above, and only then flock [with the others]" 色斯舉矣翔而後集 (*Lunyu*, 10.25.434).

⁶⁷ A reference to the sage advisor Fu Yue 傅說 of Shang king Wuding 武丁. The king dreamed of a sagacious advisor, and had his officials conduct a search throughout the empire until he was found, at the Cliffs of Fu 傅巖, where Fu Yue was laboring along with other corvée laborers to dam up the flooding waters nearby. See *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義, SSJZS ed. 10.62.174; Declercq, 354. I render the phrase *wanggong* 王公 as "regal lord," a reference to Wuding, instead of following Li Xian's suggestion of reading *wang gong* as, generally, "kings and dukes" or "nobles."

⁶⁸ Taigong Wang 太公望 (literally, "Expected by my Grandfather") found the favor of King Wen while he was a fisherman. Before going out hunting, a divination was made that said a great assistant of the Zhou would be found on this outing. When king found the fisherman on the south of the Wei river, he said "My grandfather had been expecting you for a long time" (*Shiji*, 32.1477-1478; Declercq, 389-390).

⁶⁹ The phrase *chouzi* 疇咨 comes from *Shangshu zhengyi*, 2.10.122. There it is an exclamation, "Oh, who?" of the sage king Yao who seeks a loyal minister.

⁷⁰ Literally, "with a hasty tread" (*bashe* 跋涉). The point is, regardless of the difficulties in reaching the commonfolk, he goes to their aid.

⁷¹ Cf. *Shangshu zhengyi*, 5.29.141. Gaoyao 皋陶 (also 咎繇), is portrayed as a wise advisor to Yu the Great in his eponymous chapters of the *Shangshu*. When Yao was in want of a way to deal with the floods, Gaoyao devised a plan together with Yu. See Declercq, 354-355.

⁷² After loosing in battle to Chu at Pengcheng, Liu Bang had his friend Zhang Liang 張良 (*zi* Zifang 子房) devise a strategy to overcome Xiangyu 項羽 of Chu by garnering allies for the Han army (*Shiji*, 55.25.2039).

⁷³ Cao Shen 曹參 (d. 190 BC), Marquis of Pingyang 平陽, and Zhou Bo 周勃 (d. 169 BC) Marquis of Jiang 絳 were both lieutenants in Liu Bang's army, and helped found the Han dynasty. During the distribution of enfeoffments, a debate erupted in court over whose merits were greatest in assisting the Han in the defeat of Chu. The ranked lords objected to the emperor's first choice, Xiao He 蕭何, who had not seen true battle, but only devised strategies; instead, they proposed Cao Shen, who had suffered seventy wounds attacking cities and defending their grounds. In the end, the emperor had his way, but Cao Shen was nevertheless remembered as a meritorious soldier (*Shiji*, 53.23.2015-2016; Declercq, 346).

⁷⁴ Chen Ping 陳平 (d. 178 BC), a lieutenant of Liu Bang, helped devise sex secret stratagems to unify the empire along with Zhou Bo (*HS* 40.2045; Declercq, 347-348). The present text seems to refer to one incident, when, in 200 BC, Liu Bang's army was surrounded by the Xiongnu at Baideng 白登, and was trapped without food or provisions for seven days. Chen Ping supposedly came up with one of his secret stratagems that allowed the troops to escape safely (*HS* 40.10.2045; *HS* 94.64.3753).

⁷⁵ Possibly a reference to when sage ruler Yao engraved a piece of dark jade to record the merits of Yu after the stopping of the flood. See *Shangshu zhengyi*, 6.37.149.

⁷⁶ Lord Kai 后開 (*alias* Qi 启) of the Xia had Felian 飛廉 forge a cauldron out of the iron of Mount Kunwu 昆吾. See Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi xiangu* 墨子閒詁 (Beijing:

Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 46.422-426. Li Xian quotes a story about Taigong Wang recounted in Cai Yong's *Minglun* 銘論, where it is said that his merits were recorded on a cauldron from Mount Kunwu (*HHS* 52.1713).

⁷⁷ Cf. *Guoyu* (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 7.432. Wei Ke 魏顙, Duke Jing 景, had his merits inscribed on the a bell after his victory over the Qin in a battle at Fushi 輔氏.

There is mention of a bell of Duke Xiang 襄 that is used by Zihan 子罕 to bribe the officials of the state of Jin in the *Zuozhuan*, but it is unclear whether this is what is alluded to here. See Hong Liangji, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, 461; Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, 372-373.

⁷⁸ i.e., Yao, the exemplary sage ruler.

⁷⁹ The Sixfold Convergence (*liu he* 六合) is a term for the universe, conceived as the four directions and heaven and earth combined as one.

⁸⁰ According to the *Zhouli* 周禮, there were six "charges" (*dian* 典) given to the Grand Ministers (*taizai* 太宰), in order to distribute control over the state. The fact of these charges being implemented signified times of peace, whereas the necessity of the nine punishments indicated times of disorder. See *Zhouli* 周禮, *CSJC* ed. 1.9.

⁸¹ Cui Yin draws a stark line between Cai Ze 蔡澤 and Fan Ju 范雎 and the other "scholars" *shi* 士 that are praised above. Indeed, we may read this as Cui Yin finding fault in Yang Xiong's "Jie chao" where Cai Ze and Fan Ju are held up as examples of men who rightly took advantage of their times. Cai Ze, a physically deformed man of humble birth, defied all odds to climb into a high position as Prime Minister in the state of Qin in

255 BC. Fan Ju, who formerly held the same position immediately before Cai Ze, was also of humble birth. He reportedly relied on his gift for oratory to climb to power. Yang Xiong recalls that Fan Ju hid himself in a sack until an opportunity presented itself to speak with King Zhao of Qin (r. 306-251 BC), at which point he left his sack and won favor. For Yang Xiong these are examples of men of a peculiar cunning; for Cui Yin, these are debased opportunists who seek their own advantage and power (Declercq, 345-346; 351-352). In contrast to these figures, Li Mu 力牧, a loyal minister to the Yellow Thearch, Lü Shang 呂尚 (i.e. Taigong Wang), Yi Yin, and Gao Yao, all took an honest course to their positions, and were not self-interested in obtaining power. For more on Li Mu, see Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 2.42; A. C. Graham, trans., *The Book of Lieh-tzu* (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd, 1960), 34.

⁸² Li Xian notes that the control of *yin* refers to the winter time, when the water constellations of the northern hemisphere are at "supremely potent" *sheng de* 盛德.

When the water constellations go into hiding, the indication is of the beginning of spring.

⁸³ In keeping with Cui Yin's parallel prose, *yu* 宇 (literally, "eaves") should be construed as a verb; hence I translate *yu* as "projecting over (in an eaves-like way)." The point of this line, indeed the point of this stanza, so to speak, is that there is an excess of officials in the capitol.

⁸⁴ The reference is to *Analects* book seven, "Shu er" 述而, where Confucius subtly admonishes his disciples Zilu 子路 not to act rashly in action (*xing* 行). The opposite of action is "preservation" (*cang* 藏), the cautious detachment from political affairs and suspension of action, which Confucius claims for himself:

The Master remarked to Yan Hui: "It is said, 'when he is employed, then he moves forward, when he is unemployed, he preserves himself.' Surely this applies only to you and me." Zilu interposed: "If you, master, were to lead the three armies into battle, who would you want by your side?" The Master replied: "I would not want the kind of person who would attack a tiger barehanded or attempt to swim the yellow river because he was willing to 'die without regret.' Surely I would want someone who would approach such undertakings with a proper sense of trepidation, and who came to a decision only after having thoroughly considered the matter." 子謂顏淵曰：用之則行，舍之則藏，惟我與爾是夫。子路曰：子行三軍則誰與？子曰：暴虎馮河，死而無悔者，吾不與也。必也臨事而懼，好謀而成者也 (Translation adapted from Slingerland, *Analects*, 67; *Lunyu*, 7.11.261-262).

⁸⁵ The Jadekeepers were men who held jade tablets to distinguish themselves as men with authority to deliberate at court. The Pillar of State was an office equal to that of a chancellor of the state of Qin. See Li Xian's note: *HHS* 52.42.1715.

⁸⁶ Literally, *kuapi* 夸毗 is "excessively assisting," or even "servile."

⁸⁷ Mengzi asks: "As for scaling the east neighboring family's wall to drag away their virgin for a wife, if you couldn't get her without scaling it, should you drag her away?"

⁸⁸ *Hanfeizi*, 13.

⁸⁹ I follow the reading of the *Hua Qiao shu*, which has *hui* 回 ("twisted") in place of *yin* 因.

⁹⁰ "Superficial cliques" translates *bu lun dang* 不倫黨, literally "cliques (of people) that don't align" or "camps that don't line up together." The point is that the officials whom Cui Yin is reproaching associate with people who have no shared interest but plot for themselves instead.

⁹¹ Cf. the *Liji* "Li yun" metaphor on cultivating the fields of individual subjects.

⁹² A possible reference to a story about Confucius, when he was supposedly serving as a minister at Jiagu 夾古. The lords of Lu and Qi held a conference at Jiagu, and the Qi lords had entertainers and dwarves dance before everyone. Confucius stood up and demanded that the penalty for a common person teaching the nobility was death. The dwarves were executed "with their hands and feet in sundry places." See: *Kongzi jiyu*, *SBBY* ed. 1.1.b-2a; *HHS* 51.41.1685. This is meant, one supposes, to demonstrate the severity of adhering to ritual traditions.

⁹³ The *Yanzi Chunqiu* relates a story in which Yan Ying (d. 500) refuses to join Cui Shu's covenant which was made by spilling the blood of his lord, Duke Zhuang of Qi. Despite the fact that Cui Shu vowed to cut the throats and skewer the hearts of anyone who refused him, and the fact that Cui Shu showed particular interest in Yan Ying by promising him a share in the power of Qi, Yan Ying resolutely refused (*Yanzi Chunqiu*, *SBBY* ed. 5.1a-2.a). For more on Yan Ying see Declercq, 398.

⁹⁴ Cao Hui 曹沫 (also 劌) was a general in the army in Lu, subordinate to Duke Zhuang. After suffering defeat to Qi in 542 BC, Duke Zhuang entered into a covenant, signifying a treaty by blood sacrifice at Ke 柯. Cai Hui was loyal to his state and escaped back to Lu by brandishing his blade at the men of Qi (*SJ* 33.3.1531).

⁹⁵ Cf. Lu Yuanjun, *Xinxu*, 281-282. Bian Zhuangzi 卞莊子 fled from war three times in order to take care of his mother. His friends and superiors censured him for this, but after the death of his mother, Lu went to war with Qi, and Bian Zhuangzi fought valiantly to his death. Bian Yan 卞嚴 is a name used to avoid the taboo name Zhuang 莊 of Liu Zhuang 劉莊, Emperor Ming.

⁹⁶ Fan Li 范蠡 (5th cen.) is said to have advised King Goujian 勾踐 to humbly submit to the king of Wu, when Goujian's soldiers were surrounded at their refuge in Kuaiji. This allowed the state of Yue to get revenge and overtake Wu twenty years later in 473 BC. See: *Shiji*, 41.11.1740-1741; Declercq, 352-353.

⁹⁷ Wu Zixu's 伍子胥 (*zi Yuan* 員) father was sentenced to death in Chu, so Wu Zixu joined the state of Wu in attacking Chu. He famously defeated the Chu forces at a battle in Baiju 柏舉. *Guliang zhuan*, SBBY ed. 19.4b-5b.

⁹⁸ Lu Zhonglian 魯仲連 successfully protected Liaocheng 聊城, a city of the state of Qi, from Yan's offensive. After defeating the general of Yan, he wrote him a letter convincing him to retreat. The general Tian Dan, left and committed suicide. See *Shiji*, 83.2465-2469.

⁹⁹ Shen Baoxu 申包胥 of Chu saved his country in 509 BC from the forces of Wu by beseeching Qin for help. He reportedly cried for seven days in the Qin court until the king of Qin agreed. See Hong Liangji, *Zuozhuan*, 817-821; Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, 757.

¹⁰⁰ When Wei was unable to win Qin as an ally against Qi and Chu, Tang Ju 唐雎, who was over 90 years old at the time, traveled to Qin himself to have an audience with the

king. The king was shocked to see an elderly man travel so far, and was moved to support Wei. See Fan Bangjin 范邦瑾 ed., *Zhangguo ce* 戰國策 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 25.4.1450-1452. The "spotted head" (*huadian* 華顛) indicates the depilated head of an old man.

¹⁰¹ When Gan Luo was only eleven years old, he helped the state of Qin lead an attack against the state of Zhao. See *Shiji*, 71.11.2319.

¹⁰² After the armies of Qin laid siege to Yuan 原, Zhao Shuai 趙衰 was appointed in charge of the land for having carried pots of water and food for his superior commander without taking any for himself. See Hong Liangji, *Zuozhuan*, 324; Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with The Tso Chuen*, 194, 197.

¹⁰³ Zhao Xuanmeng 趙宣孟 had mercy on a hungry man of Jiang, and gave him food. The man would not eat the food on grounds that he should give it to his mother and father, so Xuanmeng increased the poor man's rations. See Chen Qiyou, *Lüshi Chunqiu*, 15.4.893-895; Knoblock and Riegel, *Annals of Lü Buwei*, 352-353.

¹⁰⁴ Ji Zha 季札 of Wu realized that a lord of Xu 徐 admired his sword. Ji Zha intended to give his sword to the lord as a gift, but before he had this chance the lord died. Accordingly, Ji Zha visited his tomb and planted his sword in the tree overlooking his grave. See *Shiji*, 31.1459.

¹⁰⁵ Apparently a variation of a story about Liuxia Hui (i.e. Zhan Ji 展季), who supposedly showed his sympathy for a girl shivering on the side of a road by unbuttoning his robe and holding her against his body. Nevertheless, Liuxia Hui did not lose his chastity. Li Xian seems to quote a bit of the *Hanshi waizhuan* not extant in modern editions. See

note 23 in *HHS* 52.1718. Compare other renditions of Liuxia Hui's chastity stories in Declercq, *Writing Against the State*, 374-375.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Hanshi waizhuan*, 2.12.43-45; *Hightower*, *Han Shih Wai Chuan*, 49-51. When Dongye Bi 東野畢 drove swiftly by Yan Hui and Duke Ding of Lu, Yan Hui predicted aloud that Dongye Bi's horses would run away. The Duke was unhappy with Yan Hui for slandering Dongye Bi, and so Yan Hui withdrew himself. But his prediction was proven true, after the horses indeed ran away, and the Duke summoned Yan Hui back on a chariot. Yan Hui claimed that he knew the horses would desert their master because they were carelessly exhausted and treated cruelly.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *SJ* 43.1785. Cheng Ying 程嬰 saved the child Zhao Wu 趙武, scion of a ducal family of Jin, from Tu Anjia 屠岸賈 who attempted to wipe out the Zhao clan.