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From Protest to Eulogy: Poems of Saunters in Sylphdom from Pre-Qin to the Late Six Dynasties

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Abstract

This essay examines the literary evolution of *youxian shi* **遊仙詩** (poetry of "saunters in sylphdom") from a form of social protest to a form of courty eulogy between the pre-Qin and late Six Dynasties (about *300* B.C. to A.D. *587*) periods. It explores the formation of its generic conventions, and how they were carried on and subverted in its later development. Through a close analysis of five groups of poems, it demonstrates *youxian shi* originated from Qu Yuan's **屈原**(*340-278* B.C.) "Far-off journey" ("Yuanyou"**遠遊**), which established the genre's fundamental features as colorful descriptions of a celestial journey aiming to transcend human sufferings and frustrations. Later when the *youxian* motif was transferred to *shi* **詩** or lyric poetry it underwent some changes. The extravagant descriptions in Qu Yuan's poem, characteristic of the *fu* **賦** genre, were greatly toned down because unlike *fu, shi* is generically more suited for self-expression. As a corollary of this stylistic change, its thematic focus also shifted. The lyric subject and his human

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world gradually assumed a larger role. By the Six Dynasties *youxian shi* became a poetic mode not dissimilar to eremitic poetry where the poet's feelings and thoughts, not transcendents and their activities, became the central concern. At yet another phase of this evolution, the function of *youxian shi* underwent a most significant transformation when it was introduced into court literature: it was no longer a form of social protest as during its early stage, but a panegyric on the status quo.

Key Words: poems of saunters in sylphdom, transcendent, imitation, parody, generic conventions

I. Introduction

Youxian shi **遊仙詩**, or poems of "saunters in sylphdom,"[1] is a poetic mode that flourished during the Wei-Jin period,[2] an era of great chaos and suffering in Chinese history. In the mostly secular context of Chinese culture, this mode, heavily influenced at its early stage by shamanism and Taoism,[3] provid-

1 This is Edward H. Schafer's translation; see his *Mirages on the Sea of Time: The Taoist Poetry of Ts'ao T'ang* (Berkeley: University of California Press, *1985*), *13*. J. D. Frodsham and Ch'eng Hsi translated it as "poems of wandering immortals" in their *An Anthology of Chinese Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, *1967*), *92*. Wai-lim Yip translated *youxian shi* as "poems on roaming with immortals;" see his *Chinese Poetry: An Anthology of Major Modes and Genres* (Durham: Duke University Press, *1997*), *143*. Schafer observed that xian **仙** are "'transcendents,' implying that they have the power to transcend earthly corruption, but sometimes I style them 'sylphs' because of their resemblance to the delicate, airy elementals of western tradition. They are not 'immortal,' however, and must constantly renew their vital powers." *Mirages on the Sea of Time*, *21*. In this essay I use "transcendent" to translate *xian*. Paul W. Kroll offered yet another rendering of *youxian*, as "roaming to transcendence;" see his "On 'Far Roaming.'" Journal of American Oriental Society *116.4* (*1996*): *653-69*.

2 I am using Wei-Jin mainly in the sense of literary history, and as thus it spans from the years of Jian'an (AD *196-220*) to the end of the Jin in AD *420*.

3 On this subject see David Hawkes, "Quest of the Goddess," in Cyril Birch, ed., *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres* (Berkeley: University of California Press, *1974*), *54-68*, Ge Zhaoguang **葛兆光**, *Daojiao yu zhongguo wenhua* **道教與中國文化** (Shanghai: Shanghai remin, *1987*),

ed poets with a means to express their transcendent desires and imagination. The goal of this essay, however, is not to explore anew the religious significance of this poetic mode. Instead I will examine its literary evolution from a form of social protest to a form of courtly eulogy during the pre-Qin to late Six Dynasties (about *300* B.C. to *587* A.D.) periods. Specifically I will examine the formation of its generic conventions, and how they were carried on and subverted in its later development. Through a close analysis of five groups of poems, I will demonstrate that *youxian shi* originated from Qu Yuan's **屈原** (*340-278* B.C.) "Far-off Journey" ("Yuanyou" **遠遊**),[4] a *fu* **賦** or rhapsody[5] that

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especially *368-417*, and Wang Yonghao **汪涌豪** and Yu Haomin **俞灝敏**, *Zhongguo youxian wenhua* **中國遊仙文化** (Beijing: Falu, *1997*), passim.

4 There is debate about the authorship of this poem. Because some lines of this poem are taken directly from "Li sao" **離騷**, some scholars have suspected that it was composed by an anonymous Han imitator. See David Hawkes, trans., *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (Penguin, *1985*), *191-93*. However, Wang Yi **王逸** (fl. A.D. *114-19*), the Han scholar who compiled *Chuci zhangju* **楚辭章句**, an anthology of *Chu ci* poems by Qu Yuan and others, did not seem to have any doubt about Qu Yuan's authorship of this poem. See Wang Yi and Hong Xingzu **洪興祖** (fl. *1111-17*), eds. and anns., *Chuci buzhu* **楚辭補注** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1983*), *163-75*. Jiang Liangfu **姜亮夫** argues forcefully for the view that this poem was written during the pre-Qin period, mostly likely by Qu Yuan; see his "Yuan you wei Quzi zuopin dingyi" **遠遊為屈子作品定疑**, in his *Chucixue lunwenji* **楚辭學論文集** (Shanghai: Shanghai guji), *507-44*.

Some scholars have pointed out, without offering detailed discussions, the connection between Cao Zhi **曹植** (*192-232*) and Guo Pu's **郭璞** (*276-324*) *youxian shi*, to be considered in detail later, with "Yuan you." See Huang Jie **黃節**, ed. and ann., *Cao Zijian shizhu* **曹子建詩注** (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, *1957*), *79*, and the remarks by He Zhuo **何焯**, Yao Fan **姚範**, quoted in *Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao wenxueshi cankao ziliao*, **魏晉南北朝文學史參考資料** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1962*), *331*. Also see Deng Shiliang **鄧仕樑**, *Liang-Jin shilun* **兩晉詩論** (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, *1972*), *144-45*. However, both *Yiwen leiju* **藝文類聚** and *Chuxue ji* **初學記**, two Tang compendiums, fail to mention "Yuan you" in their separate entries on **仙道** and **仙**, where, especially in the more comprehensive *Yiwen leiju*, some representative works in *youxian* literature were quoted. *Chuxue ji* begins its poetic illustration of the entry with Guo Pu's poems, whereas *Yiwen leiju* begins its with a *youxian* poem by Cao Pi **曹丕** (*187-226*), and its *fu* section with Sima Xiangru's **司馬相如** (*179-118* B. C.) "Daren fu" **大人賦**. See *Chuxue ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1962*), v. *3*, chap. *23, 549-51*, and *Yiwen leiju* (Shanghai: Zhonghua, *1965*), v. *2*, chap. *78, 1326-46*;

established its fundamental features, which can be characterized as colorful descriptions of a celestial journey aiming to transcend human sufferings and frustrations. Later when the *youxian* motif was transferred to *shi* **詩** or lyric poetry it underwent some changes. The extravagant descriptions in Qu Yuan's poem, characteristic of the *fu* genre,[6] were greatly toned down because unlike *fu, shi* is generically more suited for self-expression. As a corollary of this stylistic change, its thematic focus also shifted. The lyric subject and his human world gradually assumed a larger role. By the Six Dynasties *youxian shi* became a poetic mode not dissimilar to eremitic poetry where the poet's feelings and thoughts, not transcendents and their activities, became the central concern. At yet another phase of this evolution, the function of *youxian shi* underwent a most significant transformation when it was introduced into court literature: it was no longer a form of social protest as during its early stage,

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5 I am following the Han categorization of *Chu ci*. See "Yiwen zhi" **藝文志** in Ban Gu **班固** (*32-92*), *Han shu* **漢書** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1962*), v. *6, 1747.* As You Guo'en **游國恩** demonstrated in "Qufu kaoyuan" **屈賦考源**, *fu* and *ci* are interchangeable terms during Han. See his *You Guo'en xueshu lunwenji* **游國恩學術論文集** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1989*), *1-36*. *Wen xuan* **文選**, ed. by Xiao Tong **蕭統** (*501-31*), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, *1986*), separated Qu Yuan and other works in the *Chu ci* genre from *fu* and put them in the category of *sao* **騷**.

6 That *fu* is best suited for description is a conventional view accepted by scholars throughout the classical tradition. This characteristic is often differentiated from the expressiveness of *shi*, as was stated memorably by Lu Ji **陸機** (*261-303*) in his "*Fu* on Literature" **文賦** : "*shi* originates from feelings and is exquisite; *fu* describes the object and is lustrous" (**詩緣情而綺靡，賦體物而流亮**); see *Wen xuan*, v. *1*, chap. *17, 239-44*; for an English translation of this work, see Cyril Birch, ed., *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, *1965*), *1:252-75*, and Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, *1992*), *73-118.* For studies on *fu*, see Cheng Tingzuo **程廷祚**, *Sao-fu lun* **騷賦論** (Taipei: Lihang, *1970*), Ma Jigao **馬積高** *Fu shi* **賦史** (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, *1987*), Jiang Shuge **姜書閣**, *Hanfu tongyi* **漢賦通義** (Jinan: Qilu shushe, *1988*), Wan Guangzhi **萬光治**, *Hanfu tonglun* **漢賦通論** (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, *1989*), David R. Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, *1976*), Burton Watson, *Chinese Rhyme-Prose* (New York: Columbia University Press, *1977*), and Dore J. Levy, "Conctructing Sequences: Another Look at the Principle of *Fu* **賦** 'Enumeration,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 46* (December *1986*): *471-93.*

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that the subsequent sections of the poem are merely the products of wishful thinking.[10]

These two lines establish an intense human presence that will inevitably color our reading of the entire poem. Wang Yi, for example, argues that because Qu Yuan was misunderstood and persecuted, in this poem he "uses the transcendents to embody his deep thoughts and roams [in his mind] with them to every corner of the universe. However, he still cannot forget Chu his country and his folks at home. Such is the sincerity of his loyalty and the depth of his virtue." [11] Wang even extends this allegorical interpretation to Qu Yuan's style, for he regards the magnificent diction in "Yuan you" as a rhetorical counterpart of his steadfast moral character.[12]

Equally influential to *youxian shi* of later periods is the description of the "far-off journey" itself, which forms the bulk of the poem. Qu Yuan therein not only provides later poets with the pattern of this journey, but also the vocabulary to portray it. I will dwell on these two aspects in some detail.

The journey undertaken by the author of "Yuan you" can be best described as cosmic, in keeping with the generic characteristic of *fu* that tends to include every aspect of the subject in question.[13] In an effort to travel "far-off" in his mind, the poet takes his readers to the edges of the universe, accompanied by his dazzling, half-human and half-supernatural entourage, as in the following passage:

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10 I thus believe that Hawkes' rendering of this word as "wanted" is inadequate. The same graph is repeated at the beginning of line *23*, right after the mention of Red Pine **赤松** the alleged transcendent. It introduces a similar wish, that he would love to model himself after the example of Red Pine **願乘風乎遺則**. Another slightly different word, but with the same meaning and function, *yu* **欲**, is used in line *127*, **欲度世以忘歸兮**.

11 「...**遂敘妙思，託配仙人，與俱遊戲周歷天地，無所不到。然猶懷念楚國，思慕舊故，忠信之篤，仁義之厚也。**」*Chuci buzhu, 163.*

12 「**是以君子珍重其志，而瑋其辭也。**」Ibid, *163.*

13 Hawkes links this cosmic nature of the "far-off" journey to the practices of shamanism during Qu Yuan's time. See his "Quest of Goddess."

朝發軔於太儀兮	In the morning I set off from the Court of Heaven, *93*
夕始臨乎微閭	In the evening Wei-lü[14] came in sight below.
屯余車之萬乘兮	I marshalled in order my ten thousand chariots,
紛溶與而並弛	And moved slowly forwards in splendid procession. *96*
駕八龍之婉婉兮	Eight dragons drew my car, coiling and curvetting,
載雲旗之委蛇	Over it a cloud-banner flapped upon the wind.
建雄虹之采旄兮	The standards we carried bore rainbow devices:
五色雜而炫耀	Five contrasting colors, dazzling to behold. *100*
服偃蹇以低昂兮	Splendidly the yoke-horses bowed and tossed their heads;
驂連蜷以驕驁	Proudly the trace-horses arched and curved themselves.
騎膠葛以雜亂兮	A din and bustle rose up confusedly
斑漫衍而方行	As our colourful, many-assorted train began to move. *104*
撰余轡而正策兮	I grasped the reins, and, with my whip, I signalled the direction:
吾將過乎句芒	The first part of our journey should be to visit Gou Mang.[15]

The poet, who has claimed at the beginning of the poem to have "Fallen on a time of foulness and impurity,"[16] now embarks on a fantastic journey of freedom in a realm of utter beauty and purity. This magnificent celebration of human will and imagination, enacted in an equally magnificent, powerful verbal medium, echoes strongly "Li sao" **離騷** or "On Encountering Sorrow." However, unlike "Li sao" which ends with the poet's declaration of commitment to human world, "Yuan you" manages to overcome the poet's nostalgia for his country[17] and concludes with a passage in which the human world is transcended:

經營四荒兮	I toured the Four Outlands, *163*
周流六漠	Traversed the Six Regions.

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14 "According to the 'Autumn Floods' chapter of *Zhuang zi* (Ch. *17*), this was the name of a great vortex in the Eastern Sea where the waters of the ocean drained away through as sort of gigantic plug-hole, without, however, any apparent diminution in their volume." Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, *202*.

15 Gou Mang was guardian god of the East. Chinese text in *Chuci buzhu*, *169-70*; English translation by Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, *196-97*.

16 **遭沉濁而污穢兮**. Ibid, *163* and *193*.

17 See lines *131-39*, where the poet was grieved to see his country below, but "brushed the tears away" and was "in control once more."

上至列缺	Up to the lightning's fissure,
降望大壑	And down to the Great Abyss. *166*
下崢嶸而無地兮	In the sheer depths below, the earth was invisible;
上寥廓而無天	In the vastness above, the sky could not be seen.
視儵忽而無見兮	When I looked, my startled eyes saw nothing;
聽惝怳爾無聞	When I listened, no sound met my amazed ear. *170*
超無為以至清兮	Transcending Inaction, I came to Purity,
與泰初而為鄰	And entered the neighbourhood of the Great Clearing.[18]

In this short passage the key Taoist word *wu* **無** (nothing or nothingness) is repeated four times. The four realms modified by *wu*, *wudi* **無地** (no earth), *wutian* **無天** (no sky), *wujian* **無見** (no seeing), *wuwen* **無聞** (no listening), together create a quintessential Taoist world. This is reinforced at the end by the phrase *taichu* **泰初** (The Great Beginning), which echoes an identical phrase in *Zhuangzi*.[19] In fact, as many scholars have pointed out, Taoism and Shamanism, prevalent in the Chu region during Qu Yuan's time, are the strongest and most visible influences on Qu Yuan's work, especially on "Yuan you."[20] They not only helped to shape the cosmic journey described in this and other Chu *ci* poems,[21] but also supplied this and later *youxian shi* some stock images and vocabularies. The supernatural animals summoned to service by the poet, the splendid processions of his entourage, the names of various transcendents mentioned in the poem, such as Chisong **赤松** (Red Pine), Han Zhong **韓眾** (another variation is **韓終**), Wang Qiao **王喬**, Yuren **羽人** (feathered men), the places where they live, such as Danqiu **丹丘** (Cinnabar Hill), Gou Mang **句芒**, Qingdu **清都** (Clear City), and the activities they engage in, such as "I supped the Six Essences, drank the Night Dew; Rinsed my mouth in Sun Mist; savoured the Morning Brightness" (**餐六氣而飲沆瀣兮，漱正陽而**

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18 Ibid, *174-75* and *198-99.*

19 See Guo Qingfan **郭慶藩** ed., *Zhuangzi jishi* **莊子集釋** (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, *1986*), *Zhuzi jicheng* edition, v. *3*, chap. *12, 190.*

20 See You Guo'en, "Qufu kaoyuan," and Hawkes, "Quest of Goddess." You has further traced this back to the Yin and Yang school of thought.

21 David Hawkes has discussed this in detail in his essay "Guest of the Goddess."

含朝霞) —all this would find permanent echoes in the poetry of later periods.

3. The *Youxian* Motif in Han *Yüefu*

The graph *xian* 仙 was also written as 僊, which literally means to rise to reach an eternal life.[22] During the Han dynasty searching for immortality gained wide popularity partly due to Emperor Wu's obsession, which encouraged various kinds of immortality cults to pervade society.[23] Under such circumstances the emphasis of *youxian shi* became more preoccupied with describing imaginative journeys to join transcendents in their eternal bliss. Because the bulk of "Yuan you" portrays such a journey, it became the source of inspiration and reference for the poets dealing with this topic. However, when the *youxian* motif in "Yuan you" was adopted by *yuefu* or music bureau poems a few noticeable changes took place. The extravagant descriptions of the cosmic trip in "Yuan you" are mostly omitted, and in the few *yüefu* poems that treat this theme the *tristia* section is entirely left out; what remains, in a much shortened form, is the *itineraria*. In these poems we find no profound sorrows over the sufferings of the world, but merely a wish for longevity that has been removed from specific social contexts. The following is an example:

長歌行	*A Long Song*
仙人騎白鹿	The transcendent rides on a white dear, *1*
髮短耳何長	His hair is short, but his ears are long.
導我上太華	He guides me toward Taihua Mountain,
攬芝獲赤幢	We pluck *lingzhi* herbs, get red-feathered banners. *4*
來到主人門	We arrive at the master's door,
奉藥一玉箱	And present him with drugs in a jade box.

22 *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 defines 僊 as "to ascend to an eternal life" 長生僊去; see *showen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, *1988*), chap. *8, 383. Shiming* 釋名 explains *xian* 仙 as "not to die when one gets old" 老而不死曰仙; cited in *Chuxue ji*, v. *3*, chap. *23, 549.*

23 See "Jiaosi zhi" 郊祀志 in *Han shu*, v. *4*, chap. *25, 1210-71*. Also see Ying-shih Yu, "Life and Immortality in the Mind of Han China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 25* (*1964-65*), *80-122*, and "'O Soul. Come Back!' A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 47* (*1987*): *365-95.*

主人服此藥	When the master takes these drugs,
身體日康強	His health will improve day by day. *8*
髮白［復］更黑	His grey hair will become black,
延年壽命長	His life will reach longevity.[24]

The extraordinarily plain and colloquial language in this poem, characteristic of most poems in the *yüefu* genre, nearly eliminates the heavenly aura in "Yuan you." Gone are the transcendents found in those "far-off" places at heaven's ends; instead the "master" (*zhuren* **主人**) is seen by his "door" (*men* **門**) [25] at Taihua Mountain, the Western Peak near Chang'an. There is nothing celestial about him, whose wish is merely to improve his health and enjoy a long life. This marks the first attempt in a long tradition to bring transcendents and their world down to the human realm.[26]

This simple *yüefu* poem nevertheless signals a shift in the theme of *you-xian shi*. Qu Yuan is not unconcerned with brevity of human life in "Yuan you." He makes it clear, however, that the reason he "came to be fearful of the passing of seasons" (**恐天時之代序兮**) is that he "had gone through the length of years with nothing yet achieved" (**永歷年而無成**).[27] His primary concerns are social and his transcendents and their world are presented as an alternative

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24 Guo Maoqian **郭茂倩**, ed., *Yüefu shiji* **樂府詩集** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1979*), v. *2*, chap. *30*, *442*, my translation. For other translations of this poem, see J. D. Frodsham and Ch'eng Hsi, *An Anthology of Chinese Verse*, *3*, and Anne Birrell, ed. and trans., *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, *1993*), *68*.

25 The stock phrase for this in "Yuan you" and "Li sao" is *changhe* **閶闔**, heavenly gate.

26 Other *yüefu* poems treating this theme are **上陵**, **王子喬**, **董逃行**, **步出夏門行**; all in *Yuefu shiji*. It should be noted that all these poems evince similar characteristics, although to different degrees. Ge Xiaoyin **葛曉音** has argued that the worldly descriptions of godly realms in *yüefu* poetry resulted from the fact that they are modeled after the artistic and architectural designs in temples and palaces built throughout the country during the Han dynasty, when the nation was obsessed with various religious cults and practices, the most prevalent of which was the search for longevity. See "Lun Han yüefu xushishi de fazhan yuanyin he biaoxian yishu" **論漢樂府敘事詩的發展原因和表現藝術**, in her *Han-Tang wenxue de shanbian* **漢唐文學的嬗變** (Beijing: Beijing daxue, *1990*), *11-14*.

27 *Chuci buzhu*, *165*; *Songs of the South*, *195*.

to the corrupt society. But in this poem society is bracketed out, and the search for longevity becomes the only motif. The transcendents and their world come to represent a de-contextualized alternative to an equally de-contextualized human life. This is an important shift, because when removed from its original socio-political context, the *youxian* motif can be appropriated by other poets for different purposes, as we will see later in our discussion.

4. *Youxian shi*'s Heyday, the Wei-Jin Period

The interest in immortality gained a new intensity during the Wei-Jin period. Large scale social destruction brought about by wars and natural disasters, and cruel political struggles that led to the death of numerous famous literati made the poets of the time keenly aware of the fragility and transience of human life.[28] Even though many of them had strong doubts about the validity of the immortality cult and practice,[29] they were nonetheless drawn to the *youxian* motif because it provided them with at least a temporary relief from the pressing tragedies of human existence. Cao Zhi **曹植** (*192-232*) and Guo Pu **郭璞** (*276-324*) are the best-known figures of this poetic mode during its heyday.

Cao Zhi was the first poet to use *youxian* to name one of his poems. His *youxian shi* further developed the thematic shift that occurred in the *yüefu* poem discussed earlier. Stylistically, however, they are much closer to "Yuan you" because Cao Zhi adopted Qu Yuan's diction and imagery in portraying his transcendents and their activities. The poem that bears the name of this

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28 Among those who lost their lives in political struggles is Guo Pu, whose poetry will be considered in detail in this essay. He was executed by Wang Dun **王敦** for trying to persuade him not to start a coup against the government. See the biography of Guo Pu in *Jin shu* **晉書** (Beijing: *1974*), v. *6*, chap. *42, 1899-1910*.

29 Cao Zhi, for example, vehemently denounced them in his "Biandao lun" **辯道論**, and poem *7* of "Zeng Baima Wang Biao" **贈白馬王彪**. See *Cao zhi ji jiaozhu, 186-89*, and *300*. Later in his life, though, his view on immortality cult seemed to have moderated somewhat. See Donald Holzman, "Ts'ao Chih and Immortals," *Asia Major 1* (*1988*): *15-57*, especially *52-57*.

poetic mode also consists of two parts, a *tristia* and an *itineraria*, although greatly reduced in scale:

遊仙	*Saunters in Sylphdom*
人生不滿百	Our life is not a hundred years long,
歲歲少歡娛	The years come and go and give so little pleasure!
意欲奮六翮	I would like to spread my six feathered wings,
排霧陵紫虛	And clearing the fog about me, I'd head up straight to heaven. *4*
蟬蛻同松喬	Like Red Pine and Wang Qiao, I'd give up this old cicada shell,
翻跡登鼎湖	And sail through the sky to the great Tripod Lake.[30]
翱翔九天上	I'd hover above the Ninth Heaven,
騁轡遠行遊	Then ride to take a far-off journey. *8*
東觀扶桑曜	To the East—to see the Sun rising from Fusang,
西臨弱水流	To the West—to stand by where Ruoshui flows,
北極登玄渚	To the North—to attain the Dark Isle,
南翔陟丹邱	To the South—to climb the Cinnabar Hill.[31] *12*

The poem begins with a statement of *tristia*, not about the "parlous state" of the world, but about the brevity of human life. In line *3* the poet adopts a similar rhetorical gesture *yiyu* **意欲** (I would like) to introduce his wish to undertake a heavenly journey, which in line *9* is further described as *yuan-xingyou* **遠行遊** (journey far away).[32] The pattern of the trip, portrayed in a language strongly echoing that of "Yuan you," is also cosmic, as is stressed by the mention of all four directions in the last two couplets. The poet calls upon transcendents Red Pine and Wang Qiao and travels to celestial places located at every corner of the universe. The poem ends on a transcendent note where the grief over human transience expressed at the outset is suppressed.

"A Journey in the Fifth Direction" **五遊詠** looks even more like a scaled-down version of "Yuan you," but, like the poem above, is also devoid of its socio-political dimension. In this poem of greater length, Cao Zhi even adopted

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30 "Tripod Lake" **鼎湖** is where Yellow Emperor was said to have ascended to heaven. See "Feng-shan shu" **封禪書** in *Shi ji* **史記** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1959*), v. *4*, chap. *28*, *1394*.

31 The places named in the last four lines all refer to legendary places where transcendents reside; see *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, *265*, my translation.

32 Cao Zhi wrote another poem entitled "A Far-off Journey" **遠遊篇**. See *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, *402*.

the ornate diction and celestial imagery that have become a trademark of works in the *Chu ci* repertoire:

九州不足步	Even the length and breadth of China cramps my stride, *1*
願得凌雲翔	I would like to hover upward on clouds;
逍遙八紘外	To roam at ease, beyond the edges of the earth,
遊目歷遐荒	And cast my eyes across infinite wilderness. *4*
披我丹霞衣	Clad in my robe of morning cloud,
襲我素霓裳	Dressed with my clothing of pale rainbow;
華蓋芬晻靄	My chariot's painted canopy bright amongst dark mist,
六龍仰天驤	Hauled by six dragons, heavenwards. *8*
曜靈未移景	The sun's shadow has not moved,
倏忽造昊蒼	At a glimpse I find myself in space.
閶闔啟丹扉	The cinnabar gates of heavenly palaces switch open,
雙闕曜朱光	Their twin columns radiate rosy light. *12*
徘徊文昌殿	I'm strolling around the Wen Chang Temple,
登陟太微堂	And ascending the Tai Wei Hall.
上帝休西櫺	The heavenly god is resting by the western lattice,
群后集東廂	His retinue assembles in the eastern room *16*
帶我瓊瑤佩	Decked in pendants of jade,
漱我沆瀣漿	Drinking the dew of midnight air,
踟躕玩靈芝	I wander up and down, twirling with *lingzhi* herbs,
徙倚弄華芳	I pace back and forth, admiring the beautiful flowers. *20*
王子奉仙藥	Wang Qiao presents celestial medicine,
羨門進奇方	Xian Men[33] offers exotic prescriptions.
服食享遐紀	Let us eat and take them so that we may enjoy long life!
延壽保無疆	May we extend our life to eternity![34] *24*

The activities described here not only resemble those of "Yuan you," but are presented in nearly identical vocabulary. The graph *yuan* appears similarly at the beginning of the second line, the poet's chariot is also hauled by dragons, and he too is clad in shining jewelry, drinking midnight dew, and playing with divine herbs. The only difference is the condition that prompted this supernatural journey: the profound sorrow over human sufferings in "Yuan you" is

33 Xian Meng **羨門** is the name of another transcendent; see ibid, *401*n. *15*.

34 *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, *401-02*, my translation.

replaced by an ennui that once more has been generalized and rendered vague.[35]

These two verses demonstrate the overpowering influence of Qu Yuan. Even for a great poet like Cao Zhi the presence of this archetypal figure is so strong that he had to struggle, often unsuccessfully, to make his voice heard. This is particularly striking in light of Cao Zhi's great achievement in almost every other poetic sub-genre.[36] His main contribution to *youxian shi* is that he successfully transplanted the transcendent, "far-off journey" motif in "Yuan you" and its stylistic features to his *shi* poetry. In addition to this, he gave this poetic mode a name that became a permanent part of nomenclature in Chinese literary history.

The *Wen xuan* **文選** edited by Xiao Tong **蕭統** (*501-31*) recognized *youxian* as a distinct mode of *shi* poetry. In this category it included eight poems by two Jin dynasty poets, one by He Shao **何劭** (d. AD *391*), seven by Guo Pu. In fact, Guo Pu's reputation as a poet lies entirely in his fourteen *youxian* poems,[37] the first of which is the most anthologized poem of this mode:

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35 It should be pointed out that traditional readings of Cao Zhi's *youxian shi* aim to supply the socio-political context that has been bracketed out by the poems. Thus like most other poems by Cao Zhi, his *youxian shi* have been interpreted allegorically as expressions of the poet's personal frustrations. For examples of this most common view, see the remark on this poem by Chen Zuoming **陳祚明** cited in Huang Jie, *Cao Zijian shizhu*, *82*, and the general observation on Cao Zhi's *youxian shi* by Li Baojun **李寶均** in his *Caoshi fuzi he jian'an wenxue* **曹氏父子和建安文學** (Shanghai: Zhonghua, *1962*), *45*. Yu Guanying **余冠英** maintains that the wishing for longevity at the end of this poem shows that this might in fact be a drinking poem. *See his San-Cao shixuan* **三曹詩選** (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, *1979*), *55*. Donald Holzman states that Cao Zhi uses the *youxian* motif "no longer only as allegory for his disappointment in politics, but also as a release in fantasy from the narrow confines of his fief and prison." See "Ts'ao Chih and Immortals," *56*.

36 Zhong Rong **鐘嶸** (*468-518*) ranked Cao Zhi as a first class poet and said that Cao Zhi to literature was like Duke Zhou and Confucius to human kind. *See Shi pin* **詩品**. The edition I am using is Cao Xu **曹旭**, ed., *Shi pin jijie* **詩品集解** (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, *1994*), *97*.

37 *Xian-qin han-wei-jin nan-bei chao shi* **先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1983*) ed. by Lu Qinli **逯欽立** includes *19 youxian* poems by Guo Pu, but only *10* are non-fragmentary. See v. *2, 865-87*. For a very general study of Guo Pu's life and his *youxian shi*, see Cao Daoheng **曹**

遊仙詩七首之一	*Seven Poems of Saunters in Sylphdom: Number 1*
京華遊狹窟	The capital is a cave for wandering knights, *1*
山林隱遯棲	Mountains and forests are hiding-places for hermits.
朱門何足榮	Vermilion gates are not what I honor,
未若託蓬萊	Better to entrust my life to Penglai Mountain. *4*
臨源挹清波	There I may drink from clear streams,
陵崗掇丹蕤	And climb the hills to gather cinnabar buds.
靈谿可潛盤	Magic Stream is a good place to withdraw to,
安事登雲梯	What need do I have for climbing the cloud-ladder? *8*
漆園有傲吏	A haughty official once lived in Lacquer Garden,
萊氏有逸妻	Master Lai's wife was fond of the hermit's life.
進則保龍見	Advancement will surely let you see the dragon,
退為觸藩羝	But to retire, you're a goat with horns in the hedge. *12*
高蹈風塵外	Let me leave this wind and dust far behind,
長揖謝夷齊	And bowing low, say farewell to Yi and Qi.[38]

This verse marks an important shift in *youxian shi*. Unlike the poems discussed earlier, its locus is "mountains and forests" (*shanlin* **山林**) acting as an antithetical counterpart to "capital" (*jinghua* **京華**) in the opening couplet. Such antithesis immediately suggests an eremitic theme where the simple life of integrity in nature is contrasted with the corruption in society. This brings back the social dimension in "Yuan you." The next couplet reinforces this, as "vermilion gates" (*zhumen* **朱門**), symbolic of power and wealth, is contrasted with Penglai Mountain (*Penglai* **蓬萊**), a conventional place for transcendents. Because *Penglai* and *shanlin* are placed in parallel positions and their counterparts both refer to vainglory and corruption, we are led to believe that they signify the same location, i.e. "mountains and forests," where one may escape such vainglory and corruption.

Lines *5* and *6* describe two conventional activities in eremitic literature. Note that there are no cosmic flights, no supernatural creatures, no transcen-

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道衡, "Guo Pu he youxian shi" **郭璞和遊仙詩**, in his *Zhonggu wenue shi lunwen ji* **中古文學史論文集** (Beijing: Zhonghua: *1986*), *196-210*.

38 *Wen xuan* **文選**, v. *3*, chap. *21*, *1019*. English translation in Frodsham, *Anthology of Chinese Verse*, *92-93*, with my modifications.

dents such as Red Pine and Wang Qiao. Drinking from clear streams and gathering plants (albeit that "cinnabar buds" *danyi* **丹蕊**) can be naturalized,[39] especially in a mountainous setting. Both the editors of *Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao wenxue shi cankao ziliao* and Frodsham maintain that the subject of this couplet is the hermit.[40] I believe the subject is the poet, who, after stating in line *4* that he would rather lead a life of seclusion in "mountains and forests," goes on to imagine in this couplet the life he may have had there. This is a significant difference because it demonstrates the change that Guo Pu tries to initiate in *youxian shi*, namely, to shift the focus away from transcendents to the lyric subject or the poet himself. This interpretation also makes the reading of lines *9* and *10* less abrupt. After imagining the reclusive life he may enjoy in mountains, the poet is moved to announce its sufficiency: "Magic Stream is a good place to withdraw to" (**靈谿可潛盤**), and to renounce the need for any transcendence: "What need do I have for climbing the cloud-ladder?" (**安事登雲梯**). According to Li Shan, "Magic Stream" (*lingxi* **靈谿**) is the name of an actual river, whereas to "climb the cloud-ladder" (*deng yunti* **登雲梯**) refers to searching for transcendence.[41] This is the first example that a *youxian* poem explicitly renounces the necessity of *youxian*, the longing and quest for transcendents.

Lines *9* and *10* use two allusions, not however to transcendents, but to historical figures. The haughty official in Lacquer Garden refers to Zhuangzi who refused to serve in the court of a Chu King.[42] The story of Master Lai's wife is

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39 Li Shan, quoting the *Bencao jing* **本草經**, says that *chizhi* **赤芝**, also named **丹芝** *danzhi*, can prolong one's life. *Yi* **蕊** refers to young herbs. *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21, 1019*.

40 *Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao*, *324*; Frodsham, *92*.

41 *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21, 1019*. A contemporary Chinese critic argues that this phrase is a metaphor for political advancement, because if it were refering to the search for immortality it would have clashed with the poem's title. See the interpretive essay on this poem by Yuan Qing **元青** in the *Han-Wei Liuchao shi jianshang cidian* **漢魏六朝詩鑒賞辭典** (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, *1992*), *439-41*. I believe Li Shan's interpretation is correct, but Yuan's uneasiness shows that Guo Pu's poem represents a significant change in this mode.

42 *Shi ji*, cited in *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21, 1019*.

taken from *Lienu zhuan* **列女傳**, *Biographies of Exemplary Women.* It is said that Master Lai, a hermit, was once tempted by an offer of service from the king. His wife then left him in anger and shame, which prompted Master Lai to follow his wife's footsteps.[43] These two allusions help to highlight the poet's desire to withdraw from society. The reference to historical figures is another important innovation that Guo Pu brought into *youxian shi*. It gives the poem a historical dimension that further emphasizes the human aspect of this seemingly transcendent mode of poetry.

The last four lines state once again the poet's determination to leave society, where one is trapped in either advancement or failure.[44] The mention of Bo Yi **伯夷** and Shu Qi **叔齊**, two Confucian models for filial piety and loyalty, suggests that such traditional virtues are mere obstacles to the poet's retreat to a Taoist world of freedom. The penultimate line, "Let me leave this wind and dust far behind" (**高蹈風塵外**), is the only place in the entire poem where a journey is implied, but the poet has made it clear that it points toward "mountains and forests."

This change did not escape the attention of critics. Zhong Rong noted that Guo Pu's *youxian shi* "teem with strong sorrows (*kangkai* **慷慨**) and stray far from religious thoughts (*xuanzong* **玄宗**). Lines such as 'What about the manners of tigers and leopards' (**奈何虎豹姿**) and 'Gathering wings to nest in brushes' (**戢翼棲榛梗**)[45] in fact express his heartfelt frustrations (**坎壈詠懷**). They are not at all interested in transcedents."[46] Li Shan observed that "Generally speaking, *youxian shi* tend to fault [the world's] dusty web and belittle official service. [In them the poets] sup on morning clouds in the highest heaven and dine on jade in a heavenly paradise. But in Guo Pu's poems one finds

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43 Ibid.

44 I am following the reading of lines *11* and *12* by the editors of *Wen-Jin Nan-bei-chao wenxueshi cankao ziliao, 325.* Li Shan holds that to advance (*jin* **進**) refers to the search for transcendents. See *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21, 1019.*

45 The poems from where these two lines were taken are no longer extant.

46 *Shi pin jijie, 247.*

a great deal of self-expression (*zixu* **自敘**)."[47] The phrases *yonghuai* **詠懷** (heart-felt chanting) and *zixu* **自敘** (self-expression) are often used to describe lyric poetry, which in the Chinese tradition is defined as the poet's response to historical events.[48] *Yonghuai* in particular alludes to Ruan Ji's eighty-two "Poems Expressing My Feelings" **詠懷詩** where he meditates on history, contemporary events, and life.[49] That these phrases were used to describe Guo Pu's *youxian shi* demonstrates that Guo Pu lyricized this mode. After Guo Pu *youxian shi* no longer simply describes heavenly journeys aiming to transcend human sufferings and mortality; rather it becomes a form of lyrical expression.

My analysis of the poem above illustrates that compared with *yüefu* and Cao Zhi's *youxian shi* Guo Pu's uses a less straightforward structure and dense texture. The parallels and contrasts between capital and mountains/forests, Taoist simplicity and social corruption, the presence of numerous historical allusions, and the poet's personal feelings conveyed via these devices make a reading far richer than the one offered by the earlier works, where the focus is on the description of transcendents.

To further demonstrate this significant change let us take a look at the third verse of the group. There the shift from the transcendents' heaven to the human world is equally remarkable:

翡翠戲蘭苕	Feicui birds are playing among orchid flowers, *1*
容色更相鮮	Together their colors look more brilliant.
綠蘿結高林	Green vines twine around tall trees,
蒙籠蓋一山	Their luster envelops the entire mountain. *4*

47 *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21, 1018*. Zhong Rong and Li Shan's comments are echoed by numerous critics in the classical tradition. See *Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao wenxueshi cankao ziliao, 330-32*, and *Shi pin jijie, 151-52*.

48 See "The Great Preface to *The Book of Songs*" **詩大序**, in James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics: IV The She King, or The Book of Poetry* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, *1960*), *34-37*; for a discussion and another translation of this document, see Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 37-49*.

49 For the text of these poems, see Lu Qinli, *Xian-Qin Han-Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao shi*, v. *1, 497-510*; for a study of Ruan Ji's poetry, see Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi, AD 210-263* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, *1976*).

中有寂冥士	There one finds a hermit
靜嘯撫清絃	Who, hands on clear strings, is quietly chanting.
放情陵霄外	His feelings hover above the clouds,
嚼蕊挹飛泉	He chews flower buds, drinks from flying fountains. *8*
赤松臨上遊	Up there Red Pine roams about,
駕鴻乘紫煙	And rides his crane on purple clouds.
左挹浮丘袖	On his left he holds on to Fu Qiu's sleeve,
右拍洪崖肩	On his right he pats Hong Yai's shoulder. *12*
借問蜉蝣輩	Ask those ephemera-like people:
寧知龜鶴年	How can they know the years of turtle and crane? [50]

This poem can be viewed as an illustration of lines *7* and *8* of the first poem, where the poet proclaims the self-sufficiency of life in nature and renounces the need of searching for transcendence. It is set in a mountain, where a hermit dwells. The first four lines portray its lustrous beauty: colorful birds [51] are dancing among orchid flowers in a mountain wrapped by green luster. The realistic nature of this description has prompted one critic to consider this poem as one of the earliest harbingers of landscape poetry.[52] There is none of the supernatural aura that one finds in "Yuan you" and Cao Zhi's poems, and it is against this backdrop of a natural location that the hermit and transcendents are introduced.

The striking difference between this and earlier *youxian shi* is that not only is the *itineraria* abandoned altogether, but the transcendents are also brought down to join the hermit in the mountain. Red Pine may still be riding his crane on clouds, but the poet has made him come to accompany the hermit in his life of reclusion.[53] No longer standing in stupefied admiration in front of

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50 *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21*, *1020-21*; *Xian-Qin Han-Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao shi*, v. *2*, *865*, my translation.

51 The feathers of *feicui* birds are very colorful, ranging from blue, green, red, brown to other colors. See *Ciyuan* **辭源**.

52 See Lin Wenyüe **林文月**, "Cong youxian shi dao shanshui shi" **從遊仙詩到山水詩**, in her *Shanshui yu gudian* **山水與古典** (Taipei: Chuwenxue, *1976*), *8-12*.

53 It should be noted that the description of the hermit's life in this poem, with its specific mention of chanting, drinking from fountains, and playing stringed instruments, has already been con-

the transcendents, the hermit treats them as equals as he frolics with them in lines *11* and *12*. This suggests that there is no difference between dwelling in Taoist freedom and searching for immortality. The rhetorical question in the last line sets up a contrast between transience and longevity, represented respectively by ephemera-like people (*fuyou bei* **蜉蝣輩**) and turtle-crane years (*guihe nian* **蜉蝣輩**).[54] It reinforces the poem's Taoist theme, that a reclusive existence is more conducive to a healthy, long life.

It must be noted that among Guo Pu's ten non-fragmentary *youxian* poems there are two that do describe heavenly *itinerarias* that resemble the ones in "Yuan you" and Cao Zhi's poems.[55] They do not, however, represent the main thrust of his *youxian shi*. In fact, these two pieces are often excluded in later anthologies.[56] They are certainly not what Zhong Rong and Li Shan had in mind when they commented on the lyrical and lack of transcendental qualities of his poems. Rather than going through another such journey, I will invite the readers to look at poem *5* where the "far-off journey" has been invested with a different meaning:

逸翮思拂霄 I spread my wing and want to fly on clouds, *1*

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ventionalized by Guo Pu's time. See for example Ji Kang's **嵇康** "Siyan zeng xiong xiucai yuzhun shi" **四言贈兄秀才入軍詩**, in *Xian-Qin Han-Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao shi*, v. *1, 482-84*.

54 Ephemera (*fuyou* **蜉蝣**) is an insect that is born in the morning and dies in the evening, hence a conventional image for transience. Cranes and turtles are conventional Taoist symbols for longevity, because, according to *Yangsheng yaolun* **養生要論** cited by Li Shan, cranes bend their necks when they rest, turtles hide themselves when they are choked, and these two methods are followed by those who try to nourish their nature through breathing exercises. See *wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21, 1021*.

55 They are poems *6* and *10*. Liu Xie **劉勰** might have them in mind when he remarked that Guo Pu's *youxian shi* "hover above the clouds" **飄飄而凌雲矣**. See *Wenxin diaolong [zhu]* **文心雕龍［注］**, ann. by Fan Wenlan **范文瀾** (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, *1978*), v. *2, 701*.

56 Xiao Tong included poem *6* in his *Wen xuan*, but not poem *10* which is the most "celestial" piece in the entire group. Most other pre-modern anthologies followed his step in selecting Guo Pu's works; see for example Shen Deqian **沈德潛**, ed., *Gushi yuan* **古詩源** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1963*), and Wang Shizhen **王士禎** and Wen Rentan **聞人倓**, eds., *Gushi jian* **古詩箋** (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, *1980*). The previously cited *Han-Wei Liu-chao shi jianshang cidian*, comprehensive as it is, does not include these two pieces.

迅足羨遠遊	With quickening feet I wish to go on a far-off journey.
清源無增瀾	But there are no high waves in the clear streams,
安得運吞舟	How can they carry the fish that can swallow a boat? *4*
珪璋雖特達	The *Gui* and *Zhang* jade may be special passes,
明月難暗投	Bright pearl is hard to throw in the dark.
潛穎怨青陽	Hidden flowers complain about Spring,
陵苕哀素秋	Outstanding blossoms sorrow over Autumn. *8*
悲來惻丹心	My heart is grieved by such sadness,
零淚緣纓流	As tears stream down my tassels.[57]

The poem opens with the poet's wish to embark on a "far-off journey," thus evoking Qu Yuan and Cao Zhi's works. The next couplet, however, takes a very unexpected twist. Instead of moving up toward clouds, we are led downward, on the surface of "clear streams" (*qingyuan* **清源**), and are told that they are not deep enough to carry a big fish. This alludes to a passage in *Hanshi waizhuan* **韓詩外傳** where Mencius said that "a boat that can swallow a fish will not reside in a shallow moor, and a man of great ambition will not live in a foul world." [58] Li Shan interprets this couplet as a metaphorical statement that "the dusty customs [of the world] are not enough to sustain the transcendents." [59] After this one might expect the poet to turn his attention away from the stream and move upward, but this is not the case at all. The poem still focuses on human world. The jade and bright pearl in lines *5* and *6* are metaphors of virtue and talent.[60] Line *5* in particular is a paraphrase of Confucius' following words: "Gui and Zhang are special passes [because they represent] virtue."[61] This couplet seems to suggest that people of outstanding virtue may cause misunderstanding and even be persecuted if they encounter unfortunate situations.

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57 *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21*, *1021-22*; *Xian-Qin Han-Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao shi*, v. *2*, *865-66*, my translation.

58 Cited in *Wen xuan*, v. *3*, chap. *21*, *1021*.

59 Ibid.

60 *Gui* and *Zhang* are jade tools used in court and ritual ceremonies and services. Bright pearl (**明月之珠**) refers to a passage by Zou Yang **鄒陽** which says that if one throws a bright pearl in front of people in the dark, it will cause them to hold their swords in alarm; ibid.

61 *Li ji* **禮記**, cited by Li Shan; ibid.

It may also suggest, as Li Shan points out, that those with transcendent ambitions are usually misunderstood by the world.[62] This is an important connection because with its help the poet may use *youxian* and its conventions to express his personal and worldly sentiments.

This, I believe, is exactly what he does in the remaining part of the poem. The two situations described in lines *7* and *8*, that sorrow accompanies both Spring and Autumn, two seasons symbolic of different circumstances, indicate that people of outstanding virtue may suffer the same fate.[63] It must be this painful realization that causes the remarkable display of grief in the last couplet, an emotional outpouring that has hitherto been unseen in the endings of *youxian shi*.[64] The "far-off journey" proposed in the first two lines never materializes in the poet's mind. His attention remains concentrated on the human conditions that the "far-off journey" is conventionally assumed to transcend.

Guo Pu's poems have retained the original socio-political thrust of Qu Yuan's "Yuan you" because they likewise represent an alternative to a corrupt society, except that one no longer need to search for it in a transcendent realm. In essence, the *youxian shi* discussed so far, including those of Cao Zhi, are situated in alienating socio-political backgrounds and human conditions. Their function is to express symbolically the poets' longing for integrity and freedom

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62 Ibid.

63 Li Shan holds that this couplet talks about the people of the world who, doubtful of the validity of the search for transcendents, nevertheless complain about the unfair distribution of natural favor in the Spring and the early arrival of Autumn. See ibid. He Linhui **何林輝**, who wrote the essay on this poem in *Han-Wei Liuchao shi jianshang cidian*, believes that this poem is entirely an allegory of poet's personal frustrations. However, in his discussion he completely ignores the conventions of the genre. For example, he fails to mention its connection with "Yuan you." See pages *447-48*. I agree that this poem in fact talks more about the poet's feelings and thoughts, but it must be noted that he is doing so through the generic characteristics of *youxian shi*. This is a crucial point.

64 The only other poem where such a strong emotion is described is "Yuan you," but it occurs at the beginning and is erased or transcended toward the end. This is a significant difference, as it suggests a change in the function and purpose of *youxian shi*. It is to express, not to transcend.

that are denied by society and human lot. What would happen if the *youxian* motif is taken up by court literature whose chief function is to entertain, and whose writers are mainly concerned with glorifying the status quo?

5. The Courtly Revision of *Youxian shi* in Late Southern Dynasties

That court literature should show any interest in the *youxian* motif may be puzzling at first look. After all, *youxian shi* aims to transcend social corruption of which the court and its culture are often thought to be the main representatives. But as I have stated earlier, the de-politicization of *youxian* motif already takes place in the *youxian* poems of *yüe fu* and Cao Zhi because in these works it no longer constitutes a socio-political alternative as it does in "Yuan you"; instead it comes to represent an escape from human transience. Indeed, since searching for immortality transcends particular socio-political contexts, the *youxian* motif always has the potential to be appropriated for different purposes. Sima Xiangru, for example, adroitly deleted the socio-political aspects of "Yuan you" and turned it into "*Fu* on the Great Master" (**大人賦**) to entertain Emperor Wu's fantasies of immortality.[65] The court poets of the late Six Dynasties followed Sima Xiangru's lead and used the *youxian* motif merely for decorative purposes. In their works *youxian* became a trope for courtly glory and a rhetorical means to flatter their patrons. Thus courtly *youxian shi* is no longer a social protest; rather it is turned into a social panegyric and decoration. Here is a poem by Shen Yue **沈約** (*441-513*):

和竟陵王	*Two Poems of Saunters in Sylphdom, Written to Match*
遊仙詩二首之一	*Prince Jingling: Number 1*
天嶠承絳仙	The crimson transcendents ride on the heavenly mountain pass,
螭衣方陸離	How brilliant are their dragon robes!
玉鑾隱雲霧	Jade chariots are concealed in mists and clouds,
溶溶紛上弛	Striding upward in magnificent grandeur.

65 For a text of this work, see Zhu Yiqing **朱一清** and Sun Yizhao **孫以昭**, eds. and anns., *Sima xiangru ji jiaozhu* **司馬相如集校注** (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, *1996*), *67-69.*

瑤臺風不息	On azure-gem terrace wind does not cease,
赤水正漣漪	Red Stream is rippling by.
崢嶸玄圃上	High up at Dark Orchard of Kunlun Mountain
聊攀瓊樹枝	Leisurely we are plucking from the emerald boughs.[66]

In this poem the diction and conventions of *youxian shi* are applied to a courtly excursion; as a result the prince and his retinue are turned into transcendents. For example, in the opening line the prince and his entourage are described as *jiangxian* **絳仙** (crimson transcendents), an allusion to the renowned transcendent Wang Ziqiao, who is described as wearing crimson clothes in *Shuijing zhu* **水經注**.[67] The *yuluan* **玉鑾** or jade chariots that are moving upward along the mountain path in line *3* reinforce this because they refer to royal vehicles.[68] Now that the prince and his retinue are established as the locus of description in the first two couplets, the celestial places that appear in the next three lines, namely *Yaotai* **瑤臺** (Jade Terraces), *Chishui* **赤水** (Red Stream), and *xuanpu* **玄圃** (Dark Orchard),[69] are to be understood in the same vein, as celebratory compliments. There is no *tristia*, and the poem gives no hint at all of the poet's emotional state. The entire poem consists of a condensed, elegant *itineraria*, and it is important to note that this *itineraria* is presented as an independent entity, not an alternative, either to social conditions or to human transience, as in the verses discussed earlier.

In addition to function, another important factor that helped to bring about this transformation of *youxian shi* in court literature is the context of its composition. In previous periods it was written under private circumstances.[70]

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66 *Yiwen leiju*, v. *2*, chap. *78, 1335*. Also in *Xian-Qin Han-Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao shi*, v. *2, 1636*, my translation.

67 Li Daoyuan **酈道元**, *Shuijing zhu* **水經注**, ann. Wang Guowei **王國維** (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, *1984*), ch. *23, 755*.

68 The "Yufu zhi" **輿服志** in *Hou-Han shu* **後漢書** (Beijing: Zhonghua, *1965*) notes that jade is used to decorate imperial vehicles; v. *12*, chap. *29, 3643*. For an earlier example of this usage in poetry, see *yuwang* (**玉輞**) in Cao Zhi's "Xiji fu" **喜霽賦**; *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu*, *211*.

69 All three places are said to be located on Kunlun Mountain.

Even during the Jian'an **建安** era (*196-220*) when group composition on certain topics was in vogue, the *youxian* subject was left alone. A private context ensures the personal nature of *youxian shi* because it enables poets to use this motif to contemplate issues in life and society that are of special importance to them. Thus in the poems discussed earlier we sense the personal involvement of the poets, who use writing poetry in this particular mode as an occasion to express their personal hopes and frustrations. In court literature this changes entirely. Personal expressions have to be sacrificed in order to conform to public rules or decorum,[71] and in a courtly environment that accentuates entertainment and conformity, personal frustrations and fears, two key elements in earlier *youxian shi*, are particularly irrelevant. However, the description of splendid processions of transcendents in *youxian shi* is nevertheless welcomed by court poets because it is consistent with the grandeur of courtly activities; in addition, comparing one's patron to a transcendent is always a compliment. Shen Yue's poem demonstrates that this is its only aspect that interests him, as its sequel further illustrates:

之二	Number *2*
朝止閶闔宮	In the morning we stop at the palace of Changhe,
暮宴清都闕	In the evening we banquet at the pavilion of Limpid City.
騰蓋隱奔星	Flying canopies obscure the rushing stars,
低鑾避行月	Low chariots evade the journeying moon.
九疑紛相從	The gods of Mount Jiuyi accompany us in grandeur,

70 The authorship of *yüe fu* poetry was a very thorny issue. In my opinion, the fact that they were performed in public certainly does not rule out the possibility of their being written in private situations. For studies on this topic, see Xiao Difei **蕭滌非**, *Han-wei Liu-chao yüefu wenxueshi* **漢魏六朝樂府文學史** (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, *1984*), chaps. *1, 2*, and Zong-qi Cai, *The Matrix of Lyric Transformation: Poetic Modes and Self-Presentation in Early Chinese Pentasyllabic Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, *1996*), chap. *2*.

71 For discussions on this aspect of court literature, see Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Early T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, *1977*), and Fusheng Wu, *The Poetics of Decadence: Chinese Poetry of the Southern Dynasties and Late Tang Periods* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, *1998*), chap. *2*.

虹旌乍升沒	Banners emerge and submerge now and then.
青鳥去復還	Blue birds shuttle to and fro,
高唐雲不歇	Clouds from Gaotang Gorge never cease.
若華有余照	By Ruohua trees there remains lingering light,
淹留且晞髮	Where we loiter and dry our hair.[72]

The echoes of Qu Yuan's "Yuan you" are heard throughout the poem. The first couplet employs not only its diction, such as *Changhe* **閶闔** and *Qingdu* **清都**,[73] both referring to heavenly locations in the original contexts, but also one of its most noticeable rhetorical devices: the juxtaposition of morning (*zhao* **朝**) and evening (*mu* **暮**) as a way of portraying the sequence of activities.[74] After further describing the pompous processions of this excursion in lines *3* to *6*, the poet inserts in lines *7* and *8* two allusions to royal adventures that help to accentuate the courtly nature of the excursion. "Blue birds" (*qingniao* **青鳥**) alludes to the story in *Hanwu gushi* **漢武故事** where the Queen Mother of the West **西王母** is said to have sent two blue birds to carry a message for Emperor Wu of Han.[75] "Gaotang Gorge" (*gaotang* **高唐**) refers to the sexual encounter between King Huai of Chu and the goddess of Wu Mountain recounted in Song Yu's **宋玉** "Gaotang fu" **高唐賦**.[76] After what must have been an orgy, implied in line *8* by the phrase *yun buxie* **雲不歇** "the clouds [of sexual pleasures] never cease,"[77] the prince and his entourage are portrayed in the last two lines as taking a rest at another celestial location, "Ruohua" **若華**. Once more the language of these two lines echoes that of *Chu ci*,[78] but such

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72 *Yiwen leiju*, v. *2*, chap. *78, 1335.* Also in *Xian-Qin Han-Wei-Jin Nan-Bei-chao shi*, v. *2, 1636.*

73 See "Yuanyou," **命天閽其開關兮，排閶闔而望余**; and **集重陽入帝宮兮，造旬始而觀清都** ; *Chuci buzhu*, *168, 169.*

74 See for example the following two lines in "Yuan you," **朝發軔於太儀兮，夕始臨乎微閭** *Chuci buzhu*, *169.* There are numerous similar examples in "Li sao."

75 See *Ciyuan*, *1824.*

76 See *Wen xuan*, v. *2*, chap. *19, 875-82.*

77 Before leaving King Huai, the goddess of Mount Wu said that "in the morning I will be morning clouds, and in the evening I will be evening rain." Ibid, *876.*

78 **若木** (here referred as **若華**) are trees said to be located where the sun sets. "Li sao" used this reference in the following two lines: **折若木以拂日兮，聊逍遙以相羊** ; *Chuci buzhu*, *28. Xifa*

echoes are only superficial, because Shen Yue uses the stylistic features of "Yuan you" and *Chu ci* to describe a very different activity.

6. Conclusion

Courtly *youxian shi* abandons the protesting character of earlier *youxian shi* and thereby turns itself into an encomium. This transformation provides us with an occasion to reflect on the principles behind the evolution of a literary archetype in the Chinese tradition. I propose to use "imitation" and "parody" to describe the two stages in this process.

Imitation may characterize the development of *youxian shi* from Qu Yuan to Han *yüefu*, Cao Zhi, and Guo Pu because an apparent continuity exists between them. In this stage "Yuan you," the model of emulation, and identification with it are crucial in interpreting a poem in this poetic mode because its value and style are constantly invoked and maintained. The result is that even though the focuses of these four groups of poems vary, they nonetheless share a common spirit and purpose, which is to express the poets' frustrations with society and life and to protest against evils and imperfections therein. The shift toward describing a de-contextualized search for immortality that occurred in the *yüefu* genre is still within this general framework. The same is true for Guo Pu's poems. Although they are different from "Yuan you" in many aspects, they do not constitute a revision of it because the values of the former can be directly applied to the latter without causing any sense of incongruity. Compared to the *youxian* shi of Han *yüefu* and Cao Zhi, Guo Pu's are more "original" in that they *added* more dimensions to this poetic mode, thereby enriching it.

Shen Yue's courtly *youxian shi* evidently demonstrates a different thrust. It may be characterized as a parody because it is clearly a "twist or reversal of

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晞髮 (to dry hair) in the last line refers to the following two lines in "Jiu ge: Shao siming" **九歌：少司命** of *Chu ci*: **與女休兮咸池，晞女髮兮陽之阿**; ibid, *73*.

those cultural values embedded in the source-text."[79] In his poems what is invoked is merely the "Yuan you" style, but it has been "misprised" to subvert the original message in the source-text. Shen Yue's *youxian shi* therefore constitutes a revision of its precursor, "Yuan you." Here Harold Bloom's notion of "metalepsis" or "transumption" may help to illustrate rhetorically this process. According to Bloom, a metalepsis is a rhetorical act of troping on, alluding to a precursor text, and then turning it toward a different direction or making it take in another sense.[80] Similarly we may regard Shen Yue's two *youxian* poems as a trope. They trope on, via allusion, "Yuan you" the source-text, and by this rhetorical "turn" force it to acquire a different meaning, as a panegyric on the status quo.

One must note, however, that Bloom's general description of poetic influence and revision as a psychological battle of survival is not as helpful as his illustration of some particular rhetorical acts therein. The "anxiety of influence" that Bloom perceived in the history of Western literature is certainly not as important an issue in the Chinese tradition. Cao Zhi, for example, is without question a "strong poet," but our analysis has shown that he is not much concerned with competing with Qu Yuan for literary immortality. Instead he seems content with partaking in the tradition established by Qu Yuan the precursor and articulating his feelings and thoughts in that tradition. Shen Yue's revisionist misprision of Qu Yuan's "Yuan you" is carried out more with humor than with anxiety, as is suggested by the light-hearted tone of his two poems discussed in this essay, and his misprision is determined more by the socio-historical circumstances of composition than by his desire to overthrow Qu Yuan. David Lattimore's comments on the different type of literary immortality sought by Western and Chinese writers may help to clarify this issue:

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79 Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, *1993*), *882.*

80 See Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, *1976*), passim.

"...Roman and Renaissance poets envisaged chiefly the immortality of their own literary 'monuments' (which would, in turn, confer immortality on the subjects of the monuments), whereas the Chinese envisaged chiefly a corporate immortality, devolving upon the individual poet from his participation in a continuing tradition."[81] The evolution of *youxian shi* I have delineated so far is not without its turns, but they are certainly not enough to break its continuity. After all, parody is still an imitation,[82] albeit an ironic and subversive one.

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81 "Allusion and T'ang Poetry," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twichett, eds., *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, *1973*), *412.*

82 See *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, 881.*

由抗議到禮贊：
先秦至南朝遊仙詩的演變

吳 伏 生

摘 要

本文探討遊仙詩這一文體從先秦至南朝的演變過程。通過對此期間五組作品的細微分析，它力圖證明遊仙詩最初作為一種對社會邪惡的抗議，濫觴於楚辭中的「遠遊」。此後遊仙的主題從賦遊離到詩中，個人抒情的成分逐漸增加，對仙境的描寫則逐漸減少。在「遠遊」中遊仙的目的在於超越人世，而在後來的作品中它卻被詩人用來吟詠人世的情懷。在南朝宮廷詩人沈約的筆下，遊仙更成為對朝廷歌功頌德的藉口。這一演變過程揭示了中國詩歌史中文體變化的兩個規律，即模仿（imitation）和滑稽模仿（parody）。前者是對原形作品的繼承和發展，後者則是對它的篡改與修正。

關鍵詞：遊仙詩、仙、模仿、滑稽模仿、文體準則