CHAPTER 4

Creating a Book and Performing It: The "Yao lüe" Chapter of the *Huainanzi* as a Western Han *Fu*

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The Cultural Context of the *Huainanzi*

In 139 BCE, Liu An 劉安, king of Huainan 淮南 (r. 179?–122 BCE), visited the imperial court at Chang'an for a statutory audience with Emperor Wu 武 (r. 141–87 BCE).[1] Liu An was a grandson of the Han dynasty founding emperor Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 202–195 BCE) and the uncle of Emperor Wu, who at the time was eighteen years old and had been appointed emperor just two years before. During his visit, Liu An presented the emperor with a lengthy text that in Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92 CE) *Hanshu* 漢書 biography is called "inner writings" (*neishu* 內書)[2] and that the catalog of the late Western Han imperial library, as preserved in the *Hanshu* "Monograph on Arts and Writings" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志), lists as "Inner [Writings] of Huainan" ("Huainan nei" 淮南內).[3] From Han times onward, this text has generally been accepted as the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, the Western Han book transmitted in twenty-one chapters. Both *Hanshu* passages attribute the authorship of the text directly to Liu An, although most modern scholars regard Liu An as the patron of the text, the individual chapters of which were probably composed by some of the 'several thousand' scholarly retainers in residence at his court in Shouchun 壽春, the last capital of the ancient state of Chu in modern Anhui.[4]

In recent years, the *Huainanzi*, a central work of early Chinese intellectual history, has finally begun to receive the attention it deserves in Western scholarship. After decades of occasional scholarly articles and scattered translations of individual chapters,[5] Charles Le Blanc and Rémi Mathieu published their French translation of the entire text in 2003,[6] capping a substantial tradition in francophone scholarship.[7] Now, a complete English translation, by John S. Major and collaborators, has been published (2010).[8] In conjunction with this effort, a panel, "Rhetorical Strategies in the *Huainanzi*," was organized at the 218th meeting of the American Oriental Society in March 2008;[9] here, Major argued that the text is not only a *summa* of contemporaneous philosophical

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[1] On Liu An's scheduled visits, see Griet Vankeerberghen, *The* Huainanzi *and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 49–51.

[2] As opposed to "numerous outer writings" (*waishu shen zhong* 外書甚眾) and eight scrolls of "middle writings" (*zhongshu* 中書); see Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Han). 12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 44.2145.

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[3] Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 30.1741. The text goes on to list "Outer [Writings] of Huainan" ("Huainan wai" 淮南外) in thirty-three bundles.

[4] See Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Liang Han sixiang shi* 兩漢思想史 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1976), 2:175–293; also the summary by Judson Murray, "A Study of 'Yaolüe' 要略, 'A Summary of the Essentials': Understanding the *Huainanzi* Through the Point of View of the Author of the Postface," *Early China* 29 (2004): 45–108.

[5] See Charles Le Blanc, "*Huai nan tzu*," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China and Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993), 193–95; more recent studies are also noted in Vankeerberghen, *The* Huainanzi *and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*; Murray, "A Study of 'Yaolüe' 要略," 45–108; Sarah A. Queen, "Inventories of the Past: Rethinking the 'School' Affiliation of the *Huainanzi*," *Asia Major*, 3rd ser., 14.1 (2001): 51–72.

[6] Charles Le Blanc and Rémi Mathieu, *Philosophes Taoïstes II: Huainan zi* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).

[7] See, e.g., Claude Larre, *Le traité VII du Houai nan tseu* (Taipei: Institut Ricci, 1982); Charles Le Blanc and Rémi Mathieu, *Mythe et philosophie à l'aube de la Chine impériale: Études sur le Huainan zi* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal; Paris: De Boccard, 1992); Claude Larre, Isabelle Robinet, and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée, *Les grands traités du Huainan zi* (Paris: Éditions du CERF, 1993).

[8] John S. Major, Sarah A. Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, trans., *The* Huainanzi*: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, Translations from the Asian Classics (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[9] Chicago, March 14–17, 2008.

thought but also a repertoire of Western Han literary forms used in political and philosophical persuasion. The text, Major noted, is unusual in its attempt to be not just philosophical—in the way many early Chinese texts are—but persuasive; it has an occasion, a message, and a purpose.[10]

Despite Major's stylistic observations, the *Huainanzi* remains primarily discussed in terms of intellectual history while only limited attention is given to its language and rhetorical force. My own thoughts about Liu An and the work compiled under his patronage wander in a different direction. As a student of classical literature, I am thinking of the court at Shouchun as one of the centers of early Western Han literary culture.

To begin with, Liu An's court produced a large and wide-ranging body of prose and poetic writings encompassing diverse fields of knowledge and philosophical thought.[11] More specifically, the *Hanshu* "Monograph on Arts and Writings" credits Liu An with no fewer than eighty-two "poetic expositions" (*fu* 賦) and his retainers with another forty-four; by comparison, the retrospectively most celebrated *fu* author of Liu An's time, Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 BCE), has twenty-nine pieces listed under his name. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Eastern Han criticism of the Western Han *fu* that began with Yang

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[10] John S. Major, "Refutation and Argumentation in *Huainanzi* 19, 'Cultivating Effort,'" paper presented at the 218th meeting of the American Oriental Society, Chicago, March 14–17, 2008. At the same meeting, Judson B. Murray spoke about the final chapter of the *Huainanzi*, "Yao lüe" 要略, or "An Overview of the Essentials." The conference presentations by Major and Murray sparked my interest in the "Overview" and led me to embark on the present study, the first version of which was presented at the Harvard conference on the *Huainanzi* held in May 2008. In turn, it is gratifying to see that my principal thesis—that is, that "An Overview of the Essentials" was composed as a *fu* 賦 and used to present the *Huainanzi* to the imperial court—was adopted immediately by Major and his collaborators for their 2010 translation volume.

[11] Charles Le Blanc, *Huai-nan tzu: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought; The Idea of Resonance* (Kan-ying), *with a Translation and Analysis of Chapter Six* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1985), 41–52, provides an annotated list of the known writings by Liu An and his retainers. In addition, Harold Roth has argued that the *Zhuangzi* was likely compiled at Liu An's court; see Roth, "Who Compiled the *Chuang Tzu*?" in *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*, ed. Henry Rosemont Jr. (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Press, 1991), 79–128. Liu Xiaogan, by contrast, dates the *Zhuangzi* to the Warring States; see his *Classifying the* Zhuangzi *Chapters*, trans. William E. Savage (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1994). Liu's argument has been severely challenged by Esther Klein, "Were There 'Inner Chapters' in the Warring States? A New Investigation of Evidence about the *Zhuangzi*," *T'oung Pao* 96 (2010): 299–369.

Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE) and was fully accepted by Ban Gu[12] is then also leveled at Liu An elsewhere in the *Hanshu*, where he is used as a counterpoint to Liu De 劉德, King Xian of Hejian 河間獻王, who is celebrated for his love of classical learning as opposed to the "superficial disputation" (*fubian* 浮辯) practiced at the court of Huainan.[13]

In addition to the *fu*, the "Monograph on Arts and Writings" mentions four *pian*—probably four individual pieces—of short songs from Huainan (*Huainan geshi* 淮南歌詩).[14] The *Chuci* 楚辭 anthology of southern songs notes one of Liu An's courtiers, referred to as Xiaoshan 小山, as the author of "Calling Back the Recluse" ("Zhao yinshi" 招隱士), and Liu An himself is known for having produced an exposition on "Encountering Sorrow" ("Li sao" 離騷) on imperial command—a work he purportedly completed within a few hours.[15] He also is credited with the first version of an anthology of Chu songs that over time developed into the *Chuci* 楚辭 anthology assembled by Wang Yi 王逸 (d. 158 CE) in the late Eastern Han.[16] Furthermore, Liu An pronounced himself on the nature of the "Airs of the States" ("Guofeng" 國風) in a way that resonates closely with how "Guanju" 關雎 and other songs are discussed in recently excavated manuscripts such as the Mawangdui 馬王堆 and Guodian 郭店 "Five Modes of Conduct" ("Wuxing" 五行) or "Confucius's Discussion of Poetry" ("Kongzi shilun" 孔子詩論) in the Shanghai Museum corpus, all of which come from the old region of Chu.[17] Together with the courts of Liang 梁 (with Liu Wu 劉武 as king) and Wu 吳 (with Liu Pi 劉濞 as king), Liu An's court at Shouchun was one of the three great southern literary centers of his time where the *fu*—and with it the rhetoric of both political persuasion and moral self-cultivation—flourished before it was introduced to the imperial court of Emperor Wu.

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[12] Martin Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the *Fu*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63 (2003): 383–437; and Martin Kern, "The 'Biography of Sima Xiangru' and the Question of the *Fu* in Sima Qian's *Shiji*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123 (2003): 303–16.

[13] Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 53.2410.

[14] Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 30.1747.

[15] Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 44.2145.

[16] David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology of Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 33–34. Le Blanc, *Huai-nan tzu*, 7–8, notes that both the poetic style of the *Huainanzi* and the theme of self-transformation (which Le Blanc understands as Daoist but which, as self-cultivation, cuts across the boundaries between Daoist and Confucian thinking) find close counterparts and relations in the *Chuci* and the "shamanistic traditions of Chu." He also traces the "close affinity on many essential points between *Huai-nan Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu*" back to "their common indebtedness to the transcendental spirit of the poets of Ch'u."

[17] Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the *Fu*"; and Martin Kern, "Excavated Manuscripts and Their Socratic Pleasures: Newly Discovered Challenges in Reading the 'Airs of the States,'" *Études Asiatiques/Asiatische Studien* 61.3 (2007): 775–93; Ke Mading 柯馬丁 (Martin Kern), "Cong chutu wenxian tan 'Guofeng' de quanshi wenti: Yi 'Guanju'

In short, and far beyond the poetic context sketched here, it is clear that the *Huainanzi*, while being the largest Western Han text of its time (before Sima Qian's 司馬遷 [ca. 145–ca. 86 BCE] *Shiji* 史記, that is), was only one of many intellectual enterprises that occupied the court at Shouchun, and we would be ill-advised to isolate the text from this environment—especially considering how the *Huainanzi* itself encompasses many diverse areas of learning. Both linguistically and philosophically—think not only of the numerous rhymed passages but also of the themes of political persuasion and moral self-cultivation just mentioned—good parts of the text are in fact closely aligned with some of the issues that occupied the composers of the southern *fu*. Other sections reflect contemporary explorations in fields of knowledge such as astrology, astronomy, or geography alongside deliberations on military matters, rhetorical techniques of persuasion, or affairs of ritual and customs. While the individual chapters must reflect the work of different groups of scholars learned in different traditions of knowledge, it is the *Huainanzi* that presents their sum total as an integrated whole. Moreover, the very multiplicity and versatility not only of learning but also of verbal expression ranked high among the prized accomplishments of court culture at Shouchun.

While the different parts of the *Huainanzi* employ a wide range of styles, including purely technical writing and factual accounts in, for example, the chapters on astrology ("Tian wen" 天文), geography ("Di xing" 墬形), and the calendar ("Shi ze" 時則), countless passages are composed in the southern poetic idiom of the time that can be observed not only in the Western Han *fu* but also in Emperor Wu's "Songs for the Suburban Sacrifices" ("Jiaosi ge" 郊祀歌).[18] In the *Huainanzi*, this idiom is not external embellishment to the expression of philosophical thought; judging from the *fu* and some of the recently excavated manuscripts, it is integral to southern philosophical thinking in Liu An's time. Yet despite the fact that the *Huainanzi*'s poetic language has occasionally been noted[19] and that, already five decades ago, Luo Changpei 羅常培 (1899–1958) and Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 (1914–95) listed—albeit somewhat incompletely—the rhymes of the *Huainanzi*,[20] practically no research has been conducted to relate the text's philosophical outlook to its poetic idiom. Without this idiom, however, the *Huainanzi* would be an utterly different text—or would not have been composed altogether.

It is important to keep in mind that the Western Han *fu* is not just eulogy or entertainment. Next to passages in rhythmic and semantically patterned prose,[21] it embodies all poetic forms available to Han writers—from *Shijing* 詩經-inspired tetrasyllabic lines (but now more tightly composed by Han authors, beginning with Jia Yi's 賈誼 [ca. 200–168 BCE] "*Fu* on the Owl" ["Fu niao fu" 鵩鳥賦])[22] to the diction of the short southern song[23] and the more complex meter of the "Li sao" and other pieces in the *Chuci* anthology. Moreover, the Western Han *fu* is closely related to the political rhetoric of the so-called wandering persuaders (*youshui* 遊說),[24] and several of the *fu*'s most magnificent surviving examples—Mei Sheng's 枚乘 (d. 141 BCE) "Seven

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wei li" 從出土文獻談《國風》的詮釋問題：以《關雎》為例, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中華文史論叢 2008.1: 253–71.

[18] The numerous correspondences between these poems and the *Huainanzi* are noted in Martin Kern, *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer: Literatur und Ritual in der politischen Repräsentation von der Han-Zeit bis zu den Six Dynastien* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997), 174–303.

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[19] See, e.g., Le Blanc, *Huai-nan tzu*, 7–8; Xu Fuguan, *Liang Han sixiang shi*, 187–88. In addition, translations of individual chapters sometimes note many of the rhymes.

[20] Luo Changpei 羅常培 and Zhou Zumo 周祖謨, *Han Wei Jin nanbeichao yunbu yanbian yanjiu* 漢魏晉南北朝韻部演變研究 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1958), 246–305.

[21] 'Prose' may be too strong a word here in denoting the mere absence of rhyme and meter. William H. Baxter, "Situating the Language of the *Lao-tzu*: The Probable Date of the *Tao-te-ching*," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, ed. Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 237, notes that "both rhyme and semantic patterning are used as poetic devices" in the *Laozi*.

[22] As Zeb Raft, "The Beginning of Literati Poetry: Four Poems from First-Century BCE China," *T'oung Pao* 96 (2010): 74–124, has shown, Western Han tetrasyllabic verse can be regarded not as direct imitation but as 'actualization' and 'translation' of earlier *Shijing* verse. One characteristic of tetrasyllabic Han verse is its overall tighter, more substantial, and more narrative diction. The same can be said of the Western Han sacrificial hymns from both Han Gaozu's 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE) time and, later, Emperor Wu's; see Kern, *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*. For the "*Fu* on the Owl" that Jia Yi composed as an exile in Changsha in 173 BCE, see Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 84.2497–2500; and Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 48.2227–29; Gong Kechang, *Studies on the Han* Fu (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1997), 93–113.

[23] As discussed in Martin Kern, "The Poetry of Han Historiography," *Early Medieval China* 10–11.1 (2004): 23–65.

[24] See David R. Knechtges and Jerry Swanson, "Seven Stimuli for the Prince: The *Ch'i-Fa* of Mei Ch'eng," *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970–71): 99–116; Nakajima Shiaki 中島千秋, *Fu no seiritsu to tenkai* 賦の成立と展開 (Matsuyama 松山: Sekiyō Shiten 関洋紙店, 1963), 95–279, 291–307; David R. Knechtges, "Yang Shyong, the *Fuh*, and Hann Rhetoric" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1968), 164–87, 239–51.

Stimuli" ("Qi fa" 七發), Sima Xiangru's "Excursion Hunt of the Son of Heaven" ("Tianzi youlie fu" 天子遊獵賦), and the "Great Summons" ("Dazhao" 大招) in the *Chuci* anthology[25]—extol the process of self-cultivation that has been identified in the *Huainanzi* as well as in recently excavated manuscripts from the south, most prominently in the "Five Modes of Conduct" texts from Guodian and Mawangdui.[26] In short, while the *Huainanzi* is the only large text that has survived from the court of Liu An, its seeming singularity and isolation are but an illusion.

"An Overview of the Essentials"

The final chapter of the *Huainanzi*, "An Overview of the Essentials" ("Yao lüe" 要略), reviews and puts into perspective the contents of the previous twenty chapters, and my guiding questions are: what is the point of this chapter, and what is its literary form? As indicated by the title of the present essay, I conclude that the chapter should be properly understood as a Western Han *fu*, that is, a composition that was skillfully recited (*song* 誦) at the imperial court of Emperor Wu when the *Huainanzi* was submitted in 139 BCE.[27] It is therefore composed with all the features of euphony and mnemonic devices that make the text both performable and memorable.

Taking the "Overview" as a *fu* is an argument, not about oral composition or transmission, but about the fact that the text was composed in a way that lent itself to oral performance. I have no doubt that the text was from the start composed in writing, yet I also believe that the large bundle (or rather bundles) of bamboo slips on which the first twenty chapters were written was not just handed over to the imperial librarian. Instead, I assume that the text was formally presented to the young and presumably impressionable Emperor Wu as the most comprehensive and profound guide to perfect rulership, and that this presentation was not a silent act but a splendid verbal performance that matched the significance of both the text and the occasion. No other text of this kind is known from the period, and certainly no other text that advances

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[25] See my discussion in Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics."

[26] See Mark Csíkszentmihályi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004); Scott Cook, "Consummate Artistry and Moral Virtuosity: The 'Wu xing' 五行 Essay and Its Aesthetic," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 22 (2000): 113–46.

[27] Another account of an oral presentation (*zou* 奏) of a *fu* at Emperor Wu's court right around 139 BCE is that of Sima Xiangru's "Daren fu" 大人賦; see Sima Qian, *Shiji* 117.3056; Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 57B.2592; for an analysis, see Kern, "The 'Biography of Sima Xiangru.'"

similar claims about its own importance as the ultimate compilation of philosophical wisdom. The *Huainanzi*, mentioned in the "Overview" as "the book of the Liu clan" (*Liu shi zhi shu* 劉氏之書)—that is, the imperial family—was speaking not only to the young emperor but also for him, and indeed for the entire royal house.

The "Overview" encompasses and presents the whole of the *Huainanzi*, and it does so not in a single literary form but by using, embodying, and unifying the varied totality of all such forms—poetic and prose—that were available to an early Western Han author. It shows an intense use of rhyme, fast-paced metric versatility, complex syntactic patterns that are employed in highly regularized fashion—often extended just long enough to become explicit before the text moves on to the next pattern—and, finally, the frequent use of introductory and concluding particles typically employed in the Han *fu* to mark off the individual sections. While many early philosophical texts contain passages of rhyme and meter[28]—the *Laozi* 老子,[29] the *Zhuangzi* 莊子,[30] the *Xunzi*

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[28] For the best modern survey of rhyme in early Chinese expository prose, see Long Yuchun 龍宇純, "Xian-Qin sanwen zhong de yunwen" 先秦散文中的韻文, *Chongji xuebao* 崇基學報 2.2 and 3.1 (1962–63), reprinted in Long Yuchun, *Sizhu xuan xiaoxue lunji* 絲竹軒小學論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 182–283. A useful brief account and discussion is Tan Jiajian 譚家健, "Xian-Qin yunwen chutan" 先秦韻文初探, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 1995.1: 12–19. The basis for all such work is Jiang Yougao 江有誥 (d. 1851?), *Yinxue shishu* 音學十書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993).

[29] See S. A. Starostin, *Rekonstrukcija drevnekitajskoj fonologičeskoj sistemy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), translated into Chinese as Si. A. Sitaluosijin 斯。阿。斯塔羅斯金, *Gudai hanyu yuyinxi de gouni* 古代漢語語音系的構擬 (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2010); Yu Suisheng 喻遂生, "*Laozi* yongyun yanjiu" 《老子》用韻研究, *Xinan shifan daxue xuebao* (*zhexue shehuikexue ban*) 西南師範大學學報(哲學社會科學版) 1995.1: 108–14; Sun Yongchang 孫雍長, "*Laozi* yundou yanjiu" 《老子》韻讀研究, *Guangzhou daxue xuebao* (*shehui kexue ban*) 廣州大學學報 (社會科學版) 2002.1: 48–59; Bernhard Karlgren, "The Poetical Parts in Lao-Tsï," *Göteborgs högskolas årsskrift* 38.3 (1932): 1–45; Rudolf G. Wagner, *The Craft of a Chinese Commentator: Wang Bi on the* Laozi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 53–113; Liu Xiaogan, *Classifying the* Zhuangzi *Chapters*, trans. William E. Savage (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1994), 172–86; Michael LaFargue, *Tao and Method: A Reasoned Approach to the Tao Te Ching* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Baxter, "Situating the Language of the *Lao-tzu*," 231–53. For a discussion of the *Laozi* as poetry, see Xu Jie 許結, "Laozi yu Zhongguo gudai zhelishi" 老子與中國古代哲理詩, *Xueshu yuekan* 學術月刊 1990.2: 58–64; and Madison Morrison, "The Poetic Element in Lao Tzu," *Tamkang Review* 11 (1981): 391–420.

[30] The only attempt so far at a systematic account of rhyme in the *Zhuangzi* is David McCraw, *Stratifying* Zhuangzi*: Rhyme and Other Quantitative Evidence* (Taipei: Institute

荀子,[31] the "Neiye" 內業 chapter (and some others) in the *Guanzi* 管子,[32] some chapters in the *Liji* 禮記, and so on—none of them shows the kind of dense and at the same time variegated patterning one finds in the "Overview."[33]

In calling the "Overview" a *fu*, I have in mind the text's formal complexity that lends itself to a ravishing oral performance. This is not to say that the "Overview" belongs to a clearly defined literary genre; as David R. Knechtges has put it,

> the *fu* is somewhat illusory in that it existed in many different forms, and was constantly changing throughout the Former Han period. For this reason, it is virtually impossible to provide a succinct definition of the genre that would apply to all specimens of *fu*.[34]

In fact, "the notion of *fu* was extremely broad in Han times, and almost any long rhymed composition could be called *fu*."[35] The only definition of the *fu* in Han times is focused on its performative nature: *bu ge er song* 不歌而誦 ('to recite without singing').[36] Covering a wide range of different types of

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of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, 2010). For a survey, see Long Yuchun, "Xian-Qin sanwen zhong de yunwen," 227–34.

[31] See Long Yuchun, "Xian-Qin sanwen zhong de yunwen," 251–57; and my "Poetry and Style in the *Xunzi*," forthcoming in *Dao Companion to Xunzi*, ed. Eric Hutton (Dordrecht: Springer). Separate from its poetic diction throughout, the *Xunzi* also includes two chapters comprising poems, "Cheng xiang" 成相 (chap. 25) and "Fu" 賦 (chap. 26); on these, see David R. Knechtges, "Riddles as Poetry: The '*Fu* Chapter' of the *Hsün-tzu*," in *Wenlin: Studies in the Chinese Humanities*, vol. 2, ed. Chow Tse-tsung (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 1–31; Wiebke Denecke, *The Dynamics of Masters Literature: Early Chinese Thought from Confucius to Han Feizi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), 188–95; Göran Malmquist, "Cherng Shianq," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 45 (1973): 63–91; Li Binghai 李炳海, "*Xunzi* 'Chengxiang' de pianti, jiegou jiqi linian kaobian" 《荀子。成相》的篇題、結構及其理念考辨, *Jianghan luntan* 江漢論壇 2010.9: 89–93; Zhu Shizhe 朱師轍, "Xunzi chengxiangpian yundou bushi" 荀子成相篇韻讀補釋, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報 1957.3: 42–47.

[32] Harold D. Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[33] While large parts of both the *Laozi* and the "Neiye" (and some other *Guanzi* chapters) contain tight poetic patterns, these are far more unified than the rich texture of patterning in the *Huainanzi* "Overview."

[34] David R. Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the* Fu *of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 14.

[35] Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody*, 28.

[36] Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 30.1755.

compositions—many of them written, but some are also purely oral—basic features of the *fu* in Western Han times included the irregular alternation of rhymed and unrhymed passages, meter, a certain length, and an overall emphasis on euphony (e.g., by use of alliterative, rhyming, and reduplicative binomes) for the purpose of verbal 'presentation' (*zou* 奏).[37] However, this does not mean that every poetically refined passage in early Chinese literature should be considered a *fu*. To qualify (as far as one can tell from the early sources), a text would require a topic, it had to be a self-contained, stand-alone treatment of this topic, and it would aim to present its topic *in extenso*. This desire for comprehensiveness would then sometimes—though not invariably—lead to a certain self-referential grandeur of expression and the extensive use of catalogs; striking examples are the compositions by Mei Sheng and Sima Xiangru. These features are, if in less extreme form, on display in the "Overview."

In addition, the "Overview" is characterized by what I consider one of the essential traits of the Western Han *fu*, namely, the mimetic representation of its own subject on the level of linguistic performance.[38] If the *Huainanzi*, as is claimed in the "Overview," contains the philosophical totality of the universe, observing the images of Heaven and Earth (觀天地之象) and penetrating all matters from antiquity to present (通古今之事), then the "Overview" itself contains the linguistic totality that gives expression to the philosophical one. In other words, the spectacle and totality of language are performed to embody the spectacle and totality of philosophical thought that in turn embody the spectacle and totality of the cosmos and political sphere. Strictly speaking, one could call the "Overview" Liu An's "*Fu on Presenting the Huainanzi*"; it celebrates not only the contents of the twenty chapters but also its own accomplished literary form and, with it, the cultural accomplishments of Liu An and his court. This form is not trivial embellishment but shows its patron as a master of textual learning and expression at precisely the time when the young emperor summoned the great *fu* composers—including Mei Sheng and Sima Xiangru—from the three southern centers of literary and cultural splendor

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[37] See Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics," 394, 401. See also Kamatani Takeshi 釜谷武志, "Fu ni nankai na ji ga ōi no wa naze ka: Zen-Kan ni okeru fu no yomarekata" 賦に難解な字が多いのはなぜか:前漢における賦の讀まれかた, *Nihon Chūgoku gakkai hō* 日本中國學會報 48 (1996): 16–30; Guo Weisen 國維森 and Xu Jie 許結, *Zhongguo cifu fazhan shi* 中國辭賦發展史 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu, 1996), 123; Ou Tianfa 歐天發, "Fu zhi mingshi kaolun: Fu zhi feng bi xing yi shuo" 賦之名實考論一賦之風比興義說, in *Cifu wenxue lunji* 辭賦文學論集, ed. Zhou Xunchu 周勛初 et al. (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu, 1999), 14–18.

[38] For the complete argument on the *fu* as mimetic representation, see Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics."

(Wu, Liang, Huainan) to the imperial court. One cannot decide whether or not Liu An himself was the actual and single author of the "Overview"; in the following, I will simply speak of 'the authors.' The question, however, may be beside the point. What counts is not actual authorship but the textual voice—in this case, Liu An's voice, which speaks to the young emperor with both scholarly authority and generational seniority. It is in this sense that the "Overview," and indeed the entire *Huainanzi*, are Liu An's work.

Considering that the "Overview" does not offer new ideas that were not already part of the twenty chapters, its principal function must have been twofold: to establish the entire text as a single work (as opposed to twenty mutually independent essays) and to introduce it as such to a new audience. Its complex literary form—oscillating between prose and poetry and largely patterned by rhythm, meter, rhyme, syntactic parallelism, and the use of euphonic binomes—embodies the versatile diction of the twenty chapters, and anyone at Emperor Wu's court versed in the poetic idiom of the *fu* must have recognized the text as an example of superior verbal artistry. Beyond this artistry, however, the purpose of the "Overview" to establish a complete text with a defined order of chapters cannot be overstated. While the later tradition is accustomed to think of early Chinese texts in terms of 'books' containing numerous 'chapters,' all historical evidence suggests that this was not how texts circulated in the early Western Han. Instead, as recent manuscript finds are informing us, writings of expository prose were independent, self-contained essays that only later were compiled into books of multiple chapters—most likely when Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE), following Emperor Cheng's 成 (r. 33–7 BCE) edict in 26 BCE, ordered and arranged all available writings for the imperial library.[39] Thus, an independent essay like "Black Robes" ("Ziyi" 緇衣), which has been found among the Guodian and Shanghai Museum bamboo-slip collections dating from ca. 300 BCE, only later became part of the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji* 禮記). Moreover, few late Warring States and early Han manuscripts bear titles, and none bears the name of an author—a phenomenon that Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (1884–1955) has noted also for most early works in the received tradition.[40]

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[39] On Liu Xiang's duties, methods, and achievements as imperial bibliographer, see Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 30.1701; Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, *Gushu tongli* 古書通例 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 98–109 passim; and Piet van der Loon, "On the Transmission of Kuan-tzu," *T'oung Pao* 41 (1952): 358–66; see also John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988–94), 1:105–10. On the individual circulation of texts that later became book chapters, see also Yu Jiaxi, *Gushu tongli*, 93–98 passim.

[40] Yu Jiaxi, *Gushu tongli*, 15–26.

It is against this background that we must appreciate the principal intent expressed in the "Overview," namely, to create a unified work of mutually independent essays that otherwise may have circulated separately but as such would not have amounted to what the "Overview" claims the *Huainanzi* to be: a single comprehensive blueprint for good rulership encompassing the totality of knowledge from a wide range of disciplines. It was the "Overview" that established the integrity and explicitly defined inner order of the *Huainanzi*. In this, the *Huainanzi* came to resemble, to some extent, the diverse collection of essays in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 from exactly one hundred years earlier, which likewise, as a unified whole, was designed to present "a philosophy for the unification of the world, a philosophy for empire."[41] Indeed, the *Lüshi chunqiu* was characterized by Sima Qian as "encompassing from antiquity to the present the affairs of the myriad kinds of things between Heaven and Earth" 備天地萬物古今之事, a phrase that echoes nearly verbatim how the "Overview" describes the *Huainanzi*.[42] Both texts are granted identical claims as to their nature and purpose, and they are listed next to each other as 'syncretist' (*zajia* 雜家) writings in the *Hanshu* "Monograph on Arts and Writings."[43] What radically distinguishes the *Huainanzi* from the *Lüshi chunqiu*, however, is its language: while the earlier text continues the classical idiom of Zhou expository prose, the later one emphatically embraces the modern, and distinctly southern, idiom of its own time, giving programmatic expression to the cultural ideology and confidence of Liu An and his court. Furthermore, it is the use of this poetic idiom that connects the "Overview" to the Western Han culture of court rituals within which the *Huainanzi* was then formally presented.[44]

The overall structure of the "Overview" is as follows. A brief introduction is followed by the plain listing of the chapter titles; thereafter, each chapter is discussed, some briefly, others more extensively. The two longest discussions are on the first and the last chapter (with 193 characters for the last chapter, "The Exalted Lineage" ["Tai zu" 泰族]). Chapters 16 and 17—"A Mountain of Persuasions" ("Shui shan" 說山) and "A Forest of Persuasions" ("Shui lin"

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[41] John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, trans., *The Annals of Lü Buwei* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 16.

[42] Sima Qian, *Shiji* 85.2511; see also the discussion in Knoblock and Riegel, *Annals of Lü Buwei*, 12–55.

[43] Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 30.1741.

[44] As another difference between the two books one might note that although the *Lüshi chunqiu* has a postface as well, it does not advance any such claims as one finds in the *Huainanzi* "Overview."

說林)—are discussed together in a mere 58 characters. Following these discussions is a self-referential section where the authors state that, in order to master the matter of any one chapter, one first needs to comprehend the precepts of the previous one; and that for this reason they had arranged the *Huainanzi* in its particular order, providing the ruler with the means to understand each matter not in isolation but, most importantly, as proceeding from the previous one. In this way, insisting that the ruler must not only follow the many different political precepts of the text but pursue them in the order purposefully arranged by the authors, the "Overview" presents each chapter as an indispensable part of the overall philosophical endeavor of the *Huainanzi* and the totality of the text as more than the sum of its parts. (Note that the sequence of the chapters, as shown below, is further enforced by the rhyming of their titles.) Following the discussion of the individual chapters is a section of general deliberations on what a man of learning needed to accomplish, culminating in a poetic eulogy on the beauty of the twenty chapters (as the fulfillment of scholarship). This in turn is followed by a historical outline of the great strategists and thinkers of preimperial learning, including Taigong 太公, Kongzi 孔子 and his disciples, Mozi 墨子 and his followers, Guanzi 管子, Yanzi 晏子, the different groups of rhetoricians, and Shang Yang 商鞅. Finally, a brief section comes back to the *Huainanzi* itself: the "writings of the Liu clan" that encompass everything between Heaven and Earth, antiquity and the present, and thus all previous philosophy. Altogether, the "Overview" displays a tight and systematic architecture that gives an account of the twenty chapters and provides a survey of early Chinese thought, which, it claims, is now best captured in the *Huainanzi*. This overall structure itself—its explicit and formally marked divisions, its catalog-like lists (e.g., of the thinkers just mentioned), its systematic arrangement, its claim for exhaustiveness and comprehensiveness, and the final moral triumph of the superior speaker (in this case: the superior text)—corresponds precisely to the typical features of the contemporaneous grand Western Han *fu* as we know it from, for example, Sima Xiangru. In the following, I will briefly discuss some of the aesthetic choices employed in the literary patterning of the "Overview."

Structure and Meaning in "An Overview of the Essentials"

My first example is the listing of chapter titles that follows the first several lines—which are already rhymed and show several distinct rhetorical patterns—at the beginning of the text. This catalog of titles, introduced by the formula "Thus, we have composed [the following] twenty chapters"

(故著二十篇), is more than a simple list; it is a rhymed litany, with each chapter title being preceded by the word "there is" (*you* 有). In the following representation, I note not only the rhymes on the even-numbered lines (as well as the rhymes of lines 19–20) as identified by Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumo but also—marked by indentation[45]—what I consider additional rhymes on some of the odd-numbered lines:[46]

故著二十篇：

1.	有原道，		
2.	有俶真，	真部	(Rhyme 1)
3.	有天文，	真部	(Rhyme 1)
4.	有墬形，	耕部	(Rhyme 1)
5.	有時則，		
6.	有覽冥，	耕部	(Rhyme 1)
7.	有精神，	真部	(Rhyme 1)
8.	有本經，	耕部	(Rhyme 1)
9.	有主術，		
10.	有繆稱，	蒸部	(Rhyme 2)
11.	有齊俗，		
12.	有道應，	蒸部	(Rhyme 2)
13.	有氾論，		
14.	有詮言，	元部	(Rhyme 3)
15.	有兵略，		
16.	有說山，	元部	(Rhyme 3)
17.	有說林，		
18.	有人間，	元部	(Rhyme 3)
19.	有脩務，	侯部	(Rhyme 4)
20.	有泰族也。	屋部	(Rhyme 4)

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[45] I will also use the same format of indentation for additional rhymes in all passages below.

[46] In the present essay, I limit my phonological analysis to the fairly straightforward matter of rhyme, using the traditional rhyme categories employed by Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumo. In this, especially where irregular rhyming patterns are involved, I may be overemphasizing some "combined rhymes"; on the other hand, the traditional focus on end rhyme as the single noteworthy euphonic feature of early texts—in distinction to, for example, the tonal patterns in later poetry—may seriously underestimate the full range

Altogether, the passage has four rhyme sequences: (1) the *zhen* 真–*geng* 耕 sequence; (2) the *zheng* 蒸 sequence; (3) the *yuan* 元 sequence; and (4) the *hou* 侯–*wu* 屋 sequence. Both the *zhen-geng* and the *hou-wu* rhyme categories are frequent "combined rhymes" (合韻) in Western Han times.[47] In addition, it is important to leave behind any preconceived notion of which lines may be part of the rhyme scheme. While Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumo operated from the assumption that only the even-numbered lines should be included in the rhyme pattern, Western Han texts provide ample evidence of additional rhymes on the odd-numbered lines.[48] Western Han authors—and perhaps especially those from the south—did not write according to the kinds of prescriptions and constraints known from later regulated verse; instead, they used rhyme considerably more freely, as can be seen in lines 3, 7, and 19 of the chapter list. The examples of rhymed passages below will reveal the same phenomenon even more clearly.

Without doubt, the overall regularity of the rhyme pattern was consciously composed, with the chapter titles deliberately chosen and arranged—or to go even a step further, which I think we must: the chapter titles themselves were created in order to rhyme in this particular sequence. Even more, it appears that the chapters were divided the way they are in order to form an even-numbered group. This is strongly suggested by the fact that the topic of rhetorical "persuasion" (*shui* 說) is split into two chapters whose fundamental identity is suggested in the "Overview," where they are treated as one.

But what exactly is accomplished by the rhymed chapter list? First, in its orderly sequence, the list encompasses the complete *Huainanzi* in a nutshell,

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of their auditory properties. (One could, for example, think of patterns of vowels and consonants within individual lines as well as between them.) I strongly suspect that a complete phonological analysis of the language of the *Huainanzi*, involving a phonetic transcription of the entire text, would be revealing; unfortunately, this has never been done and is well beyond my own expertise. As for the rhyme pattern, I am not at all sure where a mere "assonance" ends and a "combined rhyme" begins; actually, for a period as early as the Western Han I doubt the validity of such distinctions to begin with. However, in identifying possible "combined rhymes" I am surely not overstating the euphonic nature of the text under discussion. To the contrary, for every additional rhyme proposed here, there will be other auditory features neglected by the sole focus on rhyme. My limited analysis presented here suffices, however, to show that the "Overview" is a highly patterned euphonic artifact.

[47] See the tables in Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumo, *Han Wei Jin nanbeichao yunbu yanbian yanjiu*.

[48] See the numerous examples noted in Kern, *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*.

defining the text as an indivisible whole. Second, it determines the specific order of the chapters; the coherence of rhyme determines and secures the distinct places of the individual chapters within the overall sequence. Third, the rhyme scheme supports Le Blanc's contention (also accepted by Major and his collaborators) that chapters 1 through 8 are concerned with "Basic Principles" while chapters 9 through 20 deal with "Applications and Illustrations"[49]—the first rhyme sequence ends precisely with the title for chapter 8.

The discussions of individual chapters show a variety of poetic forms. Consider, for example, the passage on the chapter "Heavenly Patterns" ("Tian wen" 天文):

天文者，所以		
和陰陽之氣，		脂部
理日月之光，	陽部	
節開塞之時，		之部
列星辰之行，	陽部	
知逆順之變，		
避忌諱之殃，	陽部	
順時運之應，		蒸部
法五神之常，	陽部	
使人		
有以仰天承順，		
而不亂其常者也。	陽部	

"Heavenly Patterns" provides the means by which to
harmonize the *qi* of yin and yang,
give regular pattern to the radiances of the sun and moon,
delimit the seasons of opening [spring–summer] and closing [fall–winter],
sequence the movements of the stars and planets,
know the changes of [their] retrograde and prograde motion,
avoid the misfortunes [resulting from violations] of prohibitions and taboos,
comply with the correspondences to the seasonal cycles,
and take your model from the constancy of the spirits of the five directions.

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[49] Le Blanc, *Huai-nan tzu*, 3–4; and more recently Le Blanc, "*Huai nan tzu*," in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, 189.

[All this] will enable you to
possess the means to gaze upward to Heaven and carry out your compliance,
and not to bring disorder to the constancies [of Heaven].[50]

The passage reveals a completely regular syntactic pattern: following the title, the main text is introduced by the formula *suoyi* 所以 ("the means by which"), followed by eight lines of extreme regularity. The pattern is 'Verb–Compound Noun–之–Noun,' with the first three characters following the typical fast-paced trisyllabic line ('dum-dumdum') as seen in contemporaneous southern song, notably the "Nine Songs" ("Jiu ge" 九歌) from the *Chuci* anthology. The section concludes with the statement that this chapter "will enable you to possess the means to gaze upward to Heaven and carry out your compliance, and not to bring disorder to the constancies [of Heaven]." This form of closing statement, specifying the benefits to be gained from the chapter and urging the reader to accept the guidance given in it, concludes each of the chapter descriptions. Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumo rightly identify the regular *yang* 陽 rhymes on the even lines, including the final line of the closing formula; yet, in addition, the *zheng* 蒸 rhyme in line 7 can be combined with the *yang* rhymes, while the *zhi* 脂 and *zhi* 之 rhymes in lines 1 and 3 can form a "combined rhyme" of their own, adding further to the overall euphonic qualities of the passage.

The summary of the chapter "Seasonal Rules" ("Shi ze" 時則) is composed in a rather different poetic form, namely, the classic tetrasyllabic meter associated with the *Shijing* but now actualized in Han language.[51] While the summary is longer than the one for "Heavenly Patterns", its introductory and closing formulae serve similarly as framing devices. Unlike the summary for "Heavenly Patterns," the one for "Seasonal Rules" does not show syntactic parallelism, but its use of rhyme is even more intense:

時則者，所以		
上因天時，		之部
下盡地力，	職部	
據度行當，		
合諸人則，	職部	
形十二節，		質部
以為法式，	職部	
終而復始，		之部
轉於無極，	職部	
因循倣依，		脂部
以知禍福，	職部	
操舍開塞，		職部
各有龍忌，	之部	
發號施令，		
以時教期，	之部	
使君人者		
知所以從事。	之部	

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[50] Here and in the following, compare the translations by Sarah A. Queen and Judson Murray in Major et al., *Huainanzi*; I have often accepted their formulations.

[51] As discussed by Raft, "Beginning of Literati Poetry."

"Seasonal Rules" provides the means by which to,
above, follow the seasons of Heaven,
below, fully explore the strengths of Earth,
determine standards and enact correspondences,
merge them with the rules of Man,
give form to the twelve divisions
and take them as models and guides.
As they end and begin anew,
revolving without limit,
you should follow, comply, imitate, and adhere to them
so that you comprehend disaster and good fortune.
In taking and giving, opening and closing,
each has its prohibited days
for issuing commands and administering orders,
instructing and warning in accordance with seasonal timeliness.
[All this] will enable the ruler of humankind
to know the means by which to manage affairs.

Considering only the rhymes on the even lines, it appears that a first sequence of *zhi* 職 rhymes (lines 2–4–6–8–10) is followed by a second sequence of *zhi* 之 rhymes (lines 12–14–16). However, the two categories are closely related, with *zhi* 職 (-ək) being merely the *rusheng* 入聲 counterpart to *zhi* 之 (-ə)—two categories that frequently rhyme together in Western Han texts. However, the entire *zhi* 職 sequence is interspersed with rhymes of the *zhi* 之, *zhi* 質, and *zhi* 脂 categories, all of which are documented to rhyme with one another. As a result, nearly all the lines of the passage are part of a single euphonic sequence of rhymes or at least assonances that strongly contributes to the orderly structure of the "Seasonal Rules" summary. Comparing this structure to that for "Heavenly Patterns," one finds both of them carefully crafted yet at the same time, when taken together, an expression of stylistic versatility. This principle of variation within order can be observed throughout the twenty chapter summaries.

One of the most intensely patterned passages in the "Overview" is the section where the authors move from chapter to chapter of the *Huainanzi* to argue that they had purposefully developed their thematic sequence in order to let the ruler comprehend how the various precepts are interconnected in an unbroken linear chain. Composed in complex parallel style and alluding to the central concepts of each chapter, this key section of the "Overview" argues forcefully for the unity of the entire text. Moreover, the passage relates the logic and effects of the *Huainanzi*'s composition in terms of agency ('we') and audience ('you'), both only implied but clearly discernible. Addressing the emperor in direct speech, the passage invokes the complete series of chapters in their sequential order, albeit in most cases not by their titles but by alternative phrases, very likely in order to maintain the rhyme pattern:

故			
	言道而不明終始,	之部	
則	不知所做依。	脂部	(Rhyme 1)
	言終始而不明天地四時,	之部	
則	不知所避諱。	脂部	(Rhyme 1)
	言天地四時而不引譬援類,	脂部	
則	不知精微。	脂部	(Rhyme 1)
	言至精而不原人之神氣,	脂部	
則	不知養生之機。	脂部	(Rhyme 1)
	原人情而不言大聖之德,	職部	
則	不知五行之差。	歌部	(Rhyme 1)
	言帝道而不言君事,	之部	
則	不知小大之衰。	脂部	(Rhyme 1)
	言君事而不為稱喻,	魚部	
則	不知動靜之宜。	歌部	(Rhyme 1)
	言稱喻而不言俗變,		
則	不知合同大指。	脂部	(Rhyme 1)
	已言俗變而不言往事,	之部	
則	不知道德之應。	蒸部	(Rhyme 2)
	知道德而不知世曲,		
則	無以耦萬方。	陽部	(Rhyme 2)
	知氾論而不知詮言,		
則	無以從容。	東部	(Rhyme 2)

	通書文而不知兵指,	職部	
則	無以應卒。	質部	(Rhyme 3)
	已知大略而不知譬喻,	魚部	
則	無以推明事。	之部	(Rhyme 3)
	知公道而不知人間,		
則	無以應禍福。	職部	(Rhyme 3)
	知人間而不知脩務,	魚部	
則	無以使學者勸力。	職部	(Rhyme 3)

Therefore,
Had we discussed the Way without illuminating ends and beginnings,
then you would not know what to imitate and adhere to.
Had we discussed ends and beginnings without illuminating Heaven, Earth, and the Four Seasons,
then you would not know the taboos to avoid.
Had we discussed Heaven, Earth, and the Four Seasons without invoking examples and drawing on categories,
then you would not know the subtleties of the essential [*qi* vital force].
Had we discussed the utmost essence without tracing to its source the spirit-like vital force of human beings,
then you would not know the mechanism by which to nourish your vitality.
Had we traced to their source the genuine dispositions of human beings without discussing the virtuous power of the great sages,
then you would not know the [human] shortcomings in the five modes of conduct/Five Phases.
Had we discussed the Way of the [ancient Five] Thearchs without discussing the affairs of the ruler,
then you would not know how to distinguish the small from the great.
Had we discussed the affairs of the ruler without providing pronouncements and illustrations,
then you would not know the appropriate times for action or quietude.
Had we discussed pronouncements and illustrations without discussing changes in customs,
then you would not know how to coordinate and unify their great tenets.

Now—had we discussed changes in customs without discussing past events,
then you would not know how to act in correspondence with the Way and its Potency.
If you knew the Way and its Potency without knowing the perversions of the age,
then you would lack the means to match yourself with the myriad aspects of the world.
If you knew the “Discourses on the Boundless” without knowing “Sayings Explained,”[52]
then you would lack the means to take your ease.
If you fully comprehended the documents and writings without knowing the tenets of military affairs,
then you would lack the means to respond to [enemy] troops.
Now—if you knew grand overviews without knowing analogies and illustrations,
then you would lack the means to draw upon in order to clarify affairs.
If you knew the Public Way without knowing interpersonal relations,
then you would lack the means to respond to disaster and good fortune.
If you knew interpersonal relations without knowing “Cultivating Effort,”[53]
then you would lack the means to inspire scholars to exert their utmost strength.

An analysis of the rhymes of this passage shows far greater complexity than suggested by Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumo, who once again recognize only the rhymes on the even lines. The first rhyme sequence runs through the first sixteen lines, with either a *zhi* 脂 or a *ge* 歌 rhyme on the even-numbered lines (*zhi* and *ge* can be combined in Western Han texts). The second rhyme sequence, starting with the ninth rhyme, is a combined *zheng* 蒸–*yang* 陽–*dong* 東 sequence; after this, the rhyme returns to another combined *zhi* 質–*zhi* 之–*zhi* 職 sequence that can be connected to the initial *zhi* 脂–*ge* 歌 one.

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[52] “Discourses on the Boundless” (“Fan lun” 氾論) and “Sayings Explained” (“Quan yan” 詮言) are the titles of chapters 13 and 14 of the *Huainanzi*, as translated by Major et al.

[53] “Cultivating Effort” (“Xiu wu” 脩務) is the title of chapter 19 of the *Huainanzi*, as translated by Major et al.

If we also include the rhymes on the odd-numbered lines, it appears that in the first and third rhyme sequences, nearly all lines are part of the rhyme system, including several *yu* 魚 rhymes.

However, the rhymes are only one aspect of the overall patterning of this sequence. Equally important, the passage is composed as a mantra-like litany of repeated words and parallel phrases that lend themselves to easy memorization and recitation. If we consider both the interlocking repetitions and the density of rhyme, what dominates this entire section is not what it says; it is the overall order of how to speak. In this modular order, each word is assigned its proper place exactly as each phenomenon of the natural and social spheres has its place both in the universe and in the text of the *Huainanzi*, which is the verbal replica of that universe. Altogether, the core message of this section—namely, that the entire *Huainanzi* is tightly unified and cannot be broken apart into isolated essays—is mimetically represented in a pattern of linguistic artistry that likewise precludes any gaps or discontinuities.

For a final example of the performative diction of the “Overview,” one could look at the poetic eulogy that follows shortly after the discussion just mentioned. Here, the text takes on the genuine form of the short southern song (*ge* 歌) that in Western Han times was closely associated with the lyrics from Chu in general and with the poetry of members of the imperial house in particular:[54]

誠通乎二十篇之論，　　真部 (Rhyme 1)
睹凡得要，
以
　通九野，
　徑十門，　　真部 (Rhyme 1)
　外天地，
　捭山川，　　元部 (Rhyme 1)
其於
　逍遙一世之間，　　元部 (Rhyme 1)
　宰匠萬物之形，
亦優游矣。
若然者，

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[54] For the Western Han poems included in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, most of them attributed to members of the imperial family, see Kern, “The Poetry of Han Historiography,” 23–65; see also Ke Mading 柯馬丁, “Han shi zhi shi: *Shiji, Hanshu* xushi zhong de shige hanyi” 漢史之詩：《史記》、《漢書》敘事中的詩歌含義, *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 中國典籍與文化 2007.3: 4–12.

挾日月而不烑，　宵部 (Rhyme 2)
潤萬物而不秏。　宵部 (Rhyme 2)
曼兮洮兮，　宵部 (Rhyme 2)
足以覽矣！
藐兮浩兮，　幽部 (Rhyme 2)
曠曠兮，
可以游矣！　幽部 (Rhyme 2)

If you fully comprehend the discussions of the twenty chapters,
observe the general traits and obtain the essentials,
so that you
  traverse the nine regions of the wilderness,
  pass through the ten gates,
  move beyond Heaven and Earth,
  extend beyond mountains and streams—
and thereupon
  roam freely within the space of the whole world,
  administer and regulate the forms of the myriad kinds of things—
this will be a sublime excursion indeed!

And once it is like this, you will
  clasp sun and moon without being burned,
  give luster to the myriad kinds of things without being diminished.
  How graceful! How pure!—
  This is sufficient to read!
  How far-reaching! How grand!
  How vast, vast!—
  allowing you to roam about!

The passage can be understood either as a poem in two halves or as two separate poems. In each unit, two distinct rhymes are used that, however, are so closely related that they could also be considered combined rhymes (*zhen* 真–*yuan* 元 in the first, *xiao* 宵–*you* 幽 in the second). Each unit begins with an introductory phrase and contains one long, perfectly symmetrical couplet (at the end of unit 1 and the beginning of unit 2). While the first half of the text includes four standard trisyllabic lines of the kind found in Emperor Wu's sacrificial hymns and elsewhere, the second half ends with one long exclamation, punctuated by the breathing syllable *xi* 兮—another form familiar from southern poems of the time. As a whole, this poetic eulogy combines intensely poetic diction with the rhetoric of a grandiose imperial vision known from contemporaneous *fu* such as Sima Xiangru's "Excursion Hunt of the Son of Heaven" or "Far Roaming" ("Yuan you" 遠遊) in the *Chuci* anthology. As such, the poem resonated with Emperor Wu's political and cultural ambitions alike, celebrating imperial might as well as the cultural splendor of the Liu imperial house.

The Performance of the "Overview" and the Composition of the *Huainanzi*

All received editions of the *Huainanzi* treat the "Overview" as its final chapter (chapter 21). Yet while our earliest source, the *Hanshu*—in the biography of Liu An and in the "Monograph on Arts and Writings"—speaks of a text in twenty-one chapters, the "Overview" itself consistently, no less than thrice, refers to the "twenty chapters" of the work. First, the list of chapters cited above begins with the words 故著二十篇 ("Thus, [we] composed the twenty chapters of . . ."). Second, around the middle of the "Overview," it is remarked:

故
  著書二十篇，
則
  天地之理究矣，
  人間之事接矣，
  帝王之道備矣。

Therefore,
  we composed a collection of writings in twenty chapters
so that
  the inner structures of Heaven and Earth are penetrated,
  human affairs are revealed in their connections,
  and the Way of the Thearchs and Kings [of old] is completely
  laid out.

Third, as also cited above, the summary encourages the reader to "fully comprehend the discussions of the twenty chapters." From this evidence, but also from the fact that the "Overview" displays the quintessential characteristics of the Westen Han *fu*, I conclude that the "Overview" was initially external to the text of the *Huainanzi* proper, and that its literary form suggests that it was performed before Emperor Wu when "the book of the Liu clan" was presented to him in 139 BCE. While the twenty chapters provide comprehensive instructions on how to maintain the cosmic and political order, the presentation of the "Overview" was an act of political and moral persuasion intended to urge its hearer to follow the precepts compiled at the court of Huainan. Moreover, in addition to being composed for a specific, indeed single, oral performance of persuasive speech, it is likely that its written version was simultaneously intended to accompany the twenty chapters of the *Huainanzi* proper in order to be perpetually available as a guide for future readers. It is in this form that it has been preserved from earliest times onward, for two millennia aiding rulers, ministers, and scholars alike. It is also in this form that it has guarded the stability and internal order of the *Huainanzi* as a book.

Looking at the "Overview" from this perspective also suggests a specific date for it. In the introduction to their translation of the *Huainanzi*, John Major and his collaborators present a well-reasoned argument that the *Huainanzi*—being the very large text that it is—was not initially written for Emperor Wu but was instead a work gradually created during the preceding reign of Emperor Jing 景 (r. 157–141 BCE), and possibly even for that ruler. From my analysis presented here, I conclude that at least the "Overview" cannot have been meant for Emperor Jing. As *Shiji* and *Hanshu* inform us, Emperor Jing profoundly disliked the elaborate poetic expositions (*cifu* 辭賦, an alternative term for *fu*) that were *en vogue* at the southern courts of Wu, Liang, and Huainan.[55] As the "Overview" directly addresses its reader or hearer, and as this recipient can only be the emperor, it must have been composed for Emperor Wu, who was known for his fondness for the *fu*; directed at Emperor Jing, it would most likely have been counterproductive.

It is possible to argue, as Major et al. do in the introduction to their translation,[56] that the "Overview" was composed significantly later than the twenty chapters proper. The problem with this hypothesis is that the "Overview" appears to be, rather, not merely an afterthought to the twenty chapters but—considering especially the rhymed list of chapter titles—the very prism through which these chapters were organized and unified to begin with. Moreover, the "Overview" is explicit about the nature of the *Huainanzi*: it is a book of advice for a universal ruler. If not addressed directly to the emperor but created merely to represent Liu An's own design for universal rulership, the work would have been considered presumptuous at best, and revealing the king's dangerous ambitions at worst. In the form we know the text, it needed an emperor as its audience.

For several reasons, this emperor was unlikely to have been Emperor Jing. First, not only the "Overview" but the *Huainanzi* as a whole frequently employs the artful language of the southern *fu*. This would suggest that during the reign of Emperor Jing, the twenty chapters would not have been greeted enthusiastically at the imperial court. Second, whereas Emperor Wu came to the throne at age sixteen and was given the text just two years later, early in both his life and his reign, Emperor Jing, born in 188 BCE, had ruled the Han Empire since 157 BCE. Because Liu An's previous statutory visit to the imperial court took place in 146 BCE,[57] the *Huainanzi* must have been composed after that date; yet nearly twenty years into his reign, Emperor Jing hardly needed a new blueprint for how to govern the empire, much less one written by his cousin, a southern king of his own generation. For these reasons, I would submit that the *Huainanzi* as a whole, and not merely its "Overview," was compiled right after 141 BCE when the new emperor, Wu, ascended to the throne—a young man of the next generation with an obvious need for senior advice who, unlike his father, was receptive to the southern literary fashion of his time. Quite likely, after Liu An's own ambitions to become emperor had been thwarted,[58] he might have conceived of the *Huainanzi* as the tool to enable him to lay claim to a new stature as the imperial court's *spiritus rector*—perhaps even not far from the role of regent in the vein of the Duke of Zhou.

This is not to argue that the entire *Huainanzi* was hastily written from scratch. As the twenty chapters represent widely diverging fields of knowledge as well as distinct stylistic choices, they were most likely composed by different groups of men learned in different scholarly traditions. The chapters' diverse writings did not come into being overnight, nor were they composed for a single purpose; much of their knowledge must have been in existence—and written down in one form or another—by 141 BCE, before being compiled into the twenty chapters of the *Huainanzi*. It is only this unifying compilation, and not the original authorship of disparate texts representing different traditions of learning, that created the comprehensive message of the *Huainanzi* as a whole, and it is only the "Overview" that, in a final rhetorical gesture, unified the chapters (complete with their rhyming titles) as a single work of defined scope and fixed internal order.

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[55] Sima Qian, *Shiji* 117.2999; Ban Gu, *Hanshu* 57A.2529.

[56] Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 22–24.

[57] Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods (221 BCE–AD 24)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 242.

[58] See Vankeerberghen, *The* Huainanzi *and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority.*

Thus, I suggest, it was the occasion of 139 BCE that generated the text as we know it, and it was the literary fashion of the time, enthusiastically received by a young ruler, that shaped its representation—the "Overview"—in both its written form and as a court performance. The resulting *Huainanzi* was the first 'big book' of Han times, and its overall composition for, and presentation at, the imperial court of Emperor Wu must be seen as a forceful intervention into the politics and culture at the imperial court. Its textual unification of wide-ranging, diverse, and in fact mutually unrelated essays was the most magnificent *summa* of sagely advice for a young and ambitious emperor who found himself ruling over an only recently unified, and still highly precarious, empire. Thus, without the occasion of Liu An's court visit in 139 BCE, the *Huainanzi* as a single, unified, and monumental book may never have come into existence, and as individual essays, none of its chapters may have survived.

PART TWO

Knowledge and Rhetoric

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Cover illustration: Woodblock edition of the *Shen Xian zhuan* (*Biographies of the Immortals*) that includes *an* early *Daoist* hagiography of Liu An. Liu An is ascending to the heavens as a transcendent being. Courtesy of Harvard Yenching Library.

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We dedicate this volume to John S. Major
Scholar, Mentor, and Friend