Cultural Memory and the Epic in Early Chinese Literature: The Case of Qu Yuan 屈原 and the *Lisao* 離騷

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Abstract The present essay combines the theory of Cultural Memory with ideas about textual repertoires, composite text, and distributed authorship that in recent years have been advanced in studies of early and medieval Chinese literature. In its first part, the essay introduces in detail the historical development and key features of Cultural Memory theory. In its second part, it applies this theory to the study of Qu Yuan 屈原 and the *Lisao* 離騷, the greatest poem of early China. Through detailed philological analysis, the *Lisao* is described not as a single text by a single author but as a composite, authorless artifact that participates in a larger Qu Yuan discourse distributed across multiple texts in both prose and poetry. This distributed "Qu Yuan Epic" is an anthology of distinct characteristics attributed to the quasi-mythological Qu Yuan persona—a persona that itself emerges as a composite textual configuration into which are inscribed the nostalgic ideals and shifting aspirations of Han imperial literati. This Han social *imaginaire* recollects the noble exemplar of the old Chu aristocracy; the dual prophecy of the fall of Chu to Qin and of Qin's subsequent collapse; the religious, historical, mythological, and literary traditions of Chu; the embodied paradigm of the ruler-minister relationship; and the gradual formation of the ideal of authorship through the transformation of poetic hero into heroic poet.

Keywords Cultural Memory theory, Qu Yuan, *Lisao*, composite text, textual repertoire

Introduction: Cultural Memory and Early Chinese Literature

The notion of Cultural Memory has become a powerful concept across all fields of the humanities and social sciences, in particular in continental European scholarship.[1] It was first introduced by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann (University of Heidelberg) in his 1988 essay "Kollektives Gedächtnis und

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kulturelle Identität" (Collective Memory and Cultural Identity) and then fully developed in his 1992 *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (The Cultural Memory: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Identity in Early High Cultures). Assmann's subsequent writings in English, as well as translations of his work on the topic, further popularized the theory.[2] Later in the 1990s, Aleida Assmann, a professor of English and literary studies at the University of Konstanz, began to publish her own extensive work on Cultural Memory; while Jan Assmann's work has been focused on antiquity—especially Egypt, Israel, and Greece—Aleida Assmann expanded the horizon all the way into the twentieth century and toward broader conceptual questions.[3]

Most likely because the Assmanns' principal studies did not become available in English until years after their original German publication, the concept of Cultural Memory was only slowly picked up in the study of Chinese literature.[4] There were, of course, earlier studies that reflected on acts of remembrance in Chinese literature, most notably Stephen Owen's *Remembrances: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature* and Hans Frankel's "The Contemplation of the Past in T'ang Poetry,"[5] that predated the notion of Cultural Memory. Both studies, like a more recent one by David R. Knechtges,[6] were focused on medieval Chinese literature,[7] a field that would seem to invite much further work in which Cultural Memory could serve as an instructive device.[8]

Cultural Memory is a theoretical approach whose application illuminates a specific set of characteristics in social practices of appropriating the past. The perspective of Cultural Memory is a distinct subset of "memory studies" in general. The latter was since Roman antiquity devoted to the *ars memoria* (also as *memoria technica*), that is, memorization as a technical discipline (mnemonics).[9] It took its inspiration from a story about the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (ca. 557–467 BCE). As told by Cicero (106–43 BCE), Simonides had famously improvised a mnemonic technique to recall the exact seating order at a banquet after the building had collapsed onto the participants; his reconstruction enabled each of the dead to be identified for proper burial. Following Aristotle's *On Memory and Reminiscence* (Latin: *De Memoria et Reminiscentia*), the anonymous *Rhetoric to Herennius* (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ca. 80 BCE), Cicero's *On the Orator* (*De Oratore*), and Quintilian's (55–100) *Institutes of Oratory* (*Institutio Oratoria*) all treat memorization as a rhetorical technique for the purposes of public speech, in particular using "places" (Greek *topoi,* Latin *loci*) to mentally "locate" ideas and expressions. Numerous medieval and early modern treatises expanded these early writings, as described by Frances Amelia Yates and Mary Carruthers.[10] In literary studies, Renate Lachmann has been

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instrumental in extending the notion of memory to the interpretation of intertextuality.[11] With varying degrees of depth, "memory" now also appears in the scholarship on early China.[12]

The present essay is not intended to review individual Sinological works relating to either "memory" in general or Cultural Memory in particular. Instead, I wish to lay out in clear terms what Cultural Memory actually is in the Assmanns' definition,[13] not least in order to provide some guidance against certain superficial invocations of the concept. I will not manage to capture every aspect of the Assmanns' work—lest I end up with a Borgesian world map—but will instead summarize its key theoretical premises.

In the second part of my essay, I put the concept to work in a new reflection on the Chinese arch-poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (trad. 340–278 BCE) and "his" poem *Lisao* 離騷 (Encountering Sorrow). In particular, I attempt to demonstrate how *only* the awareness of Cultural Memory, appropriately defined, can make sense of the many texts surrounding the Qu Yuan persona and poetry. In this context, I expand the Assmanns' notion further from my own perspectives on early Chinese literature—a literature with its own characteristics that enriches the notion of Cultural Memory with particular clarity—by addressing the closely interrelated phenomena of "textual repertoire" and "composite text."[14] As a result, I describe the Qu Yuan persona of the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) not as a historical person—let alone as the author of "his" texts—but as a composite textual configuration into which are inscribed the changing ideals of Han dynasty Cultural Memory. This social *imaginaire* recollects the exemplar of the old Chu aristocracy;[15] the prophesied fall of Chu to Qin together with the necessity of the subsequent collapse of Qin; the religious, historical, and mythological traditions of Chu; the embodied paradigm of the ruler-minister relationship; the literary heritage of Chu; the transformation of poetic hero into heroic poet; and the gradual formation of the ideal of authorship by Liu An 劉安 (179–122 BCE), Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 85 BCE), Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE–18 CE), and Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BCE).

What Is Cultural Memory?

All discussion of Cultural Memory as a form of "social" or "collective" memory goes back to the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945), beginning with his *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (The Social Frameworks of Memory), published in 1925, followed in 1942 by *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte: Étude de mémoire collective* (The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land: A Study of Collective Memory) and, posthumously published in 1950, *La mémoire collective* (The Collective Memory).[16] Halbwachs, born in Reims and educated in Paris and Göttingen, died in the German concentration camp of Buchenwald on March 16, 1945; much of his extended

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family was likewise murdered by the Nazis. Halbwachs is thus part of the very history that led to the first great wave of postwar memory studies, namely, in response to the Holocaust. The second wave followed in the 1990s after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In both cases, the grand collective narratives of the past suddenly came undone, and the doors to suppressed identities and state-controlled archives came unlocked.

Following Halbwachs's insight that "no memory is possible outside of frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections,"[17] the study of collective memory developed across numerous disciplines, with contributions from—in no particular order—history, art history, archaeology, literature, linguistics, philosophy, all area studies (including Sinology), sociology, media studies, anthropology, architecture, religion, biblical studies, political science, psychology, neuroscience, and others more.[18]

Halbwachs's "collective memory" theory inspired in particular two important debates: the first over the possible congruence of individual with collective memory and the second over the relation between memory and history.[19] If all human memory is neurologically based and therefore by definition individual, how can there be such a thing as "social" or "collective" memory? And how epistemologically useful as an approach to the past is "memory" versus "history," with its procedures of memorization versus those of historiography? What is the truth value of a "collective memory" that is thus doubly constructed, first as a psychological filter through which the past is perceived and second as an abstraction of such a filter that may not even exist outside the individual human mind? According to Erll, "There has been considerable confusion about the nature of the relationship between 'memory' and 'history.' Cultural memory is not the Other of history. Nor is it the opposite of individual remembering. Rather, it is the totality of the context within which such varied cultural phenomena originate."[20] And further:

> Despite the unavoidable heterogeneity of the terminology, there are two generally agreed-upon central characteristics of (conscious) remembering: its relationship to the present and its constructed nature. Memories are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of a past reality. They are subjective, highly selective reconstructions, dependent on the situation in which they are recalled. Re-membering is an act of assembling available data that takes place in the present. Versions of the past change with every recall, in accordance with the changed present situation. Individual and collective memories are never a mirror image of the past, but rather an expressive indication of the needs and interests of the person or group doing the remembering in the present. As a result, memory studies directs its interest not toward the shape of the remembered pasts, but rather toward the particular presents of the remembering.[21]

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Thus, memory studies does not attempt some reconstruction and reification of events in the past but searches for the circumstances and procedures through which these events are called upon for the purposes and interests of a particular community in the present. This fundamental realignment in looking at the past diverges from both "history" and "tradition": it differs from history in that its stated focus of interest lies not in the past as such but in its successive retrospective configuration; and it differs from tradition in that it is not static or conservative, but—because of its responsiveness to an ever-evolving present—dynamic and innovative.

To cite a most recent example from the United States: on June 17, 2021, Juneteenth, that is, June 19, was named a federal holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in America, the first new federal holiday since the declaration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1983. Nothing has changed about the historical events of June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas; what has changed, however, is how these events are now collectively commemorated by a nation trying to redefine its political identity from the perspective of the present and towards its future, in a celebration and renewal on every June 19 henceforth. Note the critical terms here: collective commemoration, nation, political identity, present and future, celebration, renewal. These are precisely the terms that mark Cultural Memory and distinguish it from "history." What matters from the perspective of Cultural Memory is under which circumstances, with which aspirations, and through which procedures the events of 1865 are now newly inscribed into the discourse of the nation.

Thus, the Cultural Memory of any society at any moment in time is not a stable entity, no matter the material carriers and symbols through which its durability is sought—be it inscribed buildings, statues, and other monuments;[22] it is an ongoing, ever-evolving process of renewed acts of both erasure and remembrance. For a while, the Cultural Memory of some place and community may seem firmly assured; but over time, it becomes destabilized, reconfigured, or expunged.[23] This process is always contested. Battles over "history" are not about "history" at all; they are about what to remember and how to remember it. This is immediately obvious in societies where different groups compete to advance different memories—for example, to tell different stories about the past or to tell the story of the past differently, as recently with the *New York Times*'s "1619 Project"[24]—but it is equally obvious in totalitarian states (as long ago described in George Orwell's *1984*) where all public memory is strictly monopolized and controlled and where only one version of the past—the one sanctioned by the state—is allowed to exist.[25]

To further define Cultural Memory, Jan Assmann distinguishes it from "communicative memory": the first can reach back thousands of years, while the

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second is within three or four generations, not exceeding about one hundred years.[26] In this model, the "communicative memory" includes "historical experiences in the framework of individual biographies," is "informal, without much form," "arising from interaction," connected to "living, organic memories, experiences, hearsay," and carried in nonspecific ways by "contemporary witnesses within a memory community." Cultural Memory, by contrast, comprises the "mythical history of origins" and "events in an absolute past"; it is "organized, extremely formal," and shaped in "ceremonial communication" and "festival"; it is expressed through "fixed objectifications, traditional symbolic classification and staging through words, pictures, dance, and so forth" and relies on "specialized tradition bearers."[27] Several notions in this definition of Cultural Memory require further clarification. First, it is important to take note of Jan Assmann's use of the word *myth*:

> Myths are also figures of memory, and here any distinction between myth and history is eliminated. What counts for cultural memory is not factual but remembered history. One might even say that cultural memory transforms factual into remembered history, thus turning it into myth. Myth is foundational history that is narrated in order to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins. The Exodus, for instance, regardless of any historical accuracy, is the myth behind the foundation of Israel; thus it is celebrated at Pesach and thus it is part of the cultural memory of the Israelites. Through memory, history becomes myth. This does not make it unreal—on the contrary, this is what makes it real, in the sense that it becomes a lasting, normative, and formative power.[28]

Next, Cultural Memory relies on *repeated acts of memorization*, that is, in the temporal structure of ritual:

> It is generally accepted that the poetic form has the mnemotechnical aim of capturing the unifying knowledge in a manner that will preserve it. Also familiar is the fact that this knowledge is customarily performed through multimedia staging in which the linguistic text is inseparable from voice, body, mime, gesture, dance, rhythm, and ritual action. . . . Through regular repetition, festivals and rituals ensure the communication and continuance of the knowledge that gives the group its identity. Ritual repetition also consolidates the coherence of the group in time and space.[29]

As the British anthropologist Paul Connerton has noted: "Rites have the capacity to give value and meaning to those who perform them. All rites are repetitive, and repetition automatically implies continuity with the past."[30] Consider in this context the specific phenomenon of the Chinese ancestral sacrifice: it is

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performed at regular intervals in a fixed spatial setting that organizes ancestral time by generations, with the remote founding ancestor at its center; it presents the current principal descendant not only as the filial offspring of the most recent ancestor but, through the descendant's enactment of filial piety, also as the model future ancestor who shall receive the same filial commemoration from his future descendants; and its language of hymns and inscriptions is highly formalized within a strictly limited, repetitive lexicon[31] that is rhythmically performed.[32] According to Wade T. Wheelock, ritual speech "is most often a fixed and known text repeated verbatim for each performance, and the constituents of the immediate ritual setting, to which the language of the liturgy will make frequent reference, are generally standardized and thus familiar to the participants, not needing any verbal explication. Therefore, practically every utterance of a ritual is superfluous from the perspective of ordinary conversational principles."[33] Most important, the ancestral ritual's tripartite structure as embodied in bronze inscriptions[34] is concerned with the past, the present, and the future, as expressed in a famous passage from the *Liji* 禮記 (Records of Ritual):

> In an inscription, one arranges and expounds the virtue and excellence of one's ancestors; one displays their achievements and brilliance, their efforts and toils, their honors and distinctions, and their fame and name to All under Heaven; and one deliberates all these in [inscribing] the sacrificial vessel. In doing so, one accomplishes one's own name by way of sacrificing to one's ancestors. One extols and glorifies the ancestors and thereby venerates filial piety. . . . Therefore, when a noble man looks at an inscription, he praises those who are commended there, and he praises the one who has made [the inscription].[35]
> 銘者，論譔其先祖之有德善，功烈勳勞慶賞聲名列於天下，而酌之祭器；自成其名焉，以祀其先祖者也。顯揚先祖，所以崇孝也…… 是故君子之觀於銘也，既美其所稱，又美其所為。

Here, the dual figures of remembrance and "the rememberer remembered"[36] are in particular related to the act of writing, which for both Aleida and Jan Assmann is one of the defining features of Cultural Memory and related to text as canon.[37] It is easy to see the attraction of this idea, as it addresses both the durability of memory in script as well as the externalization of memory from the human mind into the written "storage" or "archive"[38] of "reusable texts" that can be actualized over long periods of time. It is also clear that writing was used in precisely this way as early as Western Zhou times (1046–771 BCE), for example, in the famous inscription of the water basin of Scribe Qiang (Shi Qiang-*pan* 史墻盤).[39] Moreover, as has often been noted, Western Zhou bronze inscriptions were only secondary texts based on primary writings originally on bamboo,

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versions of which must have been stored in the Western Zhou court archives.[40] And finally, one may view the formation of the Five Classics (*wu jing* 五經), sanctioned, shaped, and guarded by the early Chinese imperial state and its institutions of the imperial academy and library, as a particular realization of Cultural Memory.

Yet at the same time, complementary to the written archive, one might still consider the examples of long-lasting oral archives, whether in the early centuries of the Homeric epics or, even more dramatically, in the far larger and far more lasting Vedic textual repertoire—archives embedded and continuously reenacted in the formal structures of festivals and recitations. Likewise the ritual hymns of the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry) repeatedly express that the ritual practices themselves, not just a particular set of texts, present an extension of the remote past, often in rhetorical questions that are then answered with the recitation of past practice:

> Since times of old, what have we done?
> 自昔何為。[41]
>
> Truly—our sacrifices are like what?
> 誕我祀如何。[42]
>
> It is not [merely] here what we have here; / it is not [merely] now what is now; / since ancient times, it has been like this.
> 匪且有且，匪今斯今，振古如茲。[43]

Cultural Memory does not convey what is new; it repeats what is already known to all—not merely to recall the remote, “absolute past” (Aleida Assmann) but to re-present this past as the current moment. It is in this formalized, ceremonial gesture that the community of the present confirms its social/religious/political/cultural identity:

> The “remembered past” is therefore not to be equated with the objectively detached study of the past that we like to call “history.” It is always mixed with projected identities, interpretations of the present, and the need for validation. That is why our study of memory has taken us into the depths of political motivation and the formation of national identity, for what we have here is all the raw material that goes to the making of identities, histories, and communities. The study of national memory is quite distinct from that of mnemotechnics and the art and capacity of memory; it deals with memory as a dynamic force that drives both action and self-interpretation.

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> This force is part of what the French call *imaginaire*. We should not underestimate this form of imagination as a mere fiction. Such fictions or inventions underpin all cultural constructions.[44]

And further to the relationship between history and memory in the formation of identity, according to Aleida Assmann: "Abstract and generalized 'history' turns into re-embodied collective 'memory' when it is transformed into forms of shared knowledge and collective participation. In such cases,'history in general' is reconfigured into a particular and emotionally charged version of 'our history' and absorbed as part of a collective identity."[45]

To summarize, Cultural Memory is defined as

- directed at foundational narratives and the mythical truth found within them;
- selectively reconstructing the past from the perspective of the present, in deliberate acts of remembrance and forgetting;
- collective and based on social interaction;
- shaped and guarded by institutional structures of power;
- defining, stabilizing, and perpetuating socially mediated identity;
- continuously actualized in textual and ritual repetition;
- dynamically responding to the needs of the present;
- normative, binding, obligatory, and canonical;
- preserved in durable media, particularly—but not only—writing.

To make the theory of Cultural Memory productive for individual analyses, one must consider the specific implications of these points. The particular power of Cultural Memory as a theory lies in its poststructuralist potential: Cultural Memory requires us to understand certain aspects of the past as reconstructed for present purposes and to reveal the function and meaning of such reconstruction for the identity-creating needs of the community that undertakes it. At its core, Cultural Memory is a theory of ideology criticism (*Ideologiekritik*) against the impulses of historical positivism. It clarifies the processes and practices by which meaning and identity are socially, institutionally, and materially constructed at particular times and places. It tries to explain how societies make sense of themselves by probing their foundational narratives, mythological commitments, and cultural procedures.

The "Qu Yuan Epic"

In the historical imagination ever since early Han times, Qu Yuan is the most important poet of early China, and the *Lisao* is the grandest poem of Chinese

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antiquity.[46] But far beyond being celebrated as China's arch-poet, the Qu Yuan persona embodies an entire set of identity-generating paradigms—first among them that of the high-minded, aristocratic, and loyal political advisor who ends in exile and suicide—that have sustained the ideals and aspirations of many a Chinese intellectual ever since. In the following, building on my earlier studies on aspects of the Qu Yuan persona, his authorship, and the *Lisao* poem,[47] I will expand my analysis from the perspective of "epic narrative." In the case of Qu Yuan, this epic is not a single poem but a cluster of texts in both prose and poetry, including the Qu Yuan biography in Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記,[48] the *Lisao*, and other associated texts, some of which are found in the *Chuci* 楚辭 anthology,[49] others outside of it. Consider a standard definition of *epic*:

> An epic is a long narrative poem of heroic action: "narrative," in that it tells a story; "poem," in that it is written in verse rather than prose; "heroic action," while reinterpreted by each major epic poet, in that, broadly defined, it recounts deeds of great valor that bear consequence for the community to which the hero belongs. An epic plot is typically focused on the deeds of a single person or hero, mortal though exceptionally strong, intelligent, or brave, and often assisted or opposed by gods. Epic is set in a remote or legendary past represented as an age of greater heroism than the present. Its style is elevated and rhetorical.[50]

From a European perspective, an epic is considered a single, long narrative poem, but there is no reason why this should be the only definition of the genre. What counts is not that there is a single long text; what counts is what makes this long text an epic: it is narrative, poetic, and focused on the heroic action of a single protagonist who in both spirit and abilities stands high above the experiences of other mortals.

As a text distributed across multiple and diverse sources, the Qu Yuan story is an epic sui generis.[51] Compare, for example, Qu Yuan with the famous figure of Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (d. 484 BCE), another solitary hero and one far more widely known in early China.[52] Wu Zixu's multifaceted story, rich in historical detail and development, appears already extensively in pre-imperial texts; Qu Yuan's appears in none. Yet in pre-Qin or Han times, Wu Zixu's heroism is never told in poetry, let alone in pseudo-autobiographical poetry attributed to himself; he merely survives in stories and anecdotes. Qu Yuan, by contrast, is unique not only as China's first great poet but also in attracting an entire anthology of poetry centered on his paradigmatic experiences, not to mention the broader lore, written and oral, that clearly existed along and beyond what was selected and collected for transmission. Entirely unknown to the textual tradition before the Han, it was Qu Yuan alone who emerged as the exemplary figure of poet-

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hero and maligned royal advisor in whom Han intellectuals—and countless Chinese scholars since—were to recognize themselves. His complete absence to date in the numerous manuscript finds from pre-imperial Chu and even in Chu-area manuscripts from the early Western Han only further confirms how completely the "Qu Yuan Epic" was constructed by Western Han scholars who found their own identity in the mirror image of a true ancestor: an ancestor remote enough not to be known but only to be created in Cultural Memory and endowed with heroic powers not real but ideal, heroic failures not pathetic but tragic and transcendent.

Compare to the definition of the epic noted above the opening three stanzas of the *Lisao*, as they literally stage the protagonist as a mythological persona of divine ancestry who on an auspicious day "descends" into the world like a god and introduces himself in an intensely personal voice:

Stanza 1.

Distant descendant of the God Gao Yang am I,	帝高陽之苗裔兮
My august father's name was Bo Yong.	朕皇考曰伯庸
The *sheti* constellation pointed to the first month of the year,	攝提貞于孟陬兮
It was the cyclical day *gengyin* when I descended.	惟庚寅吾以降

Stanza 2.

The august one surveyed me and took my original measure,	皇覽揆余初度兮
Rising to bestow on me auspicious names:	肇錫余以嘉名
He named me "Correct Standard,"	名余曰正則兮
Styled me "Numinous Balance."	字余曰靈均

Stanza 3.

Lush am I, possessed of this inner beauty,	紛吾既有此內美兮
Further doubled in fine appearance:[53]	又重之以脩能
Shrouded in lovage and iris,	扈江離與辟芷兮
Weaving the autumn orchid as my girdle.	紉秋蘭以為佩

The "I" in this presentation, present in seven first-person pronouns, is the hero remembered; no ancient Chinese poet could have called himself a descendant of the gods. The performative nature of this impersonation is linguistically marked: "*this* inner beauty" (*ci neimei* 此內美), like deictic expressions in performance contexts in general, can only be understood as an actual gesture within the dramatic staging in front of an audience. The protagonist's "inner beauty" remains invisible except when represented through his lavish outward appearance. This does not necessarily mean that the *Lisao* as a whole was a text for

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public performance. It means that it contains elements of performance texts, just as it contains elements of other textual materials.

In my analysis the *Lisao* is best understood not as a single poem but as an anthology of modular fragments, a collection of expressions of different kinds and different origins. This analysis is centrally directed at four elements: first, different types of discourse, lexicon, and poetic register within the *Lisao*; second, blocks of texts that stand paratactically next to other blocks of texts, typically without transition; third, elements of intertextuality and repetition within the *Lisao*; and fourth, the intertextuality between the *Lisao* and certain other texts from the early layers of the *Chuci* anthology. In this, I treat the "Qu Yuan Epic" in general, and the *Lisao* in particular, as the manifestation of Cultural Memory in the form of a broader, authorless discourse that took shape over time before becoming fixed within the specific parts of the *Chuci* anthology, including in the discrete textual entities we now call *Lisao*, *Jiu ge* 九歌 (Nine Songs), *Jiu zhang* 九章 (Nine Manifestations), *Jiu bian* 九辯 (Nine Variations), and so on. This "Qu Yuan Epic" is a text both composed from diverse materials and distributed across several textual manifestations and thus a site of Cultural Memory par excellence. The version we see in the received anthology is merely the final, canonical version of the text, defined by the successive efforts and decisions of a series of commentators, including Liu An, Sima Qian, Liu Xiang, Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), Wang Yi 王逸 (89–158), and Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155) but also by the poetic responses and implicit interpretations of Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–169 BCE),[54] Wang Bao 王褒 (ca. 84–ca. 53 BCE),[55] Yang Xiong,[56] and others.

The Qu Yuan Biography

In the Western Han imagination, the story of Qu Yuan is directly tied to the destruction of the old eastern state of Chu 楚 by Qin 秦 in 223 BCE, two years before Qin's creation of the unified empire in 221 BCE. By the time of the fall of Chu, Qu Yuan (whose traditional dates are entirely dubious)[57] had long been dead, but according to the *Shiji*, he had already warned King Huai of Chu 楚懷王 (r. 328–299 BCE) that Qin was "a state of tigers and wolves that cannot be trusted" 秦虎狼之國，不可信也.[58] Both in the *Shiji* and elsewhere, this phrase is attributed to various other pre-Qin historical figures[59] while in the Qu Yuan biography, it is only spoken by him, who thus appears as the single prophet of Chu's demise: after Qu Yuan's death, "Chu was diminished by the day, until several dozen years later it was finally extinguished by Qin" 其後楚日以削，數十年竟為秦所滅.[60] Before Sima Qian, Qu Yuan must have been a figure of mythological significance in the territory of the former state of Chu, now a Western Han kingdom ruled by Liu An at Shouchun 壽春 (in modern Anhui), the last capital of pre-imperial Chu.

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It was probably at Liu An's court that the first *Chuci* anthology was compiled and the persona of Qu Yuan defined.[61] But Qu Yuan was not only the prophet of the demise of Chu; his comment on Qin as being "the state of tigers and wolves" also presaged why Qin would ultimately fail, only to be replaced by a new dynasty, the Liu 劉 family's Han, that emerged from the former Chu territory.

This leads directly to the second way in which Qu Yuan represents Han concerns. In the Western Han view from Shouchun, Qu Yuan—descendant of one of the three royal lineages of the old state of Chu[62]—was an ancestor. The culture and history of Chu, now surviving at the old capital, was the culture and history of the Han imperial house.[63] The "Qu Yuan Epic" offered a view of both the former aristocratic Chu culture—now surviving with Liu An and his court—and of Chu history, mythology, and religion, distributed across different parts of the *Chuci* anthology.

The third way in which the Qu Yuan persona spoke to the intellectual and political needs of the early Han was that it exemplified and embodied the ruler-minister debate: the centrality of loyal and upright advisors for good rulership—a position of self-interest for Han intellectuals—together with the outcry over unjust punishment (as experienced by both Jia Yi and Sima Qian).[64] Jia Yi, just like Qu Yuan, ended exiled to the miasmic south; Sima Qian avoided Qu Yuan's fate of suicide only by submitting to castration. (By that time, Liu An had already been forced into suicide.) Thus, in their shared *Shiji* biography,[65] Qu Yuan and Jia Yi are mirrored and explained against each other—yet clearly from the perspective of Jia Yi as imagined by their Han biographer.

The fourth and final way in which the Qu Yuan persona responded to Han political and cultural imagination was his stature as the first heroic poet. Over the past twenty years or so, it has become common understanding in Western Sinology that the figure of the individual author had little purchase before the empire and is fundamentally an early Han construction at the hands of Liu An, Sima Qian, Liu Xiang, Yang Xiong, and others.[66] The urgency of this new idea is nowhere more clearly expressed than in Sima Qian's *Shiji*, where the historian presents himself as both the foremost reader and a new author in the image of those from the past whom he imagines as his intellectual and moral predecessors, first among them Confucius and Qu Yuan. Only twice does he claim to visualize the persona of the author just from reading; on Confucius, Sima Qian notes:

> When reading the writings of Master Kong, I see him before me as the person he was.
> 余讀孔氏書，想見其爲人。[67]

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Likewise, but now in much richer detail, on Qu Yuan:

> When reading *Lisao*, *Tian wen*, *Zhao hun*, and *Ai Ying*, I grieve over his resolve. Ever since I traveled to Changsha and saw where Qu Yuan drowned himself in the abyss, I never can help shedding tears, and I see him before me as the person he was.
> 余讀離騷、天問、招魂、哀郢，悲其志。適長沙，觀屈原所自沈淵，未嘗不垂涕，想見其為人。[68]

As I commented in an earlier study on the Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770),

> To Sima, the supreme reader and biographer, it is the text that leads us to the true nature of the person, where the author is finally known and understood. In this, the author becomes dependent on his reader: it is the latter who now imagines the former, and who rescues the text and with it the person. This, of course, is how Sima Qian not only remembers Qu Yuan and Confucius but also imagines himself, as he—another fated author—longs for his own posterity in the minds of later readers. The same is true for Du Fu. Like the ancient historian, the Tang poet seeks to create the prospective memory of himself. Qu Yuan as much as Confucius, and Sima Qian as much as Du Fu, is the noble person without power, the high-minded individual who insists on nothing but his moral excellence, and who creates a textual legacy that has no audience except in posterity.[69]

In sum, in the Western Han *imaginaire*, the Qu Yuan persona as a figure of Cultural Memory was inscribed with a set of concepts supremely important to the writers of the time, one that in this constellation had not existed before.

But how did this persona, and with it the "Qu Yuan Epic," come about? The *Lisao* does not lend itself to a biographical reading; it mentions nothing about the historical Qu Yuan. Its biographical (or autobiographical) reading depends entirely on external material collected from a range of several other sources: the biography in the *Shiji*; the two short pieces in the *Chuci* anthology—*Bu ju* 卜居 (Divining Where to Stay) and *Yufu* 漁父 (The Fisherman)[70]—that speak about Qu Yuan in the third person but are nevertheless attributed to him; other Han poems both within and outside the anthology; and various Han dynasty comments and entire commentaries, most fully Wang Yi's *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 (Chapter and Verse Commentary to the *Chuci*), received through the *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Supplementary Annotations to the *Chuci*).[71] One cannot reconstruct a Qu Yuan persona from the *Lisao* itself—in fact, nobody could have connected the poem to the person were it not for the various external materials that relate the person to the text.

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It is futile to wonder whether the *Shiji* biography is indeed the work of Sima Qian himself. The text is an incoherent patchwork of multiple sources poorly stitched together that cannot even agree with itself on the name of its protagonist, Qu Yuan (identified as the author of *Huai sha* 懷沙 [Embracing Sand]) or Qu Ping 屈平 (identified as the author of the *Lisao*). It cannot agree with itself as to whether the *Lisao* was composed before or in response to its author's exile. Qu Yuan and Qu Ping—neither one mentioned in the *Lisao*—may well refer to the same historical person, but the biography does not harmonize them into one. Compiled from a range of different sources,[72] it opens a window on the rich and diverse nature of early Qu Yuan lore and its different traditions of mythological narrative and poetic performance. The biography reveals that literary material surrounding Qu Yuan existed in multiple parallel versions, none of which may be privileged as original or diminished as derivative. Thus, when we find direct textual parallels between the *Lisao* and Jia Yi's *Diao Qu Yuan* 吊屈原 (Mourning Qu Yuan)[73] or then again between *Xi shi* 惜誓 (Regretting the Oath; also attributed to Jia Yi),[74] *Diao Qu Yuan*, and other pieces in the *Chuci* anthology,[75] this does not suggest acts of "quotation" in the sense that one author cites the work of another, which would presume an early fixity of text for which there exists no other evidence. Instead, it suggests a shared body of expressions in the Han *imaginaire*.

While in pre-imperial times, Qu Yuan may have been a persona whose story was told in Chu, it is only in the Western Han that we see the full extent of his composite image as told in different parts of the *Shiji* biography: the political hero standing against the ruler, the minister wronged by his king, the aristocratic representative of a social order on the verge of collapse, and the autobiographic poet who laments his fate in verse. Particularly instructive is the passage that leads to the account of the composition of the *Lisao*:

Qu Ping was distressed that:	屈平疾
The king's listening was undiscerning,	王聽之不聰也
Slander and slur obscured insight,	讒諂之蔽明也
The twisted and the crooked harmed the common good,	邪曲之害公也
The square and the straight were no longer given a place.	方正之不容也
Thus, [he] worried and grieved in dark thoughts and made *Encountering Sorrow*.	故憂愁幽思而作離騷
	[*Shiji*, 84.2482]

The four rhymed lines in the middle,[76] all following the same syntactical and rhythmic structure, are a poetic fragment of unknown origin. This passage was

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almost certainly not invented by the historian himself; it must have come from some longer poetic account possibly understood as autobiographical, that is, in Qu Yuan's own voice. It is evidence for the existence of "Qu Yuan poetry" outside of the known anthology, poetry that may have circulated in smaller units and could be combined with other texts—in this case, the prose narrative of the biography. In such combinations, the figures of subject and object, of protagonist and autobiographical poet, could easily switch sides—just as the lines between biography and autobiography are blurred among the *Jiu zhang*, *Bu ju*, and *Yufu*.

This blurring occurs one more time in the *Shiji* biography.[77] Without being marked as such, the dialogical piece *Yufu*, otherwise included in the *Chuci* anthology and there attributed to Qu Yuan himself, appears as part of the biographical account. In it, a fisherman challenges Qu Yuan for being stubborn and unhappy because he cannot adapt to changing circumstances. Once again, it is not plausible that the biographer invented the stylized exchange for his narrative; he more likely incorporated it from an earlier literary version available to him. At the same time, compared to the anthology, the *Shiji* version does not include the full text of *Yufu*. It leaves out the fisherman's short song at the end that, as it happens, also appears independently in *Mengzi* 4A.8, where it has nothing to do with Qu Yuan (or a fisherman). Perhaps the *Shiji* author excluded the song; perhaps he did not know it. Either way, in the biography the story works better without it, giving Qu Yuan—now both hero and poet—the final word, highly emotional and personal: "I shall better throw myself into the ever-flowing stream and bury myself in the bowels of the river fish! How could I take my brilliant clarity and have it obscured by the confused blur of the world" 寧赴常流而葬乎江魚腹中耳，又安能以皓皓之白而蒙世俗之溫蠖乎! This is followed by a single sentence: "Then [he] made the poetic exposition of *Huai sha*" 乃作懷沙之賦. After the text of *Huai sha*, only one more thing is left to say: "Thereupon [he] embraced a stone and drowned himself to die in the Miluo River" 於是懷石遂自投汨羅以死.[78]

This is the moment when the dual nature of Qu Yuan as both poetic hero and heroic poet—as figure in the text and author of the text—breaks down: if Qu Yuan the hero is an archaic figure of noble solitude who acts decisively in the last moment of his life, Qu Yuan the poet, whose work survived his suicide, cannot just have "made" (*zuo* 作) his highly sophisticated poem impromptu nor could his creation have survived from such a moment. If Qu Yuan the hero, facing his fate, was alone when drowning himself in the Miluo river—with loneliness being a central motif of his legend—Qu Yuan the poet, responding to fate, was not alone when composing and reciting *Huaisha* moments earlier. Within the Han "Qu Yuan Epic," this contradiction did not matter: poet and hero could easily switch places.

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Nearly a century later, Yang Xiong in his *Fan Sao* challenged Qu Yuan's decision: there was no reason for Qu Yuan to drown himself after having been slandered and exiled. He could have gone into hiding or he could have left Chu. But Yang Xiong aimed at a pre-imperial Qu Yuan persona: a man of other options. Sima Qian instead imagined Qu Yuan entirely under the conditions of the imperial state, which were Sima's own: a man facing his single ruler, and having nowhere to go but into demise. The dilemma and voice Sima Qian imagined for Qu Yuan was that of an imperial scholar-official: a voice not yet heard before the empire but a voice eminently meaningful to the Han Cultural Memory.

Repertoire and Authorship

In recent years, I developed a model of "repertoires and composite texts" to analyze *Shijing* poetry not as an assembly of discrete, individual poems but rather as an anthology of "repertoires": clusters of poems that are directly related to one another and are essentially a single poem in multiple variations.[79] This model downplays the notion of individual authorship. Instead, it assumes the existence of certain poetic themes that were associated with particular sets of poetic expression, and that could be flexibly actualized in ever new variations, written or oral. Such poetry is not stable at the level of the individual text, but it is largely stable at the level of the repertoire, or body of material from which any such individual text draws. The result is multiple interrelated poems that are similar but not identical, with the textual material mobilized in modular ways.

There is nothing unusual with such a model of ancient poetic composition. For the medieval European poetic traditions, its instability at the level of the poem has been called *mouvance* in Paul Zumthor's terminology[80] and *variance* in Bernard Cerquiglini's[81] with respect to both oral and written compositions, respectively. Importantly, the "author function"[82] does not exist as a controlling factor in the interpretation or stability of such texts. Any effort to retrospectively "reconstruct" or "discover" a particular author or specific historical moment of composition is conceptually misguided and artificially limiting for poems that come into being as ever-renewed instantiations from "poetic material" or "repertoires." Stephen Owen, in conceptualizing the intertextuality of early medieval Chinese poetry in these terms, speaks of "one poetry," that is, a textual corpus where the individual text is but "a single realization of many possible poems that might have been composed" within "a single continuum rather than as a corpus of texts either canonized or ignored. It has its recurrent themes, its relatively stable passages and line patterns, and its procedures."[83] To adopt the terminology from biology, the different phenotexts are all variations of the same underlying genotext.

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This model of circumscribed poetic fluidity proves immensely productive in reconsidering the nature of ancient Chinese poetry across a wide range of genres. It relieves us of authorial attributions whose fictionality is blindingly obvious; it obviates the need to create chronologies, hierarchies, and linear directions of quotation; it accounts for the dense intertextual relations and modular textual "building blocks"[84] that move with ease between different textual instantiations across early Chinese writing; and it situates the poetic text in social practices of poetic exchange, performance, and variation. Finally—and pertinent to the present analysis—the distributed nature of poetic expression as found in the "Qu Yuan Epic" falls together with the collective dimension of Cultural Memory: the Western Han Qu Yuan is the result not of some individual textual construction but responds to the shared concerns of its time.

It is, however, necessary to be more specific about the notion of "intertextuality" in the early Chinese context. Within the *Chuci* anthology, Heng Du—to some extent following David Hawkes and others before her—has distinguished between an early, interrelated core and a later set of imitation pieces; in her reading, they are separated by pieces that serve a paratextual function,[85] in particular *Bu ju* and *Yufu*, both of which name and define the Qu Yuan persona, mark his death, and hence close the canon attributed to him.[86] Reception, quotation, commentary, or imitation all become possible only after this textual closure. At least in some early recension of the *Chuci* anthology, the *Lisao* was regarded as the only work by Qu Yuan and a *jing* 經 (canon) followed by texts of *zhuan* 傳 (tradition);[87] as a remnant of this understanding, the title *Lisao jing* 離騷經 (The *Lisao* Canon) survived through Wang Yi's Eastern Han commentary yet was no longer understood.[88] While most scholars at a minimum still accept Qu Yuan's authorship for the *Lisao*—and hence the text as a single, discrete poem—my own analysis leads me to a more iconoclastic reading of the *Chuci* "core" in the poststructuralist tradition of Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, and Renate Lachmann (all going back to Mikhail Bakhtin).[89] In my model, the formation of the "Qu Yuan Epic" is the intertextuality of composite texts, textual repertoires, and Cultural Memory and at work both between the *Lisao* and other texts and within the *Lisao* itself.

It is, in fact, Wang Yi himself who offers the lead. For the *Jiu zhang* (including *Huai sha*), he notes that after Qu Yuan's death, "the people of Chu grieved and mourned him; generation after generation appraised his phrases and transmitted his verses from one to the next" 楚人惜而哀之，世論其詞，以相傳焉.[90] Likewise with *Tian wen*: "The people of Chu mourned and grieved over Qu Yuan; they collectively appraised and transmitted [the poem], and this is why it is said not to be in a meaningful order" 楚人哀惜屈原，因共論述，故其文義不次序云爾.[91] For *Yufu*, Wang Yi states that "the people of Chu longed and

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yearned for Qu Yuan and for this reason arranged his phrases so as to transmit them onward" 楚人思念屈原，因敘其詞以相傳焉.[92]

For Wang Yi, it is implausible that the pieces of *Jiu zhang* emerged from his suicide; *Yufu* talks about Qu Yuan in the third person; and *Tian wen* is too disorderly to be Qu Yuan's own final composition. Moreover, for the *Jiu ge*, Wang Yi sees Qu Yuan more as an editor than as an original author: because the southern religious songs which he encountered in exile were *bilou* 鄙陋 (vulgar and base), Qu Yuan remade them in order to give expression to his own vengeance and remonstrance. Thus, "their textual sense is incoherent, their stanzas and lines are mixed up, and they broadly diverge in their principal meaning" 故其文意不同，章句雜錯，而廣異義焉.[93]

Authorship in this sense is communal, composite, and distributed across the roles of compilers, editors, collators, and commentators. This would not have been lost on figures like Liu An, Liu Xiang, and Wang Yi as they engaged in their own successive efforts of reorganizing the *Chuci* anthology and of the Qu Yuan legend with it. But through their own poetic contributions to the anthology they also still created an authorial model for themselves, with Qu Yuan as their spiritual ancestor. As this new author came into view—likely first with Liu An—Western Han writers responded explicitly to it: Liu An with his *Lisao zhuan* (or *Lisao fu*), Sima Qian (or whoever else) with the *Shiji* biography, and in particular Liu Xiang with his *Jiu tan* where for the first time he mentions the *Jiu zhang* and attributes them to Qu Yuan. The *Jiu tan* are written precisely in the style of the *Jiu zhang*, down to structural devices such as proems and epilogues, and move freely between speaking about Qu Yuan in the third person and impersonating him in the first.[94] In their learned bookishness, the *Jiu tan* reflect Liu Xiang's stature at the imperial court where he organized the books in the imperial library and created a new system of inherited knowledge and intellectual and literary history.[95] Indeed, it appears that Liu Xiang's voice in the *Jiu tan*, more than any earlier one, defined the persona of Qu Yuan as that of the *Jiu zhang*.[96] Liu Xiang's Qu Yuan is a Qu Yuan in Liu Xiang's own image; and Liu Xiang's own voice is developed by way of defining Qu Yuan's.

I therefore propose to divide the anthology into three layers: first, an early layer that shows multiple instances of textual overlap (especially *Lisao*, *Jiu ge*, *Jiu zhang*, *Jiu bian*); second, a late layer that explicitly refers to these earlier texts (most prominently *Jiu tan*); and third, a layer whose texts seem to stand largely separate from both the earlier and the later layers (such as the "summons" poems, *Bu ju*, *Yufu*, and to some extent also *Tian wen*), but were at some point added to the anthology. What distinguishes the early (first) layer from the late (second) one is a much greater degree of horizontal, nonhierarchical intertextual fluidity within the textual repertoire before its canonization into discrete

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poems. These two layers thus represent two different modes of textual production: one modular and without emphasis on authorship, the other consciously authored in response and as such far more controlled, nonrepetitive, and self-contained. For example, the *Jiu ge* share sentences among themselves with considerable frequency, while Wang Yi's *Jiu si* 九思 (Nine Longings), the final addition to the anthology, never do.[97]

Jiu ge, *Jiu zhang*, and *Jiu bian* are themselves anthologies of distinct repertoires. While a few of their parts stand apart,[98] the clustering of the others in these series may reflect their original, mutual diffusion (consider, e.g., the proximity of *Xiang jun* 湘君 [Goddess of the Xiang River] and *Xiang furen* 湘夫人 [Lady of the Xiang River] within the *Jiu ge*). A particular expression of this fluidity is found in the *Jiu bian* whose individual sections are not even marked by separate titles. But for repertoires to work, it is not enough that their poems share ideas and expressions. They also must stand separate from the poems of other repertoires—as they clearly do, for example, between the *Jiu ge* and the *Jiu zhang*. Only one composite text finally unites these distinct repertoires in a single poem that for this very reason is then marked by an internal diversity of voice, perspective, and lexicon and by ruptures, repetitions, and sudden moments of discontinuity: the *Lisao*.

The "Qu Yuan Epic" as Poetic Intertext

Every Western Han and later source places the *Lisao* at the head of the *Chuci* corpus as its unquestionable origin and master text. But how does a poem of 373 lines[99] appear out of nowhere? How does it circulate through generations, especially during the tumultuous third century BCE and into the Han?

Since at least the Southern Song (1127–1279), scholars have noted the *Lisao*'s structure of discontinuous, nonlinear, mutually independent sections. One could, in fact, move some of these sections around without much consequence, especially as the text spirals forward with numerous repetitions. The many attempts to divide the text into two, three, four, five, eight, ten, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, or sixteen segments[100] all remain inconclusive for the same reason: while acknowledging the ruptures and repetitions, they still take the *Lisao* as a single poem by a single author, with a single voice and a single meaning.[101]

However, together with their own patterns of repetitions, the individual sections across the *Lisao* show very specific intertextual relations with other texts in the *Chuci* anthology, especially *Jiu ge*, *Jiu zhang*, and *Jiu bian* (and even *Tian wen*) that all carry their own themes, linguistic patterns, and lexicons. These differences create jarring effects on poetic voice, perspective of speech, and typology of imagery.[102] Thus, I propose that the *Lisao* is neither the composition by a single poet nor a single poem. It is an anthology of different

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elements of the "Qu Yuan Epic," just as the *Shiji* biography is a composite of different, mutually incongruous sources. In this reading, the *Lisao* does not precede the poetry of the *Jiu ge*, *Jiu zhang*, or *Tian wen*. Qu Yuan is not its author but the protagonist of his story that was told in a range of different sources. The *Lisao* is the canonical *jing* not as the first expression of that story but as its ambitious *summa*; the other works are secondary not in the sense that they follow the *Lisao* but that they are limited to specific contents and poetic registers. This reading does not claim a chronology for the received texts of *Jiu ge*, *Jiu zhang*, *Jiu bian*, or *Tian wen* relative to the *Lisao*. Instead, it suggests that their different registers and lexicons preceded all our anthologized versions, including that of the *Lisao*, before they all became separately organized into the anthology. Together, they represent particular aspects of the Cultural Memory of Chu as it was relevant to Han authors: its ancient religious practices (*Jiu ge*), its history and mythology (*Tian wen*), and the lament of the upright official (*Jiu zhang*, *Jiu bian*), the latter since Jia Yi identified with the figure of Qu Yuan.

The process of textual integration and compilation may have been accomplished by the literary scholars at Liu An's court, including Liu An himself, or may be the work of Liu Xiang. Note, however, how both *Lisao* and *Jiu zhang* still retain strongly performative elements, beginning with the presentation of the hero in the first three stanzas of the *Lisao*. Before its final textualization, the Qu Yuan story must have been told and retold, performed and reperformed, composed and recomposed over time in both oral and written forms. This is suggested not only by the performative elements, repetitions, and ruptures but also by the fact that certain sections of the *Lisao* are impossible to understand because they completely lack context—a context that must have existed in some earlier version or was provided externally, for example during performances, to the text of the *Lisao*.[103] Despite its length, the *Lisao* is not a self-contained text.

Traces of the textualization of the "Qu Yuan Epic" can be found everywhere: in the overlap of *Yufu* with the *Shiji* biography as well as in the poetic fragment within the latter, both noted above; extensive sharing of text both within the *Lisao* and between the *Lisao* and other poems; and sharing between texts outside of the *Lisao*. To cite just one example of the latter, consider the final ten lines (before the *luan* 亂 coda) of the *Jiu zhang* poem *Ai Ying* 哀郢 (Lamenting Ying),[104] a text that has no overlap with the *Lisao* at all.[105] These same ten lines also appear in the latter sections of *Jiu bian*—a text that otherwise shares multiple lines with the *Lisao*—but spliced apart and scattered across four passages.[106] While some scholars proceed simply on the traditional claim that *Ai Ying* was written by Qu Yuan and the *Jiu bian* afterwards by Song Yu 宋玉,[107] this would imply (a) the written stability and canonicity of *Ai Ying* at an early

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time and (b) a practice of "quotation" from that stable version for which there is little further evidence. It is at least as plausible that the compact ending of *Ai Ying* was at some point attached to the text, compiled from sentences somewhere[108] or that both *Ai Ying* and *Jiu bian* draw on shared material but use it in different ways. Interesting in this context is Okamura Shigeru's hypothesis that full-line parallels in the early layers of the *Chuci* were owed to the need for metric stability in recitation.[109] Okamura lists such parallels between *Jiu zhang*, *Jiu bian*, and *Lisao* but also fourteen lines (in twelve passages through all parts of the poem) that are fully or partially repeated within the *Lisao* itself.[110] Consider the following two stanzas:

Stanza 47.

At dawn I unlocked the cartwheels by the Azure Parasol Tree,	朝發軔於蒼梧兮
At dusk I arrived at the Hanging Gardens.	夕余至乎縣圃
I wanted to linger a bit by these spirits' door-locks,	欲少留此靈瑣兮
Yet the sun moved swiftly, approaching nightfall.	日忽忽其將暮

Stanza 87.

At dawn I unlocked the cartwheels by the Celestial Ford,	朝發軔於天津兮
At dusk I arrived at the Western Extremity.	夕余至乎西極
The phoenix opened its wings to sustain my banner,	鳳皇翼其承旂兮
Soaring and flapping on high, with wings balanced.	高翔翱之翼翼
	[*Chuci buzhu*, 1.26–27, 44]

The paired place-names Azure Parasol Tree/Hanging Gardens versus Celestial Ford/Western Extremity are perfectly interchangeable,[111] the first as metonymies and the second as abstractions denoting east and west. For the structure "at dawn . . . at dusk" see also stanzas 4 and 17:

Stanza 4.

Swiftly I moved, as if I wouldn't be in time,	汩余若將不及兮
I feared the years would not stay with me.	恐年歲之不吾與
At dawn I plucked magnolias from the ridges,	朝搴阰之木蘭兮
At dusk I pulled evergreens from the islets.	夕攬洲之宿莽

Stanza 17.

At dawn I drank the dew dropped from magnolias,	朝飲木蘭之墜露兮
At dusk I ate the flowers fallen from autumn chrysanthemums.	夕餐秋菊之落英

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If only my innate affects remain truly excellent and pure,	苟余情其信姱以練要兮
Though deprived and starving for long, how could this cause pain?	長顑頷亦何傷
	[*Chuci buzhu*, 1.6, 12]

Here, the generic locations "ridges"/ "islets" denote the cosmological opposition of mountain and water, while "magnolias" versus "evergreens"/"autumn chrysanthemums" once again signify east versus west.[112] All four stanzas create an opposition between the geographical ends of the world yet without ever describing the journey between them. All action is frozen in place with neither direction nor progress. Stanzas 4 and 47 together lament the passing of time, yet nothing is gained in the latter over the former. Stanza 57 as well includes the "at dawn . . . at dusk" formula, albeit in inverted sequence. This stanza shows the same combination of cosmological opposition and directionless action, now presumably by an elusive goddess:[113]

Stanza 57.

In tumultuous profusion, now separate, now in unison—	紛總總其離合兮
Suddenly she turned obstinate and hard to sway.	忽緯繣其難遷
At dusk she took refuge at Stone's End Mountain,	夕歸次於窮石兮
At dawn she washed her hair in Weiban Torrent.	朝濯髮於洧盤
	[*Chuci buzhu*, 1.31–32]

Stanzas 4, 17, 47, and 87 could easily change places without any effect on the poem; stanza 57 is part of an abrupt and obscure pursuit of a female persona. Yet in addition to the repetitive pattern within the *Lisao*, the pursuit of the elusive goddess in conjunction with the "at dawn . . . at dusk" formula appears also in both *Xiang jun* and *Xiang furen* in the *Jiu ge*,[114] as does the profusion of plant imagery. The *Jiu ge* poems are largely consistent in their imagery and content and together form a single, self-contained unit of expression;[115] at certain passages in the *Lisao*, by contrast, their language surfaces as abruptly and without narrative contextualization as it then fades again, just as other semantic elements do, creating an overwhelming sense of discontinuity.

Such specific semantic elements are highly concentrated in certain parts of the poem while nearly absent elsewhere: the catalogues of ancient rulers, reminiscent of the *Tian wen*, are clustered in stanzas 37–41 and 72–74;[116] mythological places appear in stanzas 47–49, 54–55, 57, 59, and 86–89; plant imagery, while occasionally scattered individually, is concentrated in 3–4, 13,

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17–18, 68–70, and 76–81. When they recur in random intervals of repetition, the same semantic elements are clustered together, forming identifiable textual units within the *Lisao*; and even more tellingly, different such elements do not overlap with one another in the same passages but seem mutually exclusive, thus revealing the composite nature of the *Lisao* as a whole.

Stanza 17, already discussed, is further relevant to the discussion of two separate structural features. First, consider the following four stanzas:

Stanza 14.

I hoped that the branches and leaves would grow lofty and lush,	冀枝葉之峻茂兮
Looked back and awaited my time to cut them.	願竢時乎吾將刈
Even if they wilted and broke, how could this cause pain?	雖萎絕其亦何傷兮
Yet I lament how the numerous fragrances are overgrown with weeds.	哀眾芳之蕪穢

Stanza 17.

At dawn I drank the dew dropped from magnolias,	朝飲木蘭之墜露兮
At dusk I ate the flowers fallen from autumn chrysanthemums.	夕餐秋菊之落英
If only my innate affects remain truly excellent and pure,	苟余情其信姱以練要兮
Though deprived and starving for long, how could this cause pain?	長顑頷亦何傷

Stanza 21.

Already cast off, I wore basil for my girdle,	既替余以蕙纕兮
And further extended it to fasten angelica.	又申之以攬茝
With what is cherished in my heart,	亦余心之所善兮
Even in ninefold death there will never be regret.	雖九死其猶未悔

Stanza 29.

I fashioned caltrop and lotus for my garb,	製芰荷以為衣兮
Collected hibiscus for my skirt.	集芙蓉以為裳
Not being known, this is indeed the end,	不吾知其亦已兮
If only my innate affects remain truly fragrant.	苟余情其信芳
	[*Chuci buzhu*, 1.11, 12, 14, 17]

What makes these four stanzas identical in structure and hence freely interchangeable? In each of them, the first two lines offer a description of plants or some directionless action dedicated to them. And in each stanza, this is then

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followed by a couplet that has no description at all but is purely a statement of emotional conflict, each time with either *sui* 雖 ("even if") or *gou* 苟 ("if only"). In addition, note the verbatim parallels between stanzas 14 and 17, "how could this cause pain," and those between stanzas 17 ("if only my innate affects remain truly excellent") and 29 ("if only my innate affects remain truly fragrant"). If the descriptive plant imagery recalls the *Jiu ge*, the expression of emotion—dramatized by rhetorical questions, words like "pain," "truly," "heart," and "innate affects," and the intense use of first-person personal pronouns, in particular the emotive *yu* 余—evokes the voice of the *Jiu zhang*. In each stanza, the sequence is identical, and each time it is the plaintive *Jiu zhang* persona of the second couplet that drives the interpretation of the foregoing plant imagery. While the descriptive couplet may be put in past tense, the emotive one belongs to the present.

With this composite structure, no progress is seen between stanzas 14 and 29; all we have are variations on the exact same theme—variations, furthermore, that could further multiply without consequence. However, the structure just identified is almost unique to the first third of the text (it reappears only in reversal in stanzas 77 and 81); later in the poem, other repetitive structures dominate.

Stanzas 14 and 17 are further connected by way of their neighboring stanzas:

Stanza 13.	
I watered the nine fields of orchids,	余既滋蘭之九畹兮
And further planted the hundred acres of basil.	又樹蕙之百畝
I arranged lingering blossoms and cart-halting flowers,	畦留夷與揭車兮
Mixed them with wild ginger and fragrant iris.	雜杜衡與芳芷
Stanza 18.	
I fastened tree tendrils to tie the angelica,	攬木根以結茝兮
Threaded fallen pistils of creeping fit.	貫薜荔之落蕊
I reached up for cinnamon to string basil,	矯菌桂以紉蕙兮
Corded the winding vines of rope-creepers.	索胡繩之纚纚
	[*Chuci buzhu*, 1.10,12–13]

Whatever these two stanzas are meant to signify, they both differ from the ones just discussed in being entirely focused on the directionless action devoted to plants. There are no other stanzas of this kind in the entire *Lisao*, and nothing prepares the reader for their sudden, random, isolated appearance. Note,

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however, how they connect to stanzas 14 and 17: stanza 13 precedes stanza 14 that therefore continues the plant imagery for another couplet, but that logic does not apply to the sequence of stanzas 17 and 18. Either way, the protagonist keeps doing whatever he has done at some point before.

There are numerous other details to illustrate the composite, repetitive, nonlinear nature of the *Lisao* as a rich collage of distinct elements derived from distinct discourses that elsewhere in the *Chuci* anthology, sometime in the Han, became separately arranged in by and large coherent, self-contained textual series. What makes the *Lisao* polysemous and polyvocal is their combination within a single text. Much more must be said on

- the extensive parallels between *Lisao*, *Jiu zhang*, and *Jiu bian*;[117]
- those between *Jiu ge* and *Lisao* (and occasionally *Jiu zhang* and *Jiu bian*);[118]
- the series of identical phrases within the *Lisao* itself;
- the highly uneven distribution of the large number of first-person personal pronouns *yu* 余 and *wu* 吾 and their distinctly different uses in passages of emotive lament (mostly *yu*) versus those of a commanding sovereignty (mostly *wu*, e.g., in the formula *wu ling* 吾令, “I command,” exclusively concentrated in stanzas 48, 51, 52, 56, 60);
- the clustering of emotive expressions, especially *kong* 恐 (“I fear”; stanzas 4, 5, 9, 61, 63, 75–76), *shang* 傷 (“pain”; 14, 17), *ai* 哀 (“I lament”; 14, 20, 45, 54), the emphatic *xin* 信 (“truly”; 17, 29, 58, 65), and the nouns *xin* 心 (“heart”; 15, 16, 21–22, 26, 32, 36, 61, 70, 85) and *qing* 情 (“innate affects”; 10, 17, 29, 35, 64, 73)—all of which appear predominantly in the first third of the poem and are seen with very high frequency in the *Jiu zhang* while being largely absent in the *Jiu ge*;
- syntactical structures such as *he* 何 (“how . . . ?”), *sui* 雖 (“even if”), and *gou* 苟 (“only if”) that further emphasize emotion;
- the shifting voices, perspectives, and genders in the *Lisao* that resist any unified interpretation.[119]

For example, the complexities and uncertainties of intertextuality are on full display with stanzas 10–12:

Stanza 10.

I rushed forward in haste, front and behind,	忽奔走以先後兮
Reaching the footprints of the former kings.	及前王之踵武
Iris did not probe my loyal affection,[120]	荃不察余之中情兮
Instead trusting slander and exploding in rage.	反信讒而齌怒

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Stanza 11.

I surely understood how being frank and forthright would bring disaster,	余固知謇謇之為患兮
Yet I endured it and could not let go.	忍而不能舍也
I pointed at Ninefold Heaven to be my witness,	指九天以為正兮
It was only for the cause of Spirit Perfected.	夫唯靈脩之故也
He said: When night falls, we shall meet—	曰黃昏以為期兮
Alas! He was halfway and then changed his path!	羌中道而改路

Stanza 12.

Earlier he had given me trustworthy words,[121]	初既與余成言兮
Later he regretted and fled, having some other.	後悔遁而有他
I did not make trouble for being left and separated,	余既不難夫離別兮
Yet was pained that Spirit Perfected so often changed.	傷靈脩之數化
	[*Chuci buzhu*, 1.9–10]

Leaving aside questions of interpretation (Who is "Spirit Perfected"?), I focus on intertextuality. "Probe my loyal affection" (察余之中情兮; stanza 10, line 3) is repeated in stanza 35 but also in the *Jiu zhang* poem *Xi song* (where it is paired with another parallel from *Lisao* stanza 24).[122] "I pointed at Ninefold Heaven to be my witness" (指九天以為正; stanza 11, line 3) repeats in *Xi song* as "I pointed at Azure Heaven to be my witness" (指蒼天以為正).[123] Lines 5 and 6 of stanza 11 present a problem: they uniquely add to the four-line stanza structure but have no commentary by Wang Yi; thus, Hong Xingzu suspects that this couplet entered the text only later.[124] But how and why? Compare the following passage from the *Jiu zhang* poem *Chou si*:

In the past, the lord had given me trustworthy words,	昔君與我誠言兮
He said: When night falls, we shall meet.	曰黃昏以為期
Alas! He was halfway and then turned sideward,	羌中道而回畔兮
Instead, he now had this other intent.	反既有此他志
	[*Chuci buzhu*, 4.137]

Obviously, we are reading two versions of the same passage, even with some minor changes and the lines in different order. Nothing makes us privilege the version of the *Lisao*; if anything, we should doubt the original presence of the two additional lines there. We cannot say when these lines entered the text;

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perhaps they already existed in some Han version Wang Yi had not seen. Instead of engaging in futile efforts to determine a hierarchy of "copy" and "original" between these passages, I suggest we first of all acknowledge how easily lines from *Lisao* and *Jiu zhang* could converge and switch places—and may well have done so from the very beginning, when both were drawing on the same repertoire of the "Qu Yuan Epic."

Conclusion

The internal complexities of the *Lisao* itself and its relation to other early texts related to Qu Yuan are staggering and—as proven by the numerous different interpretations—not resolvable. This gives us several options. The worst possible choice would be to simply take one of the *Lisao*'s discursive layers and subjugate all others to it, reducing the text to a single meaning and purpose and sacrificing precisely the polysemous richness of its multiple, mutually incompatible but individually fascinating dimensions that distinguish the *Lisao* from all other early Chinese poetry. This choice, unfortunately, is that of the traditional interpretation where the *Lisao* ends up simply as a more chaotic *Jiu zhang*. A better choice would be to recognize and cherish the multiple ways in which the Qu Yuan story was imagined and told, perhaps starting in the late Warring States and then flourishing in the early Han when it answered to a considerable range of different ideological and cultural needs.

What changed from the early Han to Liu Xiang—and then even more forcefully with Wang Yi—were precisely these needs of the respective present for imagining a meaningful, identity-generating past. Liu An's Qu Yuan spoke to the nostalgic Chu *imaginaire* at Shouchun; Liu Xiang's Qu Yuan spoke to the identity of imperial scholar-officials and a new classicism that had space for Qu Yuan the suffering author and royal advisor but no more space for the seemingly bizarre world of Chu's religious, mythological, and erotic imagination. The Cultural Memory of the "Qu Yuan Epic" had changed to meet a new time.

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Notes

1. To identify "Cultural Memory" as a theoretical concept, it will be capitalized throughout. A catalog search in the Princeton University Library on June 16, 2021, returned 577 items with the phrase "cultural memory" in their titles; a search that included "cultural" and "memory" separately returned 2,638 items. These numbers refer just to English-language books.

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2. “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” (1995), *Moses the Egyptian* (1997), *Religion and Cultural Memory* (2006), “Communicative and Cultural Memory” (2008), and *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization* (2011).
3. In particular, *Erinnerungsräume* (1999); rewritten by the author in English as *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization* (2011).
4. I first employed the concept in my 1996 German dissertation, *Die Hymnen der chinesischen Staatsopfer*, unaware of any earlier uses of Assmann’s work in Sinology. The first sustained application of Cultural Memory to early Chinese literature was Kern, “*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts.” For my pertinent more recent studies, see Kern, “‘Harangues’ (*Shi* 誓) in the *Shangshu*,” and Kern, “Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shangshu*, and the *Shijing*.” For some further engagement with Cultural Memory, see Davis, *Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture in Early Medieval China*; Swartz, “Intertextuality and Cultural Memory in Early Medieval China”; Nugent, “Structured Gaps”; Krijgsman, “Traveling Sayings”; and Khayutina, “Beginning of Cultural Memory Production.” Furthermore, *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 27 (2005) collects four articles from a 2003 symposium, “Memory and Chinese Texts,” at Indiana University, but only the introduction by Lynn Struve (Struve, “Introduction to the Symposium”) refers to the Assmanns. Jan Assmann’s *Cultural Memory and Ancient Civilization* has also appeared in Chinese translation as *Wenhua jiyi: Zaoqi gaoji wenhua zhong de wenzi, huiyi he zhengzhi shenfen*. By now, the new coinage *wenhua jiyi* 文化記憶 (“cultural memory”) has gained circulation in Chinese scholarship.
5. Expanded in Frankel, *Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady*, 104–43.
6. Knechtges, “Ruin and Remembrance in Classical Chinese Literature.” Knechtges does not refer to Cultural Memory.
7. Owen’s *Remembrances* further branches out into late imperial literature.
8. Consider e.g., the early development of *yuefu* 樂府 (music bureau poetry) and *gu shi* 古詩 (ancient-style poetry), also including “imitation” (*ni* 擬, *dai* 代, etc.) poetry, as well as the *yong shi* 詠史 (Singing about History) section in chapter 21 of Xiao Tong’s 蕭統 (501–531) *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature). In fact, Xiao Tong’s entire anthology would deserve a dedicated study from the perspective of Cultural Memory.
9. The English word derives from Greek *mnēmonikos*, “relating to memory.” Mnēmosyne was the Greek goddess of memory, mother of the Muses.
10. Yates, *Art of Memory*; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*; Carruthers and Ziolkowski, *Medieval Craft of Memory.*
11. Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur.*
12. See e.g., Brashier, *Ancestral Memory in Early China*; Brashier, *Public Memory in Early China*, though without reference to Cultural Memory.
13. In addition to the Assmanns’ own writings, an excellent introduction to the different theoretical models of “memory,” including Cultural Memory, is Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 27–37. Erll provides a wealth of additional references to individual studies as well as to a series of handbooks, newly founded journals, and monograph series that have sprung up especially since the 1990s. See also *Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Erll and Nünning. Seminal works that provide the principal points of reference—and that advance different positions especially regarding the perceived dichotomy of “memory” versus “history”—include Burke, “History as Social Memory”; Connerton, *How Societies Remember*; Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*; Le Goff, *Storia e memoria* (*History and Memory*); Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (*The Places of Memory*); and Zerubavel, *Time Maps.*

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14. For "composite text," see the seminal study by Boltz, "The Composite Nature of Early Chinese Texts." I use the word *composite* to denote literary production out of distinct, preexisting themes, expressions, or materials. For "repertoire," see Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry.* For an earlier study conjoining the two concepts, see Kern, "'Xi shuai' and Its Consequences."
15. I am using the French sociological notion of the *imaginaire* to refer to the social and cultural image that Han scholars collectively created of and for themselves, similar to what Benedict Anderson has described in his *Imagined Communities.*
16. A new critical edition of this work in French was established by Gérard Namer in 1997. In English, Halbwachs's book first appeared as *The Collective Memory* (1980) and later as *On Collective Memory* (1992), further including the conclusion of *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte*.
17. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* 43.
18. See "Short History of Memory Studies," in Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 13–37.
19. See the discussions in Burke, "History as Social Memory"; A. Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory"; Erll, *Memory in Culture*, esp. 39–45, 96–101.
20. Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 7.
21. Ibid., 8. Halbwachs's insight that "a remembrance is in very large measure a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present, a reconstruction prepared, furthermore, by reconstructions of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered" (*On Cultural Memory,* 68), according to Erll, "already points to what half a century later, within poststructuralist discussions, will be called 'the construction of reality'" (*Memory in Culture*, 17).
22. For early China, see Brashier, "Longevity Like Metal and Stone"; H. Wu, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*; Kern, *Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang*.
23. See, e.g., Flower, *Art of Forgetting*.
24. "1619 Project," *New York Times*, August 14, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html.
25. Present examples are too obvious to need further reference here.
26. J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 36–41; see also Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 28–29.
27. See the table in J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 41, rephrased in Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 29.
28. J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 37–38.
29. Ibid., 41–42.
30. Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* 45.
31. Bloch's "Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation" characterizes ritual speech as "formalized" and "impoverished language," the "language of authority" where "many of the options at all levels of language are abandoned so that choice of form, of style, of words and of syntax is less than in ordinary language."
32. For detailed accounts of these elements, see Kern, "*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts"; Kern, "Bronze Inscriptions, the *Shangshu*, and the *Shijing*."
33. Wheelock, "Problem of Ritual Language."
34. See Falkenhausen, "Issues in Western Zhou Studies."
35. *Liji zhengyi*, 49.1590–91.
36. Owen, *Remembrances*, 16.

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37. A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 169–206; J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 70–110.
38. A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 119–32, 327–94; see also Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 36–37. As noted by Erll, the Assmanns' notion of the archive extends the presence of Cultural Memory from the "modus of actuality" to the "modus of potentiality," while tradition only represents the former.
39. For a discussion of the interplay of written text, visuality, and orality in Scribe Qiang's inscription, see Kern, "Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China," 167–71.
40. For Western Zhou archives, see most recently Shaughnessy, "Possible Lost Classic."
41. *Mao shi* 209, "Chu ci" 楚茨 (Thorny Caltrop).
42. *Mao shi* 245, "Sheng min" 生民 (She Bore the Folk).
43. *Mao shi* 290, "Zai shan" 載芟 (Now Clearing Away).
44. A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 73.
45. A. Assmann, "Transformations Between History and Memory," 65.
46. The present essay should not be understood as a continuation of the twentieth-century debates of "the Qu Yuan Question" (*Qu Yuan wenti* 屈原問題) but as a new departure in discussing both Qu Yuan and "his" texts. Important critical voices in the earlier debate include Liao Jiping 廖季平 (1852–1932), Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962), He Tianxing 何天行 (1913–1986), Wei Juxian 衛聚賢 (1898–1990), and Zhu Dongrun 朱東潤 (1896–1988) in China, and Okamura Shigeru 岡村繁 (1922–2014), Suzuki Shūji 鈴木修次 (1923–1989), Shirakawa Shizuka 白川静 (1910–2006), Ishikawa Misao 石川三佐男, Misawa Reiji 三澤鈴尓, Inahata Kōichirō 稲畑耕一郎, and Taniguchi Mitsuru 谷口滿 in Japan. The earlier debates can be conveniently surveyed in Inahata, "Kutsu Gen hiteiron no keifu"; Huang Zhongmo, *Qu Yuan wenti lunzheng shigao*; Huang Zhongmo, *Yu Riben xuezhe taolun Qu Yuan wenti*; Huang Zhongmo, *Zhong-Ri xuezhe Qu Yuan wenti lunzheng ji*; Xu Zhixiao, *Riben Chuci yanjiu lungang*; Hightower, "Ch'ü Yüan Studies." While Republican period Chinese scholars often expressed doubts about Qu Yuan's historical existence or authorship, more recent Chinese scholarship has moved into the opposite direction.
47. Kern, "Du Fu's Long Gaze Back"; Kern, "*Shiji* li de 'zuozhe' gainian."
48. *Shiji*, 84.2481–91.
49. Hong, *Chuci buzhu*; see also Huang, *Chuci zhangju shuzheng*; Jin, Dong, and Gao, *Qu Yuan ji jiaozhu*; and for the *Lisao* in particular, see You, *Lisao zuanyi*.
50. *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th ed., edited by Ronald Greene and Stephen Cushman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), s.v. "Epic."
51. Earlier, Wang, *From Ritual to Allegory*, 73–114, had proposed to read a series of five poems on King Wen 文 in the "Da ya" 大雅 (Major Court Hymns) section of the *Shijing* as the epic of King Wen (in Wang's coinage, the "Weniad"). It should be noted, however, that in sheer scope, the poetic representation of King Wen is nowhere close to that of Qu Yuan nor does it develop the protagonist's interiority through his experiences of heroic struggle over time.
52. See Wu Enpei, *Wu Zixu shiliao xinbian*.
53. Reading—necessitated by the rhyme—*neng* 能 as *tai* 態.
54. Jia Yi's *Diao Qu Yuan* 吊屈原 (Mourning Qu Yuan) knows of Qu Yuan but does not mention him as a poet; see *Shiji*, 84.2492–96; the same is true for the poem *Ai shi ming* 哀時命 (Lamenting the Fate of One's Time), attributed to Yan 嚴 [i.e., Zhuang 莊] Ji 忌 (fl.

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ca. 150 BCE) in *Chuci buzhu*, 14.259–67. The identified fragments of Liu An's *Lisao zhuan* 離騷傳 (Commentary on *Lisao*; possibly *Lisao fu* 離騷［傅］賦, Poetic Exposition on *Lisao*) refer to the text but not to the person; see *Chuci buzhu*, 1.1.

55. In *Chuci buzhu*, 15.268–80, Wang Bao is credited with the *Jiu huai* 九懷 (Nine Regrets).
56. For Yang Xiong's *Fan Sao* 反騷 (Contra [*Li*] *Sao*), see *Hanshu*, 87A.3515–21.
57. See Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 60–61.
58. *Shiji*, 84.2484.
59. *Shiji*, 6.230, 7.313, 40.1728, 44.1857, 69.2254, 69.2261, 71.2308, 75.2354.
60. *Shiji*, 84.2491.
61. For summaries of the history of the *Chuci* anthology, see Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 28–41; Walker, "Toward a Formal History of the *Chuci*"; Du, "Author's Two Bodies"; Chan, "*Jing/Zhuan* Structure of the *Chuci* Anthology."
62. *Shiji*, 84.2481.
63. See Li Zehou, *Mei de licheng*, 94.
64. See Schneider, *Madman of Ch'u*; Schimmelpfennig, "Quest for a Classic"; Waters, *Three Elegies of Ch'u*.
65. *Shiji*, 84.2481–504.
66. For some recent work see Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*; Du, "Author's Two Bodies"; Li, "Concepts of Authorship"; Li, "Idea of Authority in the *Shih chi* (*Records of the Historian*)"; Kern, "Du Fu's Long Gaze Back"; Kern, "*Shiji* li de 'zuozhe' gainian"; Nylan, "Manuscript Culture in Late Western Han, and the Implications for Authors and Authority"; Zhang, *Authorship and Text-making in Early China*; Beecroft, *Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China*; Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 22–87.
67. *Shiji*, 47.1947.
68. *Shiji*, 84.2503.
69. Kern, "Du Fu's Long Gaze Back," 168.
70. *Chuci buzhu*, 6.176–7.181.
71. For studies of the *Chuci zhangju*, see especially Schimmelpfennig, "Quest for a Classic"; Schimmelpfennig, "Qu Yuan's Transformation from Realized Man to True Poet"; Du, "Author's Two Bodies"; Chan, "*Jing/Zhuan* Structure."
72. Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 51–61; Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 88–108.
73. Schimmelpfennig, "Quest for a Classic," 114–18.
74. *Chuci buzhu*, 11.327–31.
75. Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 239; Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 165–67.
76. Line 2 rhymes in the *yang* 陽 category; the other three rhyme in *dong* 東. For their interrhyming in Han poetry, see Luo and Zhou, *Han Wei Jin nanbeichao yunbu yanbian yanjiu*, 179, 187–88.
77. The following four paragraphs follow closely Kern, "Du Fu's Long Gaze Back," 172–73.
78. *Shiji*, 84.2486, 2490.
79. Kern, "'Xi shuai' and Its Consequences"; Kern, "Formation of the *Classic of Poetry*."
80. Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*.
81. Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*.
82. Foucault, "What Is an Author?"
83. Owen, *Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry*, 73.
84. For "building blocks," see Boltz, "Composite Nature of Early Chinese Texts"; for "modularity," see Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things*. I use both concepts in a slightly more expansive way than how they were originally presented by Boltz and Ledderose.

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85. Du's use of "paratext" comes from Genette, *Paratexts*.
86. Du, "Author's Two Bodies."
87. Ibid., 281–83. For the full argument, see Chan, "*Jing/Zhuan* Structure," with an extensive review of earlier Chinese, Japanese, and English scholarship.
88. *Chuci buzhu*, 1.1–2.
89. Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel"; Barthes, "Death of the Author"; Lachmann, *Gedächtnis und Literatur*. Recent scholarship in the digital humanities that examines large amounts of text through computer-assisted, corpus-based analysis has only further weakened previous claims on the sanctity of discrete authorship in traditional literature; see e.g., Moretti, *Distant Reading*, and Stallybrass, "Against Thinking."
90. *Chuci buzhu*, 4.120–21.
91. Ibid., 3.85.
92. Ibid., 7.179.
93. Ibid., 2.55.
94. Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 294–300, shows that Liu Xiang's rhymes deviate noticeably from those of the *Jiu zhang*, reflecting Western Han changes in phonology. Meanwhile, Wang Bao's *Jiu huai*, contemporaneous to the *Jiu tan*, show no awareness of the *Jiu zhang* but do rhyme according to their earlier phonology (ibid., 205–7, 290–92), possibly reflecting an archaizing mode of composition.
95. See Xu Jianwei, *Wenben geming*.
96. On Liu Xiang's role in the construction of Qu Yuan, see Chan, "*Jing/Zhuan* Structure."
97. Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 132, 175–78.
98. *Ju song* 橘頌 (Ode to the Orange Tree) in the *Jiu zhang*; *Guo shang* 國殤 (The Fallen of the State) and *Li hun* 禮魂 (Paying Tribute to the Souls) in the *Jiu ge*.
99. I count ninety-three stanzas, including the final *luan* 亂 (coda). Each stanza has 4 lines with end-rhymes on lines 2 and 4. The *luan* stanza I count as 5 lines, thus arriving at 373 lines. The additional 2 lines in stanza 11 (see below) I do not count.
100. For two recent summaries, see Shi and Zhou, "*Lisao* de fenduan yanjiu zongshu," 44–50; Zhou, "*Chuci* cengci jiegou yanjiu—yi *Lisao* wei li," 28–37.
101. For Jin, *Chuci jianghua*, 112–13, those who consider the *Lisao* chaotic do not understand it.
102. Yu, *Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 86–88, 99–100.
103. This is obvious from the numerous speculative and mutually exclusive interpretations of specific phrases and entire passages over the past two millennia; see the collected commentaries in You, *Lisao zuanyi*. Consider, for example, the sudden appearance of Nüxu 女嬃 in stanza 33 or of Fufei 虙妃 (or Mifei 宓妃) and Qianxiu 蹇修 in stanza 56.
104. *Chuci buzhu*, 4.136; Huang Linggeng, *Chuci zhangju shuzheng*, 5.1431–32.
105. See the discussion in Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 169–70.
106. See *Chuci buzhu*, 8.193–95, Huang Linggeng, *Chuci zhangju shuzheng*, 2.690, 693–94, 701–4, 725; Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 147–49.
107. E.g., Jin, Dong, and Gao, *Qu Yuan ji jiaozhu*, 504. Claims about the historically obscure Song Yu are a matter of belief, not evidence. I consider them irrelevant.
108. See Hawkes, *Songs of the South*, 163.
109. Okamura, "Soji to Kutsu Gen," 94.
110. Ibid., 97–98. The intra-*Lisao* correspondences listed by Okamura occur in the following stanzas: 10–35 (cf. also 67) 17–29, 31–54, 31–82, 39–58, 47–87 (two lines), 52–57, 53–63 (two lines), 55–84, 61–70, 68–76 (cf. also 9), 79–82 (cf. also 58).

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111. See Huang Linggeng, *Chuci zhangju shuzheng*, 1.330, 1.514.
112. In Han dynasty *wuxing* 五行 (five phases) correlative cosmology, spring (the flowering season of the magnolia) is related to the east and autumn to the west.
113. For speculation about this persona, see the numerous opinions noted in You, *Lisao zuanyi*, 301–15.
114. *Chuci buzhu*, 2.63 (with *zhao* 朝 as *chao* 鼂) and 2.66.
115. See Hawkes, "Quest of the Goddess," 42–68.
116. Almost all rulers cataloged in stanzas 37–41 also appear in *Tian wen*.
117. Okamura, "Soji to Kutsu Gen," 92–93, lists twenty-six parallels between *Lisao* and *Jiu zhang*, twelve between *Lisao* and *Jiu bian*, and thirteen between *Jiu bian* and *Jiu zhang*. Note that *Lisao* and *Jiu bian*, while both having close relationships with *Jiu zhang*, correspond to them differently: *Jiu bian* shares sentences mostly with *Ai Ying*, while *Lisao* shares especially with *Xi song* 惜誦 (Regretful Recitation), *Si meiren* 思美人 (Longing for the Beautiful One), *Xi wang ri* 惜往日 (Regretting the Days Past), *Chou si* 抽思 (Unraveling My Longing), and *Bei huifeng* 悲回風 (Grieving Over the Whirling Wind); see the diagram in Okamura, "Soji to Kutsu Gen," 94.
118. For a list, see Walker, "Toward a Formal History," 224–27.
119. For present limits on space, I will explore these issues in a separate publication.
120. Reading *zhong* 中 as 忠.
121. Reading *cheng* 成 as 誠.
122. *Chuci buzhu*, 4.124.
123. Ibid., 4.121.
124. Ibid., 1.10.

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