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LITERARY CRITICISM IN CHINA IN THE EARLY THIRD CENTURY A.D.

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for Jaroslav Prusek

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of the Chien-an period (196–219) in the history of Chinese literature, for it was during those twenty-odd years that Chinese poetry finally began to take on, both in form and in content, the characteristics it was going to maintain for almost an entire millennium. The intellectual forces that brought about this development were complex, but, described succinctly, can be said to have been set in movement by the decay of the ancient world or, more precisely, by the decay of the Han dynasty that had codified in its official ideology an outward-looking, state-centered philosophy closer to the philosophies of antiquity than to those of the Middle Ages soon to come. The development of new forms of literature can be seen, and should be seen, as one of the ways contemporary intellectuals reacted to the spiritual void left by the decay of the old values.

During the second century A.D., under the influence of what seem to have been popular ballads, poetry gradually turned away from politically oriented laments, purely descriptive *fu*, and formal philosophical exercises to portray more personal, private problems: the sadness of separation, of absence from home, and of old age. Poetry, like philosophy and religion, was turning away from the state and the objective world to explore human psychology. This new orientation liberated literature from direct political concern and gave it new autonomy. One of the proofs of this is an unprecedented interest in literary criticism,

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an interest in literature itself, an attempt to stand back and look at it as a whole. As long as literature remained an obedient handmaiden to politics, literary pronouncements were limited to brief, disjointed statements, sometimes illuminating, but usually embedded in philosophical treatises dealing with other matters[1]. Now, at the beginning of the third century, a century of general philosophical renascence and political and social upheaval (comparable to the Golden Age of philosophy in antiquity), we find men discussing literature as a thing in itself for the first time[2].

This new interest in literary criticism can now only be seen[3] in the letters and works of the two leaders of the Chien-an authors, the two imperial brothers Ts'ao P'i (187–226) and Ts'ao Chih (192–232). Their works inaugurate a new field in Chinese thought, but they cast as

1. The most important of these is the beginning of the Great Preface to the *Shih ching*, probably by Wei Hung of the early Latter Han dynasty (cf. *Hou Han-shu chi-chieh* 79B, p. 6a; hereafter *HHscc*). The Preface is translated by J. Legge, The Chinese Classics 4, pp. 34–36.

2. The following works were found helpful and will be referred to in the notes by the names of their authors: Suzuki Torao, *Shina shiron shi* (Tokyo, 1925), pp. 40–43; Hsü Wen-yü, *Wen-lun chiang-shu* (1937; Taipei, 1967 reprint), pp. 15–23; Aoki Masaru, *Shina bungaku shisô shi* (Tokyo, 1943), pp. 60–64; Lo Ken-tse, *Wei Chin Liu-ch'ao p'i-p'ing shih* (1943; Taipei, 1966 reprint), pp. 1–5, 24–28, 42–43, 70, 78; Chu Tung-jun, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih ta-kang* (1944; Hongkong, 1959 reprint), pp. 24–27; Kuo Shao-yü, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih* (Shanghai, 1948; Hongkong, n. d. reprint), pp. 37–40; J. R. Hightower, *Topics in Chinese literature* (Rev. ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 42 (excellent résumé). The following editions were used: *Liu-ch'en chu Wen-hsüan* (Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an edition; hereafter called *Wh* in the notes); Yen K'o-chün, *Ch'üan shang-ku san-tai Ch'in Han San-kuo Liu-ch'ao wen* (hereafter *Ch'üan Hou Han wen* or *Ch'üan San-kuo wen*); Lu Pi, *San-kuo chih chi-chieh* (Peking, 1957; hereafter *Skccc*). The reconstruction of the *Tien lun* by Sun Feng-i (Taipei, 1962 reprint) was found quite inferior to Yen K'o-chün's. Also found useful were Okamura Shigeru, 'Sô Hi no Tenron Rombun ni tsuite', *Shinagaku kenkyû* (Hiroshima) 24/25 (1960), pp. 75–85; Matsumoto Yukio, 'Kenan shidan no keisei ni tsuite', *Ritsumeikan bungaku* (Kyoto), 1960, 10 and 12; 1961, 2–3. The philosophers, unless otherwise noted, are quoted from the 1875 *Pai-tzu ch'üan-shu*, and the dynastic histories (aside from the *Hou Han-shu* and the *San-kuo chih*) from the 1739, Ch'ien-lung Palace edition. I was unfortunately unable to use E. R. Hughes, *The art of letters: Lu Chi's Wen fu*, A.D. 302 (New York, 1951), which contains an unannotated translation of the 'Lun wen' on pp. 231–234.

3. Liu Hsieh in the preface to his *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* also refers to other texts now lost; cf. Kuo Shao-yü, p. 37.

much light on traditional, 'ancient' Chinese attitudes towards literature, from which they have not really freed themselves, as they do on subsequent theories.

This is true of both brothers' works, but it is particularly true of the earliest of these works, a letter written by Ts'ao Chih accompanying some poems he sent to an older friend and member of his coterie, Yang Hsiu (175–219). Ts'ao Chih's letter is remarkable because it discusses literature, because it is the first purely 'literary' letter in Chinese history, but the general judgments it passes on literature are almost all backward-looking, 'antique', and politically oriented. Ts'ao Chih's whole life and work can be said to have been politically oriented, resolutely turned toward the antique values that were rapidly undergoing change during his lifetime. When he wrote this letter, in 216, he was 24 years old and he still hoped that his father, Ts'ao Ts'ao, would name him crown prince and thus pave the way for his ascending the throne as the first emperor of the Wei dynasty. This hope was frustrated a year later in 217 when Ts'ao Chih's elder brother, Ts'ao P'i, was named crown prince, but at the writing of this letter he was surely full of his desire to be a brilliant sovereign. The recipient of the letter, Yang Hsiu, was, moreover, one of Ts'ao Chih's strongest supporters in court and was active at this time promoting his interests before Ts'ao Ts'ao. Yang Hsiu's execution three years later was in all probability caused by his continued friendship with Ts'ao Chih[4] who was now considered a possible enemy by his brother Ts'ao P'i. The letter should be read in this context: Ts'ao Chih seems to feel himself on the eve of some great event, and, by sending off his youthful works, he seems to want to mark the end of his purely literary career. He wants to take stock of his past experience and, incidentally, strike out at some enemies and flatter some friends.

I have divided the letter into three paragraphs. In the first the author flatters himself and his correspondent and schematically describes the

4. Cf. *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 68, pp. 2150–2151 (Peking, 1956 edition).

literary world of his time, hinting, in the last lines, that he would be able to improve present-day authors' works if they would but let him. This is rather outrageous self-assurance, not made any more palatable by the fact that Ts'ao Chih was in fact the greatest literary genius of his age. The second paragraph discusses standards in literary achievement, deciding at the outset that only Confucius never nods, and concluding inconsequentially on a highly relativistic note. In the last paragraph, perhaps drawing a logical conclusion from this relativism, Ts'ao Chih diffidently presents his own youthful production and then, like the man of antiquity he remains at heart, he writes off poetry and what we call 'pure' literature or 'belles-lettres' as an 'inferior mode' and says he will, should circumstances prevent him from making a mark for himself in the active world, imitate Confucius and try to write the equivalent of a modern *Ch'un-ch'iu*. The two oldest texts of this letter are in the *Tien-lüeh* quoted in the *San-kuo chih* 19, and in *Wen hsüan* 42. Except where indicated, I have followed the former in my translation.

Letter from Ts'ao Chih to Yang Hsiu

A few days of absence from you is painful to me, and I think you must feel as I do.

I have loved *tz'u* and *fu*[5] from the time of my youth until now that I am twenty-four years old, so that I feel fairly well qualified to speak about contemporary writers. Some time ago Wang Ts'an was inimitable south of the Han[6]; Ch'en Lin soared like an eagle north of the River[7]; Hsü Kan was the most famous of all in the land of Ch'ing[8]; Liu Chen composed with elegance at the side of the sea[9]; Ying Ch'ang

5. A vague, general term for belles-lettres; the *Wh* text has *wen-chang*, 'writings'.

6. Wang Ts'an (177–217) was one of the many scholars who associated themselves with Liu Piao in Ching-chou at the end of the second century. He stayed with him for 16 years until Liu Piao's death in 208; cf. *Skccc* 21, p. 3a.

7. Ch'en Lin (d. 217) was in the employ of Ts'ao Ts'ao's northern enemy Yüan Shao until the latter's defeat in 202; he then went over to Ts'ao Ts'ao.

8. Hsü Kan (170–217) was from Pei-hai (in Shantung), part of the ancient province of Ch'ing.

9. Liu Chen (d. 217) was actually from Ning-yang in central Shantung, fairly far from the sea, north of Ch'ü-fu; but the province of Ch'i was, of course, maritime.

became famous in Great Wei[10]; while you, Sir, looked down from aloft in the capital[11]. All the men of the times contended they held ⟨in their genius⟩ a pearl given by an enchanted snake or jade from the mountains of Ching[12]. Our king ⟨Ts'ao Ts'ao⟩ then set up a net to catch them, a net that reached to the very ends of the world, and they are now all assembled here, in this kingdom ⟨of Wei⟩. But these men are still unable to soar on high and leave the crowd behind, to rise up one thousand leagues in one leap! Take Ch'en Lin. His talents are not practiced in *tz'u* or *fu*[13] and yet he often says he can write in the style of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju. It's like a man who would draw a tiger and, not succeeding, draw a dog instead[14]! I wrote a letter to him about it, making fun of him[15], but he turned around and wrote an essay saying over and over again how I had praised his writing! Now, it is because Chung Tzu-ch'i never failed to identify the music that he was listening to that he is praised to this day[16]: the reason I, too, do not dare sigh over a man's writings for no reason at all is because I fear posterity will snicker at me if I do. No one's works can be exempt from flaws and I always like people to criticize my writings so that I can correct them when they are bad. Some time ago Ting I[17] wrote a small piece and had me embellish it for him. I thought my talent was no better than his and I refused to do it. Ting I said: 'What are you worried about? The beauties and errors in my writings are my own. Who in later years will know who corrected them?' These are words that hit the mark, and I never tire of admiring them and thinking them worthy of praise.

Confucius' writings were in the same category as other men's, but when he came to write the *Ch'un-ch'iu* not even Tzu-yu and Tzu-hsia, ⟨his most literary disciples⟩, could find a single improper word[18]. Aside from it, I have still not seen anything that can be called flawless. I suppose it is only when you have a face like Nan Wei's[19] that

10. Ying Ch'ang (d. 217) was from Ju-nan in central Honan, near the sometime Wei capital of Hsü-ch'ang. 'Great Wei' sounds anachronistic; *Wh* reads 'this Wei'.

11. Yang Hsiu dwelt in the Han capital of Lo-yang where his father, Yang Piao, was *t'ai-wei*. His native place was also in Honan.

12. Two famous treasures of antiquity. They are mentioned together in *Huai-nan-tzu* 6, p. 3b (Sptk edition).

13. He was known as a writer of letters.

14. Comparison taken from Ma Yüan's letter admonishing his nephew found in *HHscc* 24, pp. 13ab.

15. There are two fragmentary, very critical letters by Ts'ao Chih to Ch'en Lin in *Ch'üan San-kuo wen* 16, p. 7b. *Wh* 40 contains a letter of praise from Ch'en Lin to Ts'ao Chih.

16. *Lieh-tzu* 5, ch. 'T'ang wen', p. 6b.

17. Ting I was a member of Ts'ao Chih's coterie and was executed when Ts'ao P'i ascended the throne in 220; *Skccc* 19, p. 14b.

18. Based on *Shih chi* 47, p. 26b.

19. Cf. *Chan-kuo ts'e* 7 ('Wei ts'e'), p. 7b (Sptk edition). An otherwise unknown beauty who caused Duke Wen of Chin to miss court three days running.

you can talk about feminine beauty, or when you have a sword as sharp as Lung-yüan[20] that you can discuss cutting power. Liu Hsiu's[21] talent is not great enough to permit him to be an author, and yet he takes pleasure in denigrating others' writings and in pointing out their good and bad qualities. In former times T'ien Pa, under the Chi Gate[22], vilified the Five Emperors, condemned the Three Kings and said bad things of the Five Counts[23]: at one fell swoop his arguments could subdue one thousand men. But once Lu Chung-lien explained things to him, T'ien Pa closed his mouth never to open it again for the rest of his life[24]. Master Liu's powers of argumentation are not as good as T'ien Pa's were and a present-day Lu Chung-lien would not be hard to find: how can one not sigh ⟨that he has not been taken to task⟩! Each man has things he likes: the odor of orchids and irises are what the common run of men like; and yet on the seashore there was a fellow who pursued a stinking man ⟨because he liked his smell⟩[25]. The common run of men all take delight in the performance of the 'Hsien-ch'ih' and the 'Liu-ching'[26] and yet Mo Ti wrote his essay against music[27]. How can we consider men's tastes to be alike?

Herewith I am sending you some *tz'u* and *fu* I wrote in my youth. There must be something in the talk one hears in the streets and byways that is worthy of being collected[28] and some of the songs peasants sing while keeping time by tapping on their carriage shafts can compare with those of the *Book of poetry*. The thoughts of a common fellow are not easy to reject with indifference. ⟨And yet⟩ *tz'u* and *fu* are minor arts and definitely incapable of exalting the Great Moral Law and showing it in all its brightness to coming generations. Yang Hsiung was only a low official in the preceding court, and even he declared that 'A grown man does not ⟨write *fu*⟩'[29]. Although I have little virtue and my rank is that of a country lord[30], I still hope to

20. Cf. *Shih chi* 69, p. 8b.

21. Liu Hsiu was Liu Piao's son.

22. A gathering place for philosophers in the state of Ch'i at the time of King Hsüan (end of the fourth century B.C.); cf. *Shih chi* 47, pp. 12b–13a.

23. These are the legendary and historical rulers of China from earliest times down to the Warring Kingdoms.

24. Lu Chung-lien's biography is in *Shih chi* 83, but there is no mention of T'ien Pa in it. Ma Kuo-han, *Yü-han shan-fang chi i-shu*, in his reconstruction of the 'Lu Lien-tzu', pp. 13b–14b, includes the story of the encounter between T'ien Pa and Lu Lien-tzu, reassembled from various texts.

25. Cf. *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 14, pp. 10ab (ch.'Yü-ho').

26. Two famous pieces of ancient music whose ritual usage is said to have been inaugurated by legendary emperors; cf. *Han shu* 22, p. 1038 (Peking, 1962 edition).

27. Section 32 in *Mo-tzu* 8 is entitled 'Against music'.

28. This is based upon a remark of Confucius found in *Han-shu pu-chu* 30, p. 51a.

29. This is a quotation from *Fa yen*, ch.'Wu tzu', p. 3a. Yang Hsiung lived from 53 B.C. to A.D. 18, and was an official of the Former Han dynasty.

30. Ts'ao Chih became Marquis of Lin-tzu in 214.

exert myself for the State and benefit my people, accomplishing something that will last forever, merit that will be engraved into metal or stone. How could I accept mere writing as my achievement, and *tz'u* and *fu*[31] to be the work of a superior man? But if my ambitions bear no fruit and I cannot put my ideals into practice, then I will, ⟨like Confucius before me,⟩ collect material from the historians' draft records, judge what is good and what is bad in the morals of our times, determine when goodness and justice have been attained, and thus set up the words of a school of thought. Even though they may not be treasured ⟨eternally⟩ in some famous mountain[32], they may be handed down to those who have the same tastes as mine. But this is something I would like to do when my head is white, not something I should talk of today! The reason I am not ashamed of saying these things is because I am confident that you understand me, as Hui Shih ⟨understood Chuang-tzu⟩[33].

We shall see one another early tomorrow[34]. My letter has not said all I have in my heart.

Ts'ao Chih's letter wanders from subject to subject until it gets to the main reason for his writing it at all: it is to accompany the gift of his youthful works to Yang Hsiu. The early part of the letter can therefore be seen as leading up to this presentation: the critical subjects touched upon all relate, closely or distantly, to the final presentation. The description of the literary scene and of its mediocrity only sets his own work in a better light; his brief comment on the mistakes of others and on the value of correcting them might be a hint to Yang Hsiu to do the same to his:

> The piece, you think, is incorrect? Why take it,
> I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it!
> (Pope, 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot')

His remarks on the relativity of men's tastes might similarly be aimed at making Yang Hsiu more at ease in his judgments of Ts'ao Chih's own works. The tirade against Liu Hsiu suggests that Ts'ao Chih defends the

31. This is the *Wh* text. *Skccc* says *tz'u* and eulogies, *sung*.

32. These two sentences are inspired by words of Ssu-ma Ch'ien in his letter to Jen An, *Wh* 41, pp. 25b–26a; *Han-shu pu-chu* 62, p. 24b.

33. Two famous friends in antiquity; cf. *Chuang-tzu* 24, Legge 2, p. 101.

34. This exchange of letters is thus between two men who were to see one another the next day. And yet Yang Hsiu begins his reply (*Wh* 40, p. 16a) by saying 'A few days not having at-

thesis that 'it takes a poet to know a poet', a very circular argument, and one of very dubious critical value.

In the last part of his letter Ts'ao Chih presents a traditional disclaimer to writing any kind of poetry at all in the future. His aim, he says, is purely traditional, as his allusion to Ssu-ma Ch'ien and his ultimate Confucian inspiration prove. Ts'ao Chih's letter is important in literary history not because of the critical theories it expresses, but because it, for the first time, discusses literature, and above all poetry ('*tz'u* and *fu*') as a thing in itself, as a thing of some value (at least to the young), that can be perfected and judged.

But there can be no denying that his relegation of literature to a very low second place after a life of action, and poetry to an even lower place, after 'the words of a school of thought', was backward-looking and anachronistic. Yang Hsiu very clearly tells him as much in his answer. Three quarters of his letter are spent in polite denial of his own talent and in flattery (perhaps sincere) of his royal patron's. But towards the end of his letter he takes him severely to task for his gratuitous remarks against literature:

> The *fu* and eulogies that you send me today are of the same class as the poems of old: they have not been revised ⟨as the old poems were⟩ by Confucius, yet they are no different from those of the 'Feng' and the 'Ya' sections of the *Book of poetry*. Yang Hsiung, of our family[35], knew nothing of these matters when he became old, and forced himself to write a book regretting his youthful works. If what he says is true, then Chung-shan and Chou Tan, ⟨authors of poems in the *Book of poetry*[36]⟩, would both be guilty. My lord has forgotten the perfectly clear evidence of the saints of old,

tended my lord are like long years ...'. We can only consider these letters to be artificial and 'literary' attempts to preserve the ideas contained within them for posterity.

35. Yang Hsiu's family was from what is now Shensi; Yang Hsiung's was from Szechwan. It is highly improbable they were related. The difference in the orthography of their family names is not decisive, however; cf. Lu Pi in *Skccc* 19, pp. 11b–12a.

36. Chung-shan Fu is the subject of poem No. 260 in the *Shih ching* and Chou Tan, the Duke of Chou, is not only the subject of several poems, but has at least one, No. 155, attributed to him. It is difficult to see what Yang Hsiu means, unless he has mistaken Chung-shan Fu for the author of the poem celebrating him. Chang Shen, one of the five commentators of the *Wen hsüan*, says he wrote one of the *sung* of Chou, but this sounds fanciful.

to repeat the excessive language of a member of my humble clan. I believe you have not thought about this enough. Now, if you do not forget your great work of governing the land and leave behind you a brilliant reputation that will last a thousand years, if your merits are engraved on a bell like that of Duke Ching[37] and your name written on bamboo and silk[38], you will do so naturally, because of the excellence of your inherent qualities. How could literatur *(wen-chang)* interfere with this[39]?

This is more than just common sense. It is, in a way, a 'declaration of independence' for literature, a refusal to see it as something absolutely inferior to canonical studies or to an active political life.

All of the remaining works concerning literary criticism by Ts'ao Chih's elder brother, Ts'ao P'i, seem to have been written within a year or so after this exchange of letters. There are, in all, three works: a few sentences from a letter to Wang Lang, a letter to Wu Chih, and the essay 'On literature', 'Lun wen', from his *Tien lun*. Although his literary attitudes resemble his brother's in many ways, Ts'ao P'i's work is much more varied and complex, and much more important. He can probably be called the 'father of Chinese literary criticism'.

The resemblances and the differences can be seen at once in the fragmentary letter to Wang Lang[40] (died in December/January, 228/229). Wang Lang was a famous scholar and official and, as can be seen from his biography, had frequent contacts with Ts'ao P'i.

37. *Kuo yü*, 'Chin yü' 7. Ts'ao Chih often uses this phrase as an ideal of immortal glory.

38. The two most prevalently used materials for ancient documents; cf. *Mo-tzu* 2, 'Shang hsien' C, p. 9a, for the earliest use of the phrase.

39. *Wh* 40, pp. 17b–18a; cf. *Skccc* 19, pp. 10b–12a.

40. This letter is dated '22nd year of Chien-an, winter' (= 17 November 217–12 February 218) by Lu Pi (*Skccc* 2, p. 69b) and Yen K'o-chün (*Ch'üan San-kuo wen* 7, p. 7a). Okamura Shigeru, p. 77, says the letter can only be dated sometime between 217 and December 220, while Ts'ao P'i was crown prince. The *Wei shu*, an early, now fragmentary history of the dynasty which quotes this letter, does seem to put it during or just after the epidemic of 217 (see translation below). If this is the true date, then we must assume, since the letter mentions the *Tien lun* and we know the *Tien lun* was written while Ts'ao P'i was crown prince, that the *Tien lun* was written (or perhaps only finished) very shortly before the letter, since he became crown prince only in the winter of 217. Wang Lang's biography is found in *Skccc* 13, pp. 25b–26a.

When the emperor ⟨i.e., Ts'ao P'i⟩ was in the Eastern Palace[41] an epidemic became rampant and took a terrible toll of the men of the times. This moved the emperor ⟨i.e., the crown prince as he was then⟩ deeply and he wrote the following to a man he had always greatly respected, the Ta-li ('Chief Justice') Wang Lang: 'During his lifetime a man may be of goodly height, but when he dies he is only a coffinful of earth[42]. There are only two ways of attaining immortality: the better way is to establish one's virtue and become famous; the next best method is to write books. Men have been cut down in the epidemics that have occurred again and again: who am I that I should be able to preserve my life? That is why I have selected some hundred-odd pieces from among my writings, the *Tien lun*, poetry and *fu*, and I have assembled scholars within the Su-ch'eng Gate[43] to discuss their general meaning, frankly and firmly, and without tiring[44].

Like his younger brother, Ts'ao P'i considers the 'writing of books' to be inferior to an active and glorious life. But he does give 'the writing of books' the second place and, although he does not here tell us just what kind of books he has in mind, he does textually include his poems *(shih)* and *fu* together with his *Tien lun* (which we will see was his 'words of a school of thought').

He makes his position a little clearer in another letter, this time one which has come down to us in its entirety. I will translate it all because it is almost solely concerned with literary matters. The letter was written to Wu Chih (177–230)[45], an intimate friend and protégé of Ts'ao P'i and of the Ts'ao family[46]. It is contained in *Wen hsüan* 42 and in the

41. I.e., when he was crown prince; he was given the title in November/December of 217 (*Skccc* 1, p. 109b).

42. An echo of *Huai-nan-tzu* 7, 'Ching-shen hsün', p. 3a (Pai-tzu ch'üan-shu ed.).

43. This seems to have been the crown prince's classroom. It is mentioned again by Li Shan in his preface to the *Wen hsüan* in reference to Hsiao T'ung (501–531), the compiler of the *Wen hsüan* who was also crown prince.

44. *Wei shu* quoted in *Skccc* 2, pp. 69b–70a. There are other fragments of the letter in *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* 951 and 354.

45. The dates are based on Wu Chih's answer to Ts'ao P'i's letter (*Wh* 40).

46. His biography is given in *Skccc* 21, pp. 28b–32b. There is another letter to Wu Chih by Ts'ao P'i in *Skccc* 21, pp. 28b–29b, and *Wh* 42, and an exchange of letters between Wu Chih and Ts'ao Chih in the same chapter. Wu Chih answers this letter in *Wh* 40, pp. 22a–24a, and writes another to Ts'ao P'i on pp. 24a–26b.

San-kuo chih 21[47]. The letter falls into three general sections: a lament for the poets who belonged to his circle and who have died, with reminiscences of their pleasure parties[48], a description of their styles and an evaluation of their works, and a final lament for days gone by. Unless otherwise indicated, the text followed is that of the *San-kuo chih*, except for the date which is found only in the *Wen hsüan*.

Letter from Ts'ao P'i to Wu Chih

The third day of the second month ⟨= 17 March 218⟩, Ts'ao P'i writes: How fast the months and years go by! It is already four years since we parted! When he had not seen ⟨his family⟩ for only three years, the man in the 'Tung shan' poem[49] sighed at the length of time that he had been separated from them: how much more unbearable is it for me who have been separated from you for an even longer period! It is true that we have corresponded, but our letters have not sufficed to dissipate my melancholy.

So many of our friends and family were carried off in last year's epidemics. Hsü Kan, Ch'en Lin, Ying Ch'ang and Liu Chen all passed away at the same time: what unspeakable sadness it has caused me! In days gone by, when we amused ourselves together, we would ride out in our chariots one after the other, and sit together with our mats touching[50]: not for an instant could we be separated! We would fill our wine cups and pass them to one another and then, when the strings and winds played together and our ears were hot from the wine, we would raise our heads and chant poetry. How unconscious we were then, not knowing our own happiness! We thought that we would each live for a hundred years, and stay together forever! Who would have thought that within a few years we would be almost completely destroyed? It pains me to talk of it. I recently gathered together their remaining works and assembled them in a single collection. Their names look like a list of the dead. Our old parties, when I think back on them, still seem to be in front of my eyes, but those who accompanied us on them have turned to dust. What more is there to say?

As a rule, the men of letters of ancient and modern times cannot be said to have observed the small rules of conduct; few can stand on their moral reputations. Only

47. An abbreviated version is found in *Skccc* 21, pp. 13b–14a, and the entire letter is given by P'ei Sung-chih in his commentary, quoting from the *Wei lüeh*, on pp. 28b–31a. The latter dates the letter 218 and the *Wh* 42, p. 12a, adds the moon and the day, equivalent to 17 March 218.

48. These are described more fully in the beautiful letter written to Wu Chih found in *Wh* 42, pp. 10b–12a; this letter bears only the dates of the moon and the day, not the year.

49. *Shih ching* 156.

50. Defying the rules of hierarchy and protocol.

Hsü Kan had both literary and personal virtues; he was calm, with few desires, and had his heart set on retiring, ⟨like the legendary sages of old⟩, to Mount Chi[51]. It can be said of him that he was a perfect gentleman! He wrote the *Chung lun* in twenty-odd chapters which has become the words of his school of philosophy. His phrases are classical and refined, worthy of being transmitted to posterity. This man will be immortal!

Ying Ch'ang was accomplished and had the desire to compose works; his talents and learning were sufficient to enable him to write books. It is to be bitterly regretted that he was unable to realize his fine ambition. When, from time to time, I look through these men's works, I must wipe away my tears. And once we feel pain for those who have passed away, then we must also think of ourselves ...

Ch'en Lin's memorials are quite sound, but a bit too prolix. Liu Chen's ⟨work⟩ is exceptionally vigourous, but it is not tightly knit enough. But his pentameter poetry[52] is marvellous beyond that of any of his contemporaries. Juan Yü's letters and memorials are very elegant and are a delight to read[53]. Wang Ts'an alone[54] has perfected himself in *fu*; unfortunately his style ⟨*t'i*⟩ is so weak it cannot enliven his writings ⟨*wen*⟩. But when he is good, not even the ancients can surpass him very far.

In ancient times Po-ya broke the strings of his zither at ⟨the death⟩ of Chung-tzu Ch'i[55] and Confucius overturned his minced meat at ⟨the death of⟩ Tzu-lu[56]. The former was pained because it was difficult to meet with a man who understood his music; the latter grieved that his other disciples did not come up to ⟨the one who had died⟩. These ⟨six⟩ men may not have come up to the ancients, but they were outstanding in their own times. Those who live today cannot compare with them! It is true that one should respect the young[57] and that it is wrong to blame falsely those still to come, but I fear that you and I will not live to see them!

I am already well advanced in years and am beset by an infinity of problems. At times I worry so that I remain sleepless the whole night through. When will I again be as I was in the past? I am already an old man, although my hair is not yet white. Emperor Kuang-wu said: 'I am over thirty years old and have spent ten of them under arms; I have been through a multitude of changes!'[58] I cannot compare with ⟨Kuang-wu's⟩ virtue, but I am as old as he was ⟨when he made that statement. As crown

51. A mountain traditionally associated with the Taoist sages Hsü-yu and Ch'ao-fu; its actual location is doubtful.

52. *Wh* text: 'When his pentameter poetry is good, it ...'

53. Juan Yü (d. 212) was famous as a letter writer; he was the poet Juan Chi's father.

54. *Wh* text; *Skc* (and Li Shan) have 'follows the others'.

55. *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 14, ch. 'Pen wei', pp. 2b–3a.

56. *Li chi* 6, 'T'an kung', p. 7b (edition dated 1815).

57. *Lun yü* 9, 22.

58. This quotation is said to come from the *Tung-kuan Han-chi*, but I have not been able to find it there.

prince I feel as if〉my real nature was that of a dog or a sheep and that I had put on the finery of a tiger or panther, or that, without even the stars' brightness, I pretend to have the brilliance of the sun and moon! All my movements are observed: when will I be left in peace? I am afraid I will never again be able to roam as in the past 〈we roamed together〉. When we are young and vigorous we must work with all our might[59], for once the years have passed us by, what can we do to get them back again? How right were the ancients who wanted to 'grasp a taper and roam in the night'[60]! Nowadays what can we amuse ourselves with?

Have you perhaps written some new things? I look to the east[61] and, sobbing, compose this letter to let you know what is in my heart. P'i.

Ts'ao P'i's remarks are more objective than his brother's, and at the same time he treats literature with much less condescension. It should be remarked, however, that his use of the word 'immortal' is restricted to the moralistic work of Hsü Kan, and that he alone is said to have written a work that has 'become the words of a school of philosophy'.

But Ts'ao P'i's most important work is his 'Essay on literature', 'Lun wen', originally part of his larger work called the *Tien lun*, 'Normative essays'. Like the letters to Wang Lang and Wu Chih, the *Tienlun* was written when Ts'ao P'i was crown prince, that is between the winter of 217 and 220. There are four reasons for thinking so. 1. He is referred to in the *Tien lun* as crown prince[62]. 2. The section of the *Tien lun* called 'Crown prince' *(T'ai-tzu)* could only have been written just at the time he was chosen[63]. 3. He mentioned the work in his letter written to Wang Lang 'when he was in the Eastern Palace'[64]. 4. There is a letter and a *fu* addressed to Ts'ao P'i by his cousin (the son of his mother's younger brother), Pien Lan, written 'praising the crown prince's virtue and excellence', which also mentions the *Tien lun*[65].

59. This refers to the last lines of an old ballad called 'Ch'ang-ko hsing', *Wh* 27, pp. 21b–22a.

60. And thus continue their merry-making; another reference to an old ballad of which a version is found among the 'Nineteen old poems', *Wh* 29, p. 9a.

61. According to the *Skccc* 21, p. 13b, Wu Chih was magistrate *(ling)* of Yüan-ch'eng (near present Ta-ming, Hopei), to the northeast of the capital.

62. E.g., *Ch'üan San-kuo wen* 8, p. 6b.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 9a; cf. Okamura Shigeru, p. 77.

64. *Supra*, p. 122.

65. Cf. *Skccc* 5, pp. 7b–8b; the letter and *fu* are found in *I-wenlei-chü* 16 and *Ch'u-hsüeh chi* 10.

The *Tien lun* is now in a very fragmentary state, having been lost some time during the (Chao) Sung dynasty (since the work is mentioned for the last time in catalogues in the *Chiu T'ang-shu* 47, p. 2a, and *Hsin T'ang-shu* 59, p. 2a). It is first mentioned in the letters to Wang Lang and from Pien Lan, and then by an historian from the state of Wu named Hu Ch'ung who says that Ts'ao P'i sent the *Tien lun* and his poetry, written on white silk, to his rival, Sun Ch'üan, the king of Wu[66]. Ts'ao P'i's son, Ts'ao Jui, ordered that the work be cut in stone and set before the gate of the Wei ancestral temple on 12 March 230[67]. In February/March 239, when some kind of asbestos cloth was received as tribute from the Western Regions[68], Ts'ao P'i's remarks as to the inexistence of such a substance[69] were scraped off the stele, much to the amusement of all[70]. One text says the steles were set up both outside the ancestral temple and at the University *(t'ai-hsüeh)*, with the books of the Canon engraved on stone[71]. From remaining texts this seems doubtful to me, but it is fairly clear that the stones were removed to the University at an early date[72]. Both the *Hsi-cheng chi* of Tai Yen-chih (or Tai Tso)[73] and the *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* (after 547) of Yang Hsüan-

66. Cf. *Skccc* 2, pp. 70b–71a.

67. *Skccc* 3, p. 15b.

68. *Skccc* 4, pp. 1b–2a.

69. Remaining fragments of these remarks are collected in *Ch'üan San-kuo wen* 8, p. 14b.

70. *Sou-shen chi* 13, p. 100 (Taipei, 1965 edition); also quoted in *Skccc* 4, pp. 2a–4a. *Pao-p'u-tzu*, 'Nei-p'ien' 2, 'Lun hsien', p. 5b (Sptk edition), says the asbestos came during Ts'ao P'i's own reign, but this is probably an error. On the history of asbestos cloth, *huo-wan pu*, in China, see J. Needham and Wang Ling, *Science and civilisation in China* 3 (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 655–662.

71. *Sou-shen chi*, *loc. cit.* It is clear today that these stones were those written by Ts'ai Yung (133–192) in 175 in only one form of writing for each character. They were not the stones engraved with three forms of characters set up in the 240's; cf. *Skccc* 4, pp. 3a–4a.

72. P'ei Sung-chih (372–451) says he saw them when he was in Lo-yang during Liu Yü's northern campaign in 417. He was told then, by some elders, that the stones were removed at the accession of the Chin dynasty (265). He, however, did not believe them, and thought the stones had originally been erected both at the temple and at the University; cf. *Skccc* 4, pp. 4ab.

73. Quoted in *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* 589. According to Morohashi Tetsuji, *Dai Kan Wa jiten*

chih state that, of the six original steles, only four remained. The latter text states even more precisely that the four were still *in situ* in 493[74]. The *Shui-ching chu* of Li Tao-yüan (died 527) also states that the steles were aligned next to the Canon engraved on stone[75]. Rubbings of these stones seem to have existed in (Liu) Sung times, since the *Sui shu* lists a one-*chüan* '*I-tzu shih-ching Tien lun*', that is, a '*Tien lun* engraved on stone written in one form of character'[76], but there is none listed in subsequent dynastic bibliographies. Large sections of the *Tien lun* are included in the *San-kuo chih* commentary, in the *Wen hsüan* and in T'ang encyclopedias and these have been collected together by Sun Feng-i and Yen K'o-chün[77].

The *Tien lun* as we have it is rather disappointing. Perhaps the most interesting sections are those, like the one sceptical of the existence of asbestos cloth, which show a rationalist tendency, and in particular those that come out against the reality of Taoist immortality or 'long life'. There are also moral considerations, political philosophy (including appreciations of the Han emperors), stories of military life, and in particular of famous swords, and just plain gossip about women and drinking. His autobiography, the longest single section of the *Tien lun*, is almost exclusively concerned with his military prowess. An interesting omission in the fragments that remain is any mention whatsoever of Ts'ao Chih or of his clique[78].

The most important part of the *Tien lun* is the text called '*Lun wen*' that is included in *Wen hsüan* 52. Whether or not the text is complete is

(under Tai Tso), Tai Tso lived at the end of the Chin dynasty (beginning of the fifth century) and described Liu Yü's northwestern campaign in his *Hsi-cheng chi*.

74. *Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi* 3, p. 3b (Ssu-pu pei-yao edition).

75. *Shui-ching chu* 16, p. 80 (Wan-yu wen-k'u edition).

76. *Sui shu* 32, p. 35a.

77. Found in *Ch'üan San-kuo wen* 8. The preface to this reconstruction of the *Tien lun* is dated 1815.

78. See Hu Ying-lin (1551–1602), *Shih-sou wai-pien* 1, p. 134 (Peking, 1958 edition). The insertion of the words 'Ch'en Ssu wang' before the entry contained in *Ch'üan San-kuo wen* 8, p. 6b, is a later addition; Ts'ao Chih became Prince of Ch'en the year of his death in 232.

impossible to say today. By Hsiao T'ung's times (he lived from 501 to 531) two of the six steles on which the *Tien lun* was engraved had been destroyed, but rubbings of the text existed into T'ang times so that it is difficult to say that it was unavailable to him. Yen K'o-chün (p. 11ab) lists four fragments he considers to be from the *Lun wen* and remarks that 'the *Wen hsüan* has omitted even more than that'. The text, moreover, does not have much logical progression and leaps about from one topic to another and ends very abruptly indeed. Yet it is impossible to say for certain that the text is really fragmentary. Chinese literary criticism, with a very few outstanding exceptions, doesn't have much logical progression, even when we know the texts are not fragmentary. If one were to try to find a main theme running through the work, it would probably be Ts'ao P'i's insistence upon the necessity of the critic's being *complete*, of his being capable of expressing himself in any of the literary genres so that he will not be guilty of any personal bias. This is not a viable point, I believe, any more than the similar theory of Ts'ao Chih's, but it permits Ts'ao P'i to roam far afield in the realm of literary criticism and touch on a great many basic critical problems.

I have divided the work rather arbitrarily into four very uneven parts according to what I consider to be their main import, and I have added subtitles to each of them.

On literature

⟨1. The complete critic⟩

Men of letters denigrate one another[79] and have done so from ages past. Fu I ⟨*ca.* 49–89⟩ and Pan Ku ⟨32–92⟩ were as alike as two brothers ⟨as far as their literary talents were concerned⟩, and yet Pan Ku belittled him. In a letter to his brother, Pan Ch'ao ⟨33–103⟩, he wrote: 'Because he knows how to compose texts, Fu I has been named Secretary of the Imperial Library. When he sets his brush to write he goes on

79. This sentence has become an adage; cf. Chao I, *Kai-yü ts'ung-k'ao* 40, pp. 8b–9b (edition dated 1790).

endlessly, unable to stop.'[80] Now, men are good at seeing their own ⟨good points, the style of writing they are good at, for example⟩. But there is more than one style ⟨*t'i*⟩ of writing ⟨*wen*⟩ and, since there are few men who are good at them all, each uses his strong points to denigrate the shortcomings of others[81]. There is an adage that runs: 'We have a dilapidated broom at home that we think is worth a thousand pieces of gold.'[82] This is the error of not being able to see one's self as one really is.

There are Seven Masters among contemporary men of letters who have learned everything there is to learn and who yet borrow nothing from previous writers in their works. They are K'ung Jung ⟨153–208⟩ of Lu, Ch'en Lin of Kuang-ling, Wang Ts'an of Shan-yang, Hsü Kan of Pei-hai, Juan Yü of Ch'en-liu, Ying Ch'ang of Ju-nan and Liu Chen of Tung-p'ing. Since they were all like splendid coursers who could gallop one thousand leagues at a time, their heads high, rushing along neck and neck, it would be difficult indeed for them to yield to one another. But a superior man examines himself so that he can judge others. He can thus avoid this kind of involvement and write an essay 'On literature'.

⟨2. Practical criticism⟩

Wang Ts'an is strong in *fu* and, although Hsü Kan from time to time shows his temperament ⟨*ch'i*⟩ of a man of Ch'i[83], he is still a match for Wang Ts'an. Wang Ts'an's 'Ch'u cheng', 'Teng lou', 'Huai fu' and 'Cheng ssu' and Hsü Kan's 'Hsüan yüan', 'Lou chih', 'Yüan shan' and 'Chü fu' were not even surpassed by Chang Heng ⟨78–139⟩ and Ts'ai Yung ⟨133–191⟩. But their other works cannot match their *fu*. The

80. According to the 'Tien yin', a work by Pan Ku preserved in *Wh* 48 and *I-wen lei-chü* 10, he and Fu I were together at an imperial audience in 74. Fu I probably was a Secretary at that time (*HHscc* 40A, p. 8a) and worked with Pan Ku collating books some time later (*Ch'üan Hou Han wen* 43, p. 1a). It is difficult to know whether or not Pan Ku's criticism is valid because only a few of Fu I's works remain – all *fu*, in any case a notoriously prolix genre to modern tastes.

81. To use some fanciful Western equivalents: T.S.Eliot is said to have declared that Thomas Hardy's poems were weak, 'thohe of a novelist' Iondsco might sav Eliot's plavs were weak, 'those of a poet', etc.

82. *Tung-kuan Han chi* 1, p. 10 (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng edition), where the adage is put in the mouth of Ts'ao P'i's hero, Emperor Kuang-wu, under the date A.D. 36.

83. This is a much debated passage. The *Skccc* 21, p. 14a, reads 'Hsü Kan's temperament is sometimes excellent, but he is no match for Wang Ts'an'. Li Shan says the character of Ch'i literature is to be slack and slow. And Fan Ning, 'Wei Wen-ti Tien-lun Lun-wen Ch'i ch'i chieh' (see *Wei Chin Nan-pei ch'ao wen-hsüeh shi ts'an-k'ao tzu-liao*, Peking, 1962, p.48; the original article appeared in *Kuo-wen yüeh-k'an* 63), says that *Ch'i* meant 'high, eminent'. Li Shan's interpretation sounds best to me. Hsü Kan was from Ch'i and Ts'ao P'i is probably describing one of his flaws as a regional peculiarity, due either to the dialect, the music or chant accompanying the verses, or even to the character of the inhabitants of the region.

memorials and public documents by Ch'en Lin and Juan Yü are outstanding today. Ying Ch'ang's works are harmonious, but not robust; Liu Chen's robust, but not close-knit. The temperament of K'ung Jung's style ⟨*t'i-ch'i*⟩ is extraordinary, and in some ways surpasses other men's; but he cannot hold an argument: his reasoning is too weak to be able to support the beauty of his words. But when he includes jests in his works, and hits them off just right, he is the equal of Yang Hsiung and Pan Ku[84].

Ordinary men value what is distant, temporally or spatially, and despise what is near at hand[85]; they turn towards celebrity and away from real quality. And, at the same time, they suffer from not being able to see themselves: they call themselves superior to others.

⟨3. Critical theory⟩

Now, all literature ⟨*wen*⟩ is basically the same, but its ulterior manifestations differ. Indeed, memorials to the throne and debates should be elegant; letters and essays should be logical; inscriptions and eulogies should stick to the facts; and poetry and *fu* should be embellished. These four categories are not alike. Therefore those who are capable of writing them are one-sided: only a universal genius could be proficient in all these styles ⟨*t'i*⟩.

Literature ⟨*wen*⟩ is ruled by temperament ⟨*ch'i*⟩ and if a writer's temperament is clear or turbid, his style ⟨*t'i*⟩ will be so too[86]: this is not something that can be achieved by force. To take an example from music: if you asked two musicians to

84. There are 'jests' or 'pasquinades' by these two authors in *Wh* 45. There are no entire works of this kind by K'ung Jung, but he is known for his wit. A fragmentary 'jest' by him is quoted in *Ch'üan Hou Han wen* 83, p. 10b.

85. Lionello Lanciotti, *Considerazioni sull'estetica letteraria nella Cina antica: Wang Ch'ung ed il sorgere dell'autonomia delle lettere* (IsMEO, Rome, 1965), p. 31, suggests that Ts'ao P'i is here echoing Wang Ch'ung, refusing to see the present as inferior to the past. This is perhaps true, but I do not believe (*pace* Professor Lanciotti) that Wang Ch'ung was the least interested in literature as anything more than as a tool for philosophy or statecraft. It is also an exaggeration to say, as Professor Lanciotti does (*loc. cit*), that Ts'ao P'i 'dissociates letters from any ideological or political dependence whatsoever'.

86. My translation preserves the meaning of 'style' for the word *t'i* that it has elsewhere in this essay, but it is not easy to defend grammatically. The Chinese translators and commentators all understand differently, giving *t'i* a meaning in direct relation to *ch'i*: *ch'i*'s basic character (*t'i*) is to be clear or turbid', and the like. Only E. Zürcher, in *T'oung Pao* 51 (1964), p. 384, gives an interpretation similar to mine. This passage is quoted in Section 28 of the *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*. Ping-ch'en, 'Ts'ao P'i ti wen-hsüeh li-lun: Shih 't'i' yü 'ch'i'', *Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an hsüan-chi* 3 (Peking, 1960), pp. 128–134, insists that *ch'i* here means 'style' and that *t'i* means the author's character, but he is careful to point out, throughout his excellent essay, that the two are closely interrelated.

play exactly the same melodic line and to follow exactly the same rhythm, they would not be able to do so. Not even a father or an elder brother would be able to explain the way of playing in exactly the same way to his son or younger brother, because each one has his own way of controlling his breath, and each one has his own technique that is innate within him[87].

⟨4. The importance of literature⟩

Literature ⟨*wen-chang*⟩ is, indeed, the great profession by which the state is governed, the magnificent action leading to immortality[88]. Our life must have an end and all our glory, all our joy will end with it. Life and glory last only for a limited time, unlike literature ⟨*wen-chang*⟩ which endures for ever. That is why ancient authors devoted themselves, body and soul, to ink and brush and set forth their ideas in books. They had no need to have their biographies written by good historians or to depend upon the power and influence of the rich and mighty: their fame transmitted itself to posterity. Thus, when the Count of the West ⟨King Wen of the Chou dynasty⟩ was imprisoned he glossed the *I ching*[89], and Tan, the Duke of Chou, when he was already a famous man, regulated the ritual[90]. The former did not neglect his ⟨literary⟩ work when he found himself in dire straits; the latter did not take his mind from his writings because he was happy and at ease.

Now, the ancients were indifferent to a piece of good jade one foot long, but they treasured one inch of the shadow ⟨on the sun dial⟩: they were afraid of the passage of time. But most men do not exert themselves: if they are poor and humble, they fear hunger and cold; if they are rich and honored, they let themselves go in idle pleasures. Thus they busy themselves with their affairs at hand and neglect the achievements that could last one thousand years. The sun and the moon pass on above and our bodies decay here below: in a twinkling we are transformed into the elements that compose us. It is this that pains men of spirit so greatly. K'ung Jung and the others have already passed on, and only Hsü Kan's essays amount to the words of a school of philosophy.

87. This idea of the importance and originality of temperament is reminiscent of *Chuang-tzu* 13 (Legge 1, pp. 343–344).

88. This famous statement is perhaps an echo of *Tso chuan*, Hsiang-kung 24 (Legge, p. 507): 'The highest type ⟨of immortality⟩ is establishing one's virtue; the next is establishing good works; the third is establishing one's words. When these are not rejected ⟨by posterity⟩ after a long time, they can be considered "immortal"'.

89. According to *Shih chi* 4, p. 6b, King Wen augmented the eight trigrams of the *I ching* to include sixty-four hexagrams when he was a prisoner in Yu-li (Honan).

90. The Duke of Chou is credited with having set up the ritual of the Chou dynasty after the establishment of its power; cf. *Shih chi* 4, p. 16b. He is traditionally considered to be the author of the *Chou li*.

It would be difficult to overestimate 'On literature's' historical importance, but it would be very easy, on the contrary to overestimate its importance as a contribution to literary theory as such. What has Ts'ao P'i actually said of value in his essay? The first section, on the importance of objectivity and catholicity, is surely cogent, and his prescription against intellectual backbiting is extremely well taken – not only in China (but perhaps especially so). But his suggestion that the complete critic must also be the complete poet is dangerously close to the theory of poetical criticism that says 'it takes a poet to know a poet', a circular argument if there ever was one[91]. Perhaps he is only attempting to put forth his own value as a critic, since he was (as his remaining poems show) an inveterate experimenter in poetical forms and has left us the earliest poem completely written in regular seven-word lines[92].

His actual criticism of the Seven Masters of the Chien-an period is difficult to judge today. Many, if not most, of the works he alludes to are lost, and those that remain are so short that they would require extremely acute critical acumen to judge today. But perhaps the best proof of his clear-sightedness is the fact that so many of his successors have echoed his judgements in their critical works[93]. His method of comparing one man with another is one of the most pervasive in Chinese literary criticism, used down to the present day: a Chinese critic would probably be tongue-tied if he had to judge Hsieh Ling-yün without comparing him with T'ao Yüan-ming, or Tu Fu without comparing him with Li Po.

Ts'ao P'i's critical theories are so inchoate as to defy analysis, but they are interesting and have had definite and important influence on

91. T. S. Eliot is taken to task for perpetrating a similar theory in his essay 'On Milton' by Logan Pearsall Smith in *Trivia*.

92. There is an attempt to relate Ts'ao P'i's and Ts'ao Chih's works and their literary criticism by Ch'eng Fan-wan in *Wen-hsüeh t'ung-k'an* (An-hui ta-hsüeh) 1,1 (July, 1935), pp. 106–113, but the author does not even mention Ts'ao P'i's versatility as being relevant to his theory.

93. Cf. the citations collected by Hsü Wen-yü, pp. 19–21.

his successors[94]. His division of all literature into four genres is perhaps less interesting than the fact that he has attempted to look at literature as a whole at all. Ts'ai Yung had already divided official documents into categories[95], but here Ts'ao P'i divides all of literature, both rhymed and unrhymed, official and unofficial, into four categories, prescribing styles for each. Whatever one may think of genre theory, his insistence on the 'basic identity' of all literature is surely an important intuition and one that could free the critic's hands.

The 'motive force' of literature Ts'ao P'i calls *ch'i*, 'temperament', 'breath' or 'soul'. This theory, too, has had far reaching effects. It is not a purely genetic theory as it might seem at first glance. 'Breath' is not only a quality in the author; it is a quality he infuses into his work, the 'style' or 'tone' he imparts to it[96]. In any case, the statement that it is 'breath' that is the 'basis' of literature could suggest, or at least lead to, an organic theory of literature, since 'breath' is the 'vital spirit' or *pneuma* that animates all living beings.

Finally, in his last section, Ts'ao P'i underlines the importance of literature, giving it a very high place indeed in his scale of values. He very clearly, and even eloquently, defends the position that literature *(wen-chang)* is not only an extremely important element in the governing of the state, but he declares that it is a way to achieve immortality. He no longer says here that it is the 'second-best' road to immortality, as he did in his letter to Wang Lang[97]: he puts all the importance on literature, and his analysis of the distractions of worldly life that might lead one away from achieving immortality are so intelligently and sensitively

94. Hsü Wen-yü points out the echoes of individual phrases, particularly in Lu Chi and Liu Hsieh. Okamura Shigeru, pp. 75–76, gives a good discussion of the influences. Lo Ken-tse attempts to derive a great part of Shen Yüeh's theories of the tones in poetry from Ts'ao P'i's and Liu Chen's ideas on *ch'i* (pp. 42–43), but most of his arguments are forced (cf. Ping-ch'en, p. 132).

95. In his 'Tu tuan' (*Ts'ai Chung-lan chi* 4); for his theories and those of others before Ts'ao P'i, cf. Lo Ken-tse, pp. 26–28.

96. Kuo Shao-yü, p. 39.

97. *Supra*, p. 122.

presented that they make one feel Ts'ao P'i's defense of literature is heart-felt, that he is committed to its acceptance as one of the most important things in life.

But just what does he mean by 'literature' *(wen-chang)?* The only examples of 'immortal literature' he gives are those of men engaged in writing non-bellettristic literature: *I ching* exegesis, ritual texts, and the moralistic essays of Hsü Kan in his *Chung lun*. Read in isolation from the rest of the essay, this last section could be considered simply to be praise for traditional moralistic philosophy, especially since the words *wen-chang* often (but not always) mean literature of that kind[98]. Not all critics agree. The forces are about equally divided: there are those who say Ts'ao P'i meant moralistic prose, that he was not an innovator, and that his view of literature, like that of his *frère ennemi*, was purely traditional; and there are those who say he was a real reformer whose view was original and forward-looking. Among the older critics Wang Fu-chih (1619–1692) defends Ts'ao P'i against Ts'ao Chih as a more original thinker[99], while Hu Ying-lin (1551–1602) says their views are quite the same[100]. Among the recent critics Kuo Shao-yü (p. 38) and Okamura Shigeru (pp. 78–82) insist that the two brothers share the same traditionalistic views, while Suzuki Torao (p. 42), Aoki Masaru (p. 64), Lo Ken-tse (p. 78) and Chu Tung-jun (p. 24) clearly take sides with Ts'ao P'i against Ts'ao Chih, stating that the former is truly 'progressive', truly interested in seeing literature an an independent art[101].

98. Okamura Shigeru, p. 81, has assembled examples; he might have included Ying Chü (younger brother of Ying Ch'ang), 'Pai-shih', who uses the word in the meaning of 'official literature': 'my *wen-chang* does not govern the State'. But there are many examples of the contrary, of *wen-chang* meaning 'literature' of all kinds; the letter of Yang Hsiu quoted above (p. 120) is a good one.

99. Although he doesn't actually discuss their views on literature; cf. *Chiang-chai shih-hua, hsia*, p. 7b (in Ting Fu-pao, *Ch'ing shih-hua*, 1916).

100. *Shih-sou wai-pien* 1, p. 134.

101. There is a suggestion, in some of these authors, that Ts'ao P'i's contribution was to 'free' literature from moral constraint. The most extreme form of this interpretation is Lu-hsün's in his famous essay on literature in its relation to drugs and wine in the third and

It seems to me that it is impossible to defend the thesis that Ts'ao P'i's position is the same as his brother's and that his interest in literature is ultimately only in purely traditional, moralistic philosophy. Even if his essay is considered fragmentary and if his famous declaration that 'literature is immortal' should be considered primarily in relation to the kind of literature he describes in the last section (*I ching* philosophy and ritual texts), his theoretical position, stated earlier in the essay, that 'all literature is basically the same, although its ulterior manifestations differ', certainly leaves the door open to further developments. It is almost impossible to pin a Chinese literary critic (of any period) down to a very firm position on any general critical point; his work must be read, and judged, on different levels considered simultaneously.

As it stands the *Lun wen*, for all its imperfections, is a precious document. Even the indecision among critics as to whether its view of literature was conservative or progressive and original is indicative of its place in history. At the beginning of the third century A.D. Chinese intellectuals were not yet ready to liberate themselves from the old, 'ancient' view of the world and of man. They still felt that man's first interest was in the state and in external, objective things, in ethics, politics, even in metaphysics, but not in his own subjective conscience, in

fourth centuries (found in *Erh-i chi*, *Lu-hsün ch'üan-chi* 3, Peking, 1956, p. 380). He suggests there that 'Tsao P'i's generation ... was partisan to what in modern times is called art for art'. But there is no indication in Ts'ao P'i's work that he held anything but a highly moralistic view of literature. I have read two articles concerning Ts'ao P'i and his *Lun wen* after completing my own. The first is a good résumé of the subject and is especially useful for showing how Ts'ao P'i differs from his Later Han predecessors in literary criticism: T'an Chia-chien, 'Shih-t'an Ts'ao P'i ti *Tien-lun Lun-wen*', *Hsin chien-she* (Peking) 1964, 2 (No. 182), pp. 93–102. The second is less to the point and only discusses Ts'ao P'i's essay in the last two, sentences: Burton Watson, 'Literary theory in the Eastern Han', *Yoshikawa hakase taikyû kinen Chûgoku bungaku ronshû* (Kyoto, 1968), pp. 1–13. What is interesting is that the two essays are quite contradictory. The first insists (as I do) on Ts'ao P'i's originality and importance; the second affirms that the *Lun wen* is 'far less an original treatment of the subject than it is a systematic summation of the views of Ts'ao P'ei's predecessors in the Eastern Han'.

his own feelings. But times were changing. Poetry was attempting new subjects in which men's emotions were directed not only towards the exterior world, but towards their personal world, their personal anguish and (less frequently) joys. Ts'ao P'i's description of the qualities of style in subjective terms, that could refer either to the author or to his work (*ch'i*, 'temperament' or 'style'), is part of this evolution. The whole tone of his essay is to treat literature in itself, in its different genres, in the relations between the writer and his work, and, in his 'tone' at least, he distinguishes himself clearly from the narrowly traditionalistic view of his brother Ts'ao Chih. The doubt that remains as to whether or not Ts'ao P'i really meant to include poetry in 'immortal literature' shows that he is still a pivotal figure, but that doubt should not obscure the fact that he is indeed the founder of literary criticism in China.

An-hui ta-hsüeh 安徽大學

Aoki Masaru 青木正兒

Chan-kuo ts'e 戰國策

Chang Heng 張衡

Chang Shen 張銑

'Ch'ang-ko hsing' 長歌行

Chao I 趙翼

(Chao) Sung 趙宋

Ch'ao-fu 巢父

Ch'en 陳

Ch'en Lin 陳琳

Ch'en-liu 陳留

'Ch'en Sssu wang' 陳思王

'Cheng ssu' 征思

Ch'eng Fang-wan 程方萬

Chi Gate 稷下

Chi, Mount 箕山

ch'i 氣

Ch'i 齊

Chiang-chai shih-hua, hsia 薑齋詩話 下

Chien-an 建安

Ch'ien-lung 乾隆

Chin	晉
'Chin yü'	晉語
Ching	荊
Ching, Duke	景公
Ching-chou	荊州
'Ching-shen hsün'	精神訓
Ch'ing	青
Ch'ing shih-hua	清詩話
Chiu T'ang-shu	舊唐書
Chou	周
Chou li	周禮
Chou Tan	周旦
Chu Tung-jun	朱東潤
Ch'u cheng	初征
Ch'u-hsüeh chi	初學記
'Chü fu'	橘賦
Ch'ü-fu	曲阜
chüan	卷
Ch'üan Hou Han wen	全後漢文
Ch'üan San-kuo wen	全三國文
Ch'üan shang-ku san-tai Ch'in Han San-kuo Liu-ch'ao wen	全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文

Chuang-tzu	莊子
Chuang-tzu	莊子
Ch'un-ch'iu	春秋
Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing shih (ta-kang)	中國文學批評史大綱
Chung-lun	中論
Chung-shan	仲山
Chung-shan Fu	仲山甫
Chung Tzu-ch'i	鍾子期
Dai Kan Wa jiten	大漢和辭典
Erh-i chi	爾已集
Fa yen	法言
Fan Ning	范寧
'Feng'	風
fu	賦武
Fu I	傅毅
Han	漢
Han-shu	漢書
Han-shu pu-chu	漢書補注
Hiroshima	廣島
Honan	河南
Hongkong	香港
Hou Han-shu (chi-chieh)	後漢書集解

Hsi-cheng chi 西征記

Hsiang-kung 襄公

Hsiao T'ung 蕭統

Hsieh Ling-yün 謝靈運

'Hsien-ch'ih' 咸池

Hsin chien-she 新建社

Hsin T'ang-shu 新唐書

Hsü-ch'ang 許昌

Hsü Kan 徐幹

Hsü Wen-yü 徐文雨

Hsü-yu 許由

Hsüan 宣

'Hsüan yüan' 玄猿

Hu Ch'ung 胡沖

Hu Ying-lin 胡應麟

'Huai fu' 槐賦

Huai-nan-tzu 淮南子

Hui Shih 惠始

huo-wan pu 火浣布

I ching 易經

'I-tzu shih ching *Tien lun*' 一字石經典論

I-wen lei-chü 藝文類聚

Jen An 任安

Ju-nan 汝南

Juan Chi 阮籍

Juan Yü 阮瑀

Kai-yü ts'ung-k'ao 陔餘叢攷

'Kenan shidan no keisei ni tsuite' 建安詩壇の形勢について

Kuang-ling 廣陵

Kuang-wu 光武

K'ung Jung 孔融

Kuo Shao-yü 郭紹虞

Kuo-wen yüeh-k'an 國文月刊

Kuo yü 國語

Kyôto 京都

Li chi 禮記

Li Po 李白

Li Shan 李善

Li Tao-yüan 酈道元

Lieh-tzu 列子

Lin-tzu 臨淄

ling 令

Liu Chen 劉楨

Liu-ch'en chu Wen hsüan 六臣注文選

'Liu-ching'	六藝
Liu Hsieh	劉勰
Liu Hsiu	劉脩
Liu Piao	劉表
(Liu) Sung	劉宋
Liu Yü	劉裕
Lo Ken-tse	羅根澤
Lo-yang	洛陽
Lo-yang ch'ieh-lan chi	洛陽伽藍記
'Lou chih'	漏巵
Lu	魯
Lu Chi	陸機
Lu Chung-lien	魯仲連
Lu-hsün	魯迅
Lu-hsün ch'üan-chi	魯迅全集
Lu Lien-tzu	魯連子
Lu Pi	盧弼
Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu	呂氏春秋
'Lun-hsien'	論仙
'Lun wen'	論文
Lun yü	論語
Lung-yüan	龍淵

Ritsumeikan bungaku 立命館文學

San-kuo chih (chi-chieh) 三國志集解

Shan-yang 山陽

'Shang hsien' 尚賢

Shanghai 上海

Shantung 山東

Shen Yüeh 沈約

Shensi 陝西

shih 詩

Shih chi 史記

Shih ching 詩經

Shih-sou wai-pien 詩藪外編

'Shih-t'an Ts'ao P'i ti "Tien-lun Lun-wen'" 試談曹丕典論論文

Shina bungaku shisô shi 支那文學思想史

Shina shiron shi 支那詩論史

Shinagaku kenkyû 支那學研究

Shui-ching chu 水經注

'Sô Hi no Tenron Rombun ni tsuite' 曹丕の典論論文について

Sou-shen chi 搜神記

Ssu-ma Ch'ien 司馬遷

Sssu-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如

Ma Kuo-han	馬國翰
Ma Yüan	馬援
Matsumoto Yukio	松本幸男
Mo Ti	墨翟
Mo-tzu	墨子
Morohashi Tetsuji	諸橋轍次
Nan Wei	南威
'Nei-p'ien'	內篇
Ning-yang	寧陽
Okamura Shigeru	岡松繁
'Pai-i shih'	百一詩
Pai-tzu ch'üan-shu	百子全書
Pan Ch'ao	班超
Pan Ku	班固
Pao-pu-tzu	抱朴子
Pei-hai	北海
P'ei Sung-chih	裴松之
Peking	北京
'Pen-wei'	本味
Pien Lan	卞蘭
Ping-ch'en	炳辰
Po-ya	伯牙

Ssu-pu pei-yao 四部備要

Sssu-pu ts'ung-k'an 四部叢刊

Su-ch'eng Gate 肅城門

Sui shu 隋書

Sun Ch'üan 孫權

Sun Feng-i 孫馮翼

sung 頌

Sung 宋

Suzuki Torao 鈴木虎雄

Szechwan 四川

Ta-li 大理

Ta-ming 大名

Tai Tso 戴祚

Tai Yen-chih 戴延之

t'ai-hsüeh 太學

T'ai-p'ing yü-lan 太平御覽

T'ai-tzu 太子

t'ai-wei 太尉

Taipei 臺北

Tan 旦

T'an Chia-chien 譚家健

'T'an kung' 檀弓

T'ang 唐

T'ang-shu 唐書

'T'ang wen' 湯問

T'ao Yüan-ming 陶淵明

'Teng lou' 登樓

t'i 體

t'i-ch'i 體氣

Tien lun 典論

'Tien yin' 典引

T'ien Pa 田巴

Ting Fu-pao 丁福保

Ting I 丁廙

Tôkyô 東京

T'oung Pao 通報

Ts'ai Chung-lan chi 蔡中郎集

Ts'ai Yung 蔡邕

Ts'ao Chih 曹植

Ts'ao Jui 曹叡

Ts'ao P'ei 曹丕

Ts'ao P'i 曹丕

'Ts'ao P'i ti wen-hsüeh li-lun: Shih "t'i" yü "ch'i"' 曹丕的文學理論 釋體與氣

Ts'ao Ts'ao	曹操
Tso chuan	左傳
Ts'ung shu chi-ch'eng	叢書集成
Tu Fu	杜甫
'Tu tuan'	獨斷
Tung-kuan Han-chi	東觀漢紀
Tung-p'ing	東平
'Tung shan'	東山
Tzu-chih t'ung-chien	資治通鑑
Tzu-hsia	子夏
Tzu-lu	子路
Tzu-yu	子游
tz'u	辭　詞
Wan-yu wen-k'u	萬有文庫
Wang Ch'ung	王充
Wang Fu-chih	王夫之
Wang Lang	王朗
Wang Ling	王令
Wang Ts'an	王粲
Wei	魏
Wei Chin Liu-ch'ao p'i-p'ing shih	魏晉六朝批評史

Wei Chin Nan-pei ch'ao wen-hsüeh shih ts'an-k'ao tzu-liao	魏晉南北朝文學史參考資料
Wei Hung	衛宏
Wei lüeh	魏略
Wei shu	魏書
'Wei ts'e'	魏策
'Wei Wen-ti Tien-lun Lun-wen Ch'i ch'i chieh'	魏文帝典論論文齊氣解
wen	文
Wen	文
wen-chang	文章
Wen fu	文賦
Wen-hsin tiao-lung	文心雕龍
Wen hsüan	文選
Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an hsüan-chi	文學遺產選集
Wen-hsüeh t'ung-k'an	文學通刊
Wen-lun chiang-shu	文論講疏
Wu	吳
Wu Chih	吳質
'Wu tzu'	吾子
'Ya'	雅
Yang Hsiu	楊修
Yang Hsiung	楊雄

Yang Hsüan-chih 楊衒之

Yang Piao 楊彪

Yen K'o-chün 嚴可均

Ying Ch'ang 應瑒

Ying Chü 應璩

Yoshikawa hakase taikyû kinen Chûgoku bungaku ronshû 吉川博士退休記念中國文學論集

Yu-li 羑里

Yü-han shan-fang chi i-shu 玉函山房輯佚書

'Yü-ho' 遇合

Yüan-ch'eng 元城

'Yüan shan' 圓扇

Yüan Shao 袁紹