

# 七步成詩——曹子建

A Poem Composed in Seven Steps —

## Cao Zijian

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周果如 英譯

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English Translation by Gwo-Ru Jou



BIOGRAPHIES | 人物誌

名植，字子建，曹操之四子。十歲能文，妙筆生花，文不加點，為一代文豪也。幼年陪母誦經，久之，會入妙理，遂信佛。值陽春之際，率眾欣賞魚山風光，忽聞空中有梵音，幽雅悅耳，眾皆聞之，植悟其妙，靈感湧至，以七音譜出魚山梵唄，即今寺院所唱讚也。

植有才高八斗文華，天馬行空豪放，為其兄曹丕（魏文帝）所嫉，迫七步成詩，否則誅。植不加思索，即成其詩曰：「煮豆燃豆其，豆在釜中泣；本是同根生，相煎何太急！」丕受感動，貶於外地，含憂而卒，年四十一。有〈銅雀臺賦〉及〈洛神賦〉等行世。

曹子建是一個才子，可是才子多數是沒有福報的。才子近於一種狂慧，因有狂慧，所以多數是放蕩不羈，所謂的自由派，無拘無束遊山玩水這一類的人，也可以說是沒有做什麼正經

### Essay:

His name was Zhi. His style-name was Zijian. He was the fourth son of Cao Cao. At the age of ten, he could write essays. His compositions were ingenious, skillful and fast, without need of revision. He was hailed as a great writer of his generation. When Zhi was young, he accompanied his mother to chant the sutras. Over time, he came to realize the wonderful principles and believed in Buddhism. On one occasion in early spring, he led an assembly to tour the scenic spots of Fish Mountain. Suddenly, everyone heard the Brahma music from space. It was tranquil, graceful and pleasing to the ear. Zhi comprehended its wonder and was overwhelmed with inspiration. He then used the seven music notes to compose the Buddhist hymns of Fish Mountain. Today his tunes are still used in Buddhist monasteries for chants and praises.

While Zhi was endowed with remarkable literary talents with a literary style that was like a bold and unrestrained heavenly steed soaring across the skies, his elder brother Cao Pi (Emperor Wen of Wei) was jealous of him. He forced Zhi to compose a poem in the time it takes to walk seven steps or else be killed. Without a second thought, Zhi quickly came up with a quatrain:

*Boiled over a beanstalk fire, the beans weep in the cauldron.*

*Originally both are grown from the same root; why such eagerness to torment one another?*

Cao Pi was moved by his poem so he banished Cao Zhi to a far-off place instead. Zhi died of grief at the age of forty-one. His masterworks include 'Ode to the

事的。

曹子建有一點遺傳他父親的小聰明，因為曹操有鬼聰明，不是真正的神聰明。鬼聰明的人，壞主意最多，專門害人。你看曹操逃難的時候，逃到一個姓孟的家裡，姓孟的到街上買酒買菜，預備回來殺雞給他吃。他聽見人家說：「要殺」，就懷疑：「喔！這一定是他要殺我去領功。」於是就把這一家人全都殺了。

由這種行為看來，他的思想裡有一種鬼，是什麼鬼呢？人家對他好，他也不知道，反而以為是不好。因為這個，鬼聰明就遇到鬼聰明，所以他生的兒子也就有他這種氣質，多數有他這種血、這種肉、這種骨頭，都很奸的，都有鬼聰明。因此他們兄弟之間互相勾心鬥角、互相猜忌、互相傷害。

雖然曹子建很聰明，但沒有什麼用，只是在當時文化上留下一些文章，沒有其他更好的建樹。而且他的文章也都是華而不實，唸起來詞句很美，可是沒有什麼骨頭，只有一股氣在那兒。

他「姓曹，名植，字子建」，人很聰明，十歲就能寫文章，妙筆生花。所謂「妙筆生花」，就是所寫的文章合乎當時人的思想及心理所好，近於豔麗穢淫之類的，令人想入非非；旁人形容不出來的，他可以形容。他「文不加點」，也就是不加句讀，不用標點符號，寫出來的文章就能成誦，讀起來很順口，唸起來很好聽。

「曹操之四子」：曹操有26個兒子，長子曹昂被殺死，次子是曹丕，曹植是曹操第四個兒子，是絕頂聰明的。雖然他的兄弟也都很聰明，可是曹植比其他的兄弟都聰明。那麼他們是什麼樣人來的呢？大概以前他們都是在一起互相勾心鬥角的，所以現在做兄弟，還是互相勾心鬥角、妒忌障礙，不能解開這種怨氣。

**Bronze Bird Terrace,' 'Ode to the Goddess of the Luo River' and others that were widely circulated.**

**Commentary:**

Cao Zijian was a genius. However, most geniuses are bereft of blessings. A genius is often characterized by a kind of insane wisdom. Because of this insane wisdom, many are dissolute and unrestrained in conduct. The so-called liberals are the carefree and easy type that like to roam the mountains and play in the waters. It can also be said that they have not done any proper or respectable things.

Cao Zijian had inherited a bit of his father's petty cleverness. Cao Cao had ghostly cleverness, not the genuine cleverness of a deity. A person with ghostly cleverness has a lot of evil ideas and specializes in harming people. On one occasion, when Cao Cao was fleeing from a calamity, he took refuge in the home of the Meng family. Mr. Meng went to the street to buy wine and food. He had planned to kill a chicken to serve Cao Cao after he returned home. However, when Cao Cao heard him said the words "must kill" he was immediately suspicious: "Oh! He definitely wants to kill me for a reward." Therefore he slew the whole family.

From this kind of behavior, we know that there was a ghost hidden in his mind. What kind of ghost was this? He failed to know when people were good to him. Instead, he thought that they were harming him. Because of this, a person with ghostly cleverness will also encounter others with ghostly cleverness. Hence, Cao Cao's sons also inherited his temperament. In addition to having his same kind of blood, flesh, and bones, they were also very crafty with ghostly cleverness. Between the brothers, they always schemed and plotted against one another, and distrusted and harmed one another. Although Cao Zijian was very smart, it was still useless. He only left some writings in the culture of his time. He had no other achievements. His writings were elegant but without substance. They were impressive merely in appearance as one read them. They were pleasant to hear but had no bones, just a charge of energy in them.

**His family name was Cao; his name was Zhi; his style-name was Zijian.**

He was very intelligent. He could write literary essays at the age of ten. His writings were brilliant and ingeniously skillful, and his essays agreed with the thoughts and likings of the people at the time. They were mostly flowery diction of the licentious type that would cause people to indulge in wishful thinking and improper thoughts. He could describe what others were incapable of describing. His essays had no need for revision. There was no need to use punctuation in his writing, either. They could be read fluently and were pleasing to hear.

**He was the fourth son of Cao Cao.** Cao Cao had twenty-six sons. The eldest son Cao Ang was assassinated. His second son was Cao Pi. Cao Zhi, who was extremely intelligent, was Cao Cao's fourth son. Although his brothers were all very clever, Cao Zhi was the smartest of all. What kind of people were they? Perhaps in the past, they always schemed and plotted against one another. In this lifetime, when they became brothers, they still schemed and plotted against one another and were jealous and obstructed one another. They were unable to resolve their resentment.

☞待續

☞To be continued