Amaya Campbell

Professor Stubbs

ENG 201

23 March 2023

Reflection "A Lament for Ying"

"Oh, when, I thought, will this aimless wandering cease?
My heart was caught in a mesh that I could not disentangle;
My thoughts were lost in a maze that was no way out of"
-Ying, lines 23-35

Grief is a powerful and universal emotion felt by every single person on Earth, but, oftentimes, hard to articulate the range of feelings that encompass the misery. In the poem "A Lament for Ying," Qu Yuan takes the reader inside the mind of a person grieving the loss of a home and their past self. While the whole poem is a masterpiece that articulates what some tongues can not, lines 23-25 truly showcase the emotional suffering a person grieving goes through.

Before diving into the wonderfully crafted lines, it's important to go venture backwards in the poem for some context. The country the narrator lives in "moved to unrest and error," leaving everyone in a state of disarray and fear (Ying, line 2). Many decide to move eastward, leaving their home that was their security blanket filled with memories. Though moving seems like the best choice, the narrator describes the move as traveling "into exile" (Ying, line 7).

To me, each line describes a different type of emotion felt when grieving a person, place, or situation. Starting from line 23, the overall emotion being presented is hopelessness. Being in a state of hopelessness is such an isolating feeling, being too exhausted to even keep a silver lining inside one's head. Using the phrase "aimless wandering," sets into stone the profound lack of hope the narrator feels (Ying, line 23). Instead of making a plan to make the next place a home, they are stuck in a cycle of hurt surrounding their circumstances.

The imagery of line 24 represents a sense of longing, the narrator truly being unable to progress forward. I interpret the heart being "caught in a mesh" as the narrator being tethered to their old home and their old self (Ying, lines 24). When dealing with grief, it's hard to move on

to one's new life when they're missing the past. The line perfectly describes being stuck, frozen in time while being in a state of shock that you lost something dear to your heart.

Going from hopelessness to shock, line 25 goes into the part of grief that's more of a state of mind than a feeling: overthinking. The narrator's mind mirrors the thoughts of many different thoughts swirling around in one's brain, thinking about everything from the past, future, and present. Mazes are meant to confuse and ultimately keep people lost, which is what's happening in the narrator's mind. The constant, overwhelming thoughts create a space in the narrator's mind that is so hard to navigate their next action in life.