

REVIEW ARTICLE

On the Scrutability of the *Zuozhuan* *†

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The *Chunqiu* (春秋, hereafter *Annals*),¹ dealing with the years 722–479 B.C.² of the history of the state of Lu 魯, is a singularly important annalistic document in the historiography of the world.

Its commentary, the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳, is a foundational text of Chinese civilization. And now, at last, we have a convenient, bilingual, and helpfully annotated edition from which to study this immensely rich work.

Commendably, the present translation addresses itself in its rich introduction and annotation not only to specialists in Chinese history but to a general readership interested in the history of historiography.

It is worth reflecting that such historical texts have commonly played a constitutive role in the creation of a historical “identity” attached to major empires in the world.

* *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals.”* Translated and introduced by Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li, and David Schaberg. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2016. Pp. xcv + 2147. \$250.00.

† I dedicate this review to my mentor and dear friend, co-editor of *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae* over the decades, Professor Jiang Shaoyu 蔣紹愚 of Peking University, Chinese linguist, philologist, and humanist extraordinary. Also with thanks for help with the present article.

¹ In addition to the well-known Western and East Asian literature on this text I would like to draw attention to Н.И.Монастырев, trans. Конфузиева летопись чуньзю • Вёсны и осени • Перевод и примечания Исследования Д.В.Деопика и А.М.Карапетьянца (first published 1870, notes first published 1876; reprint, Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura RAN, 1999). The book spans 351 pages. The notes are on pp. 109–93.

² 479 B.C. was supposed to be the year Confucius died. The *Zuozhuan* goes down to 468 B.C. For the years 480–468 B.C., the *Zuozhuan* manifestly had to rely on sources other than the *Annals*. Indeed, all on their own, the *Annals* would not have gone very far as a historical source.

The Old Testament “historical books” (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, and Kings) are a case in point. They come close, occasionally, to an annalistic chronological style, and they refer to a historical period even earlier than the *Zuozhuan*. One will readily concur with the editors of *The Jerusalem Bible* who explain: “Though we are accustomed to refer to these as ‘historical’ books, the term ‘Prophets’ suits them well since they are written from a religious standpoint and are concerned chiefly with the relationship between Israel and God, and Israel’s obedience—above all its disobedience—to the word ministered through the prophets.”³ There is no such dominating transcendent perspective in the *Zuozhuan*. Nor is there as much psychological *ekphrasis*—sustained articulate focus on psychological states—in the *Zuozhuan* as is spread throughout the Old Testament as well as the Homeric epics.

The official and very public *Annales maximi* compiled ex officio by the chief pontiffs (*pontifices*) of the ancient Romans⁴ were ex-officio records of major events, including famines and pests as well as public festivities and political events of all kinds. The eighty-volume copy traditionally dated to the late second century B.C. presented a detailed year-by-year chronological record from about 400 B.C. onwards to 133 B.C., but it did also include a much more tentative chronology of the foundation of Rome. Cicero was among the very few who are known to have used this unique copy. Although perused by few only, the *Annales maximi* were a foundational official chronological record for the Roman Empire, much as the *Zuozhuan* seems to have come to be regarded as a foundational chronological record of the Chinese Empire in the Han times.

However, I know of no detailed commentary to these *Annales maximi* comparable to the *Zuozhuan* commentary to the *Annals*.

For the Russian Empire we do have the remarkable year-by-year chronicle *Povest’i vremennykh let* of the twelfth century,⁵ a foundational chronology of the

³ *The Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), p. 267.

⁴ For a thoughtful survey of traditional views on this document see Pauly Wissowa, *Realenzyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaften* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1894) under *Annales*. See now also Bruce W. Frier, *Libri Annales Pontificum Maximorum: The Origins of the Annalistic Tradition* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1999).

⁵ For a detailed annotated translation and study see Ludolf Müller, *Die altrussische Chronik, zugeschrieben dem Mönch des Kiever Höhlenklosters Nestor, in der Redaktion des Abtes Sil’vestr aus dem Jahre 1116, rekonstruiert nach den Handschriften Lavrent’evskaja, Radzivilovskaja, Akademiceskaja, Troickaja, Ipat’evskaja und Chlebnikovskaja und ins Deutsche übersetzt* (Stuttgart: Fink Verlag, 2001). For an English translation with a rich introduction on the history of the study of the text see *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, trans. and ed. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerod P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953).

empire of the Rus' which would richly reward detailed comparison with the *Chunqiu*, the *Zuozhuan*, and the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the historians). For here we have a rich foundational chronology of a kingdom what was to mutate into a mighty empire, where everything that is politically basic is solidly inscribed into a byzantine Christian religious historical context. There are truly excellent and very detailed Russian commentaries on this, but they are all modern and not medieval.⁶

A comparatist angle on these annalistic traditions could provide a critical fresh perspective on the specificities of our Chinese sources and their commonalities with annals around the world.

The Present Edition

Some books are so physically beautiful and so eminently useful that one is sorely tempted to celebrate their publication instead of reviewing them. *Zuo Tradition* is one of these wonderful publications that literally everyone with any interest in traditional China will need to hurry to buy. The book is handsomely produced, lavishly bound, and it is the result of many, many years of intensive cooperation between three of the world's leading scholars in the field, supported not only by the learned editors but also by some outstanding advisors thanked in the Acknowledgments.

Thus this is not only a singularly beautiful printed object, it is also an authoritative translation, if ever there was one, by the leading US scholars in the field. It seems bound to become a classic of sinology. One needs to make room for it on one's desk to keep this always within easy reach. And, most importantly, this work now creates excellent conditions to continue to improve our understanding of this unique classic in the global history of history-writing.

The *Zuo Tradition* now allows curious students like myself to recline at their ease and to try to reconstruct for themselves the intricate literary dynamics of the interaction between those radically contrasting discourse types that make up this extraordinary book.

One is helped along everywhere by introductory texts and footnotes. These original features help even the seasoned reader to find his way in the criss-crossing strands of narratives of the *Zuozhuan* with its criss-crossing onomastics for thousands of *dramatis personae*. Very successfully, *Zuo Tradition* is helpful also to the beginning student. One may still refer with great nostalgic profit to Séraphin Couvreur's often very beautiful and sensitive rendering of the *Zuozhuan* narratives, conveniently facing the Chinese original in large characters. But French is apparently no longer everyman's language of learning.⁷

⁶ See the bibliography in Müller's *Die altrussische Chronik* for bibliographic details.

⁷ I take this opportunity to draw attention to the lavish and carefully indexed volumes edited
(Continued on next page)

The Title

It is uncertain what exactly the “original” title was of the *Zuozhuan*—except that the title certainly was not *Zuozhuan*. Current ancient ways of referring to the book include *Chunqiu Zuoshizhuan* 春秋左氏傳, or *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*. Strictly speaking, the *Zuozhuan* is not a book at all, but a part of a book which includes the ancient *Annals* of the state of Lu known as the *Chunqiu*.

Given the composite nature of the *Zuozhuan* and that quite radical diversity of the types of sources and discourse which the *Zuozhuan* brings together, one might even usefully have reminded oneself of this composite nature by reading the title as “The Zuo Traditions on the *Annals*.” But as a literal translation this is not, of course, in the spirit of traditional Chinese philology.

One notes, however, that the variety of discourse types in the *Chunqiu Guliangzhuan* 春秋穀梁傳 and *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan* 春秋公羊傳 is quite radically more limited than that in *Zuozhuan*. The *Gongyangzhuan* must be read as a system of highly rationalistic questions attached to a given entry from the *Annals*, and answered in turn. This system of questions is recursive in the sense that some questions are asked not about the *Annals* themselves but actually about answers to earlier questions. The *Guliangzhuan* attaches more traditional glosses and comments of various kinds to every item of the *Annals* and has no such taxonomic structure.

In the *Guliangzhuan* as well as in the *Gongyangzhuan* there is strikingly little of the narrative *ekphrasis*, “narrative or discursive elaboration” that assures for the *Zuozhuan* a place of honour in the history of artistic narrative literature. Reference in these other commentaries is always to the *Annals*. One hardly ever suspects one is being presented with excerpts from other annals, as one often realizes one is in *Zuozhuan*.

Another striking feature that sets the *Zuozhuan* apart from the two other ancient commentaries is the fact that it frequently not only explains and expands on the *Annals*, but actually corrects or even openly criticizes the *Annals* it comments on.

An explicit example comes in Xi 15 where the *Annals* have the seemingly anodyne standard entry: 夏，五月，日有食之 (Summer, fifth month: there was a solstice). The *Zuozhuan* copies the entry and then adds a surprising comment: 夏，

(Note 7—Continued)

by Charles Le Blanc and Rémi Mathieu: *Philosophes taoistes II: Huainan zi* (Paris: Édition Gallimard, 2003), and *Philosophes confucianistes* (Paris: Édition Gallimard, 2009), as well as the Collection Bibliothèque chinoise – Les Belles Lettres which has managed to produce well over two dozen beautifully printed bilingual editions of classical Chinese texts. Very curiously, none of these French contributions have received the sort of attention they deserve in anglophone sinology.

五月，日有食之：不書朔與日，官失之也 (Summer, fifth month, there was a solstice: It does not record the first day of the month or the exact date. This is a case of official negligence).

The criticism is not of any presumed compiler like Confucius or anyone else, but of the *guan* 官 (officials) responsible for determining the dates assigned in the *Annals*. The *Annals* are an official bureaucratic court document. Like most other writings we have from ancient China, they are court literature and must be read and appreciated as such. But the text of the *Annals* is not treated by the *Zuozhuan* as sacrosanct. It is open to overt and explicit criticism on the one hand, and implicit quiet correction in many other places.

Let us consider now in a little more detail the composition of the *Zuozhuan*.

The Composition of the *Zuozhuan*

The first thing to notice is that whoever produced the *Zuozhuan* nowhere speaks for himself or herself in the first person, with his or her own voice. There certainly is neither an author's nor a compiler's separate preface in this work. Calling the first three lines a "Preface" (p. 4)⁸ is perhaps not exactly a felicitous exordium to so splendid an analytic work.

The *Zuozhuan* permits no authorial voice; no overt compilatorial or editorial remarks as a Preface would be permissible. In this, it is like the *Guliang* and *Gongyang* commentaries. But the *Zuozhuan* is quite special in the undisguised and often stylistically explicit abrupt discontinuity of its textual composition which allows the moving from very lively and detailed clearly fictional narrative to dry statements of disconnected facts. Avoiding the first-person commentarial mode everywhere, the text consists of at least the following distinct types of discourse which, of course, could be further subdivided:⁹

⁸ Here as below, unspecified page references like this are to the book under review.

⁹ For another classification of this sort see Mark Ul'yanov, М. Ю. Ульянов, Чуньцю Цзочжуань. Комментарий Цзо к «Чуньцю». Иссл., пер. с китайского гл. 1–5, комм. и указ. (Moscow: Nauka, 2011). See also Ul'yanov's very detailed Бамбуковые анналы: древний текст (Гу бнь чжу шу цзи нянь) /М.Ю. Ульянов при участии Д.В. Деопика и А.И. Таркиной (Moscow: Вост. лит., 2005) for a useful comparison with *Zuozhuan*. In an ideal scholarly world one would at least mention Ul'yanov's extensive published Russian work even if one decides to disregard it. In fact, I have found Ul'yanov's analyses and translations useful in many ways. For example, Ul'yanov (2011) is quite right not to treat the opening lines of the book as a "Preface," but as "a brief summary of relevant events" (p. 58). A convenient bibliography of Russian works on ancient Chinese history can be found in Архив российской китаистики (Moscow: Наука. Восточная Литература, 2003), pp. 551–80.

Quotations and Excerpts

1. Quotations from the *Annals*

QA

2. Shortened quotations or summaries from the *Annals*

SQA

3. Dated excerpts from independent annalistic sources other than the *Annals*

EIA

Narratives

4. Brief summaries of relevant historical events

BN

5. Expanding historical narratives

EN

6. Direct speech and dialogue

ED

7. Flashbacks introduced by *chu* 初

FB

Commentaries

8. Explanatory glosses on words or expressions or their absence¹⁰ in the *Annals*

GA

9. Elaborating paraphrases of entries in the *Annals*

PA

10. Commentaries on and supplements to the content of the narratives in the *Annals*

CA

11. Commentaries on the excerpts from independent annalistic entries

CIA

Evaluations

12. Discursive explanation of personal judgements implied by the text of the *Annals*

JA

¹⁰ See Chen Pan 陳槃, *Zuoshi Chunqiu yili bian* 左氏春秋義例辨, rev. ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), pp. 633–91 for useful documentation and discussion of explicit and implicit omission in *Zuozhuan*. These volumes certainly would have merited inclusion in any bibliography on *Zuozhuan*.

13. Ritual assessment of human behaviour in the *Zuozhuan* by *li ye* 禮也 or *fei li ye* 非禮也, sometimes with reasoning, as in Wen 7

RA

14. Generalized diplomatic rules of behaviour always introduced by *fan* 凡

DR

15. Rules for the use of technical historiographic terms always introduced by *fan* 凡

TR

16. Didactic comments on episodes in the *Zuozhuan* introduced by *junzi yue* 君子曰, *junzi wei* 君子謂, *junzi* 君子, or (more rarely) *Zhongni yue* 仲尼曰, *Kongzi yue* 孔子曰

DE

The rules for the use of technical historiographic terms **TR** mark out quite formally the abstract “metahistorical” ambitions that are part of the *Zuozhuan*. An example may be helpful: 凡民逃其上曰潰，在上曰逃 (In principle, when the people leave their ruler they are said to “disperse”; when the leaving [from the capital] is of the ruler [at the top] he is said to “flee”).¹¹ The stipulative and normative modal force of *fan* 凡 (as a matter of principle, in principle) is essential to the peculiar discourse function of all these formulae.

There are, of course, many books that contain a number of fairly distinct discourse types. What marks out the *Zuozhuan* is the disconnected, unmediated, and abrupt way that this book moves from one discourse type to another. The book reads much more like an overwhelmingly rich compilation than like an overall literary composition. However, the sequential order in which these discourse types occur is fairly predictable. Thus, with certain exceptions, as we shall see shortly, quotations from the *Annals* tend to occur at the beginning of any dated entry. Expanding narratives **EN** tend to come after and not before such **QAs**, and fictional¹² dialogues

¹¹ The translation of this passage on p. 477 is this: “In all cases when people flee their superiors, it is called ‘collapse.’ If this occurs among superiors it is called ‘flee.’” For details see Takezoe Kōkō 竹添光鴻, *Sashi Kaisen* 左氏會箋 (1912; reprint, Chengdu: Ba-Shu shushe, 2008; henceforth abbreviated as “Takezoe”), p. 694. See also the singularly important A. Taeko Brooks 白妙子, “Heaven, *Li*, and the Formation of the *Zuozhuan* 左傳,” *Oriens Extremus* 44 (2003/04), pp. 51–100, which has paid careful attention to the typology of the evaluations. Chen Pan’s *Zuoshi Chunqiu yili bian* provides rich relevant analysis of this type of discourse.

¹² The fictional nature of most of these dialogues, like the fictional nature of most of the speeches attributed by Thucydides and Sima Qian 司馬遷 to their important personalities, is given away by their unrealistic rhetorical style. Recognizing the dialogues as artistic products of the historian is crucial for a proper understanding of what is going on in the *Zuozhuan* as well as in the *Shiji*. It is all the more exciting to see how the *Zuozhuan* does imitate archaizing court style when the royal court is involved. On these occasions there is a very clear attempt at plausible stylized *mimesis*.

ED tend to follow or be part of the extended narratives **EN**. Such expectations on sequencing are so strong that when they are broken it merits an explanation.

As the Introduction to *Zuo Tradition* emphasizes, the *Zuozhuan* itself is not an independent homogeneous piece of literature in which any author or compiler explicitly asserts himself or expresses himself.¹³ In order to appreciate the literary and historical subtleties of the *Zuozhuan* it is necessary to try as best one can to read every paragraph as belonging to one of these discrete constituent types of discourse.¹⁴ For a surprisingly large part of the book this analysis turns out to be exhaustive. All the more reason, then, to concentrate on those entries in the *Zuozhuan* that for various reasons that deserve close attention do not fit the general pattern.

The use, in the *Zuozhuan*, of independent excerpts from annalistic sources other than those *Annals* it overtly comments on is of special interest for us. For example, the English translation reads “**1.** In summer, in the fourth month, Qinfu of Bi led troops to fortify Lang. **2.** This is not recorded because it was not by our lord’s command” (p. 7) (夏，四月，費伯帥師城郎。不書，非公命也). But very plausibly the first sentence **1.** must be read as an independent annalistic entry **EIA**,

¹³ The authoritative translation by Shen Yucheng 沈玉成 (*Zuozhuan yiwen* 左傳譯文 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981]) dispenses altogether with a translation of the *Annals*. It thus systematically disregards the relation of the *Zuozhuan* to the *Chunqiu* which is so important for a proper understanding of the discourse in *Zuozhuan*. See also the sumptuous and otherwise exceedingly useful Wang Shouqian 王守謙, Jin Shouzhen 金守珍, and Wang Fengchun 王鳳春, *Zuozhuan quanyi* 左傳全譯 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1990) and the famously convenient Zhu Hongda 朱宏達 and Li Nanhui 李南暉, *Zuozhuan zhijie* 左傳直解 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 2000) under the direction of none other than the legendary Jiang Liangfu 姜亮夫, both of which treat the *Zuozhuan* as if it was an independent text and disregard the crucial embeddedness in the *Annals*. Similarly for Chen Shuliang 陳書良, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan: Wenbai duizhao* 春秋左傳：文白對照 (Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1995), and also Mo Diquan 莫滌泉, *Zuozhuan: Wenbai duizhao* 左傳：文白對照 (Nanning: Guangxi minzu chubanshe, 1996).

¹⁴ Hirase Takao 平勢隆郎, *Saden no shiryō hihanteki kenkyū* 左傳の史料批判的研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1998) and Ul’yanov (2011) attempt an analysis of *Zuozhuan* paragraphs in something like this spirit, but with a much less elaborated system of discourse types. See also Joachim Gentz, *Das Gongyang zhuan: Auslegung und Kanonisierung der Frühlings- und Herbstannalen (Chunqiu)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001). There is now also Newell Ann Van Auken, *The Commentarial Transformation of the Spring and Autumn* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016). What is needed is a very careful argumentative consideration of each commentarial passage in its own right. The publication of *Zuo Tradition* demonstrates the need for such an analytic approach as well as the realistic feasibility for it. The *Zuo Tradition* is, at the same time, of tremendous help towards such a necessary detailed study in that spirit.

as indicated by the formulaic dating at the beginning. The second sentence **2.** must be read as a *Zuozhuan* comment **CIA** on that annalistic entry. In this case the **CIA** compares the **EIA** with the text of the *Annals* as reproduced within the same composite document, the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*. (So in the end one could still want to call it a kind of commentary to the *Annals*.)

What is presented as a quotation from the *Annals*, what is presented as a standardized formulaic (unattributed) excerpt from some other annals, and what is put forward by the *Zuozhuan* as its own commentarial message are separate things. One must try to distinguish the message of the *Zuozhuan* commentary itself from the messages of its sources in order to take the work seriously as literature and as historiography.

The very parsing of the *Zuozhuan* text into paragraphs can be of central importance. When we read 及連穀而死。晉侯聞之而後喜可知也, our new translation reads: “When he reached Liangu, Cheng Dechen died. When the Prince of Jin heard about his death, he was clearly delighted” (p. 423). But in fact, these two sentences must be read tightly together, and the exact nuance of *er hou* 而後 makes the psychologically essential point of the whole story about the Prince of Jin’s psychological reaction: “Having arrived at Liangu [Ziyu 子玉] died, and it is only after the Prince of Jin heard this that he showed his joy.” (Even after Ziyu’s defeat, the Prince of Jin was still scared of the formidable foe, right until he heard the man was not just defeated but well and truly dead.) I am sorry to say that neither Couvreur nor my favourite modern Chinese translation of the *Zuozhuan* caught up with the Chinese text here, but as usual, Takezoe (p. 614), with dream-like assurance, put his finger on the essence of the matter: 造語如是，而文公之畏子玉者，大可見矣。 I mention this example as representative of so many others where Takezoe guides one to understand much of the immense implicit psychological subtlety that is the hallmark of *Zuozhuan* narrative and dialogue. It is in this psychological subtlety, the *weiyán* 微言 of the *Zuozhuan*, that one can indeed compare the *Zuozhuan* with the work of Thucydides.

Take p. 35, Yin 5.1 where we have a new translation of a very well-known story:

五年，春，公矢魚于棠。

1. 五年，春，**2.** 公將如棠觀魚者。**3.** 臧僖伯諫曰：「凡物不足以講大事，其材不足以備器用，則君不舉焉。君將納民於軌物者也，故講事以度軌量謂之軌，取材以章物采謂之物。不軌不物，謂之亂政。亂政亟行，所以敗也。故春蒐，夏苗，秋獮，冬狩，皆於農隙以講事也。三年而治兵，入而振旅。歸而飲至，以數軍實。昭文章，明貴賤，辨等列，順少長，習威儀也。鳥獸之肉不登於俎，皮革、齒牙、骨角、毛羽不登於器，則公不射，古之制也。若夫山林川澤之實，器用之資，阜隸之事，官司之守，非

君所及也。」4. 公曰：「吾將略地焉。」遂往，陳魚而觀之，僖伯稱疾不從。
5. 書曰：「公矢魚于棠。」6. 非禮也，7. 且言遠地也。

1. In the fifth year, in spring, 2. our lord was going to visit Tang to inspect the fisheries. 3. Zang Xibo remonstrated: . . .

Now this Zang Xibo is none other than the son of the late Lord Xiao of Lu 魯孝公 who died in 769 B.C., so, crucially, for the story, Zang was what we would call a Prince, and he was indeed known as Gongzi Kou 公子彊, which one would be tempted to translated as “Prince Kou.” He must have been a fairly old man in 718 B.C. when he was interposing himself with that extended discourse which of course is not a speech, but part of a deliberative strategic dialogue.¹⁵

In fact, the date in 1. might perhaps be read as a shortened quotation from the *Annals*, i.e., as **SQA**, and it identifies the item in the *Annals* which is being commented on in what follows and takes its chronological cue from it. And the drama that follows shows that 2. must be read as an alternative to the explicit **QA** which, against all expectations, follows below, at the end of this entry. The *Zuozhuan* text seems to suggest, as it certainly did to Kong Yingda 孔穎達, that the Lord of Lu was going on something of a pleasure trip to Tang to get a chance to see the fishermen in that area (presumably displaying the kinds of scenic displays that we can observe even in our own time).¹⁶ Then we have that characteristic narrative *ekphrasis* in the mode of utterly disproportionate moralizing pontifical dialogue 3. which must be read as a full-fledged **ED** that expatiates on the quite sensible complaint that the ruler is wasting his time with things of insufficient importance to matters of the state. Rather like Trump might be accused by his team of spending too much time on visiting American football teams. And at the end of this seemingly endless moralizing political sermon, the Lord of Lu concludes the deliberations, again very much Trump style, with a convenient lie (according to Du Yu 杜預 a *xunci* 遜辭): “OK, I’ll (just) go and inspect the border regions. (Forget about the fishery!)” The tale continues: 遂往，陳魚而觀之 “So in the event off he went, they spread the fishing equipment for him [according to Du Yu, or alternatively according to many others in a less dramatic bureaucratic mode: he mustered the fishermen], and he admired the sight.”

¹⁵ Public forensic speeches (which play such a crucial role in Greece and Rome) must be carefully distinguished from such extended contributions to deliberative dialogue which are generally directed toward leading decision-makers and are not speeches directed at a “general” or “open” public as in the Graeco-Roman case. There are few public “speeches” in the *Zuozhuan*.

¹⁶ The *Gongyangzhuan* implausibly suspects greed for fish on the part of the Lord as a motive; the Song-dynasty scholar, Ye Mengde 葉夢得, argued first that the expedition was motivated by a very ancient ritual of spearing/shooting fish for use in an important ritual.

Having finished this I fish on the part of the Lord as a motive, the *Zuozhuan* reverts to the tricky text of the *Annals*: **5. QA** 書曰：「公矢魚于棠。」 **6. RA** 非禮也， **7. GA** 且言遠地也。 And our new translations reads “The text says, ‘Our lord arrayed the fishermen at Tang’: this was not in accordance with ritual propriety, and it is saying, moreover, that Tang was a distant place” (p. 37). One notes in passing that *shu* 書 here is probably verbal: “to record,” and it is not a natural name for the *Chunqiu* text. But this does not really matter so much. What does matter is one definitely can and probably should take *shi* 矢 not as “to array,” but as “to spear” as in (ritually or non-ritually) hunting fish with arrows. And *yu* 魚 without the water radical is not plausibly “a fisherman” but rather “fish” *vulgaris*.

This is how I believe one might be excused for taking this troubling end of our passage without thereby being in any way original or creative. However, in a delightful *tour-de-force* summarized on 35 pages (followed by ample learned appendices) of detailed documentation, Chen Pan 陳槃 aims to demonstrate that all this was actually not at all a light-hearted pleasure trip that the Lord was seeking, but that his mission was most probably of a very serious ritual nature, designed to procure fish for the all-important ancestral sacrifice by personally harpooning it, following a mythical ancient tradition.¹⁷

Xu Zibin 許子濱, on the other hand, has managed to go well beyond all this in his splendid paper, “*Chunqiu* Lu Yingong ‘shi yu yu tang’ kaobian” 《春秋》魯隱公「矢魚于棠」考辨, in which he gives a magisterial survey of the distinguished history of the interpretation of our passage.¹⁸

Now our new authoritative translation captures none of the hermeneutic excitement in and around this passage at all when it lamely translates: “Our lord said, ‘I will inspect the borderlands.’ Consequently, he went out, arrayed the fishermen, and inspected them. Zang Xibo claimed that he was sick and did not go along” (p. 37).

Séraphin Couvreur captured the drama of it all very well (“the action” as my mentor A. C. Graham liked to say), in true French style, from the very outset, gratefully following Kong Yingda’s reading of the whole affair: “Au printemps le prince voulut aller à T’ang voir pêcher le poisson (pour son plaisir). . . . Là-dessus, il partit. Il disposa, c’est-à-dire, fit disposer, les engins de pêche, et jouit du spectacle. Hi pe prétexta une maladie, et n’accompagna pas le prince.”¹⁹ I mention

¹⁷ See Chen Pan, *Jiuxue jushi shuocong* 舊學舊史說叢 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), pp. 1–35ff.

¹⁸ See Xu Zibin, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan lizhi yanjiu* 《春秋》《左傳》禮制研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012), pp. 347–65.

¹⁹ Séraphin Couvreur, trans., *Tch’ouen ts’iou et Tso tchouan: La chronique de la principauté de Lòu* (Paris: Cathasia, 1951), p. 31.

Couvreur's reading here with special satisfaction because his edition is treated a little ungenerously in the introduction of this very American translation. For all its idiosyncrasies and actually quite frequent *insouciances*, Couvreur's French version remains superbly helpful in many contexts where other available translations are not. I would say it could have been profitably consulted by the *Zuo Tradition*.

I found uncomfortably many cases where our new translation misses the jocular touches in the text. Thus on p. 493 we have:

秋，季文子將聘於晉，使求遭喪之禮以行。其人曰：「將焉用之？」文子曰：「備豫不虞，古之善教也。求而無之，實難。過求，何害？」

In autumn, Ji Wenzi was going to make an official visit to Jin. He had someone seek about the proper ritual for encountering a time of bereavement and then set out. One of his followers said, "How will we make use of this?" Wenzi said, "To be prepared for the unexpected is a good lesson handed down from early times. Trouble arises when one seeks in haste and can find nothing! What is the harm in seeking out more than we need?"

The learned footnote in the *Zuo Tradition* elaborates: "Du Yu (ZZ 19A.315) explains that Ji Wenzi had heard that 'the Prince of Jin was ill [晉侯疾故].' But Kong Yingda (ZZ-Kong 19A.315) and others believe that the concern is probably more general. Whenever a ruler left the domain, he was expected to have prepared the appropriate ritual in case he encountered a funeral (Yang, 2:549–50). The term *zao sang zhi li* 遭喪之禮, 'the ritual for encountering a time of bereavement,' also appears in Lord Ai 15.2."

But the allusion here is to the passage in the *Analects* 5.20 where Wenzi insists on *san si* 三思 (thinking thrice) before acting, and the *Zuozhuan* simply illustrates this passage in the *Analects*.²⁰ Du Yu notes concisely that the reference is to: 所謂文子三思. However, in modern times, Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 happens to have missed the allusion in his own meticulously well-documented way. So do our modern translators. But in Japan, Takezoe (p. 713) had made the matter beautifully plain a long time ago: "The *Analects* claim that Ji Wenzi only acted after having reflected thrice. . . . This was surely not because he had heard that the Prince of Jin was ill" 《論語》稱季文子三思而後行。……此亦非以聞晉侯疾故也. Viewed in isolation, we have here a very good humorous tale. But then there is an added complicating (perhaps even

²⁰ Xing Bing 邢昺 on *Analects* 5.20 (Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, ed., *Lunyu huijiao jishi* 論語彙校集釋 [Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008], p. 437) duly refers to this passage in the *Zuozhuan* and to Du Yu's commentary on it. I am inclined to agree with Xing Bing's intuition. In any case I find so much humour in the *Zuozhuan* that a witty reference to humour in the *Analects* is not in principle out of order.

ironic) twist to the tale: whereas in the *Analects* the threefold reflection before action is clearly sarcastically criticized by Confucius, in this case the seemingly excessive reflective precautions turned out quickly to be entirely relevant. For as it happened, in the eighth month of that very year, the Prince of Jin is indeed recorded to have died!

One has to conclude that the allusion to the *Analects* is so plausible and important that it certainly would have been worth discussing in a translation.

Here, then, is how I think “it goes” when all is spelt out with painful and joyless uncongenial explicitness: “In the autumn, when Ji Wenzi was about to make a formal visit to Jin he had someone seek out the proper ritual provisions for the case in which one’s host happens to be in fresh mourning. The man objected (since there was no news of any bereavement in Jin): ‘How are you going to have use for that?’ Wenzi replied, ‘To be prepared for the unexpected (and Wenzi is definitely *not* expecting to meet a case of death) is a good lesson from early times. It is when you try to find something and you don’t have it (*shi* 實 at that point!) that you have a problem! What’s the harm in seeking (to prepare) too much?’”

The logic of all this seems grotesquely fine.²¹ Or do we have, here, just a case like Mencian flat-footed didactic humour? The issue remains wide open.

I cannot possibly dwell on all those cases where our new translation misses that humorous light touch in the *Zuozhuan* which Burton Watson often brings out so brilliantly as a translator. But I feel one of this playful light touch in the *Zuozhuan* is rarely dwelt on and does deserve systematic attention. It is the playful use of quotations from the *Odes* which seems to me to illustrate what Gérard Genette expounds in his brilliant book *Palimpsestes*.²² Zhu Ziqing’s 朱自清 seminal work *Shi yan zhi bian* 詩言志辨 (Disquisition on the *Odes* expressing intent) recounts and analyses fifty-three cases of chanting poetry, and eighty-four cases of quotation from the *Odes* in *Zuozhuan*, and he goes on to a rich detailed discussion of such quotations in other early texts.²³ Here is a striking example from *Zuozhuan* Cheng 12:

此公侯之所以扞城其民也。故《詩》曰：

赳赳武夫，公侯干城。

及其亂也，諸侯貪冒，侵欲不息，爭尋常以盡其民，略其武夫，以為己腹心、股肱、爪牙。故《詩》曰：

赳赳武夫，公侯腹心。

²¹ See Christoph Harbsmeier, “Confucius Ridens: Humor in the *Analects*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 50, no. 1 (June 1990), pp. 131–61.

²² Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982).

²³ Zhu Ziqing, *Zhu Ziqing shuoshi* 朱自清說詩 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), pp. 62–91 passim.

This is how the lords and princes protect their people like shields and walls. Thus, it says in the *Odes*,

Bold and stalwart warriors,
Shields and walls of their lord and prince.

But when there is disorder, the princes in their greed have no compunctions about invading other domains or pursuing their desires. Fighting over a mere stretch of land, they drive their people to the limit, conscripting the fighting men among them to be their own bellies and hearts, legs and rumps, claws and teeth. Thus, it says in the *Odes*,

Bold and stalwart warriors,
Belly and heart of their lord and prince. (p. 799)

We leave aside the question whether *gonghou* 公侯 is not really one abstract concept “noble ruler,” whether *gancheng* 干城 is not simply “bulwark,” and whether *fluxin* 腹心 is not really “helpmate.” A footnote explains correctly: “But in the *Odes* these lines are obviously analogous: both celebrate the importance of the warrior for his lord. Xi Zhi’s fashioning of lines from the *Odes* to fit his own intent and the context is common practice in *Zuozhuan*” (p. 798, n. 249). But what is so important in this passage is the virtuoso artistic playfulness in this kind of flourishing of quotations. For one thing, the roles of ruler and people are playfully—outrageously!—inverted: the ruler is celebrated as the bulwark of defence for his people. The meaning of *fluxin* 腹心 (loyal supporters) in the second quotation from the same poem (*Maoshi* 7, “Tujie” 兔置) is reinterpreted as “enslaved cronies,” violated and abused by the wicked ruler. With Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsestes* one might well want to diagnose here something of what the American edition of his book announces as “literature in the second degree.” It is certainly not elaborated parody of the classic, as we have it in later *xiaolin wenxue* 笑林文學 (joculography). But there is a whiff of literary *persiflage* in this recurrent, and profligate, rhetorical abuse of quotations from the revered classic, the *Odes*. It is as if a whole string of adjectives become necessary to account for the rhetorical complexity of what is going on here in the *Zuozhuan*. From a literary point of view one thing is certain: the intended reading here is not hermeneutically serious. The French have a useful way of describing what is going on here: *cela se joue*. We are dealing with subtle ancient literature that defies flat translation. And a comparison with Michel de Montaigne’s use and notorious abuse of ancient lyrical quotations in his *Essais*²⁴ is not entirely beyond the point. Present discourse plays out against an overfamiliar classical foil of a received repertoire of sentiments—in both cases.

²⁴ See the annotation in Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 1987) (many reprints).

There is so much of this liveliness of *cyбтле*, insult, deliberate misrepresentation, and playful witty insinuation in the *Zuozhuan* that all this poses a constantly humiliating challenge to the modern translator. At great risk, David Hawkes has tried to do justice in English to such subtleties of discourse in his version of the *Story of the Stone*²⁵ (or *Dream of the Red Mansion*, if one prefers a literal translation of the alternative title of the book). Who could even try to do this kind of poetic justice to the monumental complexities in the *Zuozhuan*?

Let me revert, then, to more mundane and solvable problems: those of sorting out and distinguishing carefully between the discourse types within the *Zuozhuan*.

Keeping Track of the Discourse Types in the *Zuozhuan*

A few representative examples of this pervasive problem must suffice:

In our new translation we read on p. 37: “**1.** In summer, Lord Huan of Wei was buried. **2.** Wei was in disorder, so the burial was delayed” 夏，葬衛桓公。衛亂，是以緩。 But the first sentence **1.** must be read as an abbreviated quotation from the *Annals* **SQA**, and the second **2.** must be read as Zuo’s commentary on this entry **CA**. The *Zuozhuan* just refers (and defers) to the report in the *Annals* on what happened in summer. On the other hand, the *Zuozhuan* itself does make its own claim on chaos in Wei as a reason for the delayed burial. As A. C. Graham would often put it over the decades: “This, I think, is how the passage goes.” And there is much more in “how this passage goes” than the mere “good translation” of the words in the passage. As Graham put it: “As long as you only read, and you do not ‘read as’ you will be missing out on the action in the text!”

On p. 403: **1.** In winter, the Master of Chu and the princes laid siege to Song. **2.** Gongsun Gu of Song went to Jin to report their crisis” 冬，楚子及諸侯圍宋。宋公孫固如晉告急。 In fact, **1.** is a deviating summary **PA** of *Annals* 27.5(4) 冬，楚人、陳侯、蔡侯、鄭伯、許男圍宋， in which not the Master of Chu but 楚人 (a representative of Chu) is said to have been involved in the attack. One notes that *zhuhou* 諸侯 (the princes) were not listed as “princes” at all, but specifically “the Prince of Chen, the Prince of Cai, the Liege of Zheng, and the Head of Xǔ laid siege to Song.” Unless one assumes carelessness, one must take the *Zuozhuan* to correct the *Annals* on who took the leading initiative in Chu. The ruler of Chu cannot be referred to as 楚人 (representative of Chu). Next, there is the question of the precise reference of the technical term *zhuhou* which definitely does *not* refer specifically to those of the rank of *hou* 侯. Most of these so-called princes are not in fact princes at all, but are generally lined up in the *Annals* exactly according to their hierarchical ranking in

²⁵ David Hawkes and John Minford, trans., *The Story of the Stone: A Chinese Novel in Five Volumes* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973–1986).

the *wu deng* 五等 (five-rank) system: *gong* 公 first (none participated in this case), then *hou* 侯, then *bo* 伯, then *zi* 子 (none participated), then *nan* 男. Similar ranked listings abound throughout the book.

Is the meaning here to be taken as “(in the *Annals* above-mentioned) the feudal lords (of various ranks)”? That would imply the participation of many more than those mentioned in the *Annals*. Or can the phrase *zhuhou* have been understood by ancient native speakers to refer indefinitely to “certain feudal lords”? That would make good sense. The semantic details of the concept of the *zhuhou* need careful attention.²⁶

On p. 295 we read *Zuozhuan* Xi 9.4:

1. In the ninth month, Lord Xian of Jin died. 2. Li Ke and Pi Zheng wanted to install Lord Wen in power, and that is the reason why they raised a rebellion along with the support of the followers of the three noble sons. 3. Earlier, Lord Xian had Xun Xi tutor Xiqi. . . . When Li Ke was going to kill Xiqi, he first notified Xun Xi: “The three resentful groups are about to rise up, and Qin and Jin will side with them. What will you do about this?” Xun Xi said, “I will die for him.” Li Ke said, “That will be of no benefit.” Xun Xi said, “I have given my word to our former ruler and I cannot be duplicitous. Could I wish to fulfill my words but cherish my body? Even if it may do no good, how could I avoid such action? Moreover, what man, desiring to do the good, would not be like me? I do not wish to be duplicitous, but can I counsel others to desist?”

九月，晉獻公卒。里克、鄭欲納文公，故以三公子之徒作亂。初，獻公使荀息傅奚齊。……及里克將殺奚齊，先告荀息曰：「三怨將作，秦、晉輔之，子將何如？」荀息曰：「將死之。」里克曰：「無益也。」荀叔曰：「吾與先君言矣，不可以貳。能欲復言而愛身乎？雖無益也，將焉辟之？且人之欲善，誰不如我？我欲無貳，而能謂人已乎？」

In fact, 1. is a summary of the entry in the *Annals* SQA. (I note in passing that *na* 納 is probably not “install as ruler” but “allow in / cause to be installed as ruler.”) Then 2. provides brief background information BN. 3. must be read as one of those dialogues ED with great philosophical depth.

It is clear that Xun Xi was to do much, much more than tutor Xiqi: he was to act as his Official Protector *fu* 傅 who would naturally be expected to sacrifice his life in the service of his protégé, as when he presents a rhetorical question that addresses the very core of moral seriousness: “Can I, wishing to act in good faith, be stingy with my own life?” The conclusion of the dialogue is again significant for

²⁶ For the uses of *zhuhou* 諸侯 to refer to “the above-specified enfeoffed lords,” see Chen Pan, *Zuoshi Chunqiu yili bian*, pp. 283–98. Note, incidentally, that *zhuhou* is also attested in the singular “is a feudal lord.”

the philosophical dilemma of moral behaviour in historical context. It is brought out impeccably in Burton Watson's translation: "Though it may be pointless, how can I avoid it?"²⁷ (This, incidentally, is the kind of thing the Greeks wrote their tragedies about.) And then comes the ambitious abstract as well as personal remark on moral action in historical context, which in turn Couvreur captures perfectly: "D'ailleurs, quel est l'homme de bien qui n'a pas la même volonté que moi?" ("Who, desiring goodness, would not act like me?") Finally there is the deeply insulting punchline of the dialogue: "I, for my part, intend never to act in bad faith, but how can I order others to do the same?"²⁸

The discontinuity of discourse types in *Zuozhuan* is not only there to be reconstructed by historians of historiography. This structural complexity of discourse types is a central part of its literary composition: Everywhere, the *Zuozhuan* invites the reader not just to "read," but rather to "read as."

Understanding the text is to understand the systematic radical discontinuity of that text. David Keightley has set out to identify the types of discourse that enter into an oracle bone inscription (*jiaguwen* 甲骨文), and in what preferred order. By identifying this pattern of distinct types of discourse in the *jiaguwen*, David Keightley made an important contribution to the study of this special category of text.²⁹

Françoise Bottéro and Christoph Harbsmeier's *Chinese Lexicography on Matters of the Heart* sets out to do exactly the same—albeit on a much more modest scale—for the case of *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字. Thus, for example, for the *Shuowen* we show that it is essential not just to read but to read as. The head graph must be read as what Bertrand Russell would call a very special *autonomous* small seal graph, referring back to itself not as to a word, but as to a *type* of graph as instantiated in the head graph. Again, the semantic gloss after that autonomous graph must be read not as

²⁷ Burton Watson, trans., *The Tso Chuan: Selections from China's Oldest Narrative History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 26.

²⁸ For further examples demonstrating the importance of marking out everywhere by ":" initial quotations from the *Annals*, as is only sporadically done in *Zuo Tradition*, see pp. 39, 57, 113, 123, 131, 141, 153, 165, 179, 183, 189, 191, 203, 207, 219, 229, 231, 263, 281, 295, etc.

²⁹ David N. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p. 88, presents a simple and fairly uncontroversial version of this: 1. Preface, 2. Charge, 3. Prognostication, 4. Verification. After Keightley, one has to try as best one can to read everything written on an oracle bone "as" one of such types of discourse that recur in oracle bone inscriptions. Some elements are obligatory, others are optional. Still other elements may be rare and indeed *sui generis*, occasionally. This, exactly, is the situation which I am proposing for the *Zuozhuan*, having learnt the trick for oracle bone inscriptions from David Keightley, when he worked with many of us in Oslo on *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae*.

the gloss of the basic meaning of any word, but as a rough indication of the relevant semantic reading of a graph that is relevant to the interpretation of the composition of that graph.³⁰ Each “field” of a lexical entry in *Shuowen* must thus be “read as” the kind of discourse that is specific to that field. My argument is that exactly the same *régime de lecture* applies to the *Zuozhuan*: Every paragraph of the text is intended to be “read as” the kind of discourse that it belongs to: as a quotation from the *Annals*, as a shortened form of such quotation, as an expanded form of such quotation, as an excerpt from some other unidentified excerpts available to the compilers, as a short piece of historical information inserted, as a historical tale, as an illustrative dialogue, and so on.

There is a *régime de lecture* for the *Shuowen* which one disregards at one’s peril when one takes the book to provide the basic meanings of words, or when one takes the characters explained to be the *lishu* 隸書 characters. Similarly, there is a *régime de lecture* for the *Zuozhuan* which one disregards at one’s peril when one takes a quotation from the *Annals* as a statement of any author of the book, or a clearly marked excerpt from some other annals as a historical statement of fact by the compilers of the book. As we have seen, there are some clear examples where in fact the compilers of the *Zuozhuan* manifestly disagree with the quote from the *Annals* they comment on. Moreover, reading the fictional illustrative dialogues as historical records is simply failing to “read as” according to the *régime de lecture* of that text.

Terminology

Recurrent problems include the following:

君子 **versus** 公子

In *junzi yue* 君子曰 the word *junzi* must be read as generic, and *yue* as tenseless if these pronouncements are to have a general philosophical force. The point is crucial for a proper understanding. If we read this as some (unknown) noble man having commented the given episode (on some unknown occasion and in some unknown place), then some other (unrecorded) noble man might have disagreed, and the noble man in question might also have changed his mind at a later point. All these scenarios are alien to the *Zuozhuan*. The judgements after *junzi yue* are clearly taken to be what a right-minded *junzi* at any time and on any occasion would reasonably have as comment on a given episode from a general moral or “philosophical” point of view.

³⁰ See the general introduction in Françoise Bottéro and Christoph Harbsmeier, *Chinese Lexicography on Matters of the Heart: An Exploratory Commentary on the Heart Radical in Shuō wén jiě zì 說文解字* (Paris: EHESS, Centre de recherches linguistiques sur l’Asie orientale, 2016) for detail.

Take 君子曰：不備不虞，不可以師. If we read this as “The noble man said: ‘If you are not prepared for the unexpected, you cannot command troops.’” a number of questions arise:

1. Who was this anonymous noble man?
2. When did he say this?
3. Where indeed did he say it?
4. To whom did he say it?
5. Was he taken to be right or wrong at that point in saying what he did say?
6. What exactly was he trying to achieve by saying this?

7. Was he looking over the shoulders of the compilers as they put together the final draft of the *Zuozhuan* as we have it today, or was he commenting not on the text but on the historical events themselves as he or she knew them?

I believe that none of these questions are relevant. I believe that all of these questions can be shown to be evidence of a mistake in the grammatical interpretation of the abstract and generic non-referential noun *junzi* (*l’homme de bien*). This formula must be read in such a way that no such question can arise. A fully explicit paraphrase of this formula might go like this: “A man of superior understanding might (rightly and aptly) comment (on this episode) as follows:” In this way, the formula *junzi yue* must be read as a closed and closing definitive judgement of the *Zuozhuan* that does not raise any kind of open questions inviting speculations on who that *junzi* might have been. The competent grammarian will not allow for such speculation because in a very special sense such speculation is as philologically “ungrammatical” as the question who that “competent grammarian” is at the beginning of this very sentence. In other words, I think I can demonstrate that the competent reader of classical Chinese will have learnt to make a radical structural distinction between *junzi yue* (A gentleman would comment:) and *Zhongni yue* 仲尼曰 (Confucius commented). On the other hand, such a competent reader might very well not know what exactly it is that he has learnt. The competent reader might not be able to tell us what exactly he is doing when he makes this distinction. This is for the philologist to try to spell out as best he can.

On p. 483 we read: 君子是以知…… (which is recurrent) is translated as “The noble man thus knew. . . .,” whereas Couvreur gets right not only the generic reference of *junzi* as well as tenselessness of the verb *zhi* 知 in the connection, but most important of all, also the inchoative modality of *zhi* (come to understand): “Le sage verra par là que. . . .” Even the seeming mistranslation “le sage” has something usefully suggestive in it in that the notion of the *junzi* here is not predominantly a moral one, as it often is elsewhere.

It is necessary to recall the fact that the structural semantics of the generic (often ethically loaded) term *junzi* (the man of noble character) is totally different from the

structural semantics of *gongzi* 公子 (prince), which hardly ever is generic at all as far as I have been able to ascertain and which is translated impeccably but perhaps not exactly helpfully as “Gongzi” in our new translation. This comes out when on p. 499 the princes 公子成, translated as “Gongzi Cheng,” and 公子蕩, translated as “Gongzi Dang,” are first mentioned, and are then referred back to as *zhu gongzi* 諸公子, which is then translated as “the noble sons,” as if “Gongzi” and “noble sons” here were not exactly the same thing referred to by exactly the same expression. In any case, *gongzi* does not refer generally to any “noble son” in *Zuozhuan*, where the expression always means more specifically something like “prince.”

國 versus 邦

The notion of *guo* 國 (capital > state) is primarily political and focused on the (walled) capital of a city state (*guoren* 國人 is translated quite correctly as “inhabitants of the capital”), whereas the notion of *bang* 邦 (land; domain) is often clearly territorial. Examples where “domain” for *guo* does not fit the context are legion. One example is on p. 31: “This is what the domain of Wei wishes” 則衛國之願也. Here, of course, *yuan* 願 means “hope for” not “wish” as in modern Chinese, but more importantly, it is the state of Wei, not the domain, to which such hopes are naturally attributed.

The Abstract Concept of *she ji* 社稷

The *she* 社 are the altars of the land, and the *ji* 稷 are the altars of the grain. These were concrete objects normally close to a capital, but not in the city itself. They can be anybody’s altars, and they are not necessarily one’s own. Very occasionally, the phrase *sheji* 社稷 may well have been used to refer collectively to just these two things in a state. But by and large, *sheji* is highly idiomatic and refers not to those altars of the land on the one hand, and those other altars of the grain on the other. They are taken to refer to these two things all right, but as symbolic of what they ritually stand for and what they ritually realize, religiously sanctify and sacrificially celebrate through seasonal festivities: what we could be tempted to call the hearth of the state as identified by the all-important ancestral cult of the ruling lineage in the state.

Thus, when in *Zuozhuan* Wen 1 we have 好事鄰國，以衛社稷, the literal interpretation might be that the newly appointed ministers are in the habit of offering service to the neighbouring states “so as to protect the altars of the domain” (as in *Zuo Tradition*, p. 467), but it is of the essence to understand the all-important thing these altars quite abstractly come to stand for: the very ritual substance and identity of the *guo* 國, something much like the ritual hearth of the city state.³¹ Unlike the case

³¹ Note that Latin *natio* is a lineage group.

of *ren yi* 仁義 we have here not two abstract nouns combining to form an even more general abstract concept. What we have are two concrete nouns that combine to create a politico-religious key concept in ancient Chinese culture.

Li 立 (install as ruler)

Li 立 (to install [as a ruler]; get installed as a ruler) is an elaborate ritual act with its ritual pomp and ancestral sacrifices that tends to be ritually recorded for every reign in *Zuozhuan*. Now, many rulers in *Zuozhuan* actually establish *themselves* as rulers, but they still standardly have to be ritually “installed” as rulers then. On the other hand, the political and often violent process of “establishing someone as a ruler”—which, in fact, can be referred to by the same word *li* must be carefully distinguished from the formal ritual instalment.

是之謂 (it applies to this)

On p. 13 其是之謂乎 does not mean “mean this” or “refer to this,” as in the translation “Surely this is what is meant!” and similar renderings throughout *Zuo Tradition*. The meaning is “This applies to the present case.” As it does on p. 485 where the translation is “Surely this is speaking of Lord Mu of Qin” 其秦穆之謂矣, whereas the reference is either to the Xia and Shang dynasties as Du Yu suggests, or to some other ancient constellation of states. There are many more instances of this sort.

On p. 455 使謂 X means “send a message to X” and 使謂子上曰：「吾聞之……」 cannot be translated as: “sent someone to tell Dou Bo, ‘I have heard . . .’” because *wu* 吾 must be made to refer not to the messenger but to the sender of the messenger. The mistake recurs throughout the book.

The use of *ren* 人 after the names of states as in *Lu ren* 魯人 is unresolved in this translation. 宋人殺其大夫 is translated as “Song leaders put to death their high officers” which sounds like a huge massacre by the elite of their peers (p. 497), whereas on p. 499 the same phrase recurs and is translated “The men of Song killed their high officers.” Avoiding the wrong impression of a general massacre of high dignitaries as well as the specification of “the men of,” or “the leaders of,” one might try to translate the line as “In Song they killed high officials of theirs.” All this may sound like petty detail, but in a subtle text like the *Zuozhuan* the narrative often comes alive in such detail and often focuses on such detail.

All this remains problematic, but really no more problematic than the innocent use of “the Germans” in “The Germans made an alliance with Stalin.” The Russian possibility of translating *Lu ren* 魯人 as Луцзы (the Lu’s) renders this enviably well, but will not do for English. The translations like “leaders of Lu” or “a leader of Lu” scattered throughout the book are deeply misleading because the leadership in the state was a *yiyantang* 一言堂 and ministers were indeed “subjects” or “servants,”

not “leaders.” “Representatives” would come closer to spelling out (*shuopo* 說破) the intended meaning of *ren* 人 in this construction, but the point is that the Chinese original nowhere does spell anything out, and a translation must try to avoid introducing notions like “leader” which are alien to the ancient Chinese culture which only knows *dafu* 大夫 (dignitaries). However, *Lu ren* 魯人 is **not** traditionally glossed as *Lu dafu* 魯大夫. *Lu ren* 魯人 is unspecific and one should try to translate it as such.

One notes that on many occasions a phrase like *Lu ren* 魯人 in the *Annals* is paraphrased simply as *Lu* 魯, *tout court* in the *Zuozhuan*. That works painlessly well, as does the gloss “Germany made an alliance with Stalin” does for the sentence above.

The Five Ranks

The hierarchical diplomatic pecking order among the ranks was well-defined in the *Annals*: “When a record involves more than one state, the states are listed in a particular order. This order is used consistently throughout the *Chuenchiou*, with very few exceptions.”³² Even in *Zuozhuan*, where there is much more irregularity of usage, the ranks continue to play an important part. This is not the place to go into detail on this matter. In the Introduction I read “Although a *Zuozhuan* passage indicates that these terms for ranks were not an entirely meaningless jumble (Xi 4.4), they were not applied consistently in *Zuozhuan*, as Chen Pan has so persuasively demonstrated” (p. xxxvii). The reference given for this summary is Chen Pan’s truly magisterial book.³³ But it needs to be emphasized that Chen Pan has a very large number of quotations from the *Zuozhuan* as well as other sources which show the importance there of the Five Ranks. Indeed, Chen Pan concludes: “Thus that in Chunqiu times *gong, hou, bo, zi, nan* already constituted a system seems to be beyond doubt” 是春秋時代，公、侯、伯、子、男既為定制，殆無疑問矣 (*Chunqiu dashi biao lieguo juexing ji cunmie biao zhuanyi*, p. 8a). The divergence of usages found in *Zuozhuan* he explains very plausibly as follows: 而《左傳》雜采列國之史，列國則固不盡依舊典，自成實錄 (*ibid.*). He also elaborates: 由前論之，則班爵之制，雖自西周既有之矣，而秉此禮者獨有魯史。至于列國，多循舊俗，遽不能革。亦或僭分自尊，或則困而自貶。原因匪由一端，而其稱遂紛錯而不可究詰矣 (*ibid.*, p. 10a).

³² Newell Ann Van Auken, “A Formal Analysis of the *Chuenchiou* (Spring and Autumn Classic)” (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2006), p. 417. Contrast p. xxxvii in the introduction with *Zuo Tradition*.

³³ Chen Pan, *Chunqiu dashi biao lieguo juexing ji cunmie biao zhuanyi* 春秋大事表列國爵姓及存滅表譌異 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1969).

Li Feng usefully lists the ranks of the regional rulers as reconstructed by Takeuchi Yasuhiro 竹内康浩 based on the *Annals*:³⁴

Gong: Song 宋, Zhou 州, (Guo 虢), (Yu 虞)³⁵

Hou: Qi 齊, Wei 衛, Jin 晉, Chen 陳, Cai 蔡, Ji 紀, Deng 鄧, Xing 邢, Sui 隨, (Lu 魯)

Bo: Zheng 鄭, Cao 曹, Qi 杞, Xue 薛, Qin 秦, Shan 單, Mao 毛, Beiyang 北燕, Zhai 祭, Fan 凡, Gu 穀, Hua 滑, Cheng 郕, (Rui 芮)

Zi: Zhu 邾, Chu 楚, Jü 莒, Teng 滕, Xiaozhu 小邾, Wu 吳, Dun 頓, Hu 胡, Zeng 鄧, Shen 沈, Liu 劉, Tan 邾, Tan 譚, Wen 溫, Kui 夔, Gao 郛, Su 蘇, Lu 潞, Xu 徐, Rongman 戎蠻

Nan: Xu 許, Su 宿

I quote this here because these rankings were crucial in the *Annals* and thus remain important for the *Zuozhuan*. All deviations from them, I should say, deserve meticulous attention in the spirit of Chen Pan.

There are indeed cases like “the guardians of the altars of the land and grain are deemed to be the *gonghou*” 社稷之守者，為公侯 (*Guoyu* 國語, *Luyu xia* 魯語下, 18) where *gonghou* 公侯 must be taken to be generic and abstract “noble rulers (of any kind),” rather like *pengyou* 朋友 (friends of any kind): it would seem that not only rulers of the rank of Duke and Earl are deemed “guardians of altars of the land and grain.” All enfeoffed rulers are.

On p. 487 Shao bo 召伯 is translated as “Liege of Shao” when immediately afterwards that same person is referred to as Shao Zhao bo 召昭公 which is rendered as “Shao Duke Zhao.” As Takezoe (p. 704) noticed one *cannot* very well be a “Duke” and a “Liege” *at the same time*. Takezoe takes *bo* 伯 to be “eldest of the brothers” as in the name Guan Zhong 管仲：召伯以邑氏，則伯行也。

The Concept of *ai* 愛

It seems that in many places the word *ai* 愛 is taken too mechanically as “love” when in fact the word often means things like “be stingy with,” as in the example above, and also simply “prefer,” as, for example, in Yin 1 遂惡之。愛共叔段, which must surely mean “in the event she came to dislike him and preferred Gongshu Duan” and not “. . . and consequently hated him. She loved Gongshu Duan. . .” (p. 9)

³⁴ Li Feng, “Transmitting Antiquity: The Origin and Paradigmization of the ‘Five Ranks,’” in Dieter Kuhn and Helga Stahl, eds., *Perceptions of Antiquity in Chinese Civilization* (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 2008), p. 134; Takeuchi Yasuhiro, “*Shunjū kara mita gotō shakusei: Shū-sho ni okeru hōken no mondai*” 『春秋』から見た五等爵制一周初に於ける封建の問題, *Shigaku zasshi* 史學雜誌, 100, no. 2 (1991), pp. 43–44.

³⁵ States in parenthesis were added by Li Feng.

The Jussive Mode: For Example 殺

Sha 殺 is no doubt “to kill.” However, in many contexts the “killing” expressed by *sha* is more abstract and indirect and the word means “have (someone) killed.” Thus in *Zuo Tradition* p. 455 we have 王殺子上 which is literally translated as “So the king killed Dou Bo.” But, of course, the king himself very probably did nothing of the kind, and the story is not as dramatic as all that. The king simply had the man killed, which is bad enough. But this is not the same story as that of the king going out and taking the man on personally, sword in hand.

When, in Latin, we are told, literally, that “Caesar built a bridge across the Rhine” we do not need a translation to make it clear to us that what Caesar did, evidently, was having a bridge built across the Rhine, not at all building one himself. As a little boy I was told that from a philological point of view it was important to realize that the use of “built” here was “jussive” in the original Latin just as it is “jussive” in the modern translation.

The case is subtly different, however, with a verb like “kill.” For it is perfectly feasible for a king to draw a sword and cut down one of his subjects. Such things do happen. A good translation of *sha* 殺 must therefore make it clear exactly when the word is used in the more abstract “jussive” mode on the one hand, and when it is used in the literal bloody mode on the other. For the narrative, the distinction makes all the difference.

In this connection it is also interesting to ask whether *shi* 弑 (assassinate) does or does not have a lexicalized “jussive” meaning. For *sha* 殺 the answer seems clear to me, whereas for *shi* 弑 the answer is not so evident at all. In any case, a person you send out to kill your ruler will have killed your ruler, but he will not thereby have assassinated your ruler. It is all very complicated. And I dwell on this because I believe as sinologists we must take such abstract complications seriously as we aspire to a close reading of our texts, and as we try to do what in French is celebrated in schools and universities as *explication du texte*. Quite generally we need to ask which verbs have “jussive” readings and which do not. The fact that none of the ancient Chinese commentators and none of the modern dictionaries I know have done this work for us is no excuse. A failure to make this distinction ruins hundreds of *Zuozhuan* passages in which some powerful person who has had someone killed is described as if he had gone out and done the bloody deed himself.

The Conative Mode: Men 門

The common transitive verb *men* 門 (attack the gate; attack the gates) is generally conative and not well translated as “stormed” (see e.g., 門于方城，遇息公子朱 “stormed the gate of Fang and engaged Lord Zizhu of Xi,” where the meaning is rather “attacked the gate in the city wall of Fang but were met by Lord Zizhu of Xi.”

“Stormed” is likely to be understood in a perfective sense “attacked successfully.” Takezoe argues in detail that Lord Zizhu must have arrived on the scene to defend Jiang 江, something that is left unexplained on p. 481 but is properly brought up as a possibility by Couvreur, who here, as so often elsewhere, does *not* mechanically follow the Du Yu commentary. Demiéville’s often-cited remark that he everywhere follows Du Yu [also accepted in p. xxiv] is in fact unfair.)

I will not labour the reader with those plain cases of shoddiness that I did find too many of for comfort. The case of p. 462 footnote 7 may serve as a sufficient example. It declares the *Zuozhuan* text 葬僖公 to simply repeat the extraordinary *Annals* entry 葬我君僖公. But the utterly uninformative addition of *wo jun* 我君 raises questions of many kinds: what, one wonders, might have motivated this highly unusual—even demeaning!—way of speaking of a deceased ruler in the official record. Demonstratively, it would seem, the *Zuozhuan* summarizes the entry without that very odd addition of *wo jun*.

Punctuation

When it comes to questions of punctuation, one notes that the editors have not tried to align the punctuation of the original with their own translation. This is particularly disappointing when the punctuation in the Chinese text is clearly superior to their own. Thus we have “Mengming remembered them. He remembered virtue and was not remiss. Could he then be matched?” 孟明念之矣。念德不怠，其可敵乎？ (p. 473). It appears that the punctuation invites us to read this—much more smoothly to my taste—more like the following: “Mengming remembered the ancestors. And when someone is mindful of virtue, can he (ever) be equalled?”

Textual Criticism

On matters of textual criticism one finds a tendency to rewrite the text even in crucial punchlines. Still on p. 462 the translators rewrite 效尤，禍也 as 效尤，過也, which they then translate as “To emulate a wrongful act is wrong” where it would appear that Couvreur’s “imiter un mauvais exemple est funeste” (p. 443) not only gets the nuance of *xiao* 效 (imitate, not emulate) right, but also captures the force of *huo* 禍 quite satisfactorily. Then, a few lines further down, when the *Zuozhuan* has the very profound observation: 君子以為古。古者，越國而謀, they rewrite *gu* 古 as *gu* 沽 (shoddy) and translate “The noble man considered this careless. And what is meant by ‘careless’ in this case is to go beyond the boundaries of the domain in planning policy” (p. 463). But one may be excused for taking the meaning to be something like this: “The noble man would consider this to be the ancient practice. In ancient times strategic planning went beyond the boundaries of states.” The noble man commends the internationalist perspective in strategic planning by the ruler of Wei 衛 as being

much in the spirit of the commendable ancient practice in the famously splendid “old days.”

It looks to me as if the translators may have lost an exciting punchline of their story by rewriting their text, and by following their authoritative modern commentary. It may indeed well be that as Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 thought *gu* 沽 somewhere does mean *cu* 粗 or *lüe* 略, when read like *ku* 苦, but even Wang Li 王力 and his editors do not record any such meaning in his fat *Wang Li gu Hanyu zidian* 王力古漢語字典.³⁶ In any case, I do not see how any of this fits into the context of the story which is concerned with internationalizing a conflict.

Shu yue 書曰

Finally in the *Annals*, *shu yue* 書曰 does not perhaps work as it does elsewhere when the phrase standardly means “in the *Documents* it says” and is rightly printed as “*shu yue* 《書》曰.” In the *Annals*, *shu* 書 is probably a verb meaning “to record” in the context, as in *bu shu* 不書 “it does not record.” So *shu yue* must be taken to mean something like “When it is recorded that. . . .” The important delicate semantic point is this: *shu* does not generally refer to “the text” of a book. Thus *shu* could never be taken to refer to the text of the *Analecets*, for example. And neither can it be taken to be “the text” of the *Annals*. Thus, if one must have the *shu* as a noun, one must translate it as “the document says,” which does not sound right, because for that one would clearly expect *Chunqiu yue* 春秋曰 as we have it in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and in the *Shiji*. Fortunately, though, very little damage is done to the message of the *Zuozhuan* by mistranslating *shu yue* as “the text says.” Perhaps I should leave the matter of errors of translation before I descend into inconsequential pedantries.

Seasoned readers of classical Chinese will, inevitably, have their queries, their complaints, their criticisms, and perhaps even their corrections on every page of this book. There may be many points where students like myself might prefer interpretations of many passages in the *Zuozhuan* as proposed by Couvreur, Watson, and also Ul’yanov. But an endearing feature of this edition is just this: that on every printed page it leaves abundant space on the left hand side with the Chinese text: There the grateful reader finds abundant white space to record the new fruits of just that fresh and laid-back close reading which this new translation invites, which it so greatly facilitates, and which it indeed explicitly encourages.

Sinology owes the authors as well as the editors and not least of all the publishers of these splendid volumes a profound debt of gratitude. All of these are to be congratulated on a very major contribution towards the feasibility of a comparative study of historiography in East Asia and in the world.

³⁶ Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000.

Looking back over this review, I feel there is a disproportionate and even unfortunate focus on perceived shortcomings. But this has happened precisely because these volumes invite, inspire, and empower further critical attention to its subject from so many angles. These volumes nowhere pretend to be the last word on the *Zuozhuan*. They are resounding clarion call for a continuing in-depth comparative study of one of the world's greatest historiographical traditions.

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