Literary Forms of Argument in Early China

Edited by

Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

List of Contributors VII

Introduction: Literary Forms of Argument in Early China 1
Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer

1 **A Building Block of Chinese Argumentation: Initial *Fu* 夫 as a Phrase Status Marker** 37
Rudolf G. Wagner

2 **Beyond Parallelism: A Rethinking of Patterns of Coordination and Subordination in Chinese Expository Prose** 67
Andrew H. Plaks

3 **On the Range and Performance of *Laozi*-Style Tetrasyllables** 87
David Schaberg

4 **Defining Boundaries and Relations of Textual Units: Examples from the Literary Tool-Kit of Early Chinese Argumentation** 112
Joachim Gentz

5 **The Philosophy of the Analytic *Aperçu*** 158
Christoph Harbsmeier

6 **Speaking of Poetry: Pattern and Argument in the "Kongzi Shilun"** 175
Martin Kern

7 **Structure and Anti-Structure, Convention and Counter-Convention: Clues to the *Exemplary Figure's* (*Fayan*) Construction of Yang Xiong as Classical Master** 201
Michael Nylan

8 ***A Ragbag of Odds and Ends?* Argument Structure and Philosophical Coherence in *Zhuangzi* 26** 243
Wim De Reu

9 **Truth Claim with no Claim to Truth: Text and Performance of the "Qiushui" Chapter of the *Zhuangzi*** 297
Dirk Meyer

Index 341

CHAPTER 6

Speaking of Poetry: Pattern and Argument in the "Kongzi Shilun"

Martin Kern

The "Kongzi shilun" 孔子詩論 (Confucius' Discussion of the *Poetry*) is by far the most prominent text among the Shanghai Museum corpus of bamboo manuscripts dated to roughly 300 BC. Since its publication in December 2001,[1] it has attracted hundreds of articles and several book-length studies. In the months immediately following the initial publication, a vigorous online debate arose[2] during which at least six different sequential arrangements of the altogether twenty-nine bamboo slips were proposed. Moreover, Li Xueqin 李學勤 has argued that the text by no means reflects "Confucius' Discussion of the *Poetry*" but rather a 'discussion' that invokes Confucius; his proposed shorter title "Shilun" 詩論 (Discussion of the *Poetry*) is by now widely accepted[3] and for this reason alone—and against better judgment (see below)—will be used in the present study. Aside from detailed palaeographic analysis and vigorous discussions of interpretation and textual arrangement,[4] much research has been devoted to two questions: the authorship of the anonymous manuscript text[5] and, often related to the question of authorship, the text's position vis-à-vis the received *Mao Shi* 毛詩 where it has been compared to both the "Great

1 Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* (*yi*) 上海博物管藏戰國楚竹書（一) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 13–41, 121–168.

2 On http://www.jianbao.org, the principal online forum for academic discussions of early Chinese manuscripts.

3 For a convenient survey of these discussions, see Xing Wen, "Guest Editor's Introduction," *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 39.4 (2008): 3–17.

4 The three most important books, all reflecting the extensive discussion in the field, have been Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* "Shilun" *jieyi* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書《詩論》解義 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004); Liu Xinfang 劉信芳, *Kongzi shilun shuxue* 孔子詩論述學 (Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2002); and Chen Tongsheng 陳桐生, *Kongzi shilun yanjiu* 《孔子詩論》研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004). Chen, 315–341, provides a survey of the large number of publications on the manuscript that appeared just between December 2001 and March 2004. Recently, long after the present essay was completed, a massive new study has appeared: Zhao Fulin 晁福林, *Shangbo jian 'Shilun' yanjiu* 上博簡《詩論》研究 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2013).

5 At stake, of course, is not the identity of the writer, or copyist, of the recovered manuscript but of the text that is contained in this particular manuscript and that, so it is presumed, existed also in other manuscripts.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004299702_008

Preface" ("Daxu" 大序) and the "minor prefaces" (*xiaoxu* 小序) that accompany the individual poems in the transmitted anthology.[6]

To my mind, some of this scholarship operates on unwarranted assumptions derived from tradition. This is evident in fantasies that attribute the text to some hazy figure such as Confucius' disciple Zixia 子夏 (or some other, even more obscure persona);[7] and it further appears in the way the text has been titled: with or without inserting Confucius into the title, the use of the term *lun* 論 (discussion) is not only an anachronistic designation of a literary genre that cannot be traced back into pre-imperial times. It also suggests that the "Shilun" is some sort of reasoned exposition on the *Classic of Poetry*, originally composed in writing (another unproven and most likely anachronistic assumption) by a single authorial figure (yet another such assumption) and addressed to some unspecified general audience. Through all this, the text is elevated to participate in the type of philosophical discourse that the tradition, beginning in the early empire, has constructed and systematized into its grand narrative of ancient Chinese thought, complete with a range of rivalling schools represented by an impressive line-up of 'masters' (*zi* 子) and their faithful disciples. It is undoubtedly—if perhaps unconsciously—in order to place the text at these lofty heights of discourse that the "Shilun" has been assigned a known author valorized by tradition.

I consider this approach to the text misguided and misleading. It imbues the text with qualities it does not have while suppressing some properties that a closer reading may be able to reveal. I am not arguing for the "Shilun" to be read exclusively on its own terms (or in those of *New Criticism*); but I do oppose the false historicization that forces newly discovered texts into the traditional (and thoroughly retrospective) framework of tradition. This anachronistic histori-

6 See, e.g., Ma Yinqin 馬銀琴, "Shangbo jian 'Shilun' yu 'Shixu' shishuo yitong bijiao: jianlun 'Shixu' yu 'Shilun' de yuanyuan guanxi" 上博簡《詩論》與《詩序》詩說異同比較—兼論《詩序》與《詩論》的淵源關係, *Jianbo yanjiu* 簡帛研究 2002–2003: 98–105.

7 E.g., in arguing for Zixia's authorship of the "Shilun," Li Xueqin 李學勤 and others base themselves on (a) Confucius' praise for Zixia's understanding of the *Poetry* in *Lunyu* "Bayi" 八佾 (3.8) and (b) three brief statements on Zixia's teaching of the *Poetry* in texts that range from the *Hanshu* 漢書 "Monograph on Arts and Letters" ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志, first century AD) to Lu Deming's 陸德明 (556–627) *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 preface—that is, sources postdating Confucius (or Zixia) by five hundred to one thousand years. As Chen Tongsheng 陳桐生 has noted, the later the source, the more emphatically and extensively it speaks of Zixia as an expert on the *Poetry*. Yet on the basis of just these sources, Xing Wen, "Guest Editor's Introduction," 6, has stated: "According to the transmitted textual evidence available to us, Zixia is very likely the author of the bamboo 'Shilun'." For the more clear-headed view that we cannot identify the anonymous author, see Chen Tongsheng 陳桐生, "*Kongzi shilun*" *yanjiu*《孔子詩論》研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 85–88.

cization is ideological not so much because it views the "Shilun" as 'Confucian' but because it defines the nature and purpose of the text exclusively within the retrospectively applied parameters of early Chinese textuality. By all accounts, these parameters did not exist before the grand project of ordering the textual heritage according to the needs of the early imperial state, most notably in successive waves of canonization and censorship from the Qin (221–207 BC) through the Western Han (202 BC–AD 9), culminating in the collection and catalogue of the imperial library at the end of the first century BC[8] and solidified by the subsequent Eastern Han (9–220 AD) commentarial canonization of a newly emerging 'book culture.' I believe that the shift from a ritual- to a text-centred culture,[9] or what one might call a shift from mythographic to historiographic authority, has not only blinded us to the purposes and properties of received pre-Qin texts but now blinds us further to those of newly discovered manuscripts. The search for the author of the "Shilun" is not merely a futile exercise; far more consequential, it is the subjugation of the text under a specific and anachronistic ideology of textual production. Before the empire, vast amounts of text were authorless—not because they were missing something, but because the very absence of authorship was a function of traditional authority.[10] In the mythographic mindset, that which "is said" was transmitted, believed, and true precisely because it was not individually authored, and precisely because it was not tied to a historical moment;[11] by contrast, the historiographic mindset of the early empire required the figure of the author in order to arrange the textual heritage into meaningful teleological and genealogical contexts of early Chinese thought. Thus, the absence of the author function[12] in the "Shilun," far from being a defect to be emended by modern research, is a

8 See Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2000), 183–196.

9 See Michael Nylan, "Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 BCE–220 CE)," in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 3–49; Martin Kern, "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of *wen* in Early China," *T'oung Pao* 87 (2001): 43–91.

10 Note that not a single one of all recently found early Chinese manuscripts contains an identification of its author. For a discussion of the entire problem, see Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, *Gushu tongli* 古書通例 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 15–49.

11 As argued by Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitute Imagination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 23, 64.

12 To use Michel Foucault's term; see Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141–160. (Orig., "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" 1969).

rhetorical feature of the text that underlies much of its discursive force. To consider the "Shilun" a general 'discussion' and to identify Zixia or any other traditional icon as its author are two ideological constructions that necessitate one another; together, they pre-empt the analysis of the "Shilun" as a truly original text that does not fit the traditional narrative of elevated 'masters' literature.

While no consensus has been reached on either the authorship of the manuscript text or its relation to Han dynasty (202 BC–AD 220) readings of the *Shijing*,[13] the text comes to us without historical context—not only because it was looted from its original site and then sold on the Hong Kong antique market, a process that erased all traces of specific provenance; but also because the *manuscript* was almost certainly taken from a tomb, which, in turn, was most likely not the *text's* original environment.[14] As a result, the "Shilun" has a certain disembodied quality to it: we have the (fragmentary) text, but we do not know why we have it—whether it was put into a tomb, and if so, what its purpose proper was prior to, and outside of, that particular material context.

In this situation, a gap has opened between specific palaeographic study and detailed interpretation on the one hand, and general historical contextualization on the other. This gap concerns the literary form as well as the pragmatic function of the "Shilun"—two core aspects of the text critical to any interpretation or contextualization. In my view, it is the particular literary form of the "Shilun" that marks it as a specific type of text, which in turn is defined by its particular function. Moreover, in the absence of any external information on the actual uses of the "Shilun"—its *Sitz im Leben*—there is little choice but to turn directly to a rhetorical analysis of its literary pattern and argumentation and try to see what the text does and how it does what it does. What does the text itself, through its particular aesthetic features, reveal about its own historical situation—its uses, its audience, its functions, and its purposes? If it was indeed part of an exegetical or teaching tradition of the *Poetry*, what

13 These issues are at the heart of Chen Tongsheng, *"Kongzi shilun" yanjiu*; on the debate over authorship alone, see 36–96. After reviewing the different proposals of a particular author for the text, Chen wisely concludes that we cannot identify the author of the manuscript beyond the general observation that he was a Warring States man, learned in the *Poetry* and influenced by the discussions on self-cultivation that were current at the time and that have appeared, for example, in the "Xingqing lun" 性情論 and "Xing zi ming chu" 性自命出 manuscripts found among the Guodian 郭店 and Shanghai Museum collections (and are often associated with the elusive figure of Zisizi 子思子).

14 Although this particular physical manuscript may have been produced just for the tomb, there is no reason to assume that the text it contains was composed for that purpose.

can we learn from the "Shilun" about the ways, or at least one way, in which such exegesis or teaching worked?

The received textual tradition has not prepared us for a text like the "Shilun": nothing like it has been transmitted, although one might suspect that it represents the raw material of a type of text that in the received literature—had it survived—would be more polished, generalized, and philosophized. From its diction, it appears that the text served more immediate concerns, in more immediate contexts, than, say, the "Great Preface" that, in a scholastic exercise geared toward an anonymous readership, pulled together statements on poetry and music from various earlier sources and as such established itself within an already existing tradition.[15] Perhaps this difference is brought out best by Socrates' statement on writing in the *Phaedrus*:

> You know, Phaedrus, writing shares a strange feature with painting. The offsprings of painting stand there as if they are alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent. The same is true of written words. You'd think they were speaking as if they had some understanding, but if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, it continues to signify just that very same thing forever. When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its father's support; alone, it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support.[16]

15 As is well-known, the initial sections of the "Great Preface" are adapted from an earlier discourse on music found in the "Yueji" 樂記 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 as well as in the "Yueshu" 樂書 chapter of the *Shiji* 史記. In turn, these discussions are influenced by the earlier discourse on music in the *Xunzi* 荀子 chapter "Yuelun" 樂論, the music chapters in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, and other sources. Likewise, the core formula *shi zhe zhi zhi suo zhi ye* 詩者志之所之也 ("poetry is where the intent goes") has antecedents in a range of early sources, including the "Yaodian" 堯典 chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, and the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳. See Steven Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Kurihara Keisuke 栗原圭介, *Chūgoku kodai gakuron no kenkyū* 中國古代樂論の研究 (Tokyo: Daitō bunka daigaku tōyō kenkyūjō, 1978).

16 *Phaedrus* 275d–e; translation from Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, *Plato, Phaedrus* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995), 80–81. Matthias Richter, in his monograph *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 190, has likewise invoked this passage from the *Phaedrus* to argue—in my view correctly—that early manuscripts in general were much more bound to specific situational contexts than our reading habits of the transmitted literature have prepared us to recognize.

Socrates' scepticism about the written artifact that goes into a world of infinite and unknown audiences describes our problems with the "Shilun" quite well: with us, it surely reaches "those who have no business with it," nor can it "defend itself" or "come to its own support." The texts of the received tradition have overcome these problems because they are either—as in the case of the "Great Preface" or the 'masters' texts—generalized (and hence appearing philosophical), or they are connected to a larger framework of historical anecdotes, or they are "defended" and "supported" by thick layers of commentary. Nothing of this is true for the "Shilun." It is a text that does need its "father's support" in order to speak to us "who have no business with it." It makes little effort to explain itself, nor is it supported by additional layers of explication that would have accrued around a text preserved by tradition. The fact that within months of its original publication by the Shanghai Museum, a series of different arrangements of the bamboo slips were proposed bespeaks its somewhat disjointed overall structure. This is not merely due to the fact that the manuscript is fragmentary to the extent that we do not even know how much of it is missing; the problems of arranging and interpreting the text are also, and perhaps even more, due to its lack of linear organization. While scholars like Li Xueqin and Huang Huaixin have succeeded to group clusters of bamboo slips according to the parallel structures within the text, the connections between these clusters remain tentative.

At the same time, the hitherto unknown format of the "Shilun" makes it a valuable source for what it might tell us about the actual teaching of the *Poetry* in the fourth century BC. It appears not as a general treatise about the *Poetry* but as a specific school text—a pedagogical device—to teach how to interpret and how to apply the ancient poems. As such, it should not be called "Shilun" or, equally problematically, "Shixu" 詩序 (Preface to the *Poetry*),[17] because it is not at all an overall "discussion" of, or overall introduction to, the *Poetry*. What is more, as genre designations, both *lun* or *xu* are anachronistic and misleading for the Warring States period (475–221 BC). The shift toward an autonomous discourse on literature that happened in Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries BC, freeing the discussion of literary texts from immediate ethical, social,

17 As proposed by Jiang Guanghui 姜廣輝, "Guanyu gu "Shixu" de bianlian, shidu yu dingwei zhu wenti yanjiu" 關於古《詩序》的編連、釋讀與定位諸問題研究, *Zhongguo zhexue* 中國哲學 24 (2002): 165–168; translated as "Problems Concerning the Rearrangement, Interpretation, and Orientation of the Ancient *Preface to the* Poetry (Shixu)," *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 39.4 (2008): 43–45.

and religious concerns and leading to the discovery of both genres and authors,[18] did not occur in pre-imperial China but only began to develop in Han times.

Rhetorical Patterns in the "Shilun"

The "Shilun" is a brief, fragmentary text of little over a thousand characters that does not proceed in a single expository style.[19] It is a patchwork of various rhetorical patterns, including quotations attributed to Confucius, on disconnected and mostly broken bamboo slips. There is no consensus on the sequence of the individual sections and, hence, on the actual overall argument—if there is any—of the text. For the purposes of the present paper, I will use the sequence proposed by Huang Huaixin, which improves further the one suggested by Li Xueqin.[20] In this reading, the entire text of twenty-nine slips is divided into thirteen sections. On the level of individual graphs and the words they are presumably writing, scholars disagree in a considerable number of cases, often with equally plausible reasoning—first on the transcription of the graph and then on the interpretation of the word it is writing. In my presentation of the text that follows, I have chosen the readings that I find most convincing; readers interested in the often complex and technical discussions behind these choices will find them easily available elsewhere.[21] For the same reason, I also refrain from printing any direct transcriptions of the original characters; instead, I use the modern characters that reflect those interpretations of the characters in the manuscript that I find most convincing. In a number of cases,

18 See Andrew Ford, *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

19 Selected passages from the following analysis are also included in Martin Kern, "Lost in Tradition: The *Classic of Poetry* We Did not Know," in *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry* 5, ed. Grace S. Fong (Montreal: Centre for East Asian Research, McGill University, 2010), 29–56. The present essay contains a number of corrections of my earlier analysis.

20 Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* "Shilun" *jieyi* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書《詩論》解義 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004), 1–22. Huang's well-argued and compelling arrangement of the slips has been almost exactly reproduced by Thies Staack, "Reconstructing the *Kongzi Shilun*: From the Arrangement of the Bamboo Slips to a Tentative Translation," *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 64 (2010): 857–906. Staack only places a single slip (#17) in a slightly (and inconsequentially) different position.

21 Excellent sources for these debates are the books by Chen Tongsheng, Huang Huaixin, and especially Liu Xinfang mentioned above.

these choices are still contested, but I will not enter these discussions because they do not affect my rhetorical analysis.

The first section in Huang Huaixin's reconstruction of the text comprises slips 10, 14, 12, 13, 15, 11, and 16 from the original arrangement by Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 and his fellow Shanghai Museum editors.[22] It displays some of the core rhetorical characteristics of the entire text. I distinguish three paragraphs in this section:

> (§ 1) The transformation of "Guanju," the timeliness of "Jiumu," the wisdom of "Hanguang," the marriage in "Quechao," the protection in "Gantang," the longing in "Lüyi," the emotion in "Yanyan"—what of these?
>
> (§ 2) It is said: "As they are set in motion/move the audience, [these poems] all surpass what they put forth initially."[23] "Guanju" uses [the expression of] sexual allure to illustrate ritual propriety […] the pairing (?), its fourth stanza is illustration. It uses the pleasures [one derives] from the zithers as a comparison to lustful desire. It uses the delight [one derives] from the bells and drums as {a comparison to}[24] the liking of […] As it guides back toward ritual propriety, is this not indeed transformation? In "Jiumu," good fortune is with the gentleman. Is this not {indeed timeliness? "Hanguang" teaches not to pursue what cannot} be achieved, not to tackle what cannot be accomplished. Is this not indeed knowing the constant way? In "Quechao," [the young woman] departs with a hundred carriages. Is this not indeed still leaving [her family behind]? That in "Gantang," {one longs} for the man and cherishes his tree is because [the Duke of Shao's] protection [of the people] was magnanimous. The cherishing of the "Gantang" tree is {because} of the Duke of Shao […] emotion, is love.
>
> (§ 3) The transformation of "Guanju" is about [the man's] longing being excessive. The timeliness of "Jiumu" is about [the man's] good fortune. The wisdom of "Hanguang" is about knowing what cannot be obtained. The marriage of "Quechao" is about [the woman's] departure being […] {The protection of "Gantang" is about the longing for} the Duke of Shao. The sorrow of "Lüyi" is about

22 Hereafter, all slip numbers are according to the original arrangement by the Shanghai Museum editors.

23 As an alternative, the word *dong* 動 here might be understood as "as they move [the listener]." Furthermore, some scholars have suggested to read the character in question as *zhong* 終 ('in the end' or 'as they end'), which is a possible but phonologically inferior choice.

24 Throughout this essay, I am using { } parentheses for tentative suggestions of missing words in the text. In many cases, I am following the perspicacious proposals offered by Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*.

longing for the ancients. The emotion of "Yanyan" is about [the man's sentimental] uniqueness.

(§ 1) 《關雎》之改，《樛木》之時，《漢廣》之智，《鵲巢》之歸，《甘棠》之報，《綠衣》之思，《燕燕》之情，曷？

(§ 2) 曰：動而皆賢于其初者也。《關雎》以色喻于禮 【。。。】兩矣。其四章則喻矣。以琴瑟之悅擬好色之願，以鐘鼓之樂{擬}【。。。】好。反納于禮，不亦能改乎？《樛木》福斯在君子，不{亦有時乎？《漢廣》不求不}可得，不攻不可能，不亦知恆乎？《鵲巢》出以百兩，不亦有離乎？《甘{棠思}及其人，敬愛其樹，其保厚矣。《甘棠》之愛以召公{之固也。}【。。。】情，愛也。

(§ 3)《關雎》之改，則其思益矣。《樛木》之時，則以其祿也。《漢廣》之智，則知不可得也。《鵲巢》之歸，則離者【。。。】{《甘棠》之保，思}召公也。《綠衣》之憂，思古人也。《燕燕》之情，以其獨也。[25]

While the lacunae in paragraphs 2 and 3 leave us with some uncertainty, the overall formulaic and repetitive nature of the passage—which displays only very minor syntactic variation—suggests a tightly coherent passage and supports Li Xueqin and Huang Huaixin's re-arrangement of the order of the slips. Most likely, the lacuna in paragraph 2 that follows the discussion of "Gantang" and ends before "emotion, is love" (情，愛也) contained discussions of both "Lüyi" and "Yanyan," with the remark on "emotion" being the concluding comment on the latter. What can be glanced from this short section?

First, and this is true for the entire "Shilun," nothing in the text advances the kind of historical and political interpretation we know from the *Mao Poetry*. There is no historical reference except for one poem that mentions the Duke of Shao. This is in complete contradiction to the Mao reading which historicizes the poems based on information, or assumptions, from outside the poems themselves. The reference to the Duke of Shao, by contrast, is already within the poem and therefore not an external historicization brought to it from another source. Nothing suggests that the author of the "Shilun" was integrating the poems into a historical context, nor did he refer to any other text to explain them.

This should not be surprising. The historicizing impulses of early imperial readers and commentators are part and parcel of the broader shift in textual

25 Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 23–50.

culture that began with the Han[26] where the poetry from the past was reframed in several ways. Within the overall organization of pre-imperial history into a meaningful, ethical and political narrative, poetry served as a privileged voice not about but *from within* the historical account, attributed to the historical actors themselves.[27] At the same time, poetry became tied to specific meaningful moments in the progress of a teleological history that led into, and explained the historical evolution of, the early empire; in this function, specific poems attained new meanings as markers of specific historical events. In the fusion of poetry and history,[28] the ancient poetry was thus embedded into a new framework of meaning that transcended any specific, locally confined interpretation and instruction toward a rapidly expanding, anonymous audience of court-affiliated scholars and statesmen; it became part of the literary canon that furnished knowledge about the past, available to any potential student. The passage quoted above offers nothing to lend itself to this overall historical approach.

A second conspicuous feature of the passage is its initial paragraph of single-word characterizations of seven poems that are then followed by the interrogative particle *he* 曷 ('what of these?'). The question then prompts an elaboration—in paragraphs 2 and 3—on these single-word characterizations in two separate and cumulative ways. But where do these apodictic, unexplained, single-word characterizations come from? They appear to be taken for granted and hence are one of two things: either they are based on an existing, agreed-upon understanding of the poems, or they rhetorically claim (and impose) such an understanding in order to respond to a prevailing indeterminacy in the interpretation of the *Poetry*. As such, they do not serve the purpose of explaining the poems, and far less are they suited for a general treatise on the *Poetry*.

---

26 See Nylan, "Toward an Archaeology of Writing"; and Kern, "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon."

27 On this practice in Han historiography, see Martin Kern, "The Poetry of Han Historiography," *Early Medieval China* 10–11.1 (2004): 23–65. This phenomenon can already be found in the *Zuo zhuan*, though in a different way: here, new poems are impromptu compositions and performances mostly by anonymous folk (while members of the recognized elite give performances of already existing poems from the *Poetry*); see David Schaberg, "Song and the Historical Imagination in Early China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59 (1999): 305–361.

28 As noted by Jeffrey Riegel, "Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings of *Shijing* Commentary," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.1 (1997): 143–177, 171, the Han exegetical lineages known from the received tradition treat the *Poetry* as "history told in verse."

The interrogative particle *he*, moreover, rhetorically introduces a teaching situation; as such, the text resembles the catechistic structure of, for example, the *Gongyang* 公羊 interpretation of the *Chunqiu* 春秋. This situation is further emphasized by the single word that introduces the following paragraph: 'it is said' (*yue* 曰) or, perhaps, some unspecified master "has said" or "would say." How are we to understand *yue*? To my mind, it cannot refer to a specific subject in the sense of "I say" but points in exactly the opposite direction. Widely used in early Chinese expository prose, *yue* is a marker of authoritative speech that derives its authority precisely from the fact that it is *not* tied to any individual or authorial voice.[29] Instead, *yue* marks the following utterance as a commonly accepted 'saying' sanctioned and perpetuated by tradition.[30] In other words, the rhetorical use of *yue* is a conventional stylistic pattern that further emphasizes the absence of a specific authorial voice—and hence confirms the observations above on the absence of authorship in the "Shilun": this absence is not a deficiency but a positive quality, marking the text as an expression of traditional authority.

The catechistic, authoritative nature of the text is further apparent from its rigorously formulaic nature. The "Shilun" never argues in any explicit way; instead, it issues pronouncements. Such a style is, of course, another form of argument: an implicit claim for tradition and authority that does not require explicit reasoning or explanation to be compelling. Complementary to Foucault's notion of the "author function,"[31] a text like the "Shilun" involves the notion of the authorless voice—a function just as powerful as that of the author, and typical of authoritative texts in traditional societies.[32]

In my understanding, 'it is said'—answering to the question "what of these?"—only refers to a single sentence, namely "As they are set in motion/move the audience, [these poems] all surpass what they put forth initially" (*dong er jie xian yu qi chu zhe ye* 動而皆賢于其初者也). This is the central hermeneutical statement of the text. Marked as a proverbial piece of

29 On the rhetorical use of such markers of direct speech, see Martin Kern, "Style and Poetic Diction in the *Xunzi*," in *Dao Companion to Xunzi*, ed. Eric L. Hutton (New York: Springer, forthcoming).

30 The often non-individualized, non-authorial voice in early Chinese expository prose involves even the explicit use of the first-person pronoun which frequently does not mean "I" but, on the contrary, the impersonal "one"; see See Christoph Harbsmeier, "Xunzi and the Problem of Impersonal First Person Pronouns," *Early China* 22 (1997): 181–220.

31 Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 141–160.

32 See Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths*, 59–70, for the example of ancient Greece.

unquestioned common wisdom, it sets the stage for the following two-fold elaboration on each poem, asserting that poetry is not merely what it seems to be, and opening a space to expand the shorthand one-word characterizations. "What they put forth initially" is the surface meaning of the poems, yet it does not exhaust the textual meaning; the texts mean always more than what they say. To advance to this deeper meaning requires a hermeneutical procedure.

With the following pattern of elaboration, the text reverts to the didactic voice of a teacher who makes emphatic use of rhetorical questions in the pattern of "不亦…乎" that is familiar from the first entry in the *Lunyu* 論語.[33] "Is this not indeed transformation?" "Is this not indeed knowing the constant way?" and so on are not explanations; they merely affirm the single-word characterizations presented at the outset. In doing so, they gesture once again at precedent and experience. "Is this not," like the earlier "it is said," appeals to the recognition of what is already established.

Already with its initial paragraphs (if this is what they are), the "Shilun" aims at a high level of generalization both in its pronouncements on particular poems and in its use of hermeneutic tools. In addition to the statement that the poems mean more than their initial appearance might suggest, the first section introduces two technical terms of poetic rhetoric: *yu* 喻 'illustration' and *ni* 擬 'comparison.' *Yu*, which also appears elsewhere in the "Shilun," is of particular importance and comes close to 'analogy.' As such, it appears in the Mawangdui "Wuxing" 五行 manuscript where it is explained through the example of "Guanju."[34] In the "Shilun," *yu* and *ni* are not explained but their understanding is presumed; they are applied to a particular poem or stanza much in the way the later imperial discussion would identify certain passages in the poems as *xing* 興 'stimulus.' In its high level of generality, the "Shilun" abstains from specific discussions of words, phrases, or lines; any reader not already familiar with a poem had virtually nothing from which to imagine its actual content or diction. In other words, the "Shilun" does not supply what is needed to understand the poems it mentions; the missing parts would have to come from elsewhere. But for which purpose?

The likeliest context of the "Shilun" was some sort of textual community where the text played a specific, and limited, role in the instruction on how to interpret and how to apply the *Poetry*. It is also in such a context where the

33 子曰：學而時習之，不亦說乎？有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎？

34 See Ikeda Tomohisa 池田知久, *Maōtai Kanbo hakusho gogyōhen kenkyū* 馬王堆漢墓帛書五行篇研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1993), 533–545; Riegel, "Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings of *Shijing* Commentary," 176–177.

introduction of hermeneutical tools like *yu* and *ni* had their place. Like *xing*, both are categories of interpretation, not of composition, that helped to identify particular features of the *Poetry* as something different from, and more than, what their surface might suggest. What the "Shilun" offers here is not a discussion of the *Poetry* but an approach to it. It guides, but it does not debate.

The general core meaning of each poem, the "Shilun" suggests, could be applied to various specific situations without being tied to any one in particular. To this end, the disinterest of the "Shilun" in matters of authorship or compositional circumstances is programmatic. An interpretation of the poems that emphasizes their possible application to new situations is fundamentally reception-centred and amounts to an erasure of original authorship; in the way they are presented in the "Shilun," no original author had ever owned the poems, and hence no poem could be discredited by finding fault with its author. Likewise, following Foucault's insight that true authorship implies accountability and potential punishment for the text, no author could be blamed for the poem. This positions the "Shilun" in diametrical opposition to the transmitted Han readings of the *Poetry*, and first and foremost to the "minor prefaces" of the Mao tradition. Furthermore, the "Shilun" shows no interest in any aesthetic considerations of poetic style; strikingly, no early Chinese discussion of the *Poetry* is concerned with beauty. When according to the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, Prince Ji Zha 季札 of Wu 吳 visits Lu 魯 in 544 BC and is treated to an extensive song and dance performance of the *Poetry*, his repeated exclamations of appreciation refer not to poetic beauty but to the excellent performance that lends itself to a perceptive moral and political appraisal.[35] For both Ji Zha and the "Shilun," poetic beauty—or rather, appropriateness—is a given that needs no further discussion.

"As they are set in motion/move the audience, [these poems] all surpass what they put forth initially," teaches a fundamental principle in the *understanding* of the poems but not the second step of *applying* them. In the three-step process of mastering the *Poetry*—grasping a poem's literal surface, understanding its implied core meaning, and on this basis applying it to various situations—the "Shilun" is concerned with the second step. It is not the most basic introduction to the *Poetry* because it already presupposes a definite, agreed-upon understanding of the literal surface that requires no further discussion. Thus, the elaborations in paragraphs 2 and 3 do not amount to extensive and detailed commentary; as their terse form reveals, they speak to

35 Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1993), Xiang 29, 1161–1165; David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 86–95.

readers who already know the poems. In other words, it is this formal quality of the "Shilun" that reveals much about its own situational use. The way it is composed, the "Shilun" cannot function as a general discussion of the *Poetry*. It is only within a didactic framework that already relies on the audience's familiarity with the poems that the "Shilun," by way of a catechistic procedure, provides prompts and brief elaborations while leaving a fuller, more detailed interpretation to be accomplished elsewhere—most likely, in actual scenes of instruction. The "Shilun" is then best understood as either one of two things, or perhaps even both: as the tool that triggers a more comprehensive discussion of the poems, perhaps even for mnemonic purposes, or as the somewhat abstracted summary of such discussion.

Either way, the "Shilun" appears as a school text of a particular intellectual lineage of *Poetry* interpretation where the initial format of question and answer opens an ideal scene of dialogical instruction. Instead of trying to determine, and hence limit, the meaning of specific expressions, it assigns a repertoire of broad semantic categories to the poems. Through this instruction in the *Poetry*, the poems could easily be mentally arranged and remembered under the columns of their respective characterizations and then be called upon in social intercourse as we know, for example, from the diplomatic encounters in the *Zuo zhuan*.[36] In this, the "Shilun" appears to answer Confucius' challenge in *Lunyu* 13.5 ("Zilu" 子路), namely, that knowing the poems by heart is useless without being able to apply them under specific circumstances.[37]

36 Among many other studies on the topic, a comprehensive account of *Poetry* citations in the *Zuo zhuan* is given in Zeng Qinliang 曾勤良, *Zuo zhuan yinshi fushi zhi shijiao yanjiu* 左傳引詩賦詩之詩教研究 (Tapei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1993); in addition, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: SUNY, 1999), 147–176, and David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past*, 72–78, 234–242, passim. For examples of the flexible interpretation of the *Poetry* see the excellent study by O Man-jong 吳萬鍾, *Cong shi dao jing: Lun Maoshi jieshi de yuanyuan ji qi tese* 從詩到經：論毛詩詩解釋的遠遠及其特色 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 16–43.

37 With this, I do not mean to suggest that the *Lunyu*, in part or as a whole, predates the *Zuo zhuan*. I do not subscribe to the idea that the *Analects* can be stratified into different chronological layers, with some of them dating to the time of Confucius' own disciples. Instead, I accept the competing view that the text was compiled in the Western Han out of a multiplicity of statements attributed to, and anecdotes involving, Confucius; see John Makeham, "The Formation of *Lunyu* as a Book," *Monumenta Serica* 44 (1996): 1–24; Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚, "Lunyu jieji cuoshuo" 論語結集脞說, *Kongzi yanjiu* 孔子研究 1 (1986): 40–52; and Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han," in *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, ed. Bryan Van Norden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134–162. This view of the *Analects* is strongly substantiated by Michael Hunter, "Sayings of Confucius, Deselected" (Ph.D. diss. Princeton University, 2012).

The "Shilun" thus offers guidance for the poem's use in the present and future, not instruction in the poetic past.

As noted above, the "Shilun" is a text that draws on existing authority. In addition to the anonymous hermeneutic tradition expressed in the "it is said" statement, the one named figure of authority is Confucius. His statements are drawn upon through the introductory formula 'Confucius said' (*Kongzi yue* 孔子曰)[38] no less than six times throughout the "Shilun" fragments. In these quotations, Confucius speaks in an emphatically personal voice.

A passage that Li Xueqin and Huang Huaixin consider to follow directly upon the initial section quoted above begins with a long quotation by Confucius. In it, Confucius uses a repetitive, fixed rhetorical pattern to issue brief statements on a series of four poems (although the original text may have extended to additional pieces). For each poem, Confucius begins his discussion with the pattern ("From [this poem], I obtain [such and such a meaning]") that is then followed by some further elaboration. In other words, Confucius is given a highly stylized voice here: on the one hand intensely personal; on the other hand extremely formulaic. Together, these characteristics exude complementary aspects of authority and as such a form of argument: the personal Confucius is the true sage, speaking from the heart; the formulaic one, given to rhythmic repetition, expresses himself in a ritualized, institutional idiom.

The pattern "From [this poem,] I obtain ...," albeit without the subsequent elaboration, has a direct parallel in how a different series of poems from the *Poetry* are discussed in the "Jiyi" 記義 chapter of the *Kongcongzi* 孔叢子, a text traditionally dated into the late third century BC but most likely composed only in Eastern Han times, even if including earlier material.[39] The fact that the rhetorical pattern resurfaces almost verbatim in the *Kongcongzi* indicates that it had a place in the Confucius lore of assembled sayings that can be found across a wider range of texts. In fact, as Chen Tongsheng has shown,[40] Confucius is quoted yet again with the same rhetorical pattern elsewhere: first, discussing the *Poetry* in *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語 and *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 and second, discussing the *Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) in *Shangshu dazhuan* 尚書大傳 and also *Kongcongzi*. Of the four poems discussed in this section of the "Shilun,"

38 I am wondering whether "Kongzi yue" indeed means 'Confucius said.' Another, perhaps more intriguing possibility is 'Confucius would have said,' which avoids the simple attribution while making the figure of Confucius, and his sayings, far more interesting as well as trustworthy.

39 For an extensive discussion of the *Kongcongzi* passage, see Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 282–315.

40 Chen Tongsheng, *"Kongzi shilun" yanjiu*, 62–63.

only "Mugua" 木瓜 is also commented upon in the *Kongcongzi*. Yet while the two statements on "Mugua" in the "Shilun" and the *Kongcongzi* can be interpreted as advancing similar ideas, their actual texts are completely different.

> Confucius said: From "Getan," I obtain the poetic expression of respecting origins. This is the nature of the common folk: when one sees the beauty of something, one invariably wants to trace it to its root. Thus, *ge* (kudzu) is sung about because of its luxuriant leaves.[41] That Lord Millet is esteemed is because of the virtue of Kings Wen and Wu.[42] From "Gantan," I obtain the respect for the ancestral temple. This is the nature of the common folk: if one deeply cherishes the person, one invariable respects his position.[43] If one delights in the person, one invariably is fond of his deeds; and if one detests the person, it is again like this. {From "Mugua," I obtain} that (the ritual presentation of) money and silk cannot be abandoned. This is the nature of the common folk: as one's intent is hidden inside, there must be a way of giving expression to it. [The poem] says that there first has to be something to be delivered and only then does one receive something in return, or that one first presents something and later enters into the exchange; people cannot oppose this. From "Didu," I obtain that noble rank [...]
>
> 孔子曰：吾以《葛覃》得氏初之詩。民性固然。見其美必欲反其本。夫葛之見歌也則以【。。。】萋葉。后稷之見貴也，則以文武之德也。吾以《甘棠》得宗廟之敬。民性固然。甚貴其人必敬其位。悅其人必好其所爲。惡其人者亦然。{吾以《木瓜》得}幣帛之不可去也。民性固然。其隱志必有以俞也。其言有所載而後納，或前之而後交，人不可干也。吾以《杕杜》得爵【。。。】[44]

As in the preceding section, this invocation of the purported words by Confucius presumes complete familiarity with the text of the poems; the brief comments do not introduce the poems but only relay what Confucius—the sage who uses the first-personal pronoun *wu* 吾 in rhythmic repetition—"obtains" from them. Yet Confucius does even more here: following his perceptive understanding of each poem, he generalizes about "the nature of the common folk," connecting his own subjectivity to the larger human and social truth that is grounded in the inborn nature of the people. Furthermore, he reasons why a

41 That is, kudzu is the root of the beautiful clothes that are made out of its leaves.

42 That is, the latter manifestations of the virtue of Zhou that originated with Lord Millet.

43 A more substantial analysis of the ancient discussion of "Gantang" is Michael Hunter, "Contextualizating the Kongzi of the 'Kongzi Shilun' 孔子詩論," paper presented at the "International Symposium on Excavated Manuscripts and the Interpretation of the *Book of Odes*," University of Chicago, September 12, 2009.

44 Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 51–61.

particular poem is composed the way it is: because its method of indirect expression resonates with "the nature of the common folk." Once again, this reasoning is driven by reference not to compositional circumstance but to the poem's reception by the common folk—and it is the perceptive mind exemplified in Confucius that is able to discern this true nature of poetic expression. In other words, the "Shilun" invites its reader to emulate the model of the sage to comprehend at once both the *Poetry* and human disposition, and to recognize the former as a *natural* representation of the latter: for example, as humans like to trace the origins of virtue and beauty, "Getan" can praise the kudzu plant because its fibres are the origin of beautiful clothes. Here, the "Shilun" comes close to developing an explicit argument on the nature and ideal perception of the *Poetry*, buttressed by the authority of Confucius. Furthermore, a comparison of the "Shilun" with the *Kongcongzi* suggests that Confucius' comments in the former include two distinct layers: while both sources share the initial "From [this poem], I obtain …" pattern, only the "Shilun" contains the larger, generalizing claim as to how the *Poetry* matches "the nature of the common folk."

The personal voice of Confucius is even more pronounced in another passage. Here, the master responds to the poems not with a discussion but with a mere personal judgment—a judgment that is implicitly authoritative because it comes from the sage who, once again, emphatically uses the first-person pronoun in every phrase:

> Confucius said: "Wanqiu" I find excellent. "Yijie" I find delightful. "Shijiu" I find trustworthy. "Wen Wang" I praise. "Qing {miao" I revere. "Liewen" I enjoy. "Haotian you chengming I} […]
>
> 孔子曰：《宛丘》吾善之。《猗嗟》吾喜之。《鳲鳩》吾信之。《文王》吾美之。《清{廟吾敬之。《烈文》吾悅之。《昊天有成命》吾}【。。。】之。[45]

These single-word expressions of emotional response are then briefly expanded: for each poem, two lines (a couplet or two separate lines) are quoted, followed again by the same statements of "I find excellent," "I find delightful," "I find trustworthy" et cetera that were given to the poem as a whole. In doing so, the discussion narrows the perspective on each poem by identifying its key lines that are considered "excellent," "delightful," "trustworthy" and so on. To a

45 Slips 21 and 22 of the original arrangement. Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 200–220.

certain extent, the selection of the poetic lines intimate how Confucius understands each poem, even though the actual interpretation is left to the reader of his comments. In fact, the combination of two selected lines with Confucius' extremely general statement says nothing specific about the text; instead, it prompts the reader to respond with his or her own hermeneutical process in order to understand what exactly it is that Confucius finds "excellent," "delightful," and "trustworthy" et cetera in these lines, and how the lines then come to stand for the entire poem. In short, this part of the "Shilun" engages the reader with both Confucius' exemplary judgment and, by way of it, the poems of the *Poetry*.

Yet the brief formulaic section intimates something else in addition. The master's personal comments are not about the poems; they are about Confucius' reaction as the person who truly understands the *Poetry*. His structurally repetitive remarks thus stand as a model of profound insight—an insight now to be grasped, and thereby repeated, by the reader. As the text inspires the reader to pursue the sage's model of perception and appreciation, it becomes an exercise in self-cultivation. It is not a closed text to take home and read; it is an open text that demands and then also guides a response from its audience. Most importantly, it offers a statement on how to approach, and how to speak of, the *Poetry*. Needless to say, the Confucius of the "Shilun," as in the section discussed before, is nothing but a chiffre: his highly stylized and pithy statements are a rhetorical artifice, and so is his 'personal' engagement with the *Poetry*.

The remaining sections of the text continue to show a variety of rhetorical patterns. To some extent, the voices of the author and of Confucius seem to merge, as both are equally elliptic. A passage that is difficult to parse—it is not clear where it ends—but that begins with "Confucius said" reads:

> Confucius said: "Xishuai" is about understanding difficulty. "Zhongshi" is about the gentleman. "Beifeng" does not cut off the anger of the people.
>
> 孔子曰：《蟋蟀》知難。《仲氏》君子。《北風》不絕人之怨。[46]

Compare this to the following section, which apparently is in the "Shilun" textual voice:

> "Dongfang weiming" contains incisive phrases. Of the words in "Qiang zhong," one must be afraid of. In "Yang zhi shui," the love of the wife is strong. In "Caige,"

46 Slip 27; see Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 69–80.

> the love of the wife is […] "{Junzi} yangyang" is about a petty man. "You tu" is about not meeting one's time. The final stanza of "Datian" shows knowing how to speak and to conduct oneself according to ritual. "Xiaoming" is about not […][47] being loyal. "Bozhou" in the "Airs of Bei" is about depression. "Gufeng" is about grief. "Liao'e" is about having a filial mind. In "Xi you changchu," one has obtained [a family] but regrets it […][48] speaks of detesting without pity. "Qiang you ci" is about guarded secrets that cannot be told. "Qingying" is about knowing […] "Juan'er" is about not recognizing people.[49] "Shezhen" is about the cutting off. "Zhu'er" is about a serviceman. "Jiaozhen" is about a wife. "Heshui" is about understanding […]
>
> 《東方未明》有利詞。《將仲》之言，不可不畏也。《揚之水》其愛婦烈。《采葛》之愛婦【。。。】《{君子}陽陽》小人。〈有兔〉不逢時。《大田》之卒章知言而禮。《小明》不【。。。】忠。《邶柏舟》悶。《鼓風》悲。《蓼莪》有孝志。《隰有萇楚》得而悔之也。【。。。】言惡而不憫。《墻有茨》慎密而不知言。《青蠅》知【。。。】《卷而》不知人。《涉溱》其絕。《著而》士。《角枕》婦。《河水》知。[50]

Comparing this passage to the one attributed to Confucius, it seems impossible to discern what distinguishes one from the other. Both passages give extremely brief characterizations of the poems, often reduced to a single word. No particular order is noticeable in their sequence, nor is there any progression of analysis in the discussion of the poems.[51] The text could go on

47 Based on the parallel passage in *Kongcongzi*, the lacuna here includes another song, "Jie nan shan" 節南山; see Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 111–115.

48 Huang Huaixin assumes that the comment following the missing characters refers to "Xiang shu" 相鼠; see *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 127–129.

49 My understanding of *zhi ren* 知人 as 'recognizing people' is based on Matthias Richter's discussion of the term in "From *shi* 士 Status Anxiety to Ru 儒 Ethics," paper presented at the conference "Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China," Institute for Advanced Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, May 1–6, 2012; see also Richter, Guan ren: *Texte der altchinesischen Literatur zur Charakterkunde und Beamtenrekrutierung* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

50 Slips 17, 25, 26, 28, and 29 of the Shanghai Museum's arrangment; see Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 94–153. Here, slip 29 breaks off. It is not clear to me whether or not the section continues onto slip 23, as Huang Huaixin assumes.

51 Most pieces can be identified with counterparts in the received *Poetry*, although in some cases, it contains more than one song of the same title. Listed with their Mao numbers, the poems in this passage are of the following sequence: Mao 76, 68, 72, 67, 70, 212, 207, 191, 26, 35, 148, 202, 52, 46, 219, and 3, followed by four pieces that do not appear under the

forever until all the pieces from the *Poetry* are covered—or maybe not. The brief comment on one poem does not illuminate the one on another. But what does this mean? Are we to assume that the author of the "Shilun" just randomly listed a range of diverse titles regardless of their place in the anthology? That the received anthological order did not yet exist, or was not known to him? That the poems listed here were just the ones he knew? That they were in some sense representative? Whatever the case, I would hesitate to presume that the "Shilun" text *just did not make sense*. Both the terse characterizations and the seemingly haphazard order in which they appear seem to confirm once again that this manuscript text was not a self-contained written artifact, open and available to whoever encountered it. Consider again what Socrates had to say about the written text that, as an artifact of writing, leaves behind its original context of face-to-face communication: it "roams about everywhere" and "doesn't know to whom it should speak"; it will be faulted and attacked while being unable to defend itself. Could it be that the barely comprehensible comments, delivered in a seemingly arbitrary sequence, mark the fact that, first and foremost, they are not to be read in isolation—that is, in the way we encounter them today? Whatever the underlying argument of the passage above might be, it is not open to us. This situation, one can argue, is not a deficiency of the text; it merely alerts us to the fact that we are the wrong audience because we do not have access to the scene of instruction in which such a passage may once comfortably played its role.

Yet to be sure, some passages in the "Shilun" seem to rise to the level of philosophical generality familiar from transmitted sources such as the "Great Preface." In the "Shilun," the most famous of these is the one the Shanghai editors have placed at the very beginning of the text, while Li Xueqin has placed it right at the end. Either position signals its exceptional nature:

> Confucius said: The *Poetry* does not hide the intent, its music does not hide the emotion, and its formal patterns do not hide its words.[52]

---

same titles in the received *Poetry*. For these, Chinese scholars have advanced a number of different proposals regarding their identity with transmitted pieces known under different titles; for a discussion of the different suggestions see Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 135–147. However, despite some partial clustering—Mao 68, 72, 67, and 70 are all from the "Wang feng" 王風 section—it seems impossible to discern a particular meaning in their sequence in the "Shilun."

52 Most scholars understand *wen* 文 here as "written characters." I consider this reading anachronistic and wrong; see Kern, "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon."

孔子曰：詩亡隱志，樂亡隱情，文亡隱言。[53]

Here again, the text appeals to the sagely authority of Confucius, but in a rather different fashion. The Confucius of this statement is still formulaic, but no longer personal; what he announces is not his own sagely judgment but a general, apodictic truth on the fundamental relationship between poetry, music, and language on the one hand to human intent and emotion on the other. Considering how isolated this statement appears from the rest of the "Shilun," it carries the distinct flavor of having been incorporated either from some other discourse on the *Poetry* or as a commonplace saying. Indeed, it reads precisely like the kind of generalizing statement that could have survived in the received tradition.

• • •

Given the fragmentary nature of the "Shilun," broader claims about the text can only remain tentative. However, some of its features of content and style suggest that the text represents a particular type of discourse that has not survived in the received tradition. The analysis above has identified a series of patterns of literary rhetoric; by way of conclusion, I would now like to consider to which extent these patterns contribute to an actual argument.

Evidently, the "Shilun" cannot be read as a discursive treatise written for a larger, anonymous readership; other than being concerned with the *Poetry*, it does not seem to have a particular topic (and no title), nor does it stake out a particular philosophical position. It also does not furnish a general introduction to the *Poetry*, nor does it discuss the anthology as a whole or explain any of its poems in detail. In fact, no uninitiated reader not already familiar with the poems would be able to reconstruct any one of them on the basis of how it is dealt within the "Shilun." Thus, as the text presupposes an intimate and perhaps even comprehensive knowledge of the *Poetry*, it does not stand on its own; it only makes sense to those who have learned the poems before. On this basis, the "Shilun" suggests a higher mastery of the *Poetry*: to penetrate the textual surface toward the core meaning of each of the poems.

From this perspective, the first argument of the "Shilun," however implicit, is that the different poems do have specific, different, and discernable meanings, that each poem can indeed be reduced to one particular meaning and that, in their sum, the poems represent an entire catalogue of meanings conducive to an ethical way of life. While the "Shilun" has nothing to say about the

53 See Huang Huaixin, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu*, 267–271.

aesthetic qualities of the *Poetry*, its pronouncements on particular poems—whether in the voice of the anonymous author or attributed to Confucius—are concerned with moral and social values: ritual propriety, the good fortune of the gentleman, timeliness in action, knowledge of the constant way, marriage, longing for the ancients, meeting one's time, recognizing people, the virtue of the sage kings, or respect for the ancestral temple, to name just some of the topics raised in the quoted passages above. This catalogue of sanctioned practices and attitudes marks the second, again implicit, argument of the "Shilun": poetry serves as a tool of moral edification, and the "Shilun" itself serves as a tool to discern the specifically moral meaning within each poem. Here again, the "Shilun" does not stand on its own: its system of moral and social ideals is a given, and it would be impossible to understand the *Poetry* without recourse to these established ideals.

The very emphasis on moral edification is an argument in itself, as it implies a hierarchy of values in poetry. Here, moral edification and aesthetic delight operate in opposition to one another, as can be seen with those poetic genres in Chinese literature that have been taken to emphasize the latter over the former—for example, the Western Han *fu* 賦[54] and or late Six Dynasties poetry.[55] As noted by Andrew Ford, the shift from moral to aesthetic concerns is the fundamental point of Aristotle's *Poetics*: for both poetry and poetic criticism to become an autonomous intellectual and technical enterprise, "the *Poetics* inaugurates literary criticism as a technical appreciation of poetry that was distinct from the abundant moral, social, and religious critiques" of the archaic period and hence established "explanatory principles … independent of those in any other domain of inquiry."[56] This is the step that the "Shilun"—or any other early Chinese poetic discourse—never takes; it begins and ends with the unquestioned assumption that poetry serves moral purposes, and indeed *only* these.

This assumption is grounded in tradition, the reference to which constitutes another argument. Whether in the formula 'it is said,' the use of rhythmic and repetitive (and hence highly ritualized) language, in the attribution of such language to Confucius, in the emphatic representation of Confucius' personal voice, or with the final apodictic statement on poetry and music, the "Shilun" is organized around implicit and explicit claims for traditional authority.

54 See Martin Kern, "Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the *Fu*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63 (2003): 383–437.

55 See Xiaofei Tian, *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502–557)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

56 Ford, *The Origins of Criticism*, 269.

Confucius' pronouncements may be pithy, but they are authoritative because of the a priori presumed authority of their charismatic speaker; and what "is said" may come without further reasoning, but it must be accepted because it comes from received wisdom. Therefore, strictly speaking, the "Shilun" does not pretend to offer a new or unique approach to the *Poetry*. To the contrary—or so the text suggests—its claims regarding the meaning of particular poems are only restating what is already established.

Such restating does not require the text to explain itself by way of reasoning; it may content itself with terse pronouncements that by their very nature need not and cannot be debated. These pronouncements are not merely elliptic but apodictic—or, more precisely, culminating in single-word definitions of entire poems: they are elliptic to the point where they can only be accepted as apodictic. As such, the very form of expression *is* already (in McLuhan's sense) the message.[57] It is the absence of any overt reasoning or arguing that constitutes the text's most forceful claim for truth.

This also explains the most conspicuous way in which the "Shilun" differs from early imperial approaches to the *Poetry*: it abstains from historicizing the individual poems. It does not categorize them according to the "praise and blame" (*baobian* 褒貶) paradigm of eulogistic versus satirical verse, it does not reference how the poems had been used before, it offers nothing in terms of a philological commentary, and it disregards questions of authorship or scenes of composition. As a result, its terse judgments and characterizations operate on a level of abstraction and generality where challenges by way of historical reference do not reach. At the same time, the "Shilun" affirms the semantic openness and wide-ranging applicability of the poems that are on display in pre-imperial sources such as the *Zuo zhuan*.

It is this openness, then, where the "Shilun" situates its own purpose, function, and quality. Not hermeneutically confined by historical contextualization, the pithy statements shared by Confucius and the textual voice advance claims not of historical knowledge but of superior poetic perception of the self-cultivated mind. In this, the "Shilun" presents an argument on its own behalf: if Confucius is the established yet bygone authority of the *Poetry*, the "Shilun," modeled on his example, takes his place in the present. While Confucius expresses himself with emphatic emotion, the unauthored "Shilun" speaks with the force of traditional wisdom. At the same time, the text also responds to the issues of the day—chief among them the discourse on self-cultivation—known from other contemporaneous manuscripts such as the "Wuxing" or the

57 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

"Xing zi ming chu" 性自命出/"Xing qing lun" 性情論 from the Guodian 郭店 and the Shanghai Museum corpora.

The central quality the "Shilun" discerns in the *Poetry* is that its pieces speak properly and compellingly of matters of the human mind and the human condition: as noted above, poetry is the way to express social and moral norms. Yet as the *Poetry* is interpreted as such, the "Shilun" reveals the cultivated mind of the interpreter. This is particularly obvious in the intensely personal, charismatic voice given to Confucius, but also in the rhetorical questions and occasional exclamations by the textual voice of the "Shilun." In this way, the "Shilun," if it indeed was an actual pedagogical tool, also serves as the ideal representation of such a tool. Early on, it offers the key to its own raison d'être: "As they are set in motion/move the audience, [these poems] all surpass what they put forth initially." In other words, the "Shilun" argues that the *Poetry* requires a hermeneutic procedure to unlock them—and the following statements on individual poems then prove the capacity of the "Shilun" itself to perform this very procedure. In this logic, the "Shilun" does just as much for the *Poetry* as the *Poetry* does for the "Shilun." If Li Xueqin and Huang Huaixin are correct with their arrangement of the bamboo slips, the text is triumphantly capped by stating the accomplishment of its own task, a feat already prefigured and celebrated by Confucius, the sagely interpreter: "The *Poetry* does not hide the intent, its music does not hide the emotion, and its formal patterns do not hide its words." The unauthored poems have found their second master in the unauthored text.

References

Chen Tongsheng 陳桐生. "*Kongzi shilun*" *yanjiu* 《孔子詩論》研究. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mark. "Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han." In *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, edited by Bryan Van Norden. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002: 134–162.

Ford, Andrew. *The Origins of Criticism: Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" In *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, edited by Josué V. Harari. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979: 141–160; orig. "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" 1969.

Harbsmeier, Christoph. "Xunzi and the Problem of Impersonal First Person Pronouns." *Early China* 22 (1997): 181–220.

Huang Huaixin 黃懷信. *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* "Shilun" *jieyi* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書《詩論》解義. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004.

Hunter, Michael. "Contextualizing the Kongzi of the 'Kongzi Shilun' 孔子詩論." Paper presented at the "International Symposium on Excavated Manuscripts and the Interpretation of the *Book of Odes*," University of Chicago, September 12, 2009.

———. "Sayings of Confucius, Deselected." PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012.

Ikeda Tomohisa 池田知久. *Maōtai Kanbo hakusho gogyōhen kenkyū* 馬王堆漢墓帛書五行篇研究. Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1993.

Jiang Guanghui 姜廣輝. "Guanyu gu 'Shixu' de bianlian, shidu yu dingwei zhu wenti yanjiu" 關於古《詩序》的編連、釋讀與定位諸問題研究. *Zhongguo zhexue* 中國哲學 24 (2002): 165–168; translated as "Problems Concerning the Rearrangement, Interpretation, and Orientation of the Ancient *Preface to the* Poetry (Shixu)." *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 39.4 (2008): 43–45.

Kern, Martin. *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang. Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation*. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2000.

———. "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of *wen* in Early China." *T'oung Pao* 87 (2001): 43–91.

———. "Western Han Aesthetics and the Genesis of the *Fu*." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63 (2003): 383–437.

———. "The Poetry of Han Historiography." *Early Medieval China* 10–11.1 (2004): 23–65.

———. "Lost in Tradition: The *Classic of Poetry* We Did not Know." In *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry* 5, edited by Grace S. Fong. Montreal: Centre for East Asian Research, McGill University, 2010: 29–56.

———. "Style and Poetic Diction in the *Xunzi*." In *Dao Companion to Xunzi*, edited by Eric L. Hutton. New York: Springer, forthcoming.

Kurihara Keisuke 栗原圭介. *Chūgoku kodai gakuron no kenkyū* 中國古代樂論の研究. Tokyo: Daitō bunka daigaku tōyō kenkyūjō, 1978.

Lewis, Mark Edward. *Writing and Authority in Early China*. Albany: SUNY, 1999.

Liu Xinfang 劉信芳. *Kongzi shilun shuxue* 孔子詩論述學. Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2002.

Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed. *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* (*yi*) 上海博物管藏戰國楚竹書（一）. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001.

Ma Yinqin 馬銀琴. "Shangbo jian 'Shilun' yu 'Shixu' shishuo yitong bijiao: jianlun 'Shixu' yu 'Shilun' de yuanyuan guanxi" 上博簡《詩論》與《詩序》詩說異同比較—兼論《詩序》與《詩論》的淵源關係. *Jianbo yanjiu* 簡帛研究 (2002–2003): 98–105.

Makeham, John. "The Formation of *Lunyu* as a Book." *Monumenta Serica* 44 (1996): 1–24.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

Nehamas, Alexander, and Paul Woodruff, transl. *Plato, Phaedrus*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1995.

Nylan, Michael. "Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 BCE–220 CE)." In *Text and Ritual in Early China*, edited by Martin Kern. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005: 3–49.

O Man-jong 吳萬鍾. *Cong shi dao jing: Lun Maoshi jieshi de yuanyuan ji qi tese* 從詩到經：論毛詩解釋的遠遠及其特色. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001.

Richter, Matthias. *Guan ren: Texte der altchinesischen Literatur zur Charakterkunde und Beamtenrekrutierung*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2005.

———. "From *shi* 士 Status Anxiety to Ru 儒 Ethics." Paper presented at the conference "Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China," Institute for Advanced Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, May 1–6, 2012.

———. *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Riegel, Jeffrey. "Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings of *Shijing* Commentary." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.1 (1997): 143–177.

Schaberg, David. "Song and the Historical Imagination in Early China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59 (1999): 305–361.

———. *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001.

Staack, Thies. "Reconstructing the *Kongzi Shilun*: From the Arrangement of the Bamboo Slips to a Tentative Translation." *Asiatische Studien / Études asiatiques* 64 (2010): 857–906.

Tian, Xiaofei. *Beacon Fire and Shooting Star: The Literary Culture of the Liang (502–557)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007.

Van Zoeren, Steven. *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Veyne, Paul. *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitute Imagination*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Xing Wen. "Guest Editor's Introduction." *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 39.4 (2008): 3–17.

Yang Bojun 楊伯峻. *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993.

Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫. *Gushu tongli* 古書通例. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985.

Zeng Qinliang 曾勤良. *Zuo zhuan yinshi fushi zhi shijiao yanjiu* 左傳引詩賦詩之詩教研究. Tapei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1993.

Zhao Fulin 晁福林. *Shangbo jian 'Shilun' yanjiu* 上博簡《詩論》研究. Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2013.

Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚. "Lunyu jieji cuoshuo" 論語結集脞說. *Kongzi yanjiu* 孔子研究 1 (1986): 40–52.