

From Anecdote to History: Observations on the Composition of the *Zuozhuan**

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Abstract

Inquiring into the composition of the *Zuozhuan*, this paper describes a number of anecdotal passages that share the following characteristics: they are undated analepses, conveying stories of love, intrigue and succession struggles at rulers' courts with a minimum of rhetorical flourish, no literary quotations and apparently without ritual, moral or didactic considerations. These analeptic anecdotes, which are largely exclusive to the *Zuozhuan*, appear to be independent literary units inserted between annalistic or other narrative units. They seem to derive from demotic, certainly oral sources, perhaps originating among court ladies and transmitted among the populace in connection with songs.

The problem of composite texts

Perhaps the most striking aspect of books in ancient China (meaning, for the present purpose the pre-Qin period) is their "composite nature."¹ It has become common knowledge that these books are not homogeneous works but, as Hans Stumpfeldt observed, "collections of texts, whose parts, mostly dozens, were shaped over several decades, sometimes even longer periods of time. The origins of these collections are mostly obscure."² Such

"books," no matter whose names they bear, are either obviously layered texts that "grew" over centuries or are suspected to have been added to, taken from, rearranged, or pieced together after the main author (if there was one) died.³

The more evident the composite nature of early Chinese texts becomes, the more urgent it appears to understand the anonymous process of re-working and accretion⁴ that lies behind ancient Chinese books and to recognize their distinct textual units or layers. In other words, it becomes all-important to investigate the "texts behind the texts."⁵

* All translations from the *Zuozhuan* are by Li Wai-ye, Stephen Durrant, and David Schaberg, whom I thank for sharing their yet unpublished work with me. For the sake of brevity, I have omitted the footnotes to their translation as well as the superscript letters referring to the master name list. I also thank the participants of the Chicago workshop on the "emergence of writing in ancient China" for their helpful comments and criticism.

1 Boltz 2005.

2 Stumpfeldt 2002, 183.

3 Nivison 1999, 745.

4 The credit goes to Bruce and Taeko Brooks for having called attention to this process of accretion and having made it their task to analyze it in Warring States texts; cf. Brooks 1994; see also Brooks and Brooks 1998, esp. 4–5, and 201–248.

Recently, several scholars have presented inspiring case studies, which apply either to single texts or specific genres of texts, developing methods that are particularly relevant for Chinese texts.⁶ For a broader systematic approach, one may further consider the methods developed in Biblical scholarship. After all, Biblical scholars have observed phenomena that are strikingly similar to those described for ancient Chinese books. The text of the Old Testament

exhibits repetitions, multiple climaxes, or multiple statements of intention. The text can exhibit gaps or breaks where a transition is missing. It can even manifest contradictions, which in fact should be mutually exclusive.⁷

Such inconsistencies, redundancies or contradictions are certainly no deficiency, they testify to the richness of an ancient text that was not constrained by copyright laws. In fact, appreciating this richness would appear to be one of the most fundamental tasks for scholars dealing with any ancient texts.⁸

To take the text seriously means to distinguish the statements in the text, to separate that which was once separated, and also to listen separately to each of the voices in the text from various times as portions of various literary works [...] to which they once belonged.⁹

Biblical scholars call the task of separating “that which was once separated” literary criticism, and they have developed a whole array of criteria for judging the integrity of texts. Among the indicators of disunity are

- a. Doublets: The same line of content is formulated twice within the same paragraph.
- b. Double or multiple transmissions: The same piece appears more than once within larger text complexes (in a different version).
- c. Secondary brackets: The formulations of various text components are clearly recognizable as balanced and are related to one another.
- d. Tensions in vocabulary (lexical, grammatical, syntactical, terminological), especially contradictions and breaks in the text’s progression.
- e. Differences in the manner of speech and style (form, linguistic usage; poetry and prose in the same text).
- f. Differences of historical background (different historical realities which are chronological, cultic, legal, and theological).

5 This does not devalue the more traditional approach of reading a classical text “as a whole.” This is certainly called for when studying its impact in imperial times. However, scholars of pre-imperial texts neglect the “texts behind the texts” at their peril.

6 Among these, the highly ingenious method of “isocolometrical analysis,” which William Boltz (1990, 2002) applied to parts of different texts deserves to be singled out. Fascinating though it is, it works only for texts that were written on bamboo slips containing a specified number of characters; as noted in fn. 82, it does not work with the kind of texts dealt with in the present paper.

7 Steck 1998, 47. For similar observations concerning the New Testament, cf. Mack 2000, 16–17, and *passim*. Mack also points out the practice in Greco-Roman culture of ascribing anonymous texts to some famous personality of antiquity – a practice that was certainly common in ancient China as well.

8 The second most fundamental after text criticism, to be precise; cf. Vogelsang 2007.

9 Steck 1998, xv; cf. *ibid.* for the “richness” and the lack of copyrights.

- g. For certain literary layers, or sources, significant theological assertions, phrases, and linguistic peculiarities.
- h. Tensions and unevenness of content as well as elements typical for a genre.¹⁰

In what follows, I will try to apply the methods of Biblical criticism to the *Zuozhuan*, an equally important and complex text, whose composite nature appears to be particularly intricate. After discussing a well-known example by way of introduction, I will analyze a group of similar passages dispersed throughout the *Zuozhuan* that seem to form a coherent stratum of the text.

The case of the *Zuozhuan*

Chinese scholars have long since noticed the composite nature of the *Zuozhuan*. As early as the 8th century, Dan Zhu (725–770) noticed the convergence of different sources like “family biographies of eminent personalities, divination manuals, collections of anecdotes and political pamphlets,” but found it “difficult to sort out true from false.”¹¹ No lesser mind than Zhu Xi (1130–1200) pointed out that the commentaries of the *junzi* often poorly fit the narratives they refer to, and later scholars identified these as separate textual layers.¹² In the 20th century, Henri Maspero suggested that the *Zuozhuan* consisted of two entirely different works, a ritualistic and ethical commentary beside a large chronicle originally unrelated to the former;¹³ and Gu Jiegang identified as many as eight different layers of text that were added to an original *Zuosbi* text.¹⁴ Hardly any recent publication¹⁵ fails to mention that the *Zuozhuan* is “a heterogeneous and layered text that took shape over a long period of accretion,”¹⁶ mixing “large chunks of preexisting materials into a single text,”¹⁷ a “bricolage” of historical facts, cosmological theories and narratives composed in “an incremental transcription, in many places and over many years, from oral traditions closely tied to the teaching of written annals like the *Chunqiu*.”¹⁸

10 Steck 1998, 54; cf. *ibid.*, 47–61, for an introduction to the methods of literary criticism.

11 Cf. Pulleyblank 1960, 89–90.

12 Cf. Henry, 1999, 126–130 for the debate from Zhu Xi to the present. For general overviews of *Zuozhuan* scholarship, cf. Zhang 1998, 350–411; Deng and Wang 1998, 166–179; Shen and Liu 2000; Schaberg 2001, 315–324.

13 Maspero 1931–1932, 188. According to Maspero (*ibid.*, 193), both originated around the 4th or 3rd century BC and were later arbitrarily combined.

14 Gu 1988, 60–83.

15 One notable exception being Pines 1997 and 2002, who offers numerous arguments in defense of the traditional position that the *Zuozhuan* may serve as a source for the Chunqiu period. While not denying that the *Zuozhuan* is a heterogeneous text (indeed, stressing this point against Karlgren 1926), Pines attributes whatever differences there are to the respective age of the *Zuozhuan*'s sources without subscribing to the theory of accretion.

16 Li 2007, 29. Li (*ibid.*, 25) further points out “that sedimentation and heterogeneity characterize the formation of *Zuozhuan*.”

17 Henry 1999, 149. Cf. Wang 1977, 4, n. 3: “The book was probably compiled from already existing materials by one person in the early Warring States Period [...].”

18 Schaberg 2001, 137; cf. *ibid.*, 100. For a recent study of compositional strata, focusing on the notions of Heaven and *li* in the *Zuozhuan*, cf. Brooks 2003–2004. It is tempting to relate these observations to the

Analyzing its component elements, Barry B. Blakeley has recently suggested that the *Zuozhuan* consists of the following distinct kinds of material:

a version of the *Chun Qiu* 春秋 of Lu; material derived from other state annals; several types of commentary; and several narrative elements – discourses and related material, and miscellaneous matter.¹⁹

Among these, the distinction between annalistic entries (including those non-*Chunqiu* entries embedded in the *Zuozhuan*) and the other parts is certainly the least controversial. Moreover, the moralizing commentaries – by *Kongzi*, a *junzi*,²⁰ or anonymous – seem to make up a layer that is clearly distinct from the narrative parts. “The most controversial part,” according to Blakeley, “are the narrative elements.”²¹ Indeed, the abrupt changes of subject matter, interruptions of narrative flow, repetitions and contradictions within the *Zuozhuan* narratives as well as its heterogeneous language and style pose an intricate problem to modern readers.²²

This problem has been addressed in earnest by Ronald Egan, who noted an abundance of “passages within almost every narrative that are not properly part of that narrative.”

These are elements that interrupt the narratives. They are independent units that do not contribute to the larger story in which they are embedded but have their own meaning and significance. This type of passage is not nearly as common as the type that does contribute to the larger story: if it were the stories would lose all sense of movement and cohesion. Still, there are enough of such independent passages so that they cannot be ignored. In fact, recognition of their presence in *Tso chuan* is essential to a satisfactory reading of the work. Furthermore, their presence has implications regarding the long-debated questions of the composition and origins of *Tso chuan*.²³

In the same article, Egan provides an example that makes this assertion abundantly clear. It is the famous story of Zhao Dun and the prince of Jin.

traditional description of the *Zuozhuan*'s line of transmission, as outlined in Lu Deming's, *Jingdian shiwen* 1.26b: 左丘明作傳以授曾申，申傳衛人吳起，起傳其子期，期傳楚人鐸椒，椒傳趙人虞卿，卿傳同郡荀卿名況，況傳武威張蒼，蒼傳洛陽賈誼。誼傳至孫嘉。嘉傳趙人真公。賈公傳其少子長卿，長卿傳京兆尹張敞及侍御史張禹。[...]。禹傳尹更始，更始傳其子咸及翟方進、胡常。常授黎陽賈護，護授蒼梧陳欽。“Zuo Qiuming wrote the *Zhuan* and passed it on to Zeng Shen. Shen passed it on to Wu Qi from Wei; Qi passed it on to his son, Qi. Qi passed it on to Duo Jiao from Chu. Jiao passed it on to Yu Qing from Zhao. Qing passed it on to his fellow countryman Xun Qing, whose personal name was Kuang. Kuang passed it on to Zhang Cang from Wuwei. Cang passed it on to Jia Yi from Luoyang. Yi passed it on to his grandson Jia. Jia passed it on to Guan *gong* from Zhao. Guan *gong* passed it on to his youngest son, Changqing. Changqing passed it on to the capital governor Zhang Chang, as well as the assistant censor Zhang Yu. [...]. Yu passed it on to Yin Gengshi. Gengshi passed it on to his son, Xian, as well as Zhai Fangjin and Hu Chang. Chang passed it on to Jia Hu from Liyang. Hu passed it on to Chen Qin from Cangwu.” Liu Xiang's *Bielu* apparently had a more detailed description of this transmission; another quote from the *Bielu* (*Shisan jing zhushu*, 1703) confirms the line up to Zhang Cang, adding that Duo Jiao and Yu Qing copied parts of the work. Cf. Zhang 1988, 159; Tong 1980, 288–289; Zhang 1998, 350.

19 Blakeley 2004.

20 On this distinction, cf. Henry 1999.

21 Blakeley 2004, 223.

22 Wang (1993, 24) attributes these phenomena to the fact that “the author likes to interweave his two sorts of sources with one another,” namely (*ibid*, 16) “private notes of historiographers” and oral traditions.

1. a. 秋九月，晉侯飲趙盾酒，伏甲，將攻之。其右提彌明知之，趨登，曰：「臣侍君宴，過三爵，非禮也。」遂扶以下。公嗾夫獒焉，明搏而殺之。盾曰：「棄人用犬，雖猛何為！」聞且出。提彌明死之。

In autumn, in the ninth month, the Prince of Jin entertained Zhao Dun with wine. He had hidden armored soldiers who were going to attack him. Zhao's aide on the right, Ti Miming, learned of this, rushed forward and ascended the steps, saying, "For a subject waiting on a ruler in a feast to exceed three rounds of drinking is not in accordance with ritual propriety." He then helped Zhao Dun step down. The lord whistled for his fierce hounds. Ti Miming wrestled with them and killed them. Zhao Dun said, 'He deserts men and uses hounds – fierce, true, but to what avail?' All the while fighting and struggling, he came out. Ti Miming died defending Zhao Dun.²⁴

- A. 初，宣子田於首山，舍于翳桑，見靈輒餓，問其病。曰：「不食三日矣。」食之，舍其半。問之。曰：「宦三年矣，未知母之存否，今近焉，請以遺之。」使盡之，而為之簞食與肉，寘諸囊以與之。既而與為公介，倒戟以禦公徒而免之。問何故。對曰：「翳桑之餓人也。」問其名居，不告而退，遂自亡也。

Some time earlier, Xuanzi [= Zhao Dun] had hunted at Mount Shou. While lodging at Yisang, he saw Ling Zhe, who was starving, and asked what ailed him. Ling Zhe said, "I have not eaten for three days." Zhao Dun gave him food, but Ling Zhe set half of it aside. When asked about it, he said, "For three full years I have been in service. I do not yet know whether my mother is still alive. Now that I am close to home, I beg leave to send her this food." Zhao Dun had him finish eating, then prepared for him a bamboo basket filled with food and meat, put it in a sack and gave it to him. Some time later, he joined the ranks of the lord's armored attendants. He reversed his dagger axe to defend Zhao against the lord's men and thereby saved him. Zhao asked why he did that, and he replied, "I was the starving man at Yisang." Zhao asked his name and where he lived, but he withdrew without telling him. Then Zhao himself fled.²⁵

- b. 乙丑，趙穿殺靈公於桃園。宣子未出山而復。大史書曰「趙盾弑其君」，以示於朝。宣子曰：「不然。」對曰：「子為正卿，亡不越境，反不討賊，非子而誰？」宣子曰：「烏呼！〔《詩》曰〕：『我之懷矣，自詒伊感。』其我之謂矣。」

On the *yichou* day (26), Zhao Chuan assassinated Lord Ling at Taoyuan. Zhao Dun returned before leaving the mountains of Jin. The scribe wrote, "Zhao Dun assassinated his ruler" and showed the record at court. Zhao Dun said, "This was not so." He replied, "You are the chief minister. Yet fleeing you did not cross the domain border; upon returning you did not chastise the culprit. If you are not responsible, who would be?" Zhao Dun said, "Alas! As it says in the Odes, My longing is such, That I bring sorrow upon myself. That describes me indeed!"

23 Egan 1977, 340. The author concludes (ibid, 340) that the "independent incidents suggest that *Tso chuan* is a multilayered work that draws upon a host of sources, combining them within a chronological framework. This conception of the work is not new, but its importance has not been fully appreciated." Indeed, other scholars such as Bernhard Karlgren (1926, 49) have insisted on the homogeneity of the *Zuozhuan*, noting the consistency of its language throughout the work. But cf. Pines 2002, 217–220.

24 *Zuozhuan*, Xuan 2, 659–662 (all quotations from the *Zuozhuan* refer to the edition of Yang 1995). Note that the translation by Durrant, Li, and Schaberg refers to the edition of Ruan Yuan, which in some places differs from Yang Bojun's edition.

25 Xuan 2, 659–662; cf. Egan 1977, 345.

1. c. 孔子曰：「董狐、古之良史也，書法不隱。趙宣子、古之良大夫也，為法受惡。惜也，越竟乃免。」
Confucius said, “Dong Hu was a worthy scribe of ancient times: he did not conceal anything in his rules of writing²⁶ Zhao Dun was a worthy high officer of ancient times: he bore a guilty verdict for the sake of these rules. What a pity! Had he crossed the domain border, he would have been absolved.”

As analyzed by Ronald Egan, this passage juxtaposes two independent narratives (a. and A.) that do not seem to go together well. The literary disunity may easily be demonstrated using the above criteria of Biblical criticism, of which the following would seem to apply:

- Double or multiple transmissions. The fight scene at the court is described twice, and very differently: in a., a man called Ti Miming wrestles the prince’s hounds to save Zhao Dun, whereas in A. Ling Zhe “reversed his dagger axe to defend Zhao against the lord’s men and thereby saved him.”
- Tensions in vocabulary, especially contradictions and breaks in the text’s progression. The word *chu* 初 clearly marks a caesura between the two narratives. It indicates a flashback or analepsis, interrupting the narrative in order to recount the background of its events.²⁷ Tensions in vocabulary are also apparent in the personal names employed: the case of Ti Miming vs. Ling Zhe has already been mentioned, and the protagonist is called Zhao Dun in a. and Xuanzi in A.
- Tensions and unevenness of content as well as elements typical for a genre. The first part is precisely dated (“in the ninth month”), which is typical for (in this case, elaborated) annalistic entries, whereas the second part lacks any dating; it is simply introduced by a vague “some time earlier.”

Egan plausibly concludes that “the Ling Che story was originally an independent unit and has been appended, possibly with some changes, to the related story of the attempt on Chao Tun’s life.”²⁸ This conclusion may be supported by the fact that the second narrative – and only that – is also recorded in the *Lüshi chunqiu*.²⁹

One may further note that the following passages, b. and c., again seem to mark breaks in the text’s progression. Passage b. is again dated, and it introduces an entirely new character, the “scribe.” Although it employs similar vocabulary as A – the name Xuanzi and the verb *wang* 亡 –, thus linking up to A. (but not to a.), it clearly introduces a new topic – the responsibilities of a chief minister – and new rhetorical devices, namely the quotation of *Songs*. Part c., finally, clearly recognizable as a commentary, again introduces new names – Kongzi and Dong Hu – as well as

26 Incidentally, I would propose a different translation for this much-quoted passage. In analogy to the parallel structure of the following 為法受惡, I suggest translating 書法不隱 as “in writing down model cases, he did not conceal (anything),” taking 書法 not as modifier and noun but as verb and object.

27 For a discussion of analepses, cf. Schaberg 2001, 205. Schaberg argues that “analepsis establishes conditions for unity in the plot of an anecdote series.” In the cases discussed here, their effect would seem to be somewhat different.

28 Egan 1977, 346. Egan points out “that the act of a filial son setting food aside for his mother appears to be a stock motif (which recurs elsewhere in *Tso chuan*);” cf. Yin 1, 15.

29 *Lüshi chunqiu* 15.4 (*jiaoshi* ed., 893–894); only in later literature both parts are joined together: in *Gongyang zhuàn*, Xuan 6 (in *Chunqiu jingzhuàn yinde*, 186–187), and *Shiji* 39.1673–1674. For further reflections on this anecdote cf. Mittag 2002, 6f.

an entirely new turn of the story: now historiography and its “rules” or “models” are at issue, whereas there is no reference whatsoever to the ambush at court.

Having thus introduced the kinds of things this paper will be looking at, I will now turn to a number of passages that constitute independent units similar to the ones observed above. I will call these passages “analeptic anecdotes.”

Analeptic Anecdotes

Arguably, anecdotes are “the basic unit of narrative in the *Zuozhuan*,” and they have received considerable interest in recent research. Analyzing anecdote series, David Schaberg has distinguished between three kinds of anecdotes: “proleptic anecdotes,” “amplifying anecdotes,” and the “culmination.”³⁰ In what follows, I will add another category, which so far has received little attention: analeptic anecdotes,³¹ that is interjected scenes that take the narrative back in time from the current point the story has reached. Such analepses are by no means rare in the *Zuozhuan*.³² More often than not, they seem to be independent units grafted onto other textual layers of the *Zuozhuan*. This is most evident when such analepses appear between two *Chunqiu*-style entries, as in the following example:

2. a. 夏，鄭莊公卒。

In summer, Lord Zhuang of Zheng died.

- A. 初，祭封人仲足有寵於莊公，莊公使為卿。為公娶鄧曼，生昭公。故祭仲立之。宋雍氏女於鄭莊公，曰雍姑，生厲公。雍氏宗，有寵於宋莊公，故誘祭仲而執之，曰：「不立突，將死。」亦執厲公而求賂焉。祭仲與宋人盟，以厲公歸而立之。

Sometime earlier, Zhai Zhongzu, the man who had been given an allotment at Zhai, was in favor with Lord Zhuang, and Lord Zhuang had made him a minister. He had arranged for the lord to marry Deng Man, and she gave birth to Lord Zhao. That was why Zhai Zhong had established him as ruler. The Yong line of Song had given a daughter to Lord Zhuang of Zheng. She was named Yong Ji and gave birth to Tu, the future Lord Li. The Yong line was honored as a major lineage and was in favor with Lord Zhuang of Song. They therefore lured Zhai Zhong to Song and then, arresting him, said, “If you do not establish Tu as ruler, you will die.” They also seized Lord Li and sought ransom for him. Zhai Zhong swore a covenant with the Song leaders, took Lord Li back to Zheng and established him as ruler.

- b. 秋九月丁亥，昭公奔衛。己亥，厲公立。

In autumn, the dinghai day (13), Lord Zhao fled to Wei, and, on the jihai day (25), Lord Li was established as ruler.³³

30 Schaberg 2001, 194ff.

31 I use “analeptic” as the adjective derived from “analepsis,” in the sense of “taking (the reader) back (in time).”

32 They also appear regularly in the *Shiji*. Nienhauser 2003, 47–48, has noted several such cases that present textual problems insofar as they follow right after a date without an event or any connection between the analepses and the preceding date; cf. also van Ess 2001, 524.

As in 1., above, a flashback is inserted which recounts events that happened several decades before the primary sequence of events.³³ Since it provides the background to the succession crisis in Zheng, thus linking the two annalistic entries, this analepsis is not as irritating as the above episode about Zhao Dun. However, it may be identified as an independent unit on very similar grounds.

- Double or multiple transmissions. Lord Li is established twice, in A. and b.
- Secondary brackets. The two annalistic entries that appear at the beginning and the end of this passage clearly belong together. They note the death of the duke of Zheng, the flight of the heir apparent, and the accession of the new duke. Standing side by side, they would make a perfectly coherent chronology.
- Tensions in vocabulary, especially contradictions and breaks in the text's progression. Again, A. is not dated – only the vague “some time earlier” indicates the time –, and it introduces new characters to the story, namely Zhai Zhong, Deng Man, and Yong Ji.
- Finally, the anecdote's style differs significantly from the annalistic entries a. and b. The latter are by nature paratactic, simply juxtaposing terse verbal sentences without (at least in this sample) use of conjunctions, prepositions or even pronouns. A., however, gives a true narrative with subordinate clauses (connected by the conjunction *er* 而), logical connections (*gu* 故) and the use of anaphoric pronouns (*zhi* 之) which function as cross-references between clauses; direct speech occurs in one case.
- Tensions and unevenness of content as well as elements typical for a genre. A. clearly belongs to an entirely different literary genre, since it lacks the date, which is mandatory for annalistic entries, and its style, as described above, differs radically. A few noteworthy elements, which might be typical for this genre, may be pointed out: the use of *nü* 女 as a transitive verb in the sense of “give as a wife,” *qu* 娶, and the repeated use of *you chong* 有寵, *sheng* 生, and *li* 立.

In fact, these four expressions sum up the gist of this episode: someone “marries,” someone “gains favor,” as a result, someone “gives birth” and finally someone is “installed.” It is a story of intrigues, cronyism, and succession fights – one of many such juicy anecdotes that have been transmitted from ancient China.³⁵ The above analysis suggests that the anecdote derives from a different source than the surrounding annalistic entries, making it an independent, self-contained unit.³⁶ In fact, this seems to be the case with very many, perhaps all of these analeptic anecdotes, as the remainder of this paper will try to demonstrate. The famous first story in the *Zuo zhuan*, also from the state of Zheng, follows a very similar pattern, and again it is inserted as an analepsis.

33 More precisely, about forty years. The year of the entry is 701 BC, and Lord Zhuang, who figures in the anecdote, began his reign in 743 BC. However, *Shiji* (14.541ff and 42.1759–1761) does not report these marriages, and the anecdote does not provide the date.

34 Huan 11, 132.

35 Interestingly, of the 16 examples for analepses with *chu* 初 that Nienhauser (2003, 47–48) notes, no less than eleven contain anecdotes of love, marriage, birth, and succession.

36 As far as I can see, there exists no parallel to this anecdote in other classical texts.

3. a. 夏四月，費伯帥師城郎。不書，非公命也。
In summer, in the fourth month, Qinfu of Bi led troops to fortify Lang. This is not recorded because it was not by our lord's command.
- A. 初，鄭武公娶于申，曰武姜，生莊公及共叔段。莊公寤生，驚姜氏，故名曰寤生，遂惡之。愛共叔段，欲立之。亟請於武公，公弗許。及莊公即位，為之請制。公曰：「制，巖邑也，虢叔死焉。佗邑唯命。」請京，使居之，謂之京城大叔。
Sometime earlier, Lord Wu of Zheng took a wife in Shen, who was known as Wu Jiang. She bore Lord Zhuang and Duan. Lord Zhuang was breech born, and Lady Jiang was shaken. For this reason, she named him “Breech Born” and consequently hated him. She loved Duan and wanted to establish him as heir. Time and again she asked this favor of Lord Wu, but the lord would not grant it. When Lord Zhuang acceded, she requested the settlement Zhi for Duan. The lord said, “Zhi is a strategic place. The younger brother of the ruler of Guo died there. For any other place, you need only issue a command!” She requested Jing, and the lord sent Duan to live there, calling him “The Senior Younger Brother of the Walled City Jing.”
- b. 祭仲曰：「都，城過百雉，國之害也。先王之制：大都，不過參國之一；中，五之一；小，九之一。今京不度，非制也，君將不堪。」公曰：「姜氏欲之，焉辟害？」對曰：「姜氏何厭之有？不如早為之所，無使滋蔓！蔓，難圖也。蔓草猶不可除，況君之寵弟乎？」公曰：「多行不義必自斃，子姑待之。」
Zhai Zhong said, “For the wall of an outlying city to exceed one hundred *zhi* is a danger for the capital. In the system of the former kings, large cities did not exceed one-third of the capital, middle-sized cities did not exceed one-fifth, and small cities one-ninth. Now Jing, failing to conform to this standard, is not in accordance with the rules. You, my lord, will not be able to bear it.” The lord said, “Since Lady Jiang wanted this, how am I to avoid harm?” Zhai Zhong replied, “How will Lady Jiang ever be satisfied? It would be better to settle this matter right away. Do not encourage creeping vines to spread! Once they spread, they are difficult to control. If even creeping vines cannot be rooted out, then how much less the favored younger brother of a ruler?” The lord said, “If he repeatedly commits undutiful acts, he surely will bring himself down. For the time being, sir, just wait for this.”³⁷

The story is well-known: Gong Shuduan expands his influence with the help of his mother, finally plotting to attack Lord Zhuang, which leads to a civil war in Zheng. All of this is the backstory for the *Chunqiu* entry “the earl of Zheng defeated Duan at Yan.” Relying on the information given in the *Shiji*, historians may date this backstory about 40 years prior to the *Chunqiu* entry, but significantly, the anecdote itself does not provide this date.³⁸ It is not specified chronologically, merely offering a woefully imprecise “some time earlier” that is placed in no measurable relation to any fixed point in time.³⁹ “Some time earlier” remains as vague a dating as “once upon a time” in Western fairy tales – an analogy to which I shall return.

37 Yin 1, 10–11. The same events are described very similarly in *Shiji* 42.1759–1760.

38 Lord Wu of Zheng (r. 770–744 BC) is said to have married a Jiang from Zheng in his tenth year, that is 761 BC; cf. *Shiji* 14.536, and 42.1759. Cf. also Liang Yusheng's commentary quoted by Takigawa in *Shiki kaichō kōshō* 42.6 (1046), who sees no basis for this dating.

The entire analepsis is clearly independent of the annalistic entry. What is more, it does not seem to be homogeneous itself. The caesura occurs after the account of Gong Shuduan's move to Jing. Up to then, it is a story of love and hate, intrigues, and a succession fight, employing very similar key words as in the above example (*ai* 愛 instead of *you chong* 有寵, *qu* 娶, *sheng* 生, and *li* 立). Stylistically, the narrative employs short verbal sentences with spare use of direct speech or rhetorical elements; apart from the introductory *chu* 初, temporal and logical connections are indicated by *gu* 故 (which also appears in 1 A. and 2 A.), *sui* 遂, and *ji* 及.

What follows, rather abruptly, is the remonstrance of Zhai Zhong (apparently the same person that was introduced in the episode discussed above) who had not been mentioned before; instead, Gong Shuduan is not mentioned at all.⁴⁰ It is not clear, whether the time changes, but the style certainly does: whereas direct speech, just like in the example above, occurs only once in the first part, the second part consists almost entirely of direct speech. Rhetoric elements like anteposed objects (姜氏何厭之有), rhetoric questions (焉辟害 and 況君之寵弟乎) categorical statements (蔓, 難圖也) absent from the first part, now gain prominence. Perhaps most significantly, the topics under discussion change entirely. The speeches are all about norms (*zhi* 制) and propriety (*yi* 義), whereas such considerations were absent in the preceding episode. A woman experiences an agonizing birth, gives her newborn son a highly unflattering name and tries to deprive him of his birth rights in favor of her second son: this is what we would call a human interest story. They are in no way moralizing; indeed they are strangely devoid of abstract principles or moral lessons. Normative issues, be it morals, ritual propriety, or traditional rules, are conspicuously absent from the anecdotes under consideration.⁴¹ This is equally evident in the following anecdote, again from the state of Zheng.

4. a. 冬, 鄭穆公卒。

In winter, Lord Mu of Zheng died.

- A. 初, 鄭文公有賤妾曰燕姑, 夢天使與己蘭, 曰: 「余為伯儵。余、而祖也。以是為而子。以蘭有國香, 人服媚之如是。」既而文公見之, 與之蘭而御之。辭曰: 「妾不才, 幸而有子。將不信, 敢徵蘭乎? 」公曰: 「諾。」生穆公, 名之曰蘭。文公報鄭子之妃曰陳媯, 生子華、子臧。子臧得罪而出。誘子華而殺之南里, 使盜殺子臧於陳、宋之間。又娶于江, 生公子士。朝于楚, 楚人醜之, 及葉而死。又娶于蘇, 生子瑕、子俞彌。俞彌早卒。洩駕惡瑕, 文公亦惡之, 故不立也。公逐群公子, 公子蘭奔晉, 從晉文公伐鄭。

Some time earlier, Lord Wen of Zheng had a lowly concubine named Yan Jyi. She dreamed that a heavenly messenger gave her an orchid with these words, "I am Bochou. I am your ancestor. Let this be your child. As the orchid is the most fragrant flower of the domain, people will take him to themselves and love him, just as they do this flower." Not long after, Lord Wen saw her, gave her an orchid and had her serve him. She stated her case: "I am without merit. If I will be so fortunate as to bear a child, others will not believe me.

39 Cf., in a similar vein, Schmale 1993, 28, referring to "pre-literate memory of ancient and Germanic peoples."

40 It is noteworthy that the beginning of this speech appears almost verbatim in *Liji* 30.3 (*jijie* ed., 50.1282): 故制: 國不過千乘, 都城不過百雉, 家富不過百乘。以此坊民, 諸侯猶有畔者。 This parallel, too, suggests that this speech (or a part of it) is an independent unit.

41 Note, for example, that *li* 禮 appears in 1.a., but not in 1.A.

May I presume to use the orchid as proof?" The lord said, "Agreed." She gave birth to Lord Mu and named him Lan or "Orchid." Lord Wen had a liaison with the Zheng Master's wife Chen Gui, and she gave birth to Zihua and Zizang, Zizang was guilty of an offense and fled to Song, Lord Wen induced Zihua to go to Nanli and put him to death there, and he sent brigands to kill Zizang between Chen and Song, Lord Wen also married a woman of Jiang, who gave birth to Gongzi Shi. While he was visiting the court of Chu, the men of Chu poisoned him, and he died upon reaching Ye. Lord Wen also married a woman of Su, who gave birth to Gongzi Xia and Ziyumi, and the latter died young. The Zheng minister Xie Jia detested Gongzi Xia, and so did Lord Wen. That was why he was not established as heir. The lord expelled the noble sons. Gongzi Lan fled to Jin and followed Lord Wen of Jin in his military expedition against Zheng.⁴²

4. b. 石癸曰：「吾聞姬、媯耦，其子孫必蕃。媯、吉人也，后稷之元妃也。今公子蘭，媯甥也，天或啟之，必將為君，其後必蕃。先納之，可以亢寵。」與孔將鉏、侯宣多納之，盟于大宮而立之，以與晉平。
Shi Gui said, "I have heard that when the Ji and Jyi lineages make a match, their descendants are sure to flourish. 'Jyi' means an auspicious person; such was the name of the original consort of Lord Millet. Now Gongzi Lan is descended on his mother's side from the Jyi lineage. Perhaps heaven has opened a way for him. He must become ruler, and his progeny are sure to flourish. If we are the first to receive him, we may in this way win greater favor." Shi Gui, together with Kong Jiangchu and Hou Xuanduo, received him, swore a covenant with him at the ancestral temple and established him as ruler so as to achieve peace with Jin.
- c. 穆公有疾，曰：「蘭死，吾其死乎！吾所以生也。」刈蘭而卒。
Lord Mu fell ill. He said, "When the orchids die, I will likely die also! I was born because of them." The orchids were cut and he died.⁴³

Another moving story of love, affection and intrigue. And again, it displays little concern with propriety or ritual norms. This absence is highlighted by the following speech, which is all about historical precedents and abstract principles. The words "I have heard," introducing a lesson from history, are unheard of in analeptic anecdotes. The anecdotes are neither didactic nor edifying. Instead, they are entertaining, often even lewd or outrageous – which is, after all, what makes the *Zuozhuan* such a fascinating book.⁴⁴ The following example may serve as a case in point:

42 Durrant, Li, and Schaberg comment: "This harks back to events twenty-four years earlier, when Jin decided to support Lan (*Zuo*, Xi 30.3). The stories of Lord Wen's other sons are also told in *Zuo*, Xi 7.3, 33.9. In *Zuo*, Xi 30.3, the narrative concern is why Jin supports Lan, while the other passages pertain to the fate of Lord Wen's other sons. The account considered here refers to these earlier events but answers new questions as to how Lord Mu became ruler and why he died."

43 Xuan 3.6, 672–674. On this passage, cf. Li 2007, 87ff.

44 The more surprising it is that the tale of Gong Shuduan which features so prominently in later *guwen* anthologies is found nowhere else in classical literature. The *Shiji* is the first book to retell the story; cf. *Shiji* 42.1759.

5. a. 冬，城向。書時也。

In winter, we fortified Xiang; this is recorded because it was timely.

- A. 初，衛宣公烝於夷姜，生急子，屬諸右公子。為之娶於齊，而美，公取之。生壽及朔。屬壽於左公子。夷姜縊。宣姜與公子朔構急子。公使諸齊。使盜待諸莘，將殺之。壽子告之，使行。不可，曰：「棄父之命，惡用子矣？有無父之國則可也。」及行，飲以酒。壽子載其旌以先，盜殺之。急子至，曰：「我之求也，此何罪？請殺我乎！」又殺之。二公子故怨惠公。

Sometime earlier, Lord Xuan of Wei had consorted with Yi Jiang, who gave birth to Jizi. They entrusted him to the Noble Son of the Right. They selected a wife for him in Qi, and she was beautiful, so Lord Xuan took her for himself. She gave birth to Shou and Shuo, and Shou was entrusted to the Noble Son of the Left. Yi Jiang hanged herself. Xuan Jiang, the woman from Qi, conspired with Shuo against Jizi. Lord Xuan sent Jizi to Qi and sent brigands to await him at Shen, where they were to kill him. Shou told Jizi of the plot to induce him to set out for some other place, but Jizi was unwilling and said, “If he rejects his father’s command, of what use is a son! If there were a domain without fathers, then I could flee there.” When Jizi was about to depart, Shou plied him with wine. Shou then carried his banner and went first. The brigands killed him. When Jizi arrived, he said, “I am the one you were after. What crime did he commit? Please kill me!” The bandits also killed him. The two noble sons consequently hated Lord Hui.

- b. 十一月，左公子洩、右公子職立公子黔牟。惠公奔齊。

In the eleventh month, Xie, the Noble Son of the Left, and Zhi, the Noble Son of the Right, established Gongzi Qianmou as ruler. Lord Hui fled to Qi.⁴⁵

This analeptic anecdote,⁴⁶ again inserted between two annalistic entries, adds another entry to the vocabulary of illicit sexual relations: *zheng* 烝, which means having intercourse with a consort of one’s father (add *tong* 通, *yin* 淫, and *bao* 報, which appear in similar anecdotes, and the lexicon seems rather complete).⁴⁷ This was by no means the only such occurrence in the state of Wei, as the following anecdote illustrates:

45 Huan 16.4, 145–146.

46 Or are there two anecdotes? The second part, beginning with Xuan Jiang 宣姜 (who is thus called for the first time), calls Shou and Shuo by different appellations, and it is somewhat unusual insofar as it conveys a sense of moral duty (of a son towards his father) and employs some rhetorical devices (note the anteposed object in 我之求也).

47 Cf. Gu 1996, 635 ff. Durrant, Li and Schaberg note: “‘To consort with’ is our translation for the highly problematic term *zheng* 烝, usually ‘steam’ or ‘to steam.’ While the early commentators insist that this means to have an illegitimate sexual relationship ‘with a member of the older generation,’ some have argued, Tong Shuye perhaps the most noteworthy (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan yanjiu*, 209–213), that the practice of *zheng* originally was not considered improper. Rather, Tong argues, sons of noble lineages had access to the concubines and wives of a deceased father other than their own mother. Confucian commentators who lived in an era when such a relationship could only be branded as ‘immoral’ misunderstood this practice. Yi Jiang was a concubine of Lord Zhuang of Wei, Lord Xuan’s deceased father.”

6. a. 狄入衛，遂從之，又敗諸河。
The Di entered Wei and then pursued them, defeating them once more at the Yellow River.
- A. 初，惠公之即位也少，齊人使昭伯烝於宣姜，不可，強之。生齊子、戴公、文公、宋桓夫人、許穆夫人。文公為衛之多患也，先適齊。
Sometime earlier, Lord Hui had still been young at the time of his accession. The Qi leaders had urged Zhaobo to consort with Xuan Jiang, Lord Hui's mother. He refused, but they forced him. She gave birth to Qizi, Lord Dai, Lord Wen, the wife of Lord Huan of Song, and the wife of Lord Mu of Xu. On account of Wei's numerous troubles, Lord Wen had gone to Qi earlier.
- b. 及敗，宋桓公逆諸河。
When Wei was defeated, Duke Huan of Song went to meet the Wei refugees at the Yellow River.⁴⁸

Again, the drift of the anecdote is the same as in the foregoing examples, and again it is wedged between two sentences which clearly go together: 及敗 connects directly to the previous 又敗諸河. Once alerted to their vocabulary and aware of their distinctive identity, many analeptic anecdotes that bear the same features meet the eye. Some examples will suffice to illustrate this:

7. A. 初，宋芮司徒生女子，赤而毛，棄諸堤下，共姬之妾取以入，名之曰棄。長而美。平公入夕，共姬與之食。公見棄也，而視之，尤。姬納諸御，嬖，生佐，惡而婉。大子痤美而很，合左師畏而惡之。寺人惠牆伊戾為大子內師而無寵。
Sometime earlier, the Song supervisor of conscripts Rui had sired a girl child. She was born red-skinned and hairy, and he had had her abandoned at the bottom of an embankment. A concubine subordinate to Gong Ji took her in and named her "Qi." She grew up and became beautiful. Once, when Lord Ping entered his mother Gong Ji's quarters to pay an evening visit, Gong Ji gave him a meal. The lord saw Qi and gazed at her, finding her supremely bewitching. Gong Ji included her among the lord's concubines. She was favored and gave birth to Zuo, who was ugly but gentle. The heir apparent Cuo was handsome but ruthless. Xiang Xu, the preceptor of the left, feared and hated him. The eunuch Huiqiang Yili was the heir's court preceptor but did not enjoy any favor.
- a. 秋，楚客聘於晉，過宋。大子知之，請野享之，公使往。伊戾請從之。公曰：「夫不惡女乎？」對曰：「小人之事君子也，惡之不敢遠，好之不敢近，敬以待命，敢有貳心乎？縱有共其外，莫共其內，臣請往也。」遣之。
In autumn, a Chu visitor came on an official visit to Jin and passed through Song. The heir apparent knew him and requested to offer him a ceremonial entertainment in the countryside. The lord had him go. Huiqiang Yili requested to go with the heir apparent. The lord said, "Does he not hate you?" He replied, "When a petty man serves a noble man, if he is hated, he would not presume to distance himself; if he is loved, he would not presume to draw close. Respectfully he awaits commands. How would he presume to shift allegiance? Even if there are those supplying his needs in external affairs, there is none supplying his needs in internal affairs. Your servant begs leave to go." The lord sent him.⁴⁹

48 Min 2, 266–267.

49 Xiang 26, 1117–1118. The anecdote has no parallels in other works.

The anecdote, very similar in form and content to the above-mentioned analepses, is clearly distinct from its context. Although it lacks a clear ending, it may well have been part of a larger self-contained unit that was inserted into the *Zuozhuan* narrative. The topos of the abandoned child, which appears in this anecdote, is well known in the Chinese tradition. Most prominently, the ancestor of the royal house of Zhou was abandoned and later named Qi, “Abandoned.”⁵⁰ But the topos also appears in another analeptic anecdote of the *Zuozhuan*.

8. A. 初，若敖娶於鄖，生鬬伯比。若敖卒，從其母畜於鄖，淫於鄖子之妻，生子文焉。鄖夫人使棄諸夢中。虎乳之。鄖子田，見之，懼而歸。夫人以告，遂使收之。楚人謂乳穀，謂虎於菟，故命之曰鬬穀於菟。以其女妻伯比。實為令尹子文。

Some time earlier, the Ruo’ao lineage head had married a woman of Yun, who gave birth to Dou Bobi. After he died, Dou Bobi followed his mother and was raised at Yun. He had an affair with the daughter of the Master of Yun, and she gave birth to Dou Guwutu. Lady Yun had him abandoned at the marshes of Meng. A tigress suckled him. When the Master of Yun went hunting, he saw this, and returned in fear. His wife told him what had happened, and he thus had the child brought back. The Chu people called suckling “gu,” and tigers, “wutu.” That was why the child was named Dou Guwutu (Dou Suckled by the Tigress). The lord of Yun gave his daughter in marriage to Dou Bobi. That child, Dou Guwutu, was none other than chief minister Ziwen.

- a. 其孫箴尹克黃使於齊，還及宋，聞亂。其人曰：「不可以入矣。」箴尹曰：「棄君之命，獨誰受之？君、天也，天可逃乎？」遂歸，復命，而自拘於司敗。王思子文之治楚國也，曰：「子文無後，何以勸善？」使復其所，改命曰生。

His grandson, the deputy of remonstrance Kehuang, was sent on a mission to Qi. On his way back, by the time he had reached Song, he heard of the rebellion. His men said, “You can no longer enter Chu.” The deputy of remonstrance said, “He who rejects the ruler’s command – who will accept him? The ruler is heaven; can one escape from heaven?” So he returned, reported on his mission, and had himself detained by the officers of the law. Reflecting on Dou Guwutu’s able governance of Chu, the King said, “If Dou Guwutu were to have no progeny, how could one encourage excellence?” He thus had Kehuang return to his position and changed his name to “Sheng.”⁵¹

Once more, this is an entertaining story about marriage, birth and adultery, including the topos of abandoning a child and adding a passage on its naming, another common literary motif.⁵² Grammatically, too, the passage corresponds to the analepses discussed above. It consists entirely of verbal sentences, only connected twice by conjunctions (*sui* 遂 and *gu* 故), without direct speech or rhetorical figures. Again, it seems plausible to regard this passage as independent: it is clearly marked off against the preceding and succeeding parts by its different chronological context as well as by the change in protagonists.⁵³

50 *Shijing* 245 (“Shengmin”), 727–734; *Shiji* 4.111.

51 Xuan 4, 682–683.

52 For naming stories in the *Zuozhuan*, cf. Li 2007, 90–91. It may be noted that such stories, too, typically take the form of analepses, e.g. Huan 2, 91–92: 初，晉穆侯之夫人姜氏以條之役生大子，命之曰仇。其弟以千畝之戰生，命之曰成師。

The analepses discussed so far were all introduced by *chu* 初, but this need not be the case. Adverbial phrases like “last year” or genitive constructions like “when the duke was young” which are hardly more precise, may fulfill the same function.⁵⁴ Or introductory phrases may dispensed with altogether, as in the very first lines of the *Zuozhuan*⁵⁵ or in the case of the scandalous succession in Lu:

9. a. 秋，襄仲、莊叔如齊，惠公立故，且拜葬也。

In autumn, Xiangzhong and Shusun Dechen went to Qi: this was because Lord Hui was established as ruler; and moreover it was to pay their respects at the burial.

A. 文公二妃。敬嬴生宣公。敬嬴嬖，而私事襄仲。宣公長，而屬諸襄仲。襄仲欲立之，叔仲不可。仲見于齊侯而請之。齊侯新立，而欲親魯，許之。

The secondary consort of Lord Wen, Jing Ying, had given birth to Lord Xuan. Jing Ying was the favorite but had private dealings with Xiangzhong. When Lord Xuan had grown up, she entrusted him to Xiangzhong. Xiangzhong wanted to establish him as ruler, but Shuzhong Huibo was unwilling. Xiangzhong had an audience with the Prince of Qi and requested help from him. The Prince of Qi was newly established as ruler and wanted to have close relations with Lu, so he agreed to it.

b. 冬十月，仲殺惡及視，而立宣公。書曰「子卒」，諱之也。

In winter, in the tenth month, Xiangzhong killed E and Shi and established Lord Xuan as ruler. The texts says, “The son died” to conceal it.⁵⁶

Between two annalistic entries, the second of which connecting directly to the first, a self-contained anecdote takes the narrative back several years.⁵⁷ It deals not with official history, as codified in annals, but the more intimate history of the ‘inner chambers,’ where women play a decisive role as wives, mothers, or seducers, and where the kind of love and hate developed that later influenced political events.

So far, the argument for independence of analeptic anecdotes has been based on internal evidence only. Moving beyond the *Zuozhuan*, it may be noted that none of the above anecdotes seem to appear in other classical texts before the *Shiji*. Not even the *Guoyu*, which shares more than 70 stories with the *Zuozhuan*, transmits any of the anecdotes. Neither Lord Zhuang’s breech birth (3 A) and its consequences nor the stories of abandoned children in Chu and Song (7 A and 8 A) or the intrigues surrounding Lord Wen’s succession (9 A) are recorded there. Whereas this observa-

53 To be sure, the introductory “his grandson” does provide a link to the preceding analepsis; however, such elements may well be ascribed to a redactor who brought together two different narratives. As in the other cases, this analeptic anecdote has no parallels in other classical works.

54 It is my impression that in these cases, too, we have independent literary units, albeit linguistically somewhat different from the ones under discussion. As far as I can see, these passages have not yet been studied systematically.

55 Yin 1.1: 惠公元妃孟子。孟子卒，繼室以聲子，生隱公。宋武公生仲子。仲子生而有文在其手，曰為魯夫人，故仲子歸于我。生桓公而惠公薨，是以隱公立而奉之。

56 Wen 18, 631.

57 In the *Zuozhuan*, such entries may well follow one another without narrative parts intervening. Indeed, entire years may be covered solely by annalistic entries, perhaps complemented by philological commentaries; cf., for example, Huan 4, 101–102.

tion does not allow of any conclusion *per se*, such absence is conspicuous in such cases where the context of the anecdotes is transmitted but the anecdote itself is missing. Indeed, this is regularly the case in the *Guoyu*. Take the following narration in the *Zuozhuan*:

10. A. 莒紀公（子）生大子僕，又生季佗，愛季佗而黜僕，且多行無禮於國。
 Lord Ji of Ju fathered the heir apparent Pu and also Jituo. He loved Jituo and demoted Pu as heir apparent. Moreover, he did many things in the domain that were not in accord with ritual propriety.
- a. 僕因國人以弑紀公，以其寶玉來奔，納諸宣公。公命與之邑，曰：「今日必授！」季文子使司寇出諸竟，曰：「今日必達！」公問其故。季文子使大史克對，曰〔...〕。
 Pu worked through inhabitants of the capital to assassinate Lord Ji and then came to Lu in flight, bringing with him treasures and jades, which he presented to Lord Xuan. Our lord commanded that he be given a settlement and said, “This very day it must be granted!” Ji Wenzhi sent the supervisor of corrections to expel Pu from the borders of the domain and said, “This very day it must be accomplished!” When our lord asked why he had done this, Ji Wenzhi had the grand scribe Ke respond as follows: [...].⁵⁸

Follows a long speech by the grand scribe about ritual propriety, replete with classical quotations.⁵⁹ More interesting for the present study is the first part, A., which displays all the characteristics of an analeptic anecdote: it is an undated flashback (returning the reader to the birth of Pu, who is an adult in the following story), a story about birth, love, and an irregular succession.⁶⁰ Compare this to the *Guoyu*'s version of the story:

- a. 莒太子僕弑紀公，以其寶來奔。宣公使僕人以書命季文子曰：「夫莒太子不憚以吾故殺其君，而以其寶來，其愛我甚矣。為我予之邑。今日必授，無逆命矣。」
 The prince of Ju assassinated Lord Ji and then came to Lu in flight, bringing with him treasures. Lord Xuan sent a servant with a letter to Ji Wenzhi, commanding him: “The prince of Ju was not afraid to assassinate his ruler for the sake of myself, and he came in flight, bringing with him treasures: he loves me deeply, indeed. Give him a settlement on my behalf. This very day it must be granted, don't disobey the order!”⁶¹

The anecdotal flashback is conspicuously absent from the *Guoyu*. The fact that the story about the prince of Ju could be transmitted without it would seem to be another strong argument for the independence of the anecdote. William Boltz, commenting on a very similar phenomenon, concluded:

The *Guoyu* version has lines clearly and closely matching those of part A of the *Zuo zhuan*, but nothing matching part B. This in itself is a compelling reason to see the *Zuo zhuan* passage as composed of two distinct and separable parts.⁶²

58 Wen 18, 633.

59 The speech has been suspected to be an “interpolation;” cf. Pines 2002, 234–238, noting terms like *xiongde* 凶德, *cheng* 誠 and several others which appear only in this speech.

60 One may note the unusual mention of *li* 禮 in this anecdote. Should the somewhat awkward final sentence 且多行無禮於國 be a later addition?

61 *Guoyu* 4 (Lu 1.12), 176.

62 Boltz 2005, 68.

Further evidence underlining the independence of analeptic anecdotes may be found in the following parallel passages of *Guoyu* and *Zuozhuan*.

11. A. 晉獻公娶于賈，無子。烝於齊姜，生秦穆夫人及太子申生。又娶二女於戎，大戎狐姬生重耳，小戎子生夷吾。晉伐驪戎，驪戎男女以驪姬歸，生奚齊，其娣生卓子。驪姬嬖，欲立其子。

Lord Xian of Jin took a wife in Jia. She had no sons. He consorted with his father's concubine Qi Jiang, and she bore the wife of Lord Mu of Qin and the heir apparent Shensheng. He also took two women from the Rong. Hu Ji of the Greater Rong bore Chong'er, and the younger concubine of the Lesser Rong bore Yiwu. When Jin attacked the Li Rong, the Head of the Li Rong presented his daughter Li Ji. After they returned to Jin, she bore Xiqi, and her younger sister bore Zhuozi. Li Ji enjoyed the lord's favor and wanted to establish her son as heir.

- a. 賂外嬖梁五與東闕（嬖）五，使言於公曰「曲沃，君之宗也；蒲與二屈，君之疆也；不可以無主。

She bribed the lord's male favorites Liangwu and Dongguan Biwu and had them say to the lord, "Quwo is the place of my lord's ancestral temple. Pu and the two Qu are on my lord's borders. These cannot be without masters."⁶³

Whereas the speech that follows should certainly be separated from the anecdote according to the criteria of literary criticism, it may seem odd to cut off the sentence about bribing the two favorites. It does, however, usher in a new story line, introducing new characters, and – more compellingly – it marks the beginning of the *Guoyu* version:

- a. 驪姬賂二五，使言於公曰：「夫曲沃，君之宗也，蒲與二屈，君之疆也，不可以無主。

Li Ji bribed the two Wus and had them say to the lord, "Quwo is the place of my lord's ancestral temple. Pu and the two Qu are on my lord's borders. These cannot be without masters."⁶⁴

Here, the *Guoyu* version coincides almost verbatim with the *Zuozhuan* – but the preliminary anecdote is again left out. The *Guoyu* does mention the birth of Li Ji's and her sister's sons in another place,⁶⁵ but there is no record of the women from Jia, the intercourse with Qi Jiang, not even the birth of Chong'er and Yiwu.⁶⁶

Further examples of missing anecdotes in *Guoyu* which require no further comment are:

12. A. 初，王姚嬖于莊王，生子穉。子穉有寵，蕞國為之師。及惠王即位，取蕞國之圃以為圃。邊伯之宮近於王宮，王取之。王奪子禽祝跪與詹父田，而收膳夫之秩，故蕞國、邊伯、石速、詹父、子禽祝跪作亂，因蘇氏。

Sometime earlier, the king's concubine Yao had been favored by King Zhuang and had given birth to Wangzi Tui. Wangzi Tui had become the darling of the king, and Wei

63 Zhuang 28, 238–239.

64 *Guoyu* 7 (Jin 1.6), 270.

65 *Guoyu* 7 (Jin 1.3 and 1.4), 261 and 264.

66 Which is all the more surprising since *Guoyu* is the main source for the life of Chong'er; cf. Khayutina 2006.

Guo had been made his tutor. When King Hui acceded, he seized Wei Guo's garden and made it into a park. Since Bian Bo's palace was close to the king's palace, he seized it too. The king took territory from Ziqin Zhugui and Zhanfu and held back the salary of his cook, Shi Su. As a result, Wei Guo, Bian Bo, Shi Su, Zhanfu, and Ziqin Zhugui raised a rebellion, relying upon the support of the Su lineage.

12. a. 秋，五大夫奉子績以伐王，不克，出奔溫。蘇子奉子績以奔衛。衛師、燕師伐周。
In autumn, the five high officers supported Wangzi Tui in attacking the king, but they were not victorious and fled to Wen. Master Su supported Wangzi Tui and fled to Wei with him. Troops from Wei and Yan attacked Zhou.
- b. 冬，立子績。
In winter, they established Wangzi Tui as ruler.⁶⁷

The *Guoyu* account starts exactly where the analeptic anecdote in the *Zuozhuan* ends:

- a. 惠王三年，邊伯、石速、葛國出王而立子頹。
In King Hui's third year, Bian Bo, Shi Su and Wei Guo drove out the king and established Wangzi Tui as ruler.⁶⁸

Apparently, the compilers of *Guoyu*, unlike the *Zuozhuan* compilers, did not consider the anecdotes worthy of being recorded as history. This is further illustrated by the following passage in *Zuozhuan*:

13. A. 王子朝、賓起有寵於景王，王與賓孟說之，欲立之。劉獻公之庶子伯鯨事單穆公，惡賓孟之為人也，願殺之；又惡王子朝之言，以為亂，願去之。
Prince Zhao and Bin Qi enjoyed the favor of King Jing. Both the king and Bin Qi were pleased with Prince Zhao and wanted to establish him as heir. Liu Di, a son of the Liu Duke Xian by a concubine, was in service to the Shan Duke Mu. He hated Bin Qi for his behavior and was eager to have him put to death. He also hated Prince Zhao's manner of speaking, which he considered insubordinate, and was eager to have him removed.
- a. 賓孟適郟，見雄雞自斷其尾。問之侍者，曰：「自憚其犧也。」
Bin Qi, on his way to the outskirts of the city, saw a rooster plucking out its own tail feathers and asked about it. His attendant said, "He fears his own sacrifice."⁶⁹

Which has the following parallel in *Guoyu*:

- a. 景王既殺下門子。賓孟適郟，見雄雞自斷其尾，問之，侍者曰：「憚其犧也。」
King Jing had killed Xia Menzi. Bin Qi, on his way to the outskirts of the city, saw a rooster plucking out its own tail feathers and asked about it. His attendant said, "He fears his sacrifice."⁷⁰

Again the evidence of the *Guoyu* suggests that the episode about the rooster (which the *Guoyu* goes on to recount in much the same way as the *Zuozhuan*) was originally independ-

67 Zhuang 19, 212–213.

68 *Guoyu* 1 (Zhou 1.11), 28–29: Interestingly, Wei Zhao sums up the anecdote from the *Zuozhuan* in his commentary: apparently, he considered it necessary for the explanation of the events. For the same reason, the compiler of *Zuozhuan* may have inserted it.

69 Zhao 22, 1434.

70 *Guoyu* 3 (Zhou 3.8), 142.

ent of the anecdote that precedes it in *Zuozhuan*. Indeed, all the analeptic anecdotes about love and hate, intrigues, and succession fights seem to be particular to the *Zuozhuan*. The *Zuozhuan* compilers seem to have been unique in that they deemed these anecdotes worthy of transmission. Perhaps they were not available to the *Guoyu* compilers; but in at least one case, an analeptic anecdote seems to have been intentionally purged. The *Zuozhuan*, narrating the tragic story of king Xiang of Zhou, who married a Di wife and thus brought disaster upon himself, has the following background information to offer:

14. A. 初，甘昭公有寵於惠后，惠后將立之，未及而卒。昭公奔齊，王復之，又通於隗氏。王替隗氏。顏叔、桃子曰：「我實使狄，狄其怨我。」遂奉大叔以狄師攻王。王御士將禦之，王曰：「先后其謂我何？寧使諸侯圖之。」王遂出，及坎欲，國人納之。

Sometime earlier, Wangzi Dai had gained favor with King Hui's queen. The Queen was going to establish him as ruler, but before she could accomplish this, she died. Wangzi Dai had fled to Qi. The king brought him back into the domain, but then he had a liaison with Lady Wei, the king's Di consort. The king cast Lady Wei aside. Tui Shu and Taozi said, "We were the ones sent on a mission to the Di. The Di are sure to feel resentment against us." They then gave Wangzi Dai the support of Di troops to attack the king. The king's royal guard was going to resist the attack, but the king said, "What will the former queen say of me? I would rather have the princes decide what to do." The king then left the domain, reaching Kankan. But the inhabitants of the capital brought him back.⁷¹

This anecdote is actually recorded in *Guoyu*, but in a significantly different form:

- A. 初，惠后欲立王子帶，故以其黨啟狄人。狄人遂入，周王乃出居于鄭，晉文公納之。

Sometime earlier, King Hui's queen wanted to establish Wangzi Dai as ruler. Therefore, she and her coterie opened the way for the Di people. The Di then entered, and the Zhou king fled to reside in Zheng, and Lord Wen of Jin took him up.⁷²

This version lacks the core of the anecdote: the flight and return of Wangzi Dai (who, significantly, is called Lord Zhao in the *Zuozhuan*) as well as the incestuous affair with Lady Wei. Again, the *Guoyu* editors seem to have shied away from incorporating this delicate episode into their narrative. It has often been pointed out that the didactic intention of the *Guoyu* is more evident than in the *Zuozhuan*, that it is less "cynical," more "dignified" and concerned less with historical facts than with their "ethical significance."⁷³ The *Guoyu*, as Wei Zhao famously put it, "embraces heaven and earth, profoundly gauges fortune and disaster, reveals the obscure and subtle, and clarifies the good and the evil."⁷⁴ It is entirely conceivable that amoral anecdotes of the kind discussed above did not fit into this scheme.

The more remarkable it is that these anecdotes populate the *Zuozhuan* as independent textual units. The *Zuozhuan*, which is so much concerned with ritual order, obviously has a very earthy layer. There is nothing "Confucian" about the analeptic anecdotes. They do not

71 Xi 24, 425.

72 *Guoyu* 2 (Zhou 2.1), 53.

73 Zhang 1962, 243.

74 *Guoyu*, 661 (colophon): 包羅天地、探測禍福、發起幽微、章表善惡者。

describe history as the result of rulers' virtuous influence, the wise advice of their ministers or the recompense for moral or immoral behavior. Their scheme is much more straightforward. It is simply the intentions of the main characters that explain historical events: "Lord Zhuang was breach born, and Lady Jiang [...] consequently hated him," "she loved Duan and wanted to establish him as heir," "the eunuch Liu enjoyed favor and was hated by the heir apparent Zuo," "the king and Bin Qi were pleased with Prince Zhao and wanted to establish him as heir," "Liu Di [...] hated Bin Qi for his behavior and was eager to have him put to death," and so on. It is the simple mechanism of love, desire, jealousy and hate that drives this history.

These analeptic anecdotes seem to have been added to the text of the *Zuozhuan* at a certain point:⁷⁵ evidently after the annalistic entries and after certain narrative sequences the existence of which they presuppose. A narrative or chronological frame must be given for the anecdotes to fill in the background. The case is less clear with moralizing speeches, which often follow or even presuppose these anecdotes. Perhaps the anecdotes were inserted as props for moralizing speeches that straighten them out again. This seems likely in the following case:

15. a. 周公欲弑莊王而立王子克。辛伯告王，遂與王殺周公黑肩。王子克奔燕。
The Zhou Duke wanted to assassinate King Zhuang and establish Wangzi Ke as ruler. Xinbo reported this to the king and then, along with the king, killed Heijian, the Zhou Duke. Prince Ke fled to Yan.
- A. 初，子儀有寵於桓王，桓王屬諸周公。
Sometime earlier, Prince Ke had been in favor with King Huan, who entrusted him to the Zhou Duke.
- b. 辛伯諫曰：「並后、匹嫡、兩政、耦國，亂之本也。」周公弗從，故及。
Xinbo remonstrated: "A concubine put alongside the queen, a concubine's son made the equal of the main wife's son, a two-headed government, another city made equivalent in size to the capital: these are the roots of rebellion!" But the Zhou Duke did not heed this, and that is why disaster overtook him.⁷⁶

But this certainly is not true for all of them, since many – notably those inserted between two annalistic entries – do not connect to a moralizing speech. Analysis of this process, which properly belongs to the realm of redaction history, requires more in-depth research. Whereas this cannot be done in the present paper, I will finally turn to another methodological step which Biblical criticism inserts before redaction history, namely transmission history: the study of the oral history of textual units before their earliest ascertainable written stage.⁷⁷ Simply put, the question is where the analeptic anecdotes came from in the first place.

75 And, one may presume, by a different hand. If an author is, as Foucault succinctly put it, "the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning" ("le principe de l'économie dans la prolifération de sens;" I owe this quote to Martin Kern), then the analeptic anecdotes would seem to indicate a different author or redactor at work, adding to the "proliferation of meaning" in the *Zuozhuan*.

76 Huan 18, 154.

77 Steck 1998, 63–74; cf. *ibid.*, 75–93, for redaction history.

Possible Origins of the Anecdotes

Implicitly, this paper has already gone beyond literary criticism, which deals with discrete passages one at a time, in assuming a connection between the anecdotes. In fact, it is tempting to suppose that they constitute a homogeneous layer in the *Zuozhuan*, derived from a common (type of) source. The question, then, is what this source could be.⁷⁸

The very word “anecdote” (gr. *an-ekdota*, un-published) which has been used throughout this paper suggests orality.⁷⁹ Indeed, it is hard to imagine these scandals as part of court diaries (let alone annals), documents, inscriptions or any other written form known from Chunqiu times.⁸⁰ Their very style, projecting “the illusion of unfeigned, spontaneous storytelling,”⁸¹ bears the marks of orality.⁸² Orality would also explain the irritating deficiency of these anecdotes: they hardly provide a context, they do not convey lessons or even judgments, which are, after all “the anecdote’s *raison d’être*.”⁸³ No story can do without a moral judgment of sorts, analeptic anecdotes included. So most likely, all of these affective and contextual elements, including an explicit or implicit judgment must have been there *in the oral context* in which the story was told. It was only with the transfer to writing that these elements were lost.

But where and when were these anecdotes told, and by whom? What was their *sitz im leben*? And, equally important, how were they transmitted over centuries? It seems unlikely that they were “transmitted by teachers who carefully guided their students’ readings” or were “presented as part of persuasions that used the anecdote for didactic purposes.”⁸⁴ In fact, they do not belong to the realm of literary, academic or any other kind of dignified discourse at all. The stories of incest and intrigue neither fit the style of the aristocracy nor that of the rising academic elite. Rather they are demotic in nature, providing the ignoble background for the life of the elite in Chunqiu times. They display the sort of “base curiosity” that Michel Foucault has imputed to all historians:

Indeed, it is a sort of utter tastelessness, a certain clumsiness that seeks intimate association with those of higher rank and delights in finding something base about them. The historian knows no disgust; or rather, he delights in what should be disgusting. [...] Whence does history come? From the plebs. Whom does it appeal to? The plebs.⁸⁵

78 I leave the possibility of outright invention aside for the moment, although it certainly cannot be ruled out.

79 Cf. Schaberg 2001, 189, who stresses “Monika Fludernik’s claim that the anecdote is a fundamentally oral form.”

80 Incidentally, an important argument for Yuri Pines’ (2002, 18–20) theory that the *Zuozhuan* is based on written sources is the fact that so many of its entries are dated. Conversely, the fact that these anecdotes are *never* dated would seem to provide a strong indication to the contrary.

81 Monika Fludernik, as quoted in Schaberg 2001, 172.

82 For this reason, the method of “isocolometrical analysis” cannot work for anecdotes. The character count of the present examples hardly ever adds up to multiples of 22 or 24 simply because there were no written precursors.

83 Schaberg 2001, 181, who quotes Hayden White as authority: “the demand for closure in the historical story is a demand [...] for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama.”

84 Schaberg 2001, 172. As noted above, Schaberg does not deal with the kind of anecdotes discussed here.

85 Foucault 1998, 61.

No doubt to whom the professor at the Collège de France would have attributed the *Zuozhuan* anecdotes. They certainly do not derive from the noble courts – at least not from the “outer court,” being the realm of high culture and politics. But perhaps the “inner court,” that is the court ladies? Maybe the protagonists of these anecdotes, the women, were also the ones who narrated them, thus creating their own history (just like the members of the academic elite would construct a history in which they themselves were the protagonists): a history unfettered by ritual and moral considerations, but rich in details that the court ladies would have direct access to.⁸⁶ On the other hand, court gossip never tends to be confined to the (inner) court; in fact, it is only outside the court that it becomes really interesting, granting outsiders voyeuristic glimpses of an inaccessible world.⁸⁷ Such human interest stories catered to the popular mind not only by their topics, but also by the way they explained history: for “the popular consciousness views all misfortune [...] in the light of this great dramatic motive; it cannot grasp any other causes than such that are personal and passionate.”⁸⁸ For the people, the anecdote, focusing on those petty motives and ignoring broader contexts or long time spans, must have been the most human and natural way, indeed the only way of telling history. Or is it history? In a way the introductory *chu* 初 resembles the “once upon a time” of fairy tales that are not bound to specific circumstances but are fundamentally timeless. The anecdotes may have been the fairy tales of the people, providing steady guidance in a changing world. It was only with their incorporation into the *Zuozhuan*, then, that these anecdotes were historicized.⁸⁹

There are several clues in the *Zuozhuan* itself, which suggest that anecdotes may have gained currency among the people. The following passage is explicit about this:

16. a. 冬，齊、鄭盟于石門，尋廬之盟也。庚戌，鄭伯之車僨于濟。

In winter, Qi and Zheng swore a covenant at Shimen: this was to renew the covenant of Lu. On the gengxu day (?), the chariot of the Liege of Zheng tipped over into the Ji River.

A. 衛莊公娶于齊東宮得臣之妹，曰莊姜，美而無子，衛人所為賦《碩人》也。又娶于陳，曰厲媯，生孝伯，早死。其娣戴媯生桓公，莊姜以為己子。公子州吁，嬖人之子也。有寵而好兵，公弗禁。莊姜惡之。

Lord Zhuang of Wei took as wife the younger sister of Dechen, the heir-apparent of the domain of Qi. Known as Zhuang Jiang, she was beautiful but had no sons. It was for her that the people of Wei recited the ode “The Great Lady.” The lord next took a wife in Chen known as Li Gui. She gave birth to Xiaobo, but he died young. Her younger sister, Dai Gui, gave birth to Lord Huan, whom Zhuang Jiang took as her own son. Zhouxu was the child of a favorite. He had the lord’s favor and was fond of weaponry, and the lord did not restrain him. Zhuang Jiang hated him.

86 One is immediately reminded of the literary works of Heian court ladies, the most outstanding representatives of which are Sei Shonagon 清少納言 (966–1025) and her contemporary Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (dates uncertain). Interestingly, critics have observed a striking lack of moral concern, especially in Murasaki’s *Genji monogatari*; instead, the central values are elegance and purity.

87 Cf., albeit from a very different period, Naquin 2000, 131: “Through the stories of participants, a fascination with – and a voyeuristic appreciation of – life in the palace seeped steadily into Peking culture and became inextricable from it.”

88 Huizinga 1975, 15.

89 Note how history emerges from the combination of two ahistorical elements: annalistic notes and timeless anecdotes. Annals provide the dates, and anecdotes the narrative, and only together they become historical.

16. b. 石碻諫曰：「臣聞愛子，教之以義方，弗納於邪。」

Shi Que remonstrated: "I have heard that if one loves a son, one teaches him the ways of duty and does not allow him to stray into deviant paths."⁹⁰

It was for her that the people of Wei recited the ode "The Great Lady": indeed, the song "Shiren" 碩人 (*Mao* 57) praises the "Child of the Prince of Qi, / The wife of the Prince of Wei, / The younger sister of the heir-apparent" (齊侯之子, 衛侯之妻, 東宮之妹), just like it is described in the anecdote.⁹¹ Apparently, Zhuang Jiang became part of popular lore – and it is entirely plausible that anecdotes about her were orally transmitted along with the song.⁹²

Nor is this the only example that can be adduced. According to the "Small Prefaces" to the *Maoshi*, love, licentiousness and court dramas were just the stuff that the songs of the "Guofeng" section were about. According to this interpretation, at least two songs in the present *Shijing* are dedicated to Gong Shuduan (3A.): "Shu yu tian" 叔于田 (*Mao* 77), and "Dashu yu tian" 大叔于田 (*Mao* 78);⁹³ Lord Xuan of Wei and his wife (5A.) is supposedly being satirically treated in "Pao you kuye" 匏有苦葉 (*Mao* 34), "Xintai" 新臺 (*Mao* 43), and "Erzi cheng zhou" 二子乘舟 (*Mao* 44) is said to refer to his sons; "Qiang you zi" 牆有茨 (*Mao* 46) is associated with Zhaobo and Xuan Jiang (6A.), "Junzi jie lao" 君子偕老 (*Mao* 47) only with the latter; at least two songs, "Ge sheng" 葛生 (*Mao* 124) and "Cai ling" 采苓 (*Mao* 125), are directed against Lord Xian of Jin, who became the victim of Li Ji's vices (11A.); King Zhuang (12A.) is allegedly criticized in "Qiuzhong you ma" 丘中有麻 (*Mao* 74). About one third of the anecdotes under consideration are in some way connected to *Songs*. Considering that only a small part of the ancient songs has been transmitted (one need not believe in the traditional number of 3,000 to find this plausible),⁹⁴ this ratio does not seem insignificant.

Establishing such connections, of course, is highly speculative, especially since it relies on an interpretation of the *Songs*, which is not attested earlier than Han times.⁹⁵ However, such a connection to songs could explain two things. Firstly, it would provide a *sitz im leben* for anecdotes: they were part of popular lore, told as background stories accompanying communal songs. Secondly, it could explain how these anecdotes, which likely were never written down before the *Zuozhuan*, were transmitted over centuries, much longer than living memory can reach back. The songs were memorized and passed on, and so were the stories that went along with them. In this way they became a part of popular heritage – until some impious hand inserted these anecdotes between annalistic entries in the annals of Lu, thus turning them into history.

90 Yin 3, 30–31.

91 Allegedly, the song "Kao pan" 考槃 (*Mao* 56) criticizes Lord Zhuang of Wei, although there is no indication of this in the song itself.

92 The problem remains who exactly is meant by "the people." Yang and Ti 1985, 7–8, list 13 different meanings for *ren* 人, including "man," "people," "subordinate officials," as well as "ruler and high ministers."

93 Another one, "Jiang Zhongzi" 將仲子 (*Mao* 76) is supposedly dedicated to Zhuang Jiang.

94 The absence of songs from Lu in the "Guofeng" of course, is particularly striking.

95 Martin Kern (2010, 28–39) has recently suggested that quite another hermeneutic approach, attested to in the *Kongzi shilun* and the *Wuxing pian*, may have been dominant in pre-imperial times. But the tradition reflected in the *Maoshi* – if it is older than Han times – is likely to have been a "little tradition," carried not by the elite, but by the people.

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