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※ Review essay ※

Writing and Authority in the Empire of the Text

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Writing and Authority in Early China. By Mark Edward Lewis. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999. SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Pp. vii + 544. Paper.

The Empire of the Text: Writing and Authority in Early Imperial China. By Christopher Leigh Connery. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998. Pp. xiv + 209. Paper.

This book review essays to offer tribute to two important books of our times. The sequential appearance of these two works marks a breakthrough in our understanding of ancient China, and it also shows us a new level of maturation in studies thereof. This review will detail their contributions to a textual approach to Chinese texts. By focusing on writing and textuality, these authors clearly announce to us that the

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philosophy of a literature cannot be separated from the literature of the philosophy: the texts of these teachings are teachings about texts. They suggest it behoove both parties to the relation to discover in the mirror their parallel identities in the other.

These works join a general debate in the philosophy of language and psychology treating language, and by extension textuality, as primarily constitutive of thought or reality, rather than primarily communicative of prior thought or of prior reality. Examining the medium for *its* messages, they set the investigation of the classical and early literary tradition the task of exploring the texts as a new kind of virtual reality: a holographic medium which Bronze Age China bequeathed to the imperial dynasties, where the position of the king is coded into virtual relation with all elements of the textual production. Such a perspective, highly needed in this field, prepares the investigator to frame research in appropriate concepts, in terms of text, author, reader, narrative effects and figures, the position of the king, scenes of enunciation, intertextuality, and the complex domains of language and meta-language in which writing works. The appearance of these two books is a response to the unfortunate “undertheorization” in the dominion of Chinese classical studies, of which the over-reliance on work towards understanding the supposed prior reality—towards “establishing the foundations”—is “symptomatic”: “dates, authorship, textual variants, biographical and historical background” and all the other allegedly preliminary stages of research which occupy the major share of scholarly attention to the detriment of the development of text-oriented theory and its appropriate application (Connery, p. 7). Instead of focusing narrowly on these positivities of the texts, these books push us to examine the texts themselves, look for what the texts show us about themselves, how the texts bespeak their own positions in the intertextual field, and how they articulate their own

relation to their linguistic and cultural means.

These two books complement each other very well in establishing this new orientation; reading from Lewis to Connery, as we will do in this review, these two together comprise a sweeping account of the development of the Chinese textual tradition. This coherence notwithstanding, they are actually rather different projects. Lewis' effort is a careful reading of practically the entire ancient textual corpus, with detailed analysis and commentary for selected items; though difficult, it would be very suitable as textbook material in teaching early Chinese culture. Acknowledging his debt to "all the scholars whose research has been incorporated into" his own (p. vii), his book presents a summary of an extensive reading of secondary literature, particularly strong in French and Japanese research. Its depth and comprehensiveness recommend it as a textbook, standing upon a vast amount of scholarship and conveying some of the most advanced insights from giants of sinological and sociological fields. Connery's contribution, on the other hand, is relatively short and incisive; framed as an "experiment," it has an explicitly theoretical objective and conducts analysis of a few critical cases to demonstrate its point.

To say that Connery's work is more explicitly theoretical does not of course mean that Lewis' work lacks theory. To the contrary, his entire work is executed from the standpoint of a view of Chinese history and the way that textuality fits within it. The book carries out this theoretical perspective. Connery's work, on the other hand, *tests* a theoretical frame and articulates considerably more nuanced positions on controversial topics such as reading, writing, aesthetics, subjectivity, oral tradition, creativity and certain over-familiar tropes of historical narrative. Connery himself recognizes (p. 11) that Lewis' contributions, in spite of their enormous importance, invite further theoretical refinement, and tries in

part to address this challenge. We will examine this issue more carefully in discussing what Lewis has achieved.

Basically, the work of Mark Edward Lewis is grounded on the insight that writing has arisen in China as a double of the state. He knows that the earliest writing was developed as a conversation among the king, scribes, ancestors and spirits; it doubled political organization in the form of a tangible intermediary to the other world. As well, we know that Lewis is thoroughly acquainted with the history of social and political developments in the Eastern Zhou and particularly in the Warring States period. It is thus easy to comprehend that for him, the vicissitudes of the written text during these times reflect the disunity and eventual re-unification of the state. The rationalizing processes of statecraft resulted in totalizing or all-inclusive classical works. This theory, although stated simply, is surely not any less theoretical for all that. Its execution in the form of a reading and review of the textual corpus marks a monumental contribution to our understanding of the classical tradition. However, as we will see, just because Lewis' overall vision of the development of the literary corpus is so plausible and persuasive, we should take great care in assessing terms such as "totalizing" and "encyclopedic" to specify how they should be applied.

Cunningly, *Writing and Authority in Early China* is a work of 365 pages, in eight chapter divisions. The domains he maps are: writing the state, writing the masters, writing the past, writing the self (poetry); the political history and the natural philosophy of writing (the *Yijing* traditions); the encyclopedic epoch; and the Empire of Writing (the canon). Each part of this picture confirms the overall reading of the textual double of the state in its historical development and tries to synchronize their elements' occurrences. It is not only a political reading of the texts, of course. On the way making the historical demonstration, Lewis reads the

textual characters of his sources with vigor and brilliance.

The reviewer trying to criticize this tome of Lewis is a little like an ant ascending a Saturn V. There may be tiny bones to pick: those quaint Gallic spellings of “correspondence” that didn’t get edited out early in the book (p. 47); a character did not get transcribed (p. 268); a spelling error (p. 285); and it is true that, throughout, Lewis seldom neglects to boldly split the infinitive, etc. Because there are very few quibbles even at such a meager level, one indeed must treat the tract with tremendous respect for its accuracy, depth and comprehensiveness, and the brilliant power of the writing. The quality of indefatigable enterprise underlies an almost ineluctable, if not inexorable, vision that compels us on. In this reviewer’s opinion, the great payload of the author’s project is that in the course of executing the historical thesis, he has resolved to characterize and deal with the texts in terms that bring out vital aspects of their genius. Whatever we think about the historical account, however much we appreciate the thorough overview, the book is much to be celebrated for its uncompromising decision to write, as it were, in the register of the text.

Having noted that books are textual doubles of polity, in his section on statecraft, Lewis describes the extension of textuality from the early Chinese state, as we see it in the Shang, to its undoubtedly totalizing presentation of government structure in a work such as the *Zhouli*. This chapter, thus, sets the frame of the author’s thesis in probably its clearest instance. As the Shang state apparatus articulated on the ancestral framework, the production of genealogy provided a quasi-textual “flow chart of power in the spirit world”; in this way, “position took priority over personal character” and a structure was developed anticipating bureaucratic organization (p. 16). After the Shang, the Zhou state further developed from forms of family-based alliance into progressively deliberate administration, and writing was a crucial operator in the transition.

Writing was empowerment and subjection, since in its context of political development writing meant inscription into the bureaucratic order, as binding “legal” covenants and administrative instruments became used to expand the prior family–dominant mode of governance into the form of the state—the business commenced and well illustrated by the writing on the Western Zhou bronzes. Thus the king was the authority but not the author, according to Lewis. The mystic position of the king was as the quiet, omniscient reader/listener, but not as writer. Here, incidentally, the scenes of reading and writing, as raised by Connery, need juxtaposed with what Lewis says about the king (because the former claims that there is no pure scene of reading in early China, since all readers were writers). The two authors are not in full agreement in this question, but need further adjustment to be brought into congruence.

This is an important issue since Lewis has brought out very clearly the way the virtual position of the king informs the textuality of so much of the early writings, records, and law codes. The legal framework clearly encoded the relation of the subject to the king, and provided a scale of minute, quasi–mathematical gradations of rank and physical integrity, operated by the punishments and rewards, in order to map the positions of the two parties forming the termini of the inscribed/subjected relation. This system is an evident transposition of the formal schematic of sacrifices of the Shang, their clock–work calendrical round and their quantized sliding scale of offerings. The ruler, in short, takes on more and more qualities of the ancestral spirits in the Shang system. Intelligence reports go less and less to the latter and more and more to the former; as meanwhile, the scope of involvement of the state becomes more “democratized,” so to speak, along with the well–known “hollowing out” tendencies throughout the Zhou period (power descending down the “feudal” ranks and levels until it transcended the old states’ grasp altogether).

The culmination of this evolution is in the *Zhouli*-style texts whereby government is laid out in a clock-work, map-like pattern in accordance with cosmological principles. Let us grant Lewis' provisional justification (pp. 43–44) for attributing a doubled, administrative–religious character to the functional array the *Zhouli* job-descriptions deploy: these attributive words may be our present-day concepts, but the doubled vectors of organization proceed within the *Zhouli* system in the way Lewis has suggested. The doubling Lewis speaks of when he shows the parallelism of the state and text has occurred elsewhere in Chinese history as, for instance, dual exchange systems, doubling of the altars of the soil, doubling of office and cult, or general doubling of sociological and religious functions. It does not need to be conceptualized or named in order to have been a feature of organization recognized in some way in traditional culture.

Composed to show “a graphic image of the state as cosmic mandala” (Lewis, p. 45), the *Zhouli* text is “a ritualized, oversaturated bureaucracy of pure structure that is stripped of traces of temporality or narratability, rendering it not an organ of rulership or decision making but something like a dance in tune with the equally textualizable working of the cosmos” (Connery, p. 5). The assemblage of the *Zhouli* is worked out in a style that is identifiably in the cosmological genre arising in tune with the organization of political power culminating in the Qin and Han periods. As he reviews the *Zhouli* and other “schematic lists” of offices such as *Zhouguan*, *Dadai liji*, certain passages from *Mencius* and *Xunzi*, and *Shangshu lizheng*, Lewis asks questions such as whether the king was listed in the offices of governances or not. He can note that, whereas it appears at the top of the list in other texts, the position of the king is dispersed in the *Zhouli* throughout the offices, and this qualitative difference was to be the style of such schemas in the Han. Here, the king

or emperor is the ground of the cosmic plan, standing “behind” the grid of offices and their sacrificial-administrative apparatus.

The quest for comprehensive and systematic schematisms as in the case of the *Zhouli* and *Lüshi chunqiu*, among others, is realized even more dramatically in the appearance of the canon. The ambition of producing a canon, in conjunction with the physical attraction of the assembled texts in the court libraries, was to encompass the partial and limited views of individual schools and philosophers, and recover the universal scope befitting the imperial dignity. Han Wudi used control over the texts and the Ru to reduce the power of the peripheral players to the court; the consolidation of the canonical system followed the declining importance of the army, as the Eastern Han surrendered the military and administrative developments of the Warring States period. As the center lost the power of tax extraction to the manors, the rise of the “empire of the text” shadowed the trajectory of the Ru in shutting down first the local power-holders and then the central power.

The general outline of this account, running chronologically, is overwhelmingly persuasive. But because the chapter is put in a critical point of the argument, critical comment is important for this part of the present review. One must balance out what one believes about the historical developments against the original condition from which they emerged. If the reading of the earlier state is less thorough, then there will be a real risk of overstating the qualitative difference of the final condition. In particular, one wonders if the mileage the analysis gains with concepts of “totalization” happens because the term needs better specification, which would in turn make the historical account read differently.

Thus we can understand how the *Zhouli* and *Lüshi chünqiu*, among others, lay out the “mandala” of the state in a calendar-like, map-like scheme. But is it not possible that some earlier texts were composed with a

view to their holographic totality? Only, the schematics of the earlier totalizing attempts were not as mechanical as the execution of the *Zhouli* and other texts like it are seen to be. Before we can use the degree of “totalization” as an independent standard that varies historically from simple to complex, encyclopedic works, it is important that we reflect on the definition of this term itself. Can one doubt that Lewis, in some places of this work (e.g. pp. 103 on numbers, 243–45 on divination and moralization, and 280 on numerology), is engaging in some “just-so” story-telling about the progressive march of the texts from simple “lists” (p. 47) or, in the case of the *Yijing*, from a “simple manual of divination” (p. 241) to the over-arching comprehensiveness of the canonical heritage? But it remains to be seen how “simple” these earlier items are. He furthermore believes that the numerological principles of the texts he studies mark them diagnostically as later products; this assumption surely requires more careful substantiation on the basis of exposition of earlier works. Thus, to some extent, the progress Lewis stresses in reviewing the textual tradition is a result of the decisions the author himself has taken in respect to the elements of the story being reviewed. With a bias for the narrative of progress built in, in the selection and characterization of the factors in his account, he promotes a view which would date the textual corpus on what is ultimately a circular basis.

In establishing the balance between the assessment of the earlier condition and the historical progress, Lewis is predisposed to favor the latter because he makes too short shrift of the Western Zhou. He speaks, thus, of:

...the shift from the Shang’s calendar of sacrifices to potent spirits to the calendar of a ritual cycle derived from the Five Phases [which] provided the structure for the parallel ritual corporation and

administrative state of the *Zhouguan*, as well as the texts that articulated the calendrical model of monarchy at the end of the Warring States. Thus the two organizing principles of the Shang cult—genealogy and calendar—were both reworked into formal patterns of ritual that underlay the invention of the administrative state. (p. 51)

It would be good, in this sketch, if we were given even a summary comment about a Western Zhou contribution. As well, the two paradigms for the king's relation to writing (p. 35) jump from Shang, where the ancestors were the recipients of written communication, to the administrative state, where it is the king who fulfils this role. Again, we would like to see more of the intermediary forms in this story. Were the earlier and intermediary forms more carefully treated, he would find less compelling his thesis of totalization as an historical scale suitable as a criterion for dating. While there is some kind of progressive universalizing of the schemata for organizing classical texts, which Lewis has correctly sensed, the key issue is not the degree but of the *kind* of totalization. For instance, when he states (p. 47) that, “the rise of correlative cosmology... led to new models of governance based on imitation of natural patterns,” surely he does not imagine that prior to the new models nobody had imitated natural patterns? This sentence should read, “new models of governance based on *a certain kind of* imitation of natural patterns.” The task of historical scholarship thus should be to define the kind of interrelation of nature and culture at a given stage of development and how the concept of totality in the text is defined at each step. In this way, were it to be better addressed, we would get a better sense of the way the compositional logic was “flattened out” into models such as the *Zhouli* and *Lüshi chunqiu*, among others, and how these “rationalized” modelling techniques were shared across the texts as they moved along, in much the

way Lewis describes, towards the encyclopedic culmination in the canonical tradition.

The course of the book, from the texts which wrote the state to the state canonization of the texts, aims to illustrate that, “This dream of writing the world in a single text prefigured, in turn, the enterprise of uniting the world in a single state” (p. 287). We have argued that this thesis may be somewhat overstated, although basically indicative of interesting historical tendencies. To demonstrate it, Lewis treats the writing of the masters, the self, history and writing. These intermediary chapters are not only his case studies for his historical thesis, but also are invaluable for conveying the character of these often very difficult texts, the *Analects* (and other early texts by Masters), the *Springs and Autumns* traditions, the *Poetry Classic*, and the *Yijing* traditions. Lewis’ success in capturing their genius commends his work to careful study.

Inasmuch as writing was subjection, the king was not the author but the recipient of writing; in the same way, the master is not the author, but in life is the reader/responder and in death is the topic of the text. This oddly disjunct relationship between the subjective reality of the master and the text that bears his name mirrors speech: the master figures throughout at the enunciatory scene of the text, teaching his pronouncements, while the message of the teaching is formed around the distrust of language use. They are not of course incidental paradoxes but a central feature of the tradition. Through these paradoxes, “the master was always to some degree an invention of the text” (p. 95); as well, the group preserved the text and the text preserved the group (p. 55). The scene of enunciation, where the master appears, puts the latter in the position of the king, with the disciples as the scribes. They are the intermediaries for the master’s words, which thus are emerging, repeatedly, from a source that is hidden to us. The text unfolds repeated access to the master who is the object of

inquiry, but the teaching scene is always already re-enunciation to affirm the master's words in their social, transmitted setting. They cannot be merely the opinions of an individual, but are the framework by which subsequent readers of the text reach for an understanding of the master. As Lewis explains this (pp. 84–86), the features constructing the master as an object of inquiry include the suspicion of language; the expectation that the teacher should speak sparingly and elicit much; the conviction that “while the text perhaps mirrors Confucius’ teaching, this teaching is also an expression of the text’s form” (p. 85); and the situational orientation of the teaching. We know that the picture of Confucius presented in the *Analects* features a focus on the particular, concrete, temporal situation, so that the teaching is continuously unfolding; the teaching is rhythmic and always forthcoming, is the repeated re-expression of some hidden, unifying principle. The view of language we arrive at from these considerations is that meaning arises in the indirect cross-reference to *something else* which subtly conveys a teaching that propositional language poorly expresses. Indeed, “the point of language was efficacy, and words were not as efficacious as music” (p. 87).

With this approach the Ru school, and the texts that were their teachings, were engaged in a project to grasp and impart the principles that comprised the secret knowledge of kingship. They adumbrated their understanding of ancient kingship from the position of the king, which now was occupied by the figure of the master. They had embarked on the project of creating an imaginary counter-state. It is not correct to characterize these people as philosophers: “Masters of textual traditions were not philosophers, but rather sages who presented an alternative to philosophy, an encompassing truth whose victory over disputation was necessary to the survival of civilization” (p. 97). With the development of the different schools, there was a need to engage the competing viewpoints

of the different masters, and the schools unfolded fields for argumentation. Lewis shows how the Former Kings (Yu the Great, Huang Di) and Sages, chosen variously to champion diverse schools' views, focused debate and opened the field of contention. (Though Former Kings could name all things, the Sage was never wordy: this distinction shows us how meta-linguistic categories are helpful in mapping alignments in ancient Chinese textual fields, and reveals the characteristic distrust of language which is the basic feature of the writing of the masters).

Over time, the scene of teaching took second place to the problems of continuous transmission of the texts. As inter-school polemic took priority, the importance of the state for the schools increased. As well, the figure of the king returned as the master addressed teachings to kings, or with kings present. As the style of presentation became more discursive, more the direct expression of propositional arguments constructed to match and refute points made by other schools, then the master was moving towards resigning his standing in the position of the king and returning it to the state:

Thus the appearance of the master as an author, an isolated and individual voice whose disciples were excluded from the scene of his text, was a function of, or a step toward, his disappearance as the fundamental textual authority. In Chinese philosophy, "authorship" emerged in the space vacated by the shift of authority to the "classic." (p. 63)

In the process, the authorial voice also became writing that cited and compiled, because this development was deployed in the field of the Sages.

From this account we can see how much there is to recommend Connery's contention that, "Intertextuality—the linking of texts, contemporaneous or not, through direct and indirect quotation, allusion,

and other markings—is better understood as a defining feature of Literary Sinitic than as a literary technique or a stylistic device to be applied according to an author’s skill or whim” (p. 8). Lewis, of course, sees as a sign of increasing importance of textual authority the increasing frequency of inter-quotation in the texts of the schools, and in the historical texts that gradually shifted their focus from being documents for the state to documents of the schools (p. 105). As, in some cases, the text is a metonymy for the sage, and writing was held to be comprehensive as opposed to the partial and biased practices of custom, so it became more and more necessary to achieve an encompassing textual apparatus, while repelling or stopping the work of rivals (sage and king—“twin modes of censorship”—p. 120). The citation of the past amounted to a call for change in the present (p. 122), and consolidated information about the sages made a “field of disputation” and “ground of proof.” What had been attributed to the sages and kings of earlier days became associated with the masters (p. 123) and the textual authority of the schools was advanced thereby.

The writing of the past in the *Classic of Documents* and in the chronicles followed this trajectory of insertion into school traditions of textual authority, comprising an imaginary state. Lewis’ treatment of the *Springs and Autumns* traditions is excellent, and the section on the *Gongyang* commentaries is especially brilliant. He makes the important point that, “Studies of the *Zuo zhuan* have been dominated by the question of its dating, to the detriment of considering the nature of the text” (p. 132). Thus, he stresses the oppositional stance of the chronicler, showing how this historiography makes some judgements that are not literally true, but finds moral principles to explain the divergence: in this way linking the exposition of principles to the narration of events. Whereas the philosophical traditions formulated arguments, then gave them validation

through historical references, the *Zuozhuan* narrated historical events from which were developed historical truths. Although this trait is very like the conduct of divination practice, we also are given to understand the importance of the concept of *li* (ritual) which Lewis sees as the use of conservative practices for new political power (in connection with doctrines about the sages); the insistence on ritual inscribed the place of the Rǔ school into the foundations of the political order. Lewis finds, for instance, that the association of divination and chronicle in the *Zuozhuan* depicts the co-existence of parallel explanations for history, a domain where human action and divine intervention multiplied the interpretive resources of the chronicler, reflecting the dual nature of ritual: to commune with the spirits and to maintain human relations. This doubled nature of ceremonials was well understood by ritual theorists at the time.

This line of thinking shows that, whereas the *Zuozhuan* was written at the level of events, but included harangues and judgements, the *Gongyang* was entirely at the level of the author's ("Confucius's") implicit judgements. Like judicial work, it is not about past events but about recounting; it is the sage's account of the events. Lewis sees the classic in this work as similar to the position of the king and so the commentary sets up a complex interaction with it. The point of the classic-commentary apparatus is that in the world there are two kinds or standards of reality: the world of "pattern" or "text" and the reality of "expediency" (*quan*). Recent events departing from the ideal patterns are due to expediency. In the kingship of the classic, the pattern is the text itself while the commentary incorporates reality. "Thus the split between 'pattern/text' and 'reality' that informs the judgements of the *Gongyang* is recapitulated in the structure of the work." Lewis interprets the polarities of classic and commentary, ideal and real, principles and facts: "The two planes exist in a balance of mutual support and mutual repulsion" (p. 144) because the

classic cautiously omits conveying certain information or reconfigures events according to the principles of its construction. The commentary, on the other hand, tells everything for the sake of explaining the workings of the sagely adjudication. Thus, the upper level suppresses what the lower reveals, in a necessary balance. Together, this work suggests that kingship can exist in a kingless world, by showing how the realities of power and expediency interface with a world of pure pattern. It is a short step from this to the concept of Confucius as *suwang* or “uncrowned king.”

Like the chronicles, the writing of the self is a work in opposition to its times which bespeaks isolation, criticism and resentment. It is the opening of “a space in the intellectual field... wherein it was possible to question the virtue of Heaven... and to proclaim personal innocence—or even superiority—in the face of failure or suffering” (p. 153). Lewis has gifted us with an exceptionally brilliant discussion of the Mao tradition of the *Poetry Classic*, and of subsequent poetic works. Covering a millennium of development at work in the poetry traditions, he agrees with the view (Rawson, Shaughnessy) that early poetry reveals signs of specialization in liturgical functions with the progress to the mid-Western Zhou, so that an individual steps away from the group of participants to become the focal ritualist. The specialized ritual knowledge associated with the tradition of expert musician-liturgists was preserved in the courts and temples of the Springs and Autumns and thus was transmitted to the Warring States forms, appearing in such places as the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* texts among many others. When members of the aristocracy cited poetry in an exchange of presentations, this practice dissociated music and poetry, and supported noble generalists rather than hereditary experts. The uses of poetry must be understood in terms of the progressive divergence of states through the Eastern Zhou. Lewis devotes the major burden of his interpretation to showing the congruence of the poetic and political developments of the

time. The practice of presenting citations from the *Poetry Classic*, and the allusions to the classic in texts of the schools, give the impression of a progressive integration of the textual tradition as Lewis suggests. They also give occasion for a profound interpretation of what poetry signifies under such circumstances.

Like the other texts considered here, the *Poetry Classic* compels consideration of the limits of language. As poetry, it invites ambiguity and imagery, and as *lingua franca* for diverging states, poetic production conveyed recondite cultural significance. The ambiguity of meaning, “refusal of the narrative to explain itself,” was the power and the weakness of language (pp. 161, 163); the characteristic of cited poetry in turn was power, not meaning (p. 160). It did not communicate information or argument, but identified the social and cultural features of the participants. When these occasions of citing and exchange are themselves cited, it fragments the poetic dimensions of the piece even further and inserts interpretation in intertextuality. Thus, “Incorporation of poetry into a longer narrative changed its role from communication between speaker and recipient into a *sign* about the speaker or recipient, a sign intended for the implicit reader.” This textual strategy must have been part of a theory of poetic usage (p. 159), and it developed, as in *Xunzi*, the tendency to fix the meanings by the authority of commentary. “Such a program depended on reclaiming the past through a philosophic rereading of the remains of archaic religion” (p. 172); to do so presupposed the polyvocality of target texts, and thus the commentarial mode of reading/writing and a variety of lines of transmission.

In all, we can fathom that the practice of poetry always involved the introduction, through meaning, of some *other* meaning evoked by the linguistic production. This orientation enhanced an inclination to work with hidden meanings and indirect expression. This circumstance drew

upon the polyvocality of the poetry, which in turn was the basis of interpretation. As a result, the social ambience of poetry was in perpetual need of moral grounding, to limit the precarious exploitation of poetic power for individual purposes; as well, the poetic stamp of the education a man received was conducive to a general attitude of “reading” an individual like a text, through his poetic and ritual expressions. (This “entextualizing” attitude can be seen elsewhere: reading faces, for instance, in the physiognomic tradition (Connery, p. 132), in the “reading” of ritual performance in the *Zuozhuan*, and in the way Confucius “reads” his students in the *Analects*; the *dramatis personae* in these works furnish a network of differences for the narratization of the group. It is also seen in the way the “individual talents” of Jianan writers “divide along generic lines” so that “only in the collective is there writing as a whole” (Connery, p. 159).

These textual resources help explain the direction of historical development subsequently. Lewis is keen to assert a progressive tendency in this domain too. Within the framework of the changes described above—from group ritual to ritual expert dealing in undifferentiated music/poetry/ceremony, from hereditary experts to generalized nobles dealing in poetry alone in diplomatic exchange, from the presentation of poetry to its representation in stories about the diplomatic exchanges, or from the citation of poetry in textual argument, from its evocative citation by the schools to its use as evidential material in even later texts—we can see the general outlines of development point unmistakably to the *Mao Edition of the Poetry Classic*. Lewis’ brilliant treatment of the Great Preface and the individual prefaces in the Mao tradition brings out its assonance with the other encyclopedic projects of its time.

We can hardly fail to recognize that the *Mao Edition of the Poetry Classic* makes every moment of the text into a hidden reference to the

king. “Inscribing the eclipse of royal virtue and the fact of royal collapse, the anthology of the odes became a seat of royalty” (p. 176). Even the critique of the present kingship is tacit praise of the earlier kings. Thus, Mao inscribes the king as the origin and the theme of every poem, and makes the *Poetry Classic* a model of the empire (p. 175). With the kingly government as its virtual center, the verses ascend like the winds. They give both a spatial array and a chronological development (from celebratory forms to forms of decline) of the state. In this way, “each song takes its sense from its place within the whole”; thus, “the meanings of the poems are derived not from the individual poets but from their place within the anthology, and by extension their relation to the king” (p. 176).

This situation, so described, evidently recalls the lessons of the previous texts Lewis has considered. One can do no better than quote his penetrating conclusion:

The king was the hidden meaning of every ode, but these in turn were the definition of the king and the form of his presence in the world. The king informed the odes and the odes the king, but the ultimate grounding of what would otherwise become an endlessly retreating meaning was the written text. Just as the master was created in the text that derived from his teaching, so the ruler and the state were invented within the texts which drew their meaning from the political order. (p. 176)

It is the textual orientation of the cultural tradition that gives the text leave to constitute its object within the means of its textuality. Moreover, this hidden monarchy preserved the memory of the earlier ritual order; in effect, when the poet spoke, he occupied the position of the ruler, and spoke with the ruler’s authority (p. 176).

Other than repeat the macrocosmic modeling principle which we

have seen at work in other texts, the *Mao Edition of the Poetry Classic* also articulates a theory of expression to found a “psychological” or microcosmic model of the self. Lewis calls it the “spillover” metaphor for the uncontrolled spontaneity that this theory links to the “spatializing” analysis of expression working from inside to outside, as well as to the functioning of *qi* as the theoretical basis of the model. By this account, which has deep links to the musical tradition, Mencius and the Zi Si school, the expressivity of the poetic experience runs its course past the realm of awareness and control. The concept of *qi* gives the “motor” of the poetic production, and also the “guarantee of its truth” (p. 176). This conceptual foundation allowed a theory for verse as lyric to emerge four centuries before the appearance of authored lyrics (p. 175). At the same time, however, the “Mao Preface” makes it clear that expression in the so-called “psychological” domain is restricted by the social and political and that the business of the odes was a part of a political process, as we have seen.

The focus of the *Poetry Classic* on the travails of the isolated self was shared by the poems of the *Chuci* tradition. The idea of the expressive output of the poet as a function of his sensitive temperament, and his inability to find the appreciation his talents deserved, motivated a group of poems that described the attempt of the poet to find, from the reader, the understanding and appreciation he could not obtain during life. Its readership comprised a large group of people in the Han who apparently felt the same way, a very dangerous indicator for the state. The text tried to distance the reader from this identification but also to perpetuate it; in this way, the *Chuci* took on the aspect of a text moving across time and space, gathering a readership as it went. Meanwhile, the figure of Qu Yuan as the “author” of the text was invented just as that of Confucius was, but the latter had disciples to write the text, and it became the foundation of a

school; whereas the former had none, and in the end was thought to be the personal creator of the *Chuci* text, which circulated in search of a readership.

Lewis' treatment of these works further includes details on the poetics of stopping language. If this *tour-de-force* were not enough, he also adds a very thought-provoking little coda about the relation of death and authorship, including an excellent sketch of the way death structures the stories surrounding Sima Xiangru and his relation with Han Wudi.

This particularly strong treatment of poetry takes the reader to the chiasmatic center of *Writing and Authority in Early China*. Whereas the previous chapters had analyzed the writing of the self and of history, the ensuing chapters, filled with outstanding insights, will take on the history and philosophy of writing. In the chapter on the "Political History of Writing," Lewis considers a three-stage model of the relation of humans and writing. The first situation, associated with Fuxi (or Fu Xi), shows a condition where the ruler is a pure master of visual signs. The next development is a case such as the Duke of Zhou; here, the government and the texts exist in parallel domains, but can be united in a single figure. The third stage is when one finds separate realms for exercises in pure power and empty written form; this is the situation of Confucius, and is elaborated in traditions of the "king without attributes" (*suwang*) or in the "muscular Confucianism" of Sima Qian.

The first stage in this framework shows Fuxi; at this point, writing was not a single, codified system of graphic communication, but a hierarchical series of visual sign networks. "Fu Xi neither speaks nor listens. He sees. His body produces writing because it recognizes itself as being, like other bodies and their traces, a prior inscription, already a text" (Connery, p. 35). Fuxi and Nüwa mix visual signs, writing and vital powers of generation; later Chinese "literati thought of written symbols

and graphs as objects capable of generation and growth” (p. 208). To consider the first stage, Lewis treats the account of the history of civilization from the *Xici* commentary of the *Yijing*. Both Connery (pp. 34–36) and Lewis (p. 199) recognize that the list of cultural inventions presented here has been carefully designed. It is clear that Fuxi, in inventing the eight trigrams, invents the basis of all the further inventions (since these are in turn based on particular hexagrams). Furthermore, in particular, both scholars note that the first and last items in the list of inventions are linked in some way. This list covers hexagrams #30, 42, 21, 1 & 2, 59, 17, 16, 62, 38, 34, 28, 43. We see that, even disregarding the recursive beginning, we cannot decide if there are 12 or 13 items in the list, because the third item contains the Qian and Kun hexagrams; these hexagrams being “not two, not one,” the list is given a kind of expansive dynamic based on the play of a unity (+1, -1), a device familiar in archaic protomathematical traditions. Lewis and Connery do not note that the “chiasmatic center” of this list (between items number 6 and 7) is marked by contiguous hexagrams (#17, 16), but we do see that the iteration proceeds to a kind of “tying up” of the list by the invention of writing to control the disorderly proliferation of knotted records for communication. Writing obviates the quipu system.

For his treatment of the second stage, Lewis treats us to an impressive reading of the Jinteng chapter of the *Classic of Documents*. It is the story of a text-within-a-text (the thing to catch the conscience of the king). The occluded text, reminiscent of so many buried archives and oaths of alliance, is hidden in order to be found by young King Cheng, who learns his lesson thereby: it had been produced as a substitute for the Duke of Zhou, who in turn was a substitute for King Wu, who in turn is mentioned in this story only to be removed (by death). The kings are only negative elements to frame the action of the story, which features instead

the minister. Like the *Zuozhuan* stories, a poem appears in the story, but unlike the later chronicles, this poem is not only cited but created, and not only recited but written, by the sage minister. These texts were created and hidden in order to combat the unruly slandering (spoken) language swirling around the king and obscuring the virtue of the Duke of Zhou. We can see that the Jinteng indeed is textually doubled and that the Duke is simultaneously subject and king through the textual order. This leads Lewis to discuss the dangerous doubling of the king in his minister, a discussion the failure of which to mention its debt to Granet's excursus on the "alter ego" (throughout *Danses et Légendes*) is very astonishing.

Confucius develops the trajectory of the text in the muscular Confucianism presented by Sima Qian. Here, authorship is a sign of disaster and rupture of human ties; texts are hollow counterfeits of kingship. Converting anthology to biography, the historian creates a text (*wen*) to show the militant (*wu*) aspect of the sage, who can return to his vocation of teaching if the texts draw sufficient readers to themselves.

With this, Lewis returns to the discussion he began in his treatment of Fuxi and the organic nature of writing as a network of visual signs. Lewis' treatment of the *Yijing* tradition shows that he is as enthralled as everybody else is by the *Xici* commentary tradition; after all, we are all at the mercy of the *Xici* when we undertake a thematic reading of the *Zhouyi*. At least Lewis does not attack the commentary with the pathetic fetishes of "Confucianism" and "Daoism"! Instead, he goes straight at what the *Xici* is saying, giving us a splendid reading of it in its own terms, as a natural philosophy of signs.

It is true that we are obliged to read through a bit of speculative historical reconstruction of some alleged progressively moralizing use of the so-called "simple manual of divination." (Consider the passage on p. 263, for example, where Lewis reconstructs the formation of the *Yi*: it goes

directly from the “divination manual” to the commentaries.) However, the discussion readily devolves on an extended consideration of what it means to be committed to the project of divination in the first place. The commitment to textuality that comes with divination practices implies “a proto-science of generating and mutating signs” (p. 266). The *Yi* text “conflates the generation of visual signs with that of the physical objects they represent, and places the sages among these objects... [and] this suggests that the text had created the sages” (p. 253). In short, the world is a populated habitus of meaningful signs that are simply copied into the parallel reality of texts and writing; sages are those who can grasp the written messages bearing both cosmic and personal significance. “Writing derives directly from the contemplation of the world without passing through the medium of spoken language” (p. 274). To provide divination with its interpretive resources, the formal structures (*gua*: trigrams and hexagrams) are teleological and quasi-sentient, “the motors of natural process”:

The elements of the *Yi* appear as dynamic, living agents that push and move on their own accord. They are constant correlates of natural processes and underlie the sexual division that allows generation and maturation. Consequently they are responsible for the birth and death of all things. (p. 261)

The key to textualizing experience as writing is in the concept of the image. The *Xici* commentary “both *insists on* the nature of the *Yi* as text and *denies* that same nature by making its operations indistinguishable from natural phenomena” (p. 262). An image contributes to the “conflation of sign and reality” (p. 262), since, of course, it offers an “unmediated correspondence to the world” (p. 265) due to its iconicity, at the same time as it is the sign of the absence of something. As a visual sign, it is

conducive to written expression (p. 271). “When hexagrams were imagined as the origins of script, reading natural phenomena as signs became the prototype of reading graphs” (p. 263).

The single most important fact about Chinese philosophical thought is that it is stamped with its origins in divination and ancestral religion. “The idea of a correspondence between the natural and human realms emerged out of the ancient social and religious milieu in which the phenomena of the natural world were scrutinized and recorded as guides to human actions” (p. 263). The diviners shaped the images into a delimited set capable of manipulation and interaction. As Granet also showed us, images in the ancient Chinese tradition are “not purely abstract quantities or formal relations, but schematized forms of real entities.” They indicate a typologizing and topologizing concern. “Hexagrams and lines use certain relations—center versus periphery, matching correlates versus mutually repelling identities—as types for all social bonds” (p. 266).

For this reason,

the elements of the *Yi* are interchangeably (or indistinguishably) text and reality. In defining these elements and relations, the authors of the text smuggle the phenomenal world into their proto-mathematical system, and then claim to derive that world from their calculations. (p. 266)

This observation, stated in exactly the right phrases, is an extremely profound and important point about the logic of design of the *Yijing* overall. It comports with knowledge of ethno-classification from anthropology. To use Lévi-Strauss’s term, divination works like “bricolage” to make use of whatever means are at hand for interpretation. Otherwise stated, as structural analysis itself shows, the “lived” quality of such systems is in the mode of “realized logic” where the concrete and

situational delimit, while “embodying,” the categorical possibilities. This project derives its motivation from social experience, which presents the individual with rationally organized processes that were not rationally conceived. As far as the *Zhouyi* text is concerned, the dream of finding a top-down, algorithmic principle to generate the sequence deductively is still strong for many researchers, but it is more likely that the apparently seamless organization which one imagines is indeed the great designing achievement of the text’s arrangers. Instead, the King Wen sequence of the text is the holographic integration of many dozens of local logics, small sub-systems of regional coherence, which are craftily segued to give the impression of logical wholeness. The design principles of these systems are very sophisticated, but they are not like the calculational procedures of the Qin and Han, nor do they share the same field of pragmatic application as them in the exercise of positive knowledge. Lewis states: “While the numerical character of the hexagrams is ancient, only in the ‘Great Tradition’ and the ‘Shuo gua’ commentaries were the numbers theoretically articulated and worked into the analysis of the cosmos through numerical correlations” (p. 282); all of this deserves close attention before adequate clarity to make these decisions can be achieved. It is certainly not the case that the numerological project of linking heaven, earth and humans is a late development in the tradition. Lewis’ section on numbers and writing simply points to the problem of understanding the ancient structure of number usage; to study this requires putting the number sciences in an ethnological frame and treating the ancient documents more carefully in the context of the mythical and formal operations we see working there.

The use of this divinatory tradition to analyze their social reality reveals the characteristic attitude to language, as needing images and music to overcome its “inability... to exhaustively represent things” (p. 267). The *Yijing* sets “the images, which stand for the preverbal apparatus of the *Yi*–

the trigrams and hexagrams—parallel to the linguistic element;” thus “the images encompass the trigrams and hexagrams” (p. 267). The divinatory tradition is extremely close to the musical tradition in its concern for eliding the limits of language. In fact, this quality of music led Lévi–Strauss to liken music and myth; and the inter–workings of myth, and ritual, with the *Zhouyi* tradition are very important clues for interpreting the structure of the ancient text.

It is truly remarkable that anybody could have done the enormous work required to produce an excellent book such as *Writing and Authority in Early China*. One must admire such a researcher’s determination. The textual pattern itself exudes the inexorable will: first, the author chooses the next deeply interesting area of his argument; next, he sets out around three incisive points pertaining to the argument. Finally, he carries out revelatory analyses of the points he has delimited. The result of this effort has been an irreplaceable panorama of the genius of classical and early literary Chinese texts. This book helps everybody to understand the tradition much better.

Connery’s work is a lucid alternative to some customs of scholarship in this area that should be re–assessed; he clears a lot of underbrush with this book and shows the way an alternative view would look. If you view the *shi* as easily definable as the “intellectuals” (“like us”) of the Han, and think that the major issue which occupied them was the Old Text and New Text controversy; if you feel that the *danggu* incident (affair of the proscribed factions) treated the intellectuals unfairly and resulted in the fall of the Han dynasty; if you imagine that we see the sprouting of the creative individual expressing himself in such settings as the Jianan group; if you think “folk” or “oral” elements refreshed and influenced the elite production of poetry in the Han–Wei period; or if you are sure that you are able to have privileged access to the subjectivity of poets and find a

literary aesthetic developing at the end of the Han: then Connery's work will be a great challenge to your accepted scheme of things. He promotes agnosticism towards the subjectivities of the agents involved in textual production; he discusses the difficulties of definition of the *shi* (class? occupational category? social formation? literate people?) in imperial China. He probes into what "book" means, in its material and social manifestations, to learn what "the integrity of a 'book'" consists of. These are all very salutary developments in the study of Chinese culture.

The Empire of the Text amounts to a principled re-thinking of the theoretical basis of the study of ancient Chinese culture, which pressures us to quit our familiar conceptual frames and examine the terms we use in a more cautious light. In the first place, we know that by the time of the Han, the textual tradition had totalized its scope; the classics had become "vehicles of transmission, media for a message whose content is the power and range of the medium itself" (p. 6). We know that to treat this tradition properly, we need to see texts as constitutive, not communicative; they are not transparent indicators, expressions or even symptoms of external or prior (sociological or psychological) reality. Rather, they bespeak the autonomous action of textual production, which strengthens its own authority by its activity. This orientation follows an "explicitly textual logic" (p. 7) and, in particular, is always intertextual and linked to the state; in fact, since there is nothing *hors texte*, it suggests that, "the ritualized representation of the functioning of the state is coterminous with the functioning itself" (p. 10). Thus Connery, in his agnosticism, would like to treat the text/social formation directly, without intermediary of the subjectivity or intentionality of the author: the "sociotextual matrix."

This is a project of daunting but overwhelming critical significance. Since Connery thinks that "texts do not just constitute but *perform* textuality's authority" (p. 22), the exigency of writing about the textual

tradition places the researcher at an awesome proximity to the totalizing authority of the text.

The most common solution... is the empirical compromise: viewing the texts as transparent records of the real world—records whose veracity or reliability it is up to the scholar to gauge. Philological sinology is primarily of this kind. (p. 23)

For other, more international or literary efforts, “the sinological urge to face down the power of textuality by mastering one small instantiation is replaced by a desire to express more directly the special ontological status accorded to imperial textuality” (p. 24); these efforts are of the kind looking for the “world-view” of the texts. Connery instead wishes to “denaturalize” the textual totality and “deasetheticize” the literary reading of the early tradition. This requires conceptual instruments framed at the level of the text and textual production itself.

Although it is perhaps possible that Connery’s claim about the “effect of completeness,” about the texts having “achieved an absolute representational authority retroactively,” nonetheless admits strategic procedures to allow study to take place (there are “fossils” of the process, or in Wheatley’s term “phenocrysts,” giving access to earlier, perhaps differently totalized stages in the textual formation), still, his basic point is quite salient. His suggested framework of treating the texts as “textual systems” is basic to his procedure. “It refers to the material text, including appended exegeses, the contents of that text and its exegeses, the transmission mechanisms for the textual material, and the teachers and students involved in that transmission” (p. 46). It is like a textual community; it was also an analogy to the government and functioned with imperial recognition.

In dealing with the text system, Connery tells the story of the

progressive dissociation of the elements of the earlier formation, as pure textuality emerged with a physical locus in the text and a decreased emphasis on the line of transmission. This process meant stripping away the person-centered relation to a master and the social relations of the school. By the late Han, the concept of the text included fidelity to the written item rather than to the line of transmission, the cultivation of generalists, the tolerance for unclarity (without overly speculative or compulsive commentaries), public-spirited dialogue instead of cliques, and an economy, not excess, of textual production (p. 61). Step-by-step the text system gave way to the Erudites and their special pedagogy and transmission procedures, and then beyond this to the canonic system, as a material system containing cultural value irrespective of any personal relations involving them. At this point, the texts, far from being person-centered, exceed the abilities of interpreters and are not reducible to interpretation, although open to its intertextuality.

This view invites questions of the nature of a “reader” and an “author” throughout this time. Connery observes that we cannot find a pure “scene of reading” in the era he studies. Reading and writing were practiced within the same group of residents of the “parallel history” of the textual empire; in fact, the production of texts signified textual authority to other members of this same population. Producing texts was the work of the *shi*. Given the lack of distinction between reader and writer in this sociotextual matrix, other concepts are compromised, such as the “truth/fiction dichotomy” which underlies fictionality: a three-way construct between writer, reader and the Other, this concept cannot apply if the first two poles are “fundamentally interchangeable” (p. 72).

Connery has other ideas about textuality in this context that are extremely thought-provoking. For instance, where the letters of alphabets (which refer to vocalizations and combinations) “require that

standardization take the form of a regime of combination which postdates the existence of the letters themselves,” the sinographs are “evidence of a prior standardization” (p. 69). Indeed, the second (after the Shang) great period of graphic standardization, the *Shuowen jiezi* of Xu Shen, is just this kind of imperial “bibliographic policy” working at the behest of “kingly government” to prevent the disruptive effects of spoken language, stop the “tendency toward desemantization and proto-phoneticization,” and check the decay of the sinographic system (p. 38). Thus, moreover, it is inaccurate to imagine naturalistically that the pre-existing writing system makes up a classical text through the combination of its elements in writing. “Rather, the writing system is only conceivable as a system because of the existence of the canonical texts” (p. 36). This view asserts that there is no simple writing in this tradition, but only re-writing of prior text. As Lewis also has stated, Connery observes, “The writing system, then, was an analogical repetition of an ordering principle recognized as already present everywhere in the universe” (p. 35).

These are indeed far-reaching premises. Basically consistent with what Lewis has shown us, they should be taken up actively by researchers in these fields and examined closely. Connery further pursues the text-oriented concepts in daring discussion of important social phenomena, three of which we mention here: the nature of the *shi*, the possibility of “homosocial” relationships (such as friendship); and the categorical existence of belles-lettres or literature in the Han and post-Han.

Connery thinks that the category of *shi* is predominantly a “*discursive* category” which “frustrates attempts at normative description” (p. 98, italics added). We have already seen Connery’s view of the *shi* as inhabiting the parallel, textual reality of the state, but their autonomy, like textual autonomy, was not entirely coincident with the state. Of course, there is a “social homology”: we can recognize in textual operation certain

features of the social that are not just a coincidence. Yet textual culture was not the mere equivalent of state culture.

The perceived autonomy of the shi class is related to the trend toward socioeconomic autonomism that began in the first century. The diffusion and decentralization of surplus extraction that resulted from this autonomism contributed to the collapse of the Han but also laid the basis for a social formation dependent on the imperial structure for its ideological *raison d'être* and textual foundation, but on local, subimperial, and semi-autonomous structures for its self-constitutive practices. One ideological formation of the shi as a social formation in the Empire of the Text was to hold in tension the imperial on the one hand and the familial, communitarian, regional and local on the other. (p. 107)

Cautioning us not to identify ourselves as “modern intellectuals” with the *shi*, Connery clearly delimits the textual sense of the *shi*, who were engaged in textual production in order to signify the *shi* position to other *shi*. Like bureaucracy, the *shi* worked to justify and perpetuate their own work. Very important here is the concept of textual circulation, which “served, in its pure existence, to perform authority, to signify authority to the circulators of authority” (p. 107). The ways this textual circulation determined the identifications made by the *shi* in their historical settings were very subtle and multiple. In any case, it is important for us to avoid excessive influence of narrative tropes, such as “the fall of the dynasty” when dealing with the *danggu* (proscribed factions) incident, or to temper our sense of personal empathy with the *shi* with a properly contextualized understanding. For instance, the tendency to encapsulate factional dispute with seven character panegyrics, which Connery cites as evidence of a “formulaic ethos” (p. 91), is less a sign of the growth of “self-consciousness” as it is the function of entextualization which these two

authors have been discussing: here, the “textualization of alliance patterns” (p. 88). The interest in personality and aphoristic description is the opposite of an interest in individuality (p. 131).

This approach points to an overall orientation towards what Connery calls “homosociality” such as friendship. The issue here is that the work of the *shi* is to signify the textual authority of their work to other *shi*; thus, just as the family is integrated into the functioning of the harmonious society and is not disruptive with its privacy, so too leisure is problematic for the *shi* under the regime of textual circulation (p. 118). Thus the main activity at the leisure outings is to produce texts and subsume the individual qualities into an overall textual framework. The same problematique works for friendship, in that it must not lead to forming cliques, and must be transparent to the aims of the state. Connery’s discussion of this problem and its entailments is extremely penetrating, and its application to the Jianan literary moment breaks new ground.

Finally, consider the problem of literature and belles-lettres in such circumstances. We have said that the phenomenon of character evaluation of the time shows codification, systematized vocabulary, and a shift to purely textual terms for behavior: it shows less, not more, individualism (p. 129). The codified set of inner qualities becomes a kind of currency expressing “the social realities of career trajectories and alliance patterns” (p. 131). This is an example of entextualization, an activity of textual production closely linked with the divinatory nature of Chinese thought. Neither does discourse about *qi* give us character or personality, but rather a quality that inheres specifically in the words of a text. In fact, the *qi* functions in the reader’s/critic’s response to text; it concerns a hermeneutic activity. The outside generates interpretive discourse, in which case “the manifestation is more important than the referent” (p. 134). Thus, the interpretive project dominates the creative one. The text’s import is not

expression; it is for interpretation.

In fact, the textual form is always already in excess of the “human,” and Ru philosophy has tried to perform adequation of the human and the textual; however, the effort to specify and codify “human” has unfolded within a textual logic. Textual authority in China has a distinct logic, so “human” in this textual environment is figured with its attributes. The texts try to delineate “human” as *ren* or a unifying thread, a universalist moral/behavior code. In this way, “the practice of humanity becomes equivalent to textual practice.” Evidently, the category of the human is “the permanent *Aufheben* of the term’s determinant textual structuration”: nothing is human outside the textual purview, but “human” is the implied critique of the textual. The excess of the essay is “the figure of the excess of all writing, hidden at the center of textuality” (p. 143).

We often hear that we are living in the “Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology.” True as this is, it should not lead us to overlook the possibility that we may also be entering the “Golden Age of Chinese Textual Studies.” The appearance of these two books—following on the contributions of so many other scholars such as the important work done in French sociology of knowledge, among many others—suggests that we may be poised to re-read the Chinese classical tradition in ways whose fruitfulness has been previously unanticipated. The new approaches may hope to find evidence in the archaic mentality of the texts of something that we also know about in anthropology: the holographic comprehension of the culture by the people responsible for running it. By approaching the texts with the categories appropriate to understanding this feature, we will lose much of the intervening distractions and learn a good deal more about the nature of the ancient society, in their own terms. These two books bring us to the point where we see the embedded social relations in the classical texts and can understand something of the ritual nature of the

texts. Just to cite one instance, we will come to appreciate something about the *Zuozhuan* chronicle: the significance of the location of a story concerning the apotropaic ritual to remove the Four Monsters (*qu si xiong*) by exiling them to the Four Directions (a theme extensively developed for us by Granet in *Danses et Légendes*). This ritual of banishment appears at the end of the chronicle for Duke Wen (year 18) seemingly apropos of very little else in the story. We will come to understand that this fundamental *topos* in the establishment of a ritual state is placed at this site in the text because Duke Wen is the sixth duke in the Twelve Springs and Autumns Dukes of Lu. Half-way through the series, the center of the book requires a ritual gesture of foundation. The text is a holistic embodiment of the state, and must be properly secured. The banishments empty out the center of influences malign to it. Thanks to the contributions of these two authors, we can now begin to ask the question of the design of the text as a project in archaic holography.

