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Spatialization in the "Shiji"

Jian, Xiaobin, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1992

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SPATIALIZATION IN THE SHIJI

DISSEPTION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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1992

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To My Parents
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FIELD OF STUDY

Chinese Literature
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INTRODUCTION

Spatialization, e.g. "episodic structure" and "flat characterization," is undeniably among the most recognizable and yet poorly interpreted features in traditional Chinese narrative. It is most recognizable because it is everywhere in the tradition: from the early historical representations such as the Zuozhuan (The Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals) and the Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian) to later fictional writings such as the Shuihu zhuan (The Water Margin) and the Honglou meng (Dream of the Red Chamber); it has been poorly interpreted because it has been mainly and simplistically judged against concepts, such as "inward development," "unity," "temporalization," and "followability," derived from the Western literary tradition but set up in the reality of literary studies as universal standards of excellence for all narratives. Both "episodic structure" and "flat characterization" share the same characteristic of what here is termed "spatialization," that is, the presentation in general is molded in dimensions in space rather than developed through duration of time. In other words, for the work as a whole, its temporal elements are defused and its spatial quality is enforced so that, in general, it does not present itself as a unilinear process.

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but as a single and timeless picture in which all aspects of its subjects are "simultaneously" present. It is the working and effects of this "spatialization" that appear to be at odds with the Western literary concepts cited above and has been either left accounted for or simplistically criticized.

In his *Poetics*, the cornerstone of Western literary criticism, Aristotle distinguishes "narrative poetry" from "history" in terms of their constructions and their functions in relation to truth. In "narrative poetry," Aristotle asserts, "the construction of its stories should clearly be like that in a drama; they should be based on a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle, and end, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure with all the organic unity of a living creature." As for history, it "has to deal not with one action, but with one period and all that happened in that to one or more persons, however disconnected the several events may have been." The reason for such a difference to happen, according to Aristotle, is because "the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary." Aristotle himself, of course, favors the construction in "narrative poetry" and belittles that in "history." First, "poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts." Second, "of simple Plots and actions the episodic are the worst." Aristotle
argues, "I call a Plot episodic when there is neither probability nor necessity in
the sequence of its episodes." Narrative, Aristotle maintains, "must represent
one action, a complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected
that the transposai or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate
the whole."

In the eyes of many modern critics, the distance between history and
fictional narrative is much closer than what Aristotle sees. To these critics,
history is no longer a "second class" member in the category of representation
because it, too, has the qualities and functions possessed by narrative.
History (or at least "proper history"), as Hayden White argues, does apply
pre-configuration, fictionalization, and narration and thus has "real events
display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is
and can only be imaginary." Nevertheless, while history has been equated
with fictional narrative in terms of narrative structure and devices, the sense of
artistic superiority assumed for unified and temporalized narratives and the
terms that define them remain. According to Hayden White, we can make
distinctions "between a historical discourse that narrates, on the one side, and
a discourse that narrativizes, on the other; between a discourse that openly
adopts a perspective that looks out on the world and reports it and a discourse
that feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story." In
White's analysis, annals and chronicle belong to the former kind of historical
discourse, while the historical proper the latter one. Annals and chronicle, as White points out, "refused to tell a story about the past, or, rather, they did not tell a story with well-marked beginning, middle, and end phases; . . . . they did not narrativize that reality, did not impose upon it the forms of a story." Presenting history in such ways, White argues, the historian's account "remains something less than a proper history when he has failed to give to reality the form of a story. Where there is no narrative, Croce said, there is no history." Comparing annals and chronicle with the "history proper," White points out that "the imperfect 'historicality' of the former two is evidenced in their failure to attain to full narrativity of the events of which they treat." White indeed gives his highest regard to his "history proper" because he believes "history proper" to be a "narrativizing discourse [which] serves the purpose of moralizing judgements." There, the "events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do not possess as mere sequence." Thus White, in agreement with "the modern historiographical community," has distinguished historical discourses "on the basis of their attainment of narrative fullness or failure to attain it." On the same basis, White has also rated the superiority for different kinds of historical representation: the fuller the narrativization, the higher the moralization.
It is clear that modern critics like White are raising history’s status by identifying the fiction-epic, romance, or novel-or, the "full narrativity" in it. In other words, while Aristotle’s distinction between "narrative" and "history" has been challenged, his preference, which establishes the superiority of unity, temporalization, and logical construction over episodic, disunity, and spatialization, has not been seriously questioned. Thus the scene of the study of narrative is a quite unbalanced one: where the territory of fictional narrative has been explored more and more by modern critics, the "historical narrative" as defined by Aristotle has been largely ignored or in overly simplistic terms criticized. Since the conventions of the former have been applied as universals, the workings, the functions and the value of the latter have not been thoroughly and critically examined.

As we turn our sights to the study of pre-modern Chinese narrative, the matter becomes ever more pressing. The debate over the issue of unity in the late Qing novel Laocan youji 老残游记 (The Travels of Laocan) is a case in point. On the one side of the debate, there are critics who criticize, or, feel sorry for, the novel’s episodic structure: its most prominent translator has concluded that "the book lacks unity both of plot and subject matter." On the other hand, there are critics who argues that in the study of the novel, if we apply the principle of "stringing" and semantic analysis, or, if we read the novel as an allegory, we can certainly see its unity in both plot and theme. While at
first glance the two sides of the debate seem to stand at the two ends of the spectrum. On a fundamental level, they all share an underlying presupposition that a literary work should be (or would be better if it were) a unified and self-sufficient entity. When these critics read the Laocan youji, they expect a complete and independent whole. If they find it, they praise the work; if they do not, they condemn or at least feel sorry for it. Thus the study of the novel becomes a process of converting an "episodic structure" to a preset "unity." These processors may differ among themselves about what structural unity may consist and therefore may come up with different answers. Be that as it may, issues such as the workings, the effects, and the value of episodic structure in narrative have seldom been raised. Aside from the impression that episodic structure has always been considered the opposite of, or inferior to, unified and temporalized narratives, we do not know much about it, and we have made very little effort to give it a systematic account. Considering the fact that the majority of the traditional Chinese narrative possesses "episodic structure" and that influential contemporary narrative works have been constructed in a similar way, ignorance about the "episodic structure" narrative has lead to the neglect of a whole tradition.

I will in this dissertation take on the issue in different direction. Instead of taking literature as a static category for a particular type of language structure and looking for its "grammars" (universals), I will treat it as a
collective term that refers to acts that use symbolic verbal strategies that are shaped by and responds to human conditions and will examine the workings and effects of these strategies. Instead of setting up narrative devices and non-narrative devices as two uncompromising qualities and simply applying the conventions of the former as critical criteria for the latter, I will look for the complementary relationship between the two, and especially, how narrative strategies function within a non-narrative frame-work. In light of such orientation, by examining Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145–90 B.C.) Shiji 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), especially the "episodic structure" and "flat characterization" of the work, I will analyzing an outstanding feature in traditional Chinese narrative: the interplay between the spatialized construction of the work as a whole and linear narration of the individual chapters within the work. I will explore a tradition which tells its stories more in terms of dimensions in space than in terms of duration in time and operates the concept of unity between the work and the world rather than within the work itself. In short, I will discuss the working, the effects, and the value of spatialization in historical discourse. It is appropriate to note here that this dissertation is by no means a complete account of every aspect of the Shiji, but rather, it attempts to discuss one particular issue through the examination of the work. For more comprehensive studies, one can consult Edouard Chavannes' Les Mémories Historiques des Se-ma Ts'ien, Burton Watson's
Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China, and numerous studies written in Chinese and Japanese.

The Shiji has 130 chapters (“juan”) which are divided into five large sections, namely: Ben-ji (Basic Annals), Biao (Tables), Shu (Treatises), Shi-jia (Hereditary Households), and Lie-zhuan (Memoirs /Biographies). Within each chapters (except the ten chapters in Section Two and the eight chapters in Section Three), the narrative schema is by and large linear. Between the sections and between the majority of the chapters, the chronological and causal developments are not clear. There is no formal closure or "promised end" towards which the rest of the work should go. As a whole it does not present itself as a self-sufficient, completed, unified, and temporalized story. It is such a work that has been regarded as the greatest historical work by the tradition of Chinese historiography. And its structure, which has been named "The Shiji-Form" by some critics, is among the most highly praised. In fact, after Shiji and up to the turn of the present century, all the dynastic "zhengshi" (standard history) basically adopted the Shiji form. Besides historiography, the Shiji form has also given great influence on the development of traditional Chinese fiction. One can easily see the interplay between the spatialized construction of the work as a whole, the linear narration of individual chapters within the work, and "flat characterization" in almost every long traditional fiction. For examples, the
Shuihu zhuan and the Honglou meng, just to mention two of the most famous. In the past few years, a number of well-known contemporary writers have published several influential works in which the Shiji form is obviously re-activated again: Zhang Xinxin 張辛欣 and Sang Ye's 桑暉 Beijing ren 北京人 (The Beijing People, or as it has been translated, Chinese Profiles), Feng Jicai's 龍其才 Yibai ge de shinian 一百個人的十年 (One Hundred People's Ten Years), and Meng Weizai's 孟偉哉 Yibai ming sizhe de zuihou shike 一百名死者的最後時刻 (The Last Moments of One Hundred People). The constructions of these three works are almost identical: each work is an arrangement of one hundred individuals' stories. While loosely speaking there is linear narration within each story, there is no chronological and sensible causal relationships between the stories. Also, in each work, there is no general plot development or a single underlying theme that connects the whole. In short, none of the works presents itself as a completed, unified, and temporalized story.

Despite the fact that the Shiji form has been so essential to Chinese literature, very little has been done to study it. Van der Loon treats the Shiji as something "very inferior" simply because it is "compiled with scissors and paste but hardly digested or interpreted."^19^ Jaroslav Prusek in his inspiring study of the "differences in conception of the human story" calls for attention to the Shiji as a whole. Prusek holds that, as a way of perceiving and
representing the past, there is nothing inferior in traditional Chinese
historiography in spite of, or rather, because of the fact that "the Chinese
historian does not work up his sources, he does not combine the facts he has
found in successive chains, he does not fictionalize them, but he arrange them
into certain categories." Prusek's belief that the Chinese historian "does not
create, but he arranges" however, stops him from further examining the
questions of how and why the Shiji form works. The majority of the studies
that discuss the narratology of the Shiji are mainly dealing with specific devices
or individual chapters. While some critics have discussed how techniques
such as quoting, dialogue, comparison, and contrast work in the Shiji; others
have described what the Shiji form is like in its own term. Still others have
examined aspects of character, plot, point of view, and meaning in some
individual chapters. Perhaps, it seems odd, or at least very difficult, for the
critics to talk about the Shiji as whole in its current form. Joseph Roe Allen III
in his "An Introductory Study of Narrative Structure in the Shiji," one of the very
few English written studies concentrated on the narrative aspect of the Shiji,
adopts that "because of the fragmentation of the historical narrative into the
five sections of the text, and because of the independence of each separate
juan [chapter], it is difficult to deal with the text in a general way." He thus
limits his study "by using a highly selective method of analysis," i.e., "follow the
model of Scholes and Kellogg" to conduct "a close analysis of the narrative
structure of two chapters of the text." It is interesting to note that when Burton Watson translated the *Shiji* into English, he followed a 1939 Japanese version which rearranges the chapters of the work and makes them into a chronological and homogeneous flow. Chapters of the original text dealing with events before the Han dynasty were cut out and put into different volume, and materials on the Han dynasty after Sima Qian's time were taken from Ban Gu's 班固 (32-92) historical work *Hanshu* 漢書 (*The History of Han*) and interpolated, thus completing in the English version of *Shiji* (first volume) a completed history of the Han dynasty. Watson believes that such an arrangement provides a text that is more "readable and convenient," and makes the text "a unified work of literature" rather than just "a source for historical data."^27

The failure to account for the *Shiji* form reflects the failure of recognizing a "new" literary feature different from those with which the modern critic is most familiar. Certainly the modern critic will have no trouble identifying such narrative elements as character, plot, or dialogue from the *Shiji*; but when he looks at the total combination of all these elements, that is, look at the *Shiji* as a whole, he sees something out of the range of his critical paradigms. For when familiar narrative elements are combined in a non-narrative frame-work, they become something very unfamiliar. Facing such a challenge, some critics have tried to convert the "strange object" into something they feel comfortable
with, others have, as M. M. Bakhtin characterizes some critics' response to the novel, "transposed a symphonic (orchestrated) theme on to the piano keyboard." That is, their analysis "is not oriented toward the novel as a whole, but only toward one or another of its subordinated stylistic unities. . . . one of the subordinated style is isolated and analyzed as if it were the style of the whole."^{28}

A half century ago, Charles Sidney Gardner contrasted traditional Chinese historiography with Western historiography and made some characteristic remarks which have become typical:

We in the West demand that an historian analyze and classify his facts for presentation in that logical sequence which shall seem to his individual brain best calculated to expose, not merely their order in time, but also the concatenation of cause and effect. We demand, moreover, that he create a faithful and lifelike reflection on past times, strange places, and unfamiliar personalities. The Chinese, on the contrary, conceive of the past as a series of concrete events and overt acts; and of history as a registration of them which should be exact and dispassionate, without any projection across the scene of the registrar, who must punctiliously refrain from garbling his presentation by his own perhaps imperfect appreciation of the true sequence of causation.^{29}

As we have shown earlier, Gardner's understanding about Chinese historiography is reechoed today. For this reason, several basic questions regarding historical discourse and narrative in general demand more attention and fuller exploration if we are not to miss the entire tradition. Is a historical discourse such as the Shiji, which does not present itself as a completed,
unified and temporalized story, merely a collection or arrangement of data? In other words, can a historical discourse that does not possesses "full narrativity" carry out full moral judgments? What kinds of aesthetic and moral effects can such a discourse achieve? How should we understand the relation and the interaction between narrative and non-narrative in the representation of the past?

In the inquiry for a broader understanding of these issues, the concept of unity has been a factor that has hindered the effort. Under the influence of this concept, a critic not only looks for the structural unity within any literary work in question, but also seek for the unifying effect of criticism, that is, to search for the so-called "universals." There is an assumption among some critics that literary study should not reinforce differences and further diversify the already complicated literary scene, but, instead, seek for "similarities," "basic patten," "underlying rules," "deep structures," etc. Nowhere can be found a more characteristic statement of this sort than in Roland Barthes's "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative." While admitting that narrative can be carried out by many different forms, Barthes nevertheless claims "universality" for narrative:

Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even
opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, tranhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself.30

The inclination for "universality" has its long tradition. From Aristotle's "a complete whole" to Hegel's "absolute spirit" to today's "deep structure," this tradition has reinforced, in people who subscribe to it, what Marc Bloch has called "the thrill of learning singular things."31 Louis O. Mink's summary of the ideal of Universal History, an ideal most active in the late eighteen century and some of its assumptions still shared by many today, can further illuminate this tradition. According to Mink, Universal History first "was the claim that the ensemble of human events belongs to a single story." Second, it "specifies that there is a single central subject or theme in the unfolding of the plot of history." Third, "it is implied that the events of the historical process are unintelligible when seen only in relation to their immediate circumstances." And finally, it "did not deny the great diversity of human events, customs, and institutions; but it did regard this variety as the permutations of a single and unchanging set of human capacities and possibilities, differentiated only by the effects of geography, climate, race, and other natural contingencies."32

Let me cite an example to illustrate how such an approach could affect the study of traditional Chinese Historiography. In his "Traditional Chinese Historiography and Local History" Earl H. Pritchard has simply stated: "Judged by modern ideas, however, traditional Chinese historiography had certain
weaknesses." He then goes on to list some of these weaknesses. Among them there are: "the rather rigid chronological manner of presentation and the practice of quoting extensively, rather than giving a unified account of events in one's own words, discouraged real historical synthesis;" and "conciseness of style and certain literary conventions often created obscurities and caused the omission of valuable illustrative details;" and "perhaps the greatest weakness in Chinese historical writings, despite the tradition of objectivity, was to see in history the working out of certain Confucian moral principles which expressed itself in the form of praise or blame evaluation of rulers and officials." 33

There are several problems in these assertions. According to what frame of reference can an account be qualified as a unified one or a disunified one? Do we understand the frame of reference used by the ancient historian? If the most important characteristics of Chinese historical writings is "to see in history the working out of certain Confucian moral principles," as Pritchard believes, then traditional Chinese histories do give unified accounts for what they present. That a thought system such as Confucianism is fundamentally an attempt to define order in, and to make meaning out of, the world surrounded it is undeniable. Furthermore, why does a book has to give a unified account for the world surrounds it, if, to the author's eyes, a work is only a part of the world and is not a total representation of the world? To a particular authors' eyes, moreover, the world itself may not be a unified one, while, to another, the
function of writing is not to represent or explain the world out there but to enlighten, edify, entertain the author himself as well as the readers? Modern writer Robert Fulghum in his *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, a best-selling book that wins critics' praises, admits: "There are contradictions in here. You may be reading along and think, 'Didn't he just say the opposite of that a few pages back?'” Fulghum gives two reasons to explain this: first, "I seem to hold in my head some mutually exclusive notions;" and second, "I haven't make up my mind about everything yet." Richard Rorty in his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* contrasts "edifying philosophy" with "systematic philosophy," and argues that the former is less pretentious and more fruitful and productive. I am using these contemporary examples here not to imply that traditional Chinese historians and Fulghum and Rorty are facing the same condition and operating on the same level, but simply to reveal that giving a unified and systematic account is not a sinquanon of effective writing; Under certain circumstances, a book that presents multi-perspectives may be very valuable. As to the problems of obscurity and omitting valuable details, we may ask to whom are the literary style obscure. According to what criterion are the omitted details valuable? Without knowledge of the specific conditions under which what is written would appear obscure and what is omitted valuable, we simply cannot render valid judgments. If we do specify such conditions, we are at the same time
admitting that, under different conditions and to readers with different criteria, what is created may not be obscure and what is omitted may not valuable. If, for example, one of the major expectation for shi (history) is to zhengming (to rectify the names) and chuanming (to pass on the names), the "conciseness of style," e.g., thematically selecting and spatially arranging materials, omitting other details not related to the assumed "names" or images, is just the right form to use. To an educated contemporary, not a timeless and culture-free "super reader," what the shi presents would not be obscure and what it omits would not be valuable. All these problems come down to some basic questions: what are the justifications of judging the "weakness" of traditional Chinese historiography "by modern ideas?" How fruitful it will be if one, for instance, judges the ancient Greek myths from the point of view of modern science and concludes that the myths are false because they are not scientific? What are the reasons for us to study ancient traditions in modern times or to compare different cultures? To simply find out one is better than another? To regulate different traditions and cultures according to one particular kind?

As Mink points out, "what the idea of Universal History never made room for was the uniqueness, vividness, and intrinsic value of individuals, whether of individual persons, individual cultures, or individual epochs." Clifford Geertz has argued, moreover, that "universals" should be substantial
and not just empty or near-empty categories or they will have no intellectual significance at all. Of the claimed universals Geertz examines, however, none has met his criterion, and the reason for that is simply it cannot.  

There is a logical conflict between asserting that, say, "religion," "marriage," or "property" are empirical universals and giving them very much in the way of specific content, for to say that they are empirical universals is to say that they have the same content, and to say they have the same content is to fly in the face of the undeniable fact that they do not.  

Along this line of thinking, Geertz has presented many examples such as the idea of afterlife and art. One may hold that every culture has the idea of afterlife, but it would be impossible for one to generalize the idea in the same term for the Confucians, the Calvinists, the Zen Buddhists, and the Tibetan Buddhists. One may also say every culture has art, but "what art is in classical China or classical Islam, what it is in the Pueblo southwest or highland New Guinea, is just not the same thing, no matter how universal the intrinsic qualities that actualize its emotional power (and I have no desire to deny them) may be." Geertz believes that "art is neither some transcendent phenomenon variously disguised in different cultures nor a notion so thoroughly culture-bound as to be useless beyond Europe." Thus if one want to make either the idea of afterlife or art a universal, one "has to define it in most general terms, indeed---so general, in fact, that whatever force it seems to have virtually evaporates."
The belief that "there must be something in common or we wouldn't call them literature" reflects an assumption that literature is some kind of preset and static language structures and underneath such structures there is a core to which different surface-structures ultimately conform and by which various structures can be generated. It is only under this assumption that the necessity and possibility of "universals" can be raised and justified. Hayden White, who agrees with Barthes' assertion of the universality of narrative, illustrates how such "surface-structure deep-structure" operates in his influential *Metahistory*:

In this theory I treat the historical work as what it most manifestly is: a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse....In addition, I maintain, they contain a deep structural content which generally poetic, and specifically linguistic, in nature, and which serves as the precritically accepted paradigm of what a distinctively "historical" explanation should be. This paradigm functions as the "metahistorical" element in all historical works that are more comprehensive in scope than the monograph or archival report....

One of my principal aims, over and above that of identifying and interpreting the main forms of historical consciousness in nineteenth-century Europe, has been to establish the uniquely poetic elements in historiography and philosophy of history in whatever age they were practiced. In his study, for example, White postulated four principle "tropological modes" (Metaphor, Synecdoche, Metonymy, and Irony), and holds that any one of these modes, along with its "linguistic protocol," is the "metahistorical" basis of every historical work."
works, another example, White generalizes, following the line indicated by Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire as four "archetypal plot structures."\textsuperscript{45}

What the study of literature has presented to us, on the other hand, is that when literature is taken as a special type of linguistic structure, the structure is in fact inevitably and infinitely changeable according to when, where, and by whom it is discussed. Thus, as Terry Eagleton has argued, no definition can be valid anytime, anywhere, and to anyone.\textsuperscript{46} Claimed general definitions have in fact shown that they are particular versions of some particular understanding of literature. White, for example, holds that although there are several possible ways for a historian to combine the four "archetypal plot structures" into one coherent narrative style, Romance and Satire are a "mutually exclusive way of emplotting the processes of reality" because they represent contradictory notions.\textsuperscript{47} This study of the *Shiji* will show otherwise. White claims:

\begin{quote}

The historian confronts the historical field in much the same way that the grammarian might confront a new language. His first problem is to distinguish among the lexical, grammatical, and syntactical elements of the field.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

Whether or not a historian operates in the same way as a linguist does is certainly a debatable question: the linguist himself needs more than the understandings of the lexical, grammatical, and syntactical aspects of a given
language in order to make sense of it; he also needs to understand the contexts of the utterances of the language. The Shiji says, "the same words from different speakers will have different meanings [故其言一也]."

In fact, it is precisely this contextual aspect to meaning that raises important questions regarding universals claimed by some of the linguists. Without a thorough comprehension of this aspect, a linguist is facing the danger of misunderstanding or misgenerating utterances of the given language. The limitation of studying literature as language structure therefore, becomes clear. While such studies describe some phenomena in general terms, they often leads to the search for "universals" in a formalistic level and tend to take one particular type of understanding of some particular phenomenon as the "core." In this way they fail to explain why and how individual works achieve specific effects. If a single perspective cannot account for a given individual work, the value of focusing on "universals" in literature becomes seriously questionable.

An alternative way is to take literature not as a category that includes specific types of language structures but as acts "performed in response to---and thus shaped and constrained by---sets of multiple interacting conditions." As Kenneth Burke has argued: "Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose." He also notes that there can be many different answers because these answers
may adopt "various strategies for the encompassing of situations." In other words, they are "strategic answers." Burke observes: "These strategies size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them." Or as Michel Foucault has plainly put it, "to speak is to do something—something other than to express what one thinks; to translate what one knows, and something other than to play with the structures of a language (langue)."

Such acts are neither involuntary, carefree self-expressions nor simple (or complicated, for that matter) generation from some basic models. They are, in fact, performed with their individual ends and specific means. In Wittgenstein's terms, different language utterances are different language games in that different results are expected. "There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentences'. And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten."

Two of Jean-François Lyotard's observations about games are of interests to our arguments here. First, the "rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimation, but are the objects of a contract, explicit or not, between players (which is not to say that the players invent the rules)." There is no set of ultimate rules for all games, and there is no ultimate game
for which all rules may serve. As long as the players are committed to the same rules and the same game, all rules are legitimate and the playing is effective. Rules derived from game A should not be simply applied to and evaluated according to game B, or vice versa, because different games need different rules. Without considerations about specific games and players, the discussion of rules will not make much sense. Second, "even an infinitesimal modification of one rule alters the nature of the game." If whole sets of rules of two games are different, we all know the games are different. We should be sensitive that games whose rules are by and large the same but nevertheless have minor differences are different games as well. In terms of narrative, a play, a novel, or a history are no doubt different language games; within one of these categories, say, history, there could be many different games too. For example, a history presented in linear fashion, that in nonlinear fashion, and that in the fashion of the combination of both are different games too because they were written and were intended to be read by different rules and with different expectations. In other words, games that appears slightly different from each other are not just variations of one master-game, but are actually different games. Therefore, we have no reason to study and value all kinds of games against one ultimate game model or set of rules. It would be more beneficial if we ask questions about how various sets of rules serve various kinds of games, and how various kinds of games satisfy various kinds of
needs. As Marilyn Robinson Waldman suggests, we need to "view 'rudimentary' narratives as potentially alternative strategies, not as stages in the evolution of a genre." It is interesting to note that Thomas S. Kuhn, in his study of science, also sees scientific research as puzzle-solving activities confined within certain paradigms—paradigms that are not necessary compatible among themselves, and do not form a continuous pursuit for a common end.

By considering literature not as variations generated by one underlying structure but as actions interacting with their contexts, the focus of literary study shifts from "universals" to the examination of each action, its context, and the interplay between the two. As Geertz has suggested that "the social contextualization of such 'signifiers' is a more useful way to comprehend how they signify, and what, than is forcing them into schematic paradigms or stripping them down to abstract rule systems that supposedly 'generate' them." In the case of science, researchers may ask, for example, "not about the relation of Galileo's view to those of modern science, but rather about the relationship between his views and those of his group." In addition to the social context, Foucault has directed our attention to the tradition and the formulation of the particular type of act in question: "... a statement is always an event that neither the language (langue) nor the meaning can quite exhaust....it is linked not only to the situations that provoke it, and to the
consequences that it gives rise to, but at the same time, and in accordance with a quite different modality, to the statements that precede and follow it.  

It is apparent that the characteristics of this type of literary study is no longer "unity" and "universality" but, to use Foucault's term, "specificity" and "locality." Critics who are doing such studies do not try to explain their individual cases by confirming them with some sort of grand-master plan, but, instead, as Geertz puts it, "by placing them in local frames of awareness." In fact, Geertz has gone so far to name one of his recent book, which interprets various cultures in the world and discusses theoretical and methodological issues in cultural studies, *Local Knowledge*. Foucault has also stated very clearly that his "archaeological study" "is a comparative analysis that is not intended to reduce the diversity of discourse, and to outline the unity that must totalize them, but is intended to divide up their diversity into different figures. Archaeological comparison does not have a unifying, but diversifying, effect."  

Then, what about generalization? What about the function and the significance of the study? Geertz, who calls his "local knowledge" at the same time an interpretive one, answers that he does not generalize across cases but generalize within them.

The notion that one can find the essence of national societies, civilizations, great religions, or whatever summed up an simplified in so-called 'typical' small towns and villages is palpable nonsense. What one finds in small towns and villages is ( alas) small-town or village
In other words, while we do not take our studies of individual cases to speak for, or, to speak as the ultimate truth, we do take them to speak to great things. Recognizing our knowledge is not universal but local, does not make it less interpretive; on the contrary, it shows more clearly that whatever we have made in our studies is not the "laws" of the field but our interpretations of the subjects studied. In the pursuit of "sorting the mass out" according to a singular, interpretation is stigmatized because it is not "scientific." If our goal is only to enrich and diversify our understanding of the field, interpretation becomes one of the necessary and effective means.
NOTES:

INTRODUCTION


18. The number of these standard histories varied according to different conventions. The Wuyingdian edition has 24 histories, and they are: Shiji (Records of the Grand Historian), Hanshu (The Book of Han), Houhanshu (The Book of Later Han), Sanguozhi (Records of the Three Kingdoms), Jinshu (The Book of Jin), Songshu (The Book of Song), Nanqishu (The Book of Nanqi), Liangshu (The Book of Liang), Chenshu (The Book of Chen), Weishu (The Book of Wei), Beiqishu (The Book of Beiqi), Zhoushu (The Book of Zhou), Suishu(The Book of Sui), Nanshi (The History of the South), Beishi (The History of the North), Jiutangshu (The Old Book of Tang), Xintangshu (The New Book of Tang), Jiuwudaishi (The Old History of the Five Dynasties), Xinwudaishi(The New History of the Five Dynasties), Songsh (The History of Song), Liaoshi (The History of Liao), Jinshi (The History of Jin), Yuanshi (The History of Yuan), Mingshi (The History of Ming). Early in this century, the "ershiwu shi" (25 histories) convention added the Xinyuanshi (The New History of Yuan) to the above mentioned histories. Another convention further includes the Qingshigao(The Draft History of Qing) in addition to the 25 histories. These standard histories together have covered at least four thousand years of the entire pre-modern Chinese histories. All these histories basically adopted the Shiji-form with some minor variations such as: many histories name the section of "Treaties" as "zhi" instead of "shu" as used in the
Shiji: some histories do not have this section and/or the section of “Tables;” still some histories do not further divided the biographies into the “hereditary houses” section and the “memoir” section as the Shiji does.

In the tradition of Chinese historiography, besides the Shiji-form, also known as the “jizhuan” (biography), which mainly is the arrangement of the histories of persons, there are also other forms such as the “biannian” (annals or chronicle), which mainly is arranged along the line of time; “jishi benmo” (recording events from the beginning to the end), which mainly is the arrangement of narratives of events; “difang zhi” (local history), which mainly focuses on the particular district in question; and “tongdian” or “tongzhi” (the history of institutions and cultures), which mainly focuses on the nature, function, characteristics, and changes of certain political, social, economical, and cultural institutions and phenomena. Earl H. Pritchard in his article “Traditional Chinese Historiography and Local History” lists total 19 different “types of traditional Chinese historical writing.” See The Use of History, Hayden White, ed., (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), pp. 187-97. The existence of these other forms may imply that the prominence of the Shiji-form in traditional Chinese historiography is the result of choice rather than an inevitable outcome of underdevelopment in narrative concepts and technique.

Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye, Chinese Profiles, (Beijing: Zhongguo wenxue, 1986). Feng Jicai, Yibai ge ren de shinian, first published in Dangdai, 1989 (1). Meng Weizai, Yibai ming sizhe de zuihou shike, in Dangdai, 1988 (3), Kunlun, 1988 (6), and Zhongguo redian wenxue, 1989 (3). Interestingly, Sang Ye has acknowledged the similarities between the Chinese Profiles and American writer Studes Terkel’s American Dreams: Lost and Found and Working, each of which consists of many individual stories without a general developmental plot to unified them. See Chinese Profiles, p. 367.


Ibid., p. 24.

Ibid.

For examples, see Li Changzhi, Sima Qian zhi renge yu fengge (Shanghai: Kaiming, 1946. rpt. Beijing: Sanlian, 1984), pp. 225-299. Yin


26. Ibid.


33. Earl H. Pritchard, "Traditional Chinese Historiography and Local History," in Hayden White, ed. The Use of History (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), pp. 200-201. Watson has also made remarks on the difficulty of trying to deduce "a consistent system of thought" from the Shiji:
"The difficulty is that Ch'ien is seldom consistent in his avowal of any belief. He is extremely flexible in his opinions, changing his viewpoint and adapting his tone to fit the subject of each chapter....He seems rather to let himself be drawn along by his narrative, sighing in sympathy, moralizing, or chiding as the mood strikes him, and proclaiming quite the opposite when another mood is upon him." Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China, p. 144.


37. See Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, p. 39.

38. Ibid., pp. 39-40.


40. Ibid., p. 12.

41. Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, p. 40.


44. Ibid., p. xi.

45. Ibid., pp. 7-11.


52. *Ibid*.


56. *Ibid*.

57. Marilyn Robinson Waldman, "'The Otherwise Unnoteworthy Year 711': A Reply to Hayden White," *On Narrative*, p. 245.


60. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 3.

61. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 28.

63. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 159-60.

64. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 22-23.
CHAPTER I
SPATIALIZATION AS A MODE OF COMPREHENSION

In modern studies of historiography, three topics are talked about often: temporality, sequentiality, and followability. To many scholars, these are the most basic and important qualities in constructing and understanding historical works. Such a belief is evident in Hayden White's *Metahistory*, in which White proposes that five levels of conceptualization in historical works: chronicle, story, mode of emplotment, mode of argument, and mode of ideological implication. Among these levels, the first three are directly related to the construction of historical narrative. According to White, "First the elements in the historical field are organized into a chronicle by the arrangement of the events to be dealt with in the temporal order of their occurrence; then the chronicle is organized into a story by the further arrangement of the events into the components of a 'spectacle' or process of happening, which is thought to possess a discernible beginning, middle, and end." White here apparently treats chronicle and story not as two different modes of historical comprehension but as two steps of development in the same process of writing a history. In this process, if the historian wants to reach the "higher"
level of conceptualization, it is necessary for him to transform chronicle to story.

How is this transformation realized? White explains it this way:

This *transformation of chronicle into story* is effected by the characterization of some events in the chronicle in terms of inaugural motifs, of others in terms of terminating motifs, and of yet others in terms of transitional motifs.²

In other words:

The historian arranges the events in the chronicle into a hierarchy of significance by assigning events different functions as story elements in such a way as to disclose the formal coherence of a whole set of events considered as a comprehensible process with a discernible beginning, middle, and end.³

That is to say that events in chronicle have no full meanings until they become, in White's words, "elements in a *followable story.*"⁴

White further discusses how followable stories are formed and how they may be presented in different ways. The key concept here is, according to White, emplotment. "Emplotment is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind."⁵

White, following Northrop Frye, distinguishes four kinds of emplotment: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire. Although any given history may employ one or the combination of two or more kinds of emplotment, "the
important points is, "White emphasizes, "that every history, even the most 'synchronic' or 'structural' of them, will be emplotted in some way."®

To be sure, White's starting point in historical narrative analysis can find encores from other scholars in the field. Louis O. Mink once sums up what W. B. Gallie and Morton White have to say regarding to the "fundamentals" of historical narrative. According to them, a historical narration must give connection linking the events; such connection must be that of temporal succession and must indicate causes and effects; all the events must form a continuous flow towards a promised end.™ As mentioned in the Introduction to this study, the preference for temporality, sequentiality, and followability in narrative in Western Literary tradition can be clearly traced back as early as Aristotle. The presupposition that narrative equals story and story equals a completed and temporalized whole with beginning, middle, and end has long been accepted unconditionally as one of the universals in narrative analysis. In fact, White, when commenting on Paul Ricoeur, has claimed that narrative, be it historical or fictional, is "the universal human effort to reflect on the mystery of temporality."® White has also claimed that emplotted narrative, which reflects "human self-awareness" of temporality and historicality, "marks a qualitative advance" to plotless narrative which expresses only "the experience of 'within-time-ness'," or "seriality."® Indeed, as Paul Ricoeur has
said, "the development of a plot and its correlate, the ability to follow a story" have been the "most superficial" subject in the analysis of narrativity.¹⁰

Such presuppositions are not only held by some scholars in the field of Western literature, but also shared by some who are studying traditional Chinese literature. But since in most cases a narrative work in the Chinese tradition simply does not consist of one self-sufficient story but of many stories incorporated within their contexts, modern studies of Chinese narratives almost never deal with them as a whole. Instead, the studies end up by either singling out some narrative features in a few individual passages within the given work or evaluating the work as a whole as something immature or imperfect. Roland C. Egan in his study of the traditional historical work Zuozhuan (The Zuo Commentary of the Spring and Autumn Annals) first discusses "the organization and meaning" of the work by analyzing the few "longest and best-known narratives" within the work. At the end of his discussion, he expresses the opinion that the Zuozhuan as a whole may be a work conceived and written by more than one man and its main sources may be some didactic historical anecdotes. The reason for this conclusion is that there are too many digressions, overlappings, multiple versions, and awkward juxtapositions in the work, making it "a series of separate, didactic anecdotes....whose arrangement could be altered without any apparent harm" instead of "a coherent account."¹¹ While the Zuozhuan may be indeed a
collective work rather than one man's creation, Egan's priori reasoning is indeed questionable. The inference that a single writer's narrative must be itself a coherent and logical whole, and the Zuozhuan, which appears not to be, is therefore not a work of one man, is solely based on the untested presupposition that a work of historical narrative must possess a high degree of temporality, sequentiality, and followability as well as fit the criterion for judging what is "a coherent account." John C. Y. Wang also applies the notion of followability in his study of the Zuozhuan. Followability means, according to Wang, that a sequence of events is arranged in such a way that "the reader desires to go on to see what will happen later: what will become of a certain character, a certain situation, whether a crisis is going to be resolved, and in what way, and so on." Wang maintains that although the degree of followability varies from narrative to narrative, there must remain a certain degree of followability or there will be no plot. Anthony C. Yu, after citing the above-mentioned two studies, characterizes some studies of traditional Chinese narrative as having been focused on features that "are thought to provide the requisite linkages in transforming what would be merely a pointillistic recital of unrelated incidents into a truenarrative—that is, a unified story with its own perceptible sense of integrity." Simply applying notions of temporality, sequentiality and followability to historical writings that come from a tradition that has never focused on these
aspects hinders our ability to recognize and comprehend not only another way of historical representation but also another kind of history. Foucault has characterized two possible kinds of history as a series of opposed pairs: a history as division, and a history as development; a history as an interplay of relations, and a history as the result of internal dynamic; a history as a system, and a history as the hard work of freedom; a history as the works of forms, and a history as the effort of uninterrupted human consciousness. If we applying rules from the one to the other without any question and modification, we will certainly miss a chance to learn a different way of looking at our past, and we will inevitably reach the conclusion that the one "has failed" to perform as well as the other. In other words, we will be taking them as lower and higher stages of the same developmental process, instead of two literary species.

Gérard Genette has noted that in Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Poetics the field of literature has been reduced to the particular domain of representative literature: poiesis = mimesis and all other works that do not consist in the imitation of an action have been excluded. Fortunate or otherwise, we encounter today much more of these "other works," and we have to deal with them as part of our exploration of human literary activities. Scholars and critics have explored the possibility of applying new concepts and perspectives to the study of historical representation and narrative. In
issues of temporality and spatiality, attentions have been directed to the complexity of these issues and different ways of comprehending them.

Against the theory of "following," Mink has proposed the theory of "grasping together" in narrative analysis. Mink agrees with other "narrativists" that narrative answers not only the question of "What happened?" but also the question of "What does it mean?" in its unique way. However, Mink points out that those "narrativists" have failed to identify the way narrative functions. Their discussion does not stay outside of narrativity, which directs them to look only "in the sequential form of stories, in the techniques of telling and capacity for following, in the experience of interest, expectation, surprise, acceptability, and resolution." Mink believes that "grasping together" is a key to the understanding of narrative. Past theories, according to Mink, "have unaccountably neglected the significance of the simple fact that experiences come to us seriatim in a stream of transience and yet must be capable of being held together in a single image of the manifold of events in order for us to be aware of transience at all." He argues that:

Memory, imagination, and conceptualization all serve this function, whatever else they do: they are ways of grasping together in a single mental act things which are not experienced together, or even capable of being so experienced, because they are separated by time, space, or logical kind. And the ability to do this is a necessary (although not a sufficient) condition of understanding."
To be sure, Mink still believes the importance of temporality in narrative, but he also discusses the disadvantages that temporality brings in to narrative. In narrative, things presented are separated in time, while the necessary condition of understanding the story is to be able to put everything together in some way. Thus one of the tasks that the reading of narrative must accomplish is to overcome the separation caused by temporality and to grasp everything into a timeless space for a moment. Mink uses the reading of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* as a vivid example to illustrate this point. He notes that in order to understand the novel, "one must read the later pages with the earlier in mind, and in fact reread the earlier pages with the later in mind."^20 It is in this sense that Mink argues that in narrative, repetition and overlapping not only are not limitations but also are necessary devices because "they aim at producing and strengthening the act of understanding in which actions and events, although represented as occurring in the order of time, can be surveyed as it were in a single glance as bound together in an order of significance."^21

Then, why narrative at the first place? If "grasping together" is the key to our final comprehension of "what happened," why would an author go through all the trouble to construct a highly temporalized narrative so that the reader must go through the trouble of breaking it down and grasping it into a timeless space in order to understand it? While Mink and others will have to
answer these questions eventually, the practice of traditional Chinese discourse, including historiography, fiction, and poetry, may provide us some very interesting suggestions. As the next three chapters will show, the tradition has taken a different direction in achieving the grand effect of "grasping together." Historiography and poetry and other discourse that use language as their main medium have to face a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, language must be uttered one sound/word after another, thus temporalizing the discourse itself. On the other hand, in order to achieve "grasping together," the discourse must find ways to break the temporal chain that connects the words, images, and the representations. To solve the problem, the Chinese tradition applies a set of devices such as juxtaposition, repetition, cross-reference, overlapping, contrast and "flat characterization," devices which have been considered weakness and shortcomings by many modern critics but which are suggested by Mink for the reading of narrative works and the construction of the discourse. In its unique way, the discourse itself set to manipulate the reader to the "grasping together."

In agreement with Mink's "grasping together," Ricoeur have also emphasized the "twofold characteristic" of narrative: the combination of the temporal representation of events in time and the configurational grouping together. In his *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur discusses thoroughly several problems related to temporality, narrative, and historical representation.
Ricoeur proposes three aporias of temporality which the functions and limitations of narrative confront. The first aporia is called "narrative identity." Here narrative creates a "third time" which functions as a bridge which mediates the gap between phenomenological time and cosmological time. In other words, the interweaving of the respective referential intentions in narrative creates an identity that connects the initially separated private time of the soul and the public time of the world. Exactly because this identity is created through narrative, however, it is not a stable and seamless identity; it presents itself as a problem as much as a solution. Furthermore, for narrative identity to be finalized, some nonnarrative activities performed by the reader is necessary. The reader will have to make references to a network outside narrative; narrative identity alone does not exhaust the reader's question of self-constancy.23

The second aporia is "totality and totalization." "This second aporia is born from the dissociation among the three ectases of time---the future, the past, and the present---despite the unavoidable notion of time conceived of as a collective singular."24 To respond to this tension and to achieve "the multiform unity of ectases of time," Ricoeur proposes to substitute the notion of totalization for that of totality. The process of this totalization is carried out by the constructing and the understanding of narrative, which serve as "an imperfect mediation between a horizon of expectation, the retrieval of past
heritages, and the occurrence of the untimely present. Again, narrative functions here effectively and inadequately at the same time. Narrative insofar as narrative "gives preference to the plural at the expense of the collective singular in the refiguration of time," and thus it is not capable of equaling the idea of one time, one humanity and one history.

The third aporia is that of "the inscrutability of time and the limits of narrative." Here we are facing a problem resulted from "the unrepresentability of time" and the limited capacity of narrative to reconfigure time. In Ricoeur's analysis, time in nature will always remain unknown and unrepresentable, and the attempt to reconfigure it at the end exceeds the capacity of narrative as a genre or as a mode of discourse. Thus the result is that "narrative genre itself overflows into other genres of discourse that, in their own ways, undertake to speak of time." It is in this sense that Ricoeur says that "narrative is not the whole story." And the "whole story," as Ricoeur uses the Bible as an example to illustrate, is "the conjunction of the epic, the dramatic, and the lyric," or, in other words, "the conjunction between narrative and nonnarrative." In Ricoeur's analysis that some of the nonnarrative section in the Bible, such as the presentation of the law, has been "turned into an event worthy of being recounted and integrated into overall narrative." "So it is by a chain of nonnarrative mediations that, in the Bible, narrative is brought to the stage of a confessional narrative."
Bakhtin, in his positing of the concept of chronotope, examines in detail how narrative and nonnarrative can be combined together in certain ways and how they bring in special effects to the narrative whole. The term chronotope literally means "time space" and is referred to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature." To be sure, in Bakhtin's view, time is "the dominant principle in the chronotope," and his study is mainly to examine how time functions and becomes effective in different kinds of literatures. What distinguishes him from other narratists here is that he does not discuss temporality without discussing spatiality at the same time. Bakhtin presents to us three types of chronotopes developed in three ancient literatures. The first is what he calls "the Greek romance." Time in this Greek romance is the adventure time. Although here the biographical time changes, the qualities of the hero and other characters' biographical life do not, and thus nothing new is introduced along with the development of the plot. In other words, the narrative is not constructed around some crucial points in time, but lies between the starting moment and the ending moment of the biographical time. Time here is intensified but undifferentiated. That is, each act or adventure is technically dated, but the different dates do not add up or in any way affect the final outcome of the plot. Rather than representing a temporal development, the narrative creates a space, or, in Bakhtin's words, "an extratemporal hiatus," in which the story is
presented. "In essence, all the character's actions in Greek romance are reduced to enforced movement through space (escape, persecution, quest); that is, to a change in spatial location."^35

The second type of chronotope under Bakhtin's discussion is characterized by its adventure/everyday life time. The plot here is no longer an "extratemporal hiatus between two adjacent moments of real-life sequence," but consist in "the course of the hero's life in its critical moments."^36 These moments are exceptional and unusual, and they are so important to the hero's life that they are taken as crisis. It is through crisis and not the faithful reconstructing of the whole length of the hero's life, that the narrative constructs its story and portrays its characters. "We are offered various sharply differing images of one and the same individual, images that are united in him as various epochs and stages in the course of his life. There is no evolution in the strict sense of the word; what we get, rather, is crisis and rebirth."^37

The third type of chronotope is that of biography and autobiography. Bakhtin further divided this category into two types. One is the "Platonic scheme of 'the seeker's path'" which is briefly characterized as: "the life of such a seeker is broken down into precise and well-marked epochs or steps. His course passes from self-confident ignorance, through self-critical skepticism, to self-knowledge and ultimately to authentic knowing
(mathematics and music). Another type, which Bakhtin discusses in detail, is called "rhetorical autobiography and biography." Bakhtin notes that "at the base of this type lies the 'encomium'---the civic funeral and memorial speech" and brings our attention to the special qualities caused by such an origin:

When speaking of this classic type one must above all keep the following in mind. These classical forms of autobiography and biography were not works of a literary or bookish nature, kept aloof from the concrete social and political act of noisily making themselves public. On the contrary, such forms were completely determined by events: either verbal praise of civic and political acts, or real human beings giving a public account of themselves. Therefore, the important thing here is not only, and not so much, their internal chronotope (that is, the time-space of their represented life) as it is rather, and preeminently, that exterior real-life chronotope in which the representation of one's own or someone else's life is realized either as verbal praise of a civic-political act or as an account of the self. It is precisely under the conditions of this real-life chronotope, in which one's own or another's life is laid bare (that is, made public), that the limits of a human image and the life it leads are illuminated in all their specificity.38

The underlying characteristic of these specificities is the "utter exteriority" they all possess. This "utter exteriority" is shown in several aspects. First, in such a "biographized" individual every aspect of his life is not private but public. "There is in him nothing that exists 'for his sake alone', nothing that could not be subject to public or state control and evaluation."40 Second, there is no opposition between internal, psychological life and external, action life. An invisible and mute reality is unimaginable and thus does not exist. A man's life, after all, "could exist only if manifested externally in audible or visible
Thus the image of man stands as its totality and has "neither core nor shell, neither an inner nor an outer." Third, the image of man here is simple and pre-formed, and "is usually given us at the moment of its greatest maturity and fullness of life." It is in fact the idealized image of a definite life type. "This idealized form is nothing but an accumulation of all the attributes adhering to a given profession: a commander should be like this, followed by an enumeration of all the qualities and virtues of a commander." Fourth, such an "utter exteriority" does not exist in empty space but in organic human collective; does not exist in abstract and alien locations but in concrete and referable points. In short, it exists in the "native folk." "A man was utterly exteriorized, but within a human element, in the human medium of his own people." Therefore, very importantly, "the unity of a man's externalized wholeness was of a public nature."

What Bakhtin presents here is that "in literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values." While admitting, in narrative, the importance of time, Bakhtin in fact demonstrates the importance of space as well. He also illustrates that instead of being "natural" or "universal," the application of devices of temporalization and spatialization and the combination of both is greatly affected by when, under what condition, for what purpose, by whom and for whom the narrative is created. Just as in narrative
analysis temporality should not be automatically taken as the sole and paramount subject of study, spatiality should not be simply taken as a regrettable or neglectable one. Fredric Jameson has written about that "history---Althusser's 'absent cause,' Lacan's 'Real'---is not a text, for it is fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational; what can be added, however, is the proviso that history is inaccessible to us except in textual form, or in other words, that it can be approached only by way of prior (re)textualization." If he is right, then temporality, sequentiality, and followability are not history's own qualities but devices and strategies applied in the process of (re)textualization that keep alive the necessity and possibility of representing and understanding the past. And looking beyond the scope of literature defined in Aristotle's *Poetics*, we find that temporalization and other narrative devices have never been the sole active elements in such an effort, and there are also, at least, spatialization and other nonnarrative devices.

Thus the functions of spatialization and other nonnarrative devices in narrative have been brought to critics' attention. This is a significant change because it raises the issue that the process of spatialization may function not merely as a patterning decorative device but, more importantly, as a mode of comprehension. It points to an alternative way of thinking of and talking about narrative and opens a new field of vision in which we may find new understandings of and explanations for some old problems. However, it is fair
to say that most of these efforts have been made to examine how the concept of spatiality and the process of spatialization may help to better construct and/or understand narrative within the general framework of temporalization. or, as a critic puts it, "within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action." The other side of the coin, that is, the possibility of a generally spatialized representation of the past and how temporalized narrations may function within it has often been neglected.

This is evident in Genette's study of the "intermingled" relationship between narration and description. According to Genette, there are two kinds of representation: narration and description. "Narration is concerned with actions or events considered as pure process, and by that very fact it stresses the temporal, dramatic aspect of the narrative; description, on the other hand, because it lingers on objects and beings considered in their simultaneity, and because it considers the processes themselves as spectacles, seems to suspend the course of time and to contribute to spreading the narrative in space." While Genette recognizes that every narrative in fact comprises narration and description, he admits that his study mainly aims at "the role played by the descriptive passages or aspects in the general economy of narrative." Genette notes that narration and description cannot be independent from each other, but he points out that such dependence does
not prevent narration from "constantly playing the major role." Genette believes that:

There are narrative genres, such as the epic, the tale, the novella, the novel, in which description can occupy a very large place, even in terms of sheer quantity the larger place, without ceasing to be, by its very vocation, a mere auxiliary of the narrative. On the other hand, there are no descriptive genres, and one finds it difficult to imagine, outside the didactic domain (or semi-didactic fictions such as those of Jules Verne) a work in which narrative would serve as an auxiliary to description.

There is a problem here. How can one justify not to count "didactic" works in the discussion of narrative genres? It is safe to say that most narrative works, especially historical works, are didactic in some way. After all, as Hayden White affirms rhetorically: "Could we ever narrativize without moralizing?" It is only a matter of, in any given work, how strong and obvious the moral points are and how much these moral points and the art of literature appeal to the reader. And the feelings and judgements about these questions are closely related to when, under what condition, and by whom the work is read. How can we, then, in theory as well as in practice establish a line which divides the domain of didacticism and the domain of "pure literature?" And thus how can we be justified in singling out one type of writing as non-didactic works and further setting it out as standards to genre discussions, and at the same time disqualifying a rather large group of works? To use a most obvious example, if we ignore the Zuozhuan and the Shiji, which are surely didactic to a great
degree, we will not know where to start our study of narrative in the Chinese tradition. Didacticism and artistry are not two oppositional qualities, but rather, they often go hand in hand. As Timothy C. Wong through his study of satire in the eighteenth-century fictional work *Ru-lin wai-shi* (The Scholars) convincingly demonstrates, "didacticism and art in literature need not be mutually exclusive." If we separate didactic elements out from literary art we wind up with a severely limited view of that art. Without doing so, Genette's claim that there is no descriptive genre will not be able to stand up since his distinctions are based on the premise that didacticism does not belong within any of them.

To answer the questions of whether or not it is possible to have "a work in which narrative would serve as an auxiliary to description," and if possible, how does it work, we need to go beyond the scope and perspective defined by the Western literary tradition. In his study of the *Shiji*, Li Changzhi has identified several "laws" through which the historical work was constructed, such as "the law of harmony between the internal and external" (内外和谐律), "the law of contrast" (对照律), "the law of parallelism" (对称律), etc. Li even uses the metaphor of "architectural structure" (建筑结构) to refer to the construction of the *Shiji*. Apparently, what these "laws" and metaphors illuminate are spatial and descriptive in nature. "Internal and external," "contrast," "parallelism," and "architecture" are visual
images: they can be "displayed" or described in multi-dimensional space rather than be "traced" or narrated through duration of time. Andrew Plaks, through his study of traditional Chinese narrative, has argued that human experience can be conceptualized either "in accordance with temporal patterns of action" or "on the model of essentially spatialized patterns of perception." He has pointed out that in traditional Chinese narrative, events "are nearly always set into a thick matrix of non-events." It is "a dense web of intermingled events and non-events that obviates any sense of unilinear plot development and hence clouds the perception of artistic unity." It is held together not by an imposed "unitary coherence" but "links between episodes." Thus human experience is represented as a hiatus—a ritualized totalization.

As we saw earlier, Hayden White has keenly observed that there are two kinds of historical discourse: one that narrativizes itself and "feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story and one that does not narrativize itself and looks out on the world and reports it." While it may be a fruitful practice to look for and examine the internal development and unity of a work of the former kind of discourse, it has always been a frustrating attempt to try to do the same thing to a work of the latter kind. To a work of this kind, the text itself is only half the story, and the perspective it adopts to look out on the world and the world according to such a perspective consist of the other
half. In the case of traditional Chinese narrative, a work has never been
viewed as a complete and self-sufficient world created by the person(s) who
writes it but a result of the transmission from something other than it; and the
central issue has never been the work's internal coherence but always its
coherence with the world it is trying to present and with the social and cultural
roles it is supposed to play. In the following chapter, we will therefore look into
Sima Qian's world—the tradition of Chinese historiography in general and Sima
Qian's particular historical time—in order to gain a proper perspective for
interpreting the *Shiji* as well as and the workings and effects of spatialization.
CHAPTER I


2. Ibid. Emphasis original.

3. Ibid., p. 7.

4. Ibid. Emphasis original.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 8.


9. Ibid., p. 177.


27. Ibid., p. 271.

28. Ibid., p. 272.

29. Ibid., p. 273.

30. Ibid., p. 332.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., p. 334.


34. Ibid., p. 86.

35. Ibid., p. 105. Emphasis is original.

36. Ibid., p. 111.

37. Ibid., p. 115.

38. Ibid., p. 130.

39. Ibid., p. 131.

40. Ibid., p. 132.

41. Ibid., p. 134.

42. Ibid., p. 135.

43. Ibid., p. 136.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., p. 135. Emphasis original.

46. Ibid., p. 243.

It is interesting to note that Jonathan D. Kramer, in his study of music, which has long been treated as a purely temporal art, also explores the function of the mixture of temporal linearity and nonlinearity. Kramer defines linearity as "the determination of some aspect(s) of music in accordance with expectations that arise from earlier events in the piece" and nonlinearity as "the determination of some aspect(s) of music in accordance with expectations that arise from principles or tendencies governing an entire piece or section." (Jonathan D. Kramer, "Temporal Linearity and Non-linearity in Music," in J. T. Fraser, N. Lawrence, and F. C. Haber ed. *Time, Science, and Society in China and the West*, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986, p. 126.) What Kramer demonstrates and emphasizes are that "nonlinearity is not merely the absence of linearity. It is itself a structural force" (*ibid.*) and that "linearity and nonlinearity are two complementary forces in the structure of music time. Virtually all music exhibits both, but in different ways." (*ibid.*, p. 136.) Corresponding to the qualities of linearity and nonlinearity, Kramer also proposes what he calls the combination of "teleological listening" and "cumulative listening." (*ibid.*)


61. See Note 8 of the "Introduction."
CHAPTER II
THE WRITING OF THE SHIJI
AND THE TRADITION OF THE SHI 史

The Chinese term shi 史 has been accepted without question as the equivalent of the English word "history." As in the cases of many other "equivalents"—such as the "poetry" and shi 诗, and "novel" and xiaoshuo 小说—significant differences of why and how these literary activities are carried out are glossed over in favor of similarities. In the Chinese case, shi originally referred not to works of historical representation but to a profession, or, in other words, persons who are responsible for carrying out a certain type of official duty. Although modern scholars still disagree with each other on the details and the sub-categories of the duty of the shi, many of them nevertheless have reached the same conclusion on two basic features of the activities performed by someone who holds the shi position: 1) they consisted mostly of what today may be called "religious affairs" especially related to the task of ruling; and 2) they were mainly carried out by means of visual symbols and written language.¹ At a certain time, no later than the earlier part of the
Zhou dynasty (1100 B.C.-256 B.C.), the duties of recording what was happening, preparing and preserving official documents, carrying out astrological and astronomical observation, and making calendars were important duties of the *shi*. Some of the texts written by the *shi* of this period were collected onto bronze vessels and texts such as the *Shangshu* (The Classic of Documents), the *Yi Zhoushu* (The Lost-Book of Zhou), and *Zhu-shu ji-nian* (The Bamboo Annals). We can see from this that the business of the *shi* was closely tied to the practical and the political.

The cornerstone of Chinese historiography is the *Chunqiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals), the first work of historical representation and given classical status by the attribution of the compilation and editing to Confucius (551 B.C.-479 B.C.) himself. The work mainly records events occurring in the state of Lu during the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.), and its entries range from the first year of Duke Yin 隱公 (722 B.C.) to the fourteenth year of Duke Ai 亀公 (481 B.C.). However, the *Chunqiu* is better known through, or at least along with, the *Zuo zhuan*, a work that supplements narrative passages to the entries of the *Chunqiu* and extends the coverage to the 27th year of Duke Ai (468 B.C.). The *Zuo zhuan* was attributed to Zuo Qiu 左丘 (or Zuo Qiuming 左丘明, or Zuoqiu Ming 左丘明), said to be a contemporary of Confucius. Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書,
a modern scholar, once metaphorically spoke of the relationship between the Chunqiu and the Zuozhuan as that between newspaper headlines and the following reports.\(^3\) The Shiji and other classical writings contain many accounts of why and how Confucius wrote the Chunqiu and Zuo Qiu wrote the Zuozhuan, although none of the accounts can be substantiated by hard evidence. For this study, whether or not those stories are true is not crucial; what is important is that the Chunqiu tradition illustrated through these stories has been accepted and carried on by Sima Qian and by later generations. In other words, even though the stories may be distorted or even fabricated, their functions and effects are historically very real.

Contradictory to opinions that traditional Chinese historical works are merely collections of individual facts in which well-planned configurations and moral interpretations are not in evidence, and also contradictory to claims that accuracy and objectivity are the main goals of these historical writings—that this kind of writing only "intends to be and does not intend to mean"—for generations, the Chunqiu tradition has been characterized as wei-yan da-yi 微言大義 (literally, "subtle words with profound meanings") by the majority of both traditional and modern Chinese scholars.\(^5\) In fact, the ancient phrase has been cited so extensively and frequently that, in China, it has become very much a cliché. As early as Mencius (390-305 B.C.), who lived not far from
Confucius' time, the *Chunqiu* was already interpreted in this way. According to Mencius:

> When the world declined and the Way fell into obscurity, heresies and violence again arose. There were instances of regicides and parricides. Confucius was apprehensive and made the *Spring and Autumn Annals.*

Mencius further compares Confucius' act of making the *Chunqiu* with the sage Yu's legendary act of regulating the flood and thus bringing peace to the earth, and with the Duke of Zhou's taking over the ruthless and chaotic Shang dynasty and pacifying the people by establishing his rule. "Confucius completed the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and struck terror into the hearts of rebellious subjects and undutiful sons," says Mencius. In other words, whereas the *Chunqiu* represents historical events, the work is itself at the same time a historical. Far from merely recordings, history is thus a planned political act, expected to produce practical results.

To Confucius, the use of words, or the activity of discourse, was never a trivial business but something which could have profound effects on great matters. When asked by a student what should be the first thing to be done when governing, Confucius' answer was "zheng-ming 正名" ("to rectify the names"). When the student expressed doubt over the practicality of such a method, Confucius elaborated:

> If names are not correct then one's words will not be in accord. If words are not in accord, then what is to be done cannot be [correctly]
implemented! If what is to be done cannot be correctly implemented then  
li and music will not flourish. If  
li and music do not flourish punishments will not be appropriate. When punishments are not
appropriate the people will not know where to put its hands and feet [how to behave]. Therefore a noble man
uses names only in their appropriate way, so that what he says can be appropriately put into
effect. A noble man in his speech leaves nothing to chance!8

As Benjamin I. Schwartz has argued, Confucius is here mainly concerned with
the crisis of the use of language rather than the crisis of language itself, as
some modern scholars have suggested.9 Quite confident about the power of
language, Confucius is concerned about its use for proper ends. In his
opinion, under certain circumstance, one sentence can be so powerful that it
can make a country prosperous or ruin it.10 What then is considered the
proper use of language? Confucius maintains only that it should be "in
accord," but he does not specify with what. There have been several
interpretations: in accord with reality;11 in accord with one's action;12 in accord
with the ideals (dao [the Way], ren [humanity], li [propriety], yi [righteousness], zhong [loyalty], shu [magnanimity], etc.).13
Although Confucius is dealing with the relationship between thought and
reality, his way of thinking is deductive and hence idealistic: not from reality to
thought but from thought to reality. The order of his argument is that names
must first correctly reflect ideals, and words should then be in accord with the
ideals the names illuminate. Then every thing that needed to be done can
naturally be done. In other words, "things in actual fact should be made to
accord with the implication attached to them by names. The well-known phrase "junjun chenchen fufu zizi 尊尊臣臣父父子子" ("The ruler should be a ruler, the minister a minister, the father a father, the son a son") was Confucius' reply when asked, by Duke Jing of Qi 齊景公, about governing. Here, "the language of familial and social roles—words that refer to father, ruler, son, or minister—do not refer simply to bare biological or political facts but, as in the doctrine of certain varieties of modern sociology, every role is the bearer of its own role-norms. The word 'father' carries the implication that the father will 'act like a father' as well as the assumption that the language will provide information on how to do so." Although what the language reflects may appear to be the "is" in reality, it in fact reveals the "should be" in Confucian thought.

The discourse of the Chunqiu substantiates this: discourse is important not because it may reflect "reality," but because it reflects, illuminates, and carries out political and moral ends. The discourse of the Chunqiu is thus well-planned and highly politicized and moralized; in spite of its seemingly laconic and chronological listing of events, the Chinese have always taken it to be far more than a mere collection of individual facts. One of the often-cited example is an entry under the 28th year of Duke of Xi 僖公 (632 B.C.) which reads "The heavenly king went for hunting at Heyang [天王狩於河陽]." Here what appears to be a simple, disconnected and meaningless
entry in fact conveys a multi-layered massage in a carefully planned and subtle manner. The story elaborated on in the Zuozhuan tells us that in that particular year, Jin had become the most powerful state among others under the declining Zhou dynasty. To reenforce its status, the duke of Jin summoned the rulers of other states as well as the King of Zhou, referred to as "the heavenly king" in the entry, to gather at a place named Wen to hunting. According to the Zuozhuan, Confucius explains his entry as: "For a subject to call his ruler to any place is a thing not to be set forth as an example." Thus the entry became "the heavenly king went for hunting at Heyang." Heyang is part of Wen, and is better-known as a place that belongs to the territory of Jin. The propriety of the time dictates that a ruler would only hunt in his own territory, unless he was invited or summoned by someone in a superior position. In other words, only those in inferior positions would leave their own territory. By writing the entry this way, therefore, as traditional commentators have noted, Confucius eliminates the possibility of perpetuating the rebellious act and setting up a bad example for later generations; at the same time, he preserves the fact that, however unwillingly, the king did take the unusual step of going hunting outside his own territory, thus actually leaving his seat of power.

Another revealing example is an entry under the second year of Duke Xuan which reads: "In autumn, in the ninth month, on the day yi-chou,
Zhao Dun of Jin murdered his ruler, Yigao.\textsuperscript{21} According to the \textit{Zuozhuan}, Zhao Dun was the chief minister under Yigao, or better known as Duke Ling of Jin (Jinling gong). Because Zhao Dun often criticized Duke Ling's ruthless behavior, he was threatened with death by the latter. While Zhao Dun was fleeing from the state, Zhao Chuan, his younger brother, killed Duke Ling in the latter's peach garden. Upon hearing this information, Zhao Dun, who has not yet left the country, returned to court. A historian named Dong Hu wrote an entry: "Zhao Dun murdered his ruler," and showed it in the court. When Zhao Dun complained that it was not so, the historian replied: "You are the highest minister. Flying from the state, you did not cross its borders; since you returned, you have not punished the villain. If it was not you who murdered the marquis, who was it?\textsuperscript{22} What was Confucius' response to this event? Taking the entry exactly as it was written, he praised Dong Hu as follows: "Dong Hu was really a good historian of the past! His rules of writing was not to conceal."\textsuperscript{23} Today, the particular rules that defined what "murder" means may sound ridiculous and the praising of "not to conceal" may seem ironic. Through this example, however, we once again witness the process of ideal-discourse-reality. It was Confucius' idea that discourse be regulated by ideals, and reality be regulated in turn by discourse.
The Zuozhuan itself describes the Chunqiu as "subtle and yet clear; obscure and yet distinct; gentle and yet elegant; complete and yet not overdone; condemning what is evil and encouraging what is good."²⁴ Du Yu 杜 預 (222-284), a well-known commentator of the Zuozhuan, takes this description and elaborates it into "the five rules of the Chunqiu."²⁵ Qian Zhongshu argues that these so-called "rules" were the goals of the ancient historians rather than features actually realized in the Chunqiu.²⁶ Nevertheless, we should be aware that these "characteristics" and "rules" are mostly the results of the idealization of the text, it is more important to keep in mind the fact that, the idealization process began immediately after the Chunqiu was written and that during the early period of Han dynasty, when Sima Qian lived, it matured into common acceptance. That such "characteristics" and "rules" have in fact been taken as ideals in Chinese historiography is most significant.

Sima Qian was no doubt influenced by, and subscribed to, the Chunqiu tradition. In his Shiji, he includes Confucius' comment in the story of Zhao Dun murdering his ruler,²⁷ and three times he repeats the story of the king's hunting at Heyang along with Confucius' interpretation of the event.²⁸ The chapter "The Grand Historian's Self-expression" ("Taishigong zi-xu 太史公自序") of the Shiji presents a questioner named Hu Sui 胡遂, a high official and a friend of the historian, and by whom several questions
regarding the writing of the *Chunqiu* and the *Shiji* are raised. When Hu Sui asks why Confucius wrote the *Chunqiu*, Sima Qian, quoting the Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (197-104 B.C.), answers as follows:

When Confucius was Chief Minister of Justice in Lu, the ways of the Chou has declined and fallen into disuse. The feudal lords abused him and the high officials obstructed his plans. Confucius realized that his words were not being heeded, nor his doctrines put into practice. So he made a critical judgement of the rights and wrongs of a period of two hundred and forty-two years in order to provide a standard of rules and ceremonies for the world. He criticized the emperors, reprimanded the feudal lords, and condemned the high officials in order to make known the business of a true ruler and that was all. 

Sima Qian continues the discussion with his own comments:

Above, the *Ch'unch'iu* makes clear the Way of the Three Kings, and below it discusses the regulation of human affairs. It distinguishes what is suspicious and doubtful, clarifies right and wrong, and settles points which are uncertain. It calls good and bad, honors the worthy, and condemns the unworthy. It preserves states which are lost and restores the perishing family. It brings to light what was neglected and restores what was abandoned. In it are embodied the most important elements of the Kingly Way.

In his "Biography of Confucius," moreover, the historian specifically discusses the technique and effects of the *Chunqiu*. He notes that in the *Chunqiu*, "the language is concise, the content profound," and he emphasizes the application of "bi-xiao 筆削" (roughly translated, "critical editing"). He cites as example the self-reference of the rulers of the state of Wu and the state of Chu as "kings" ("wang 王"), but the *Chunqiu* only records them as barons
("zi 子"); again, he recalls the story of "the heavenly king going hunting at Heyang." He then concludes: "These examples can be used as criteria in any age to criticize or condemn men's actions, and later princes should uphold this tradition and broaden its application. When the principles of the Chunqiu are carried out, all traitors and evil-doers in the world must tremble."33

As a motivation for writing the Shiji, Sima Qian quoted his father that five hundred years after the Duke of Zhou died, there was Confucius, and that, by his time, Confucius had been dead five hundred years. The time was therefore ripe for someone who to carry on the tradition and, among other things, continue the Chunqiu. "This was what he meant! This was what he meant!" the historian exclaimed. "How can I, his son, dare to pass it on?"34 By strict calculation, there were only three hundred and thirty-four years between Confucius' death (479 B.C.) and Sima Qian's birth (145 B.C.). Nevertheless the historian applies the traditional and thus authoritative rhetoric of a great five hundred year cycle to indicate the significance between the writing of the Chunqiu and the writing of the Shiji.35 In his letter to his friend Ren An 任安, Sima Qian explains:

I, without being modest and with my poor writing, have collected ancient stories and lore that have been scattered or lost. I have examined the deeds and events of the past and investigated the principles behind their success and failure, their rise and decay. And I have written one hundred and thirty chapters. Moreover, I intended to, through this writing, study the workings between heaven and man, penetrate the
changes from the ancient time to now, and establish my own words [about history].

It has been noted that, *Shiji*, the name of the book we have today, was not the original title. The book at first was called, by Sima Qian himself, *Taishigong shu* 太史公書 (*The Book of the Grand Historian*). As Qian Daxin 大昕 (1728-1840) explains, "the Grand Historian wrote the *Shiji* to continue the *Chunqiu*; the way of his writing follows the classics, and the way he expresses his ideas is like that of the thinkers of the pre-Qin period."®

Here I must mention disagreements found among modern scholars regarding the nature of some traditional Chinese historical writings, such as the *Zuoizhan* and the *Shiji*. While Burton Watson holds that the *Zuoizhan* is like a moral handbook or a divination system,®® John Wang maintains that the work is still a history, though a highly moralized one.®® The interesting phenomena is that both of them can find plenty of examples from the same source to support their apparently different speculations. The problem lies, in my opinion, in that they are applying modern and Western concepts of morality and history to exam works written under a cultural environment that did not distinguish between the two. The often-stated Chinese prsecept "wen-shi-zhe bu-fen-jia 文史哲不分家" (literally, "literature, history and philosophy do not belong to different families") refers to the well-known fact that Chinese discourse began conceptualizing the differences between literature, history,
and philosophy only during the Wei  晋 (220-265) and Jin  晋 (265-420) period, over two hundred years after Sima Qian's death." Qian Zhongshu, in his study of the Zuozhuan quotes extensively from historical sources to show that there was a trend which reads the Zuozhuan and Shiji in the same term as poetry since they all make emotional appeals and share the characteristic of embedding great meanings with ontological images constructed through subtle words. Incidentally, the modern writer Lu Xu  鲁迅 (1881-1936) once remarked that the Shiji is just like an unsurpassable song sung by an historians or like an unrhymed Lisao, a very expressive long poem attributed to Qu Yuan (?340-?278 B.C.) (“史家之绝唱，无韵之离骚”). 43

On the other hand, Juan Zhisheng  钱志生 has shown that there was also a trend that treats history as philosophy. Jun, by invoking Zhu Xi’s  朱熹 (1130-1200) reading the Chunqiu as the Yijing  易经 (The Classic of Changes), examines the interactions between the physical and the metaphysical in both works. 44 As if in answer to the confusions of today's reader, the Ming thinker Wang Yangming  王陽明 (1472-1528), in his Chuanxilu  傳習錄, presents a dialogue between himself and his student named Xu Ai  徐愛. In the dialogue, Xu is confused about the fact that the Chunqiu, a history recording events, has been grouped together with the other classics such as the Shijing  詩經 (The Classic of Poetry), the Shujing  書經 (The Classic of Documents), the Zhouli  周禮 (The Rites of Zhou),
the *Liji* (The Classic of Rites), and the *Yijing* as "liujing 六經" ("The Six classics") by the tradition. Wang Yangming explains: "Those expressing themselves through events are histories; those expressing themselves through reasons are classics. The events are the reasons; and the reasons are the events. Thus the *Chunqiu* is a classic, and the other five classics are histories." Discussing the *Shiji*, Wang Weizhen 王維楨 (1507-1555) argues that, while it is necessary to notice the differences between "narrating events" ("xushi 叙事") and "making arguments" ("yilun 議論"), it is useless to distinguish them as two different kinds of writings. According to Wang, all classics, including the *Shiji*, "narrate events as well as express moral meanings." Wang later concludes that if events and arguments do not meet together, there will be no writing at all. Gu Yanwu 郷炎武 (1613-1682) once made what later became an often quoted characterization of the writing of the *Shiji*. According to Gu, Sima Qian is extremely skillful at implanting comments and rendering judgments through the narration of events (於叙事中寓論斷). Sima Qian himself once, by putting the words in Confucius' mouth, explained his way of writing: "I would have liked to convey [my thought] through airy formulations, but that is not as effective as illustrating them through the depth and clarity of past events [我欲載之空言，不如現之於行事之深切著明也。]. The result of
such an attempt is something that, to modern eyes, may appear too didactic to be a history and too historical to be a moral handbook.

H. O. H. Stange once made an interesting observation:

The Chinese philosopher could not, like his Greek counterpart, discuss his ideas on a political situation with an assembly of men of equal rights on the same level as himself; he could only bring his thoughts to fruition in practice by gaining the ear of a prince. The democratic method of logical argumentation was not feasible in discussions with an absolute ruler, but an entirely different method, the citation of historical examples, could make great impression. Thus it was that proof by historical examples prevailed very early in Chinese history over proof by logical argument.⁴⁹

Thus it will not be very fruitful if one simply tries to classify works such as the Zuozhuan and the Shiji into either "moral handbook" or "history proper" and judge them according to concepts developed from these categories. With discourse classified as "shi" under the Chinese tradition, great moral implications are necessary; they are the most important causes of why the discourse is needed at first place. So are the historical facts, for they are incontrovertible appealing, and they are safe to use. "The Six Classics are all histories....The ancients never abandoned events to discourse on principles."⁵⁰

This famous statement of Zhang Xuecheng 陈学诚 (1738-1801), the great synthesizer of traditional Chinese historiography, indicates the interdependent relation between the "shi 事" (events) and "li 理" (principles). As Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929), who lived at the time of the great
modern Western impact, once warned that since the Shiji, like the Chunqiu, has implanted countless 'subtle words and great principles' within itself (其中蕴含无数微言大义):

The most important goal of Sima Qian's writing is to have his own words said.... And only his words are expressed through the form of history. If we merely apply concepts derived from modern historiography to read the Shiji, we will not be able to comprehend it.51

The point to be emphasized here involves the traditional Chinese historian's use of "xingshi 行事" (deeds and events) to illustrate his moral points. We must realize that all those deeds and events he uses, no matter how strongly fictional or didactic some of them may seem to today's reader, were historically real to the historian. In other words, even though fictionalization and configuration is inevitably involved in his writing of history, the historian himself never imagined that he was making anything up, much less that he was creating his own world. Thus even though Confucius did, as the tradition holds, actually make the Chunqiu,52 and himself at least at one occasion admits that he ventures to derive moral meanings through it,53 he nevertheless insists that he "only transmits and never creates [shu er bu zuo 述而不作]."54 And Sima Qian, while expressing on the one hand his ambition to continue the Chunqiu tradition and to establish his own interpretation of the known world, nevertheless argues on the other that he is only trying to "transmit past affairs and put what has been pass on into good
order, but not to create." "If you compare my work with the Chunqiu," he specifically warns, "you are really making a mistake."

Watson in his study of the Shiji qualifies the "contradiction" between shu 说 (to transmit) and zuo 作 (to create). "That the historian must make a completely objective, realistic record of the facts, and that he must not make a record of the facts but must 'doctor them up' to accord with preconceived ideas," he writes, are "absolutely antithetical," "opposite," and necessarily mutually destructive. Sima Qian and the Chinese historical tradition, however, in spite of the distinction between shu and zuo, always emphasized and applied the complementary and not the conflict relationship between the two. We need to realize that the circumstance under which Sima Qian denied that he was creating history rather was unusual: he was asked why he would want to write a history in the critical spirit of the Chunqiu since the current emperor (Hanwudi 漢武帝 , [156-87 B.C.]) was all brilliance and virtue. In his answer, Sima Qian had no choice but to deny the comparison between the Shiji and the Chunqiu and to further deny that he was making up anything at all. On another occasion, as he was interpreting some stylistic variations in the Chunqiu, Sima Qian explains the subtlety and difficulties of answering such questions:

When Confucius wrote the Chunqiu, he wrote directly and extensively for the period from Duke Yin (721 B.C.-711 B.C.) to Duke Huan (710 B.C.-693 B.C.), but softly and sketchily for the period from Duke Ding
(508 B.C.-495 B.C.) to Duke Ai (494 B.C.-469 B.C.). This is because the later period is precisely Confucius' lifetime, and while he found no good things to mention, he was also afraid of criticizing it.  

In giving brief introductions for the 130 chapters he wrote for the Shiji, Sima Qian uses the word "zuo" (to create) on all the 130 occasions to describe his labor: "I created the Annals of the Five Emperors;" "I created the Table of the Three Dynasties;" "I created the Treaty of Rite;" "I created the History of the Wu Family;" "I created the Biography of Bo Yi;" etc. In his letter to Ren An, he remarks clearly that all he and other ancient writers have done is to "transmit past affairs with the future in mind [shu-wangshi si-laizhe 追往事思来者]." The first individual biography in the Shiji is "The Biography of Bo Yi and Shu Qi" which presents the story of two "righteous men," Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊, who were the sons of the ruler of Gu Zhu 孤竹. After their father's death, the two brothers yielded to each other the right to inherit the throne, and as neither was willing to accept the it, both departed the country. When the house of Zhou 周 overthrew the Yin 殷 or Shang 商 Dynasty, and became the ruler of the kingdom, Bo Yi and Shu Qi considered the act a violation of human morality ("bu-ren 不仁") and hence unrighteous for them to eat the grain of Zhou. They fled and hid on Shouyang Mountain, where they collected ferns for food and eventually died from starvation. While the story has been very popular through the years, a number of traditional Chinese scholars have cast doubt on its authenticity. The Qing
scholar Liang Yusheng 梁玉绳 (1745-1819), in his major work Shiji zhiyi 史记志疑 (Questions on the Shiji) presents ten proofs to prove that not only the story but also the characters of Bo Yi and Shu Qi are fabrications with no factual basis. Then, why does Sima Qian, a historian who sometimes claims that he only transmits and never creates, include such a story in his work? Sima Qian himself explains: "While a degenerate age are scrambled for profit, they alone hastened to righteousness, relinquishing a state, starving to death, and for this the world praised them. Thus I made [zuo] 'The Biography of Bo Yi and Shu Qi.'"

To Sima Qian, therefore, shu and zuo do not conflict, but operate on two levels on which the same writing is being conducted. On the one hand, all writings are made to mean something or they would not be needed; on the other hand, whatever meanings the writer may express or imply and whatever types of past affairs he may present, none are creations of the writer, but exist in the reality outside of him and may be transmitted by him. Rather than considering such pairs as "truth" and "falsehood" or "fact" and "fiction" antithetical, the tradition was more interested in learning the interplay between shi 事 (events) and yan 言 (words) and shi 实 (fullness) and kong 空 or xu 虚 (emptiness, or more accurately, abstractions)." Shi, yan, shi, kong, and xu undoubtfully operate on different levels and have different effects, but as far as their relation to the essence of the Dao is concerned, they nonetheless are
all real. The distinctions between them are not that of real and unreal, fact and fiction, or "histor" and "fictor," but that of different degrees of closeness in a continuum leading to the essence of the Dao, and that of their various effects upon the reader. It is the distinction between, to use the traditional terminology, yuan 源 and liu 流 (the origin and the flow of the river), and ben 本 and mo 末 (the roots and branches of the tree). The roots and the branches of a tree certainly have different functions, but their existences as parts of the tree are very real. Thus, in historical writing, to transmit "a completely objective, realistic record of the facts" and to make the record "accord with preconceived ideas" has never been considered as "absolutely antithetical" by the tradition since, to the historian's eyes, both the meanings and the events in his writing have their real existence. This is why Confucius can subtly embed his principles within the words and still claims to only be transmitting and never creating; and Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.-18 A.D.) can characterizes the Shiji as "truthful" ("shilu 真録") and "extra-ordinary" ("aiqi 愛奇") at the same time. Ban Gu in the one and same paragraph praises the Shiji for its straight-forward writing and its verifiable records ("qi wen zhi, qi shi he 其文直其事核"), and criticizes it for its deviating from the sages in its moral judgments ("shifei po miu yu shengren 事非頑 擢於聖人"). Fan Ye 范曇 (398-445) agrees with Ban Gu's praise ("wenzhi er shihe 文直而事核"), but sees Shiji's exercise of moral
judgments an excellent one ("dayi canran 大義粲然"). What concerns us here is not the issue of how to evaluate Sima Qian's moral stand but the fact that the tradition openly upholds the complementary relationship between the characteristic of being realistic and the act of setting forth "preconceived" principle. That it strongly believes in the combination of the two as the most important quality of historical writing is clear, constant, and incontrovertible.

In his *Metahistory*, Hayden White convincingly demonstrates that any historical representation is inevitably and necessarily pre-configured, emplotted, characterized, and thus fictionalized. Therefore what is strange or unthinkable is not how some type of writing, say, Chinese historical writings, can mix realistic style with moralization; rather it is the idea that these two can be considered separate. Without a "preconceived" concept, one simply will not be able to comprehend history, far less to transmit it.

Nevertheless, it is very important for us to be aware that the Chinese tradition does not separate realistic presentation from presentation which is in accord with preconceived concepts, but not because it realizes any presentation, no matter how realistic seeming, is made to accord with certain concepts. Quite to the contrary, the tradition holds that any great principle ("Dayi 大義") is not a creation of any one individual but has real existence outside the individual—though it may be conceived and transmitted by him. As discussed earlier, while Confucius wants to rectify names and makes
discourse accord with the principles; on the other hand he neither claims to make up the principles himself nor say that he acquired them from some unknown source. "Having before it the example of the two previous dynasties, the Zhou is resplendent in culture. I follow the Zhou," says Confucius. His principles, apparent to him, was part of the history that really existed. Therefore while he necessarily made up his writing, he can believe what he has written to be no more than the transmission of the truth. A historian may thus have "preconceived" concepts and makes his representation of the past in accord with them; nevertheless he is not a creator, but rather, a transmitter, or better, an editor because what is said or written is not considered a product of personal imagination so much as a move, a gesture, an outlet of the universe itself.

This belief is closely related to the traditional concept of that "heaven and man are one" (tian ren he yi 天人合一). As the Zhuangzi 莊子 states: "Heaven, Earth, and I were produced together, and all things and I are one." After the very well-known butterfly dream, when Zhuangzi work up and could not differentiate between himself and the butterfly, he concludes: "This is called the fusion (transformation) of things [物化]." Zhuangzi describes the "true man" (真人) as if he and nature are one entity: "He is as cool as autumn and as warm as spring, and his joy and anger assimilate the four seasons." And Confucius once connected intellectual men with water, and
benevolent men with mountains: both intellectual men and water are active, and both benevolent men and mountains are calm.\textsuperscript{70}

This mode of thought does not discriminate between man and nature and thus puts man in a position that is neither subordinate nor superior to nature. Rather, man is simply a part of nature. Such a philosophy has greatly influenced on the shaping of traditional literature and artistry in general. In traditional theories about literature, calligraphy, and painting, there are countless discussions on the issue that art is in fact the expression and/or extension of the universe itself of which the artist is part. One common way to express such an idea is to equal different aspects of writing with different aspects of nature, thus individual utterances (works) are treated as aspects or parts of the general universe. Lu Ji (261-303) in his \textit{Wenfu} (\textit{Rhyme prose on Literature}) describes the relationship between the writer and nature in the following way:

\begin{quote}
His lament for fleeting life is in observance of the four seasons that ever revolve,
His regard for the myriad growing things inspires in him thoughts as profuse.
As with the fallen leaves in autumn's rigor his heart sinks in grief,
So is each tender twig in sweet spring a source of joy.
In frost he finds sympathy at moments when his heart is all frigid purity,
Or far, far, into the highest clouds he makes his mind's abode.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{quote}
Liu Xie 刘勰 (?465-?520) in his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龙 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*) echoes his predecessor's view of the integral bond between man and nature:

> When one ascends mountains, the whole mountain will be tinged with the coloring of his own feelings; and when his eyes rove over the seas, the seas will be saturated with his ideas. The measurement of his talent? It will roam together with the wind and the clouds.\(^{72}\)

The Song dynasty calligrapher Lei Jianfu 雷简夫 once described the circumstances that caused him to change the style of his calligraphy from unnatural to natural. He told of the time he was taking a nap in a house near the Pingjiang River; he heard the great noise of the waves, and imagined the rushing and the pushing of the waves, and then he felt the urge to find some thing through which he could express his feelings. He reached for a brush, and the sound and the shape of the waves, which by then were already in his heart, poured out through the hairs of its writing tip.\(^{73}\) The famous Song dynasty painter Guo xi's 郭熙 (?1020-?) states in his *Linquan gaozhi* 林泉高致 (*The High Spirits of the Forest and the Springs*):

> The spring mountain is wrapped in an unbroken stretch of dreamy haze and mist, and men are joyful; the summer mountain is rich with shady foliage, and men are peaceful; the autumn mountain is serene and calm, with leaves falling, and men are solemn; the winter mountain is heavy with storm clouds and withdrawn, and men are forlorn.\(^{74}\)
Similarly, the Qing dynasty painter Yun Ge 沛格 (1633-1690) observes in his *Nantian lunhua 南田論畫 (Comments of Nantian on Paintings)*:

The spring mountain seems smiling; the summer mountain seems angry; the autumn mountain seems putting on make ups; the winter mountain seems sleepy. About the meaning of these four types of mountains, the mountain itself cannot talk about it, but man can.75

Yun's contemporary, the very famous Qing dynasty painter Shi Tao 石濤 (?1630-?1717) says about the same thing in his *Kugua heshang hua yulu 苦瓜和尚語錄 (Quotations on Paintings by the Bitter Melon Monk)*: "Mountains and rivers use me to speak for them. They were born in me and I was born in them."76

The significance of realizing these fundamental attitudes of traditional Chinese writers and artists is that it directs us to see why certain Western literary concepts--such as "unity within the work" and "inward development"--may obfuscate rather than illuminate our understanding of traditional Chinese literature. It also leads us to consider the subject of Chinese literature from an angle which may reveal more about it than what initially meets our eyes. Rather than emphasize the separation and antithetical relationship between the subject and the object, man and the world, literature and reality, the Chinese tradition tries to combine them, or rather, to fuse them. Thus a literary work is neither itself a created and self-sufficient world nor an imitation or representation of an outside world: it is part of the world. It is understood to
be incomplete by itself, but it is expected to be cohesive with the rest of the world. In this way, it is defined and valued by its spatial relationships with the world outside of it rather than by the temporal development within itself. Therefore, in the Chinese tradition, the issues of unity within a work and inward development have never been seriously raised; but the function of the work in accordance with the world and its place in it have always been the focus of any discussion about literature, including historiography, poetry, and fiction.

Next we shall examine the concepts of shi 時, yuzhou 宇宙, bian 變, and xunhuan 循環, concepts that played very important roles in traditional Chinese historiography. While shi now is usually translated as "time," its specific meanings to the ancient Chinese appears to be greatly different from that of "time" to modern Western historians. Marcel Granet in his La Pensée Chinoise argues that "time" to the ancient Chinese is always boxed or compartmentalized. "Time and space were never conceived apart from concrete actions." The Chinese "decomposed all time into periods just as they decomposed all space into regions." While they "preferred to see in time an ensemble of eras, seasons and epochs," they "never bothered about imagining time and space as homogeneous matrices suitable for housing abstract concepts." As Joseph Needham generalized, "Granet concluded that time in ancient Chinese conception was always divided into separate spans, stretches, blocks or boxes, like the organic differentiation of space into
particular expanses and domains. *Shih* (time) always seemed to imply specific circumstances, specific duties and opportunities; it was essentially discontinuous 'packaged' time. While admitting that Granet's observation "was assuredly true," Needham strongly insists that "it was not the whole story." According to him, "there was both compartmentalized time and continuous time in Chinese thinking. Both were important in different ways, the former for some of the sciences and technology, the latter for history and sociology." He emphasizes that Chinese historians have either "found no use for the compartmentalized time" or "overcome the 'compartmentalization' of time." Needham holds that there is "profound if tacit conviction which ran through all generations of Chinese historical writers, namely that the process of social unfolding and development had an intrinsic logic, and indwelling Tao."

Whereas Needham's view that both compartmentalized time and continuous time existed in ancient Chinese conception is certainly true, his conclusion that Chinese historians abandoned the compartmentalized time and treated history as a continuous and developmental process is very questionable. To support his argument, Needham ignores the overwhelming "standard history" ("zhengshi正史") tradition, and uses other incidents that supposedly embodied the continuous and developmental historical concept. However, these incidents either occurred relatively late in time or are lesser
known in the tradition—such as Liu Xisou's 刘熙 (fl. 1060) Liu shi chi li 刘氏志历 (Mr. Liu’s Harmonized Calendars) and Ma Duanlin’s 马端临 (?1254-1323) Wenxian tongkao 文献通考 (Comprehensive Study of History of Civilization). Other examples used by Needham include a work that is no longer extant---Wu Jun's 吴均 (469-520) Tongshi 通史 (General History), or, a work that is said to represent a continuous and developmental history but nonetheless only its "Lue 略" section, a spatialized, topically arranged historical encyclopedia, has passed on to us——Zheng Qiao's 郑樵 (1103-1162) Tongzhi 通志 (Historical Collections). Out of the examples that Needham provides, perhaps Sima Guang's 司马光 (1019-1086) Zizhi tongjian 资治通鉴 (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government) is the one that is clearly constructed in the unilinear fashion as well as well preserved in its entirety. Whether or not the Zizhi tongjian is the embodiment of a historical concept of continuous and developmental nature is still a debatable issue; its existence is at most an indication of a phenomenon we have mentioned at the start of this dissertation, that there were other forms of historical writings co-existing with the Shiji-form in traditional Chinese historiography. In itself, it falls far short of proving that Chinese historians viewed history not as re-occurring cycles but a continuous and developmental process. The fact that there were temporalized narratives in the Chinese tradition, simply suggests that the ancient Chinese knew and able to realize
other possibilities, and that the overwhelming application of the spatialized Shiji-form was a matter of choice.

A rhetorical question asked by Needham may provide us a clue of why he would take such pains to argue an assertion that flies in the face of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Needham once asked: "How could anyone ever have imagined that the time sense of the Chinese was inferior to that of Europeans? Almost the opposite could be said: for the incarnation of the Tao in history was a continuous process, ever renewed." Here we see Needham's peculiar bias: compartmentalized time is inferior to continuous time, and spatialized history is inferior to temporalized history. Since traditional Chinese historiography is great, and it can only be the latter and never the former. Here the original premise that the former is inferior to the latter is taken for granted and never seriously examined.

The shi (time) in the traditional Chinese conception was not an abstract and independent flow along which events may or may not happen, but always related to and interacted with space and with specific human actions. Xu Shen's 《说文解字》, the earliest Chinese etymological dictionary, defines shi as follows: "shi' means 'sishi 四時' (four seasons)." 《尔雅》, an encyclopedia compiled by scholars of the early Han period (206 B.C.-25), explains under the heading of "sishi": "Spring is green and sunny; summer is red and bright; autumn is white and reserved;
and winter is black and sharp....Spring is debut; summer is growth; autumn is harvest; and winter is peace."\textsuperscript{86} Shiming, another encyclopedia compiled sometime during the late Han period (23-220) by Liu Xi, has these sentences under the heading of "sishi": "Sishi' means the four directions each having one shi. Shi means periods. The life of each thing responds to its period, and then ends."\textsuperscript{87} Shi here is presented with visual, spatial natural images as well as human actions. Yuzhou is a term now used to refer to the spatial universe, but in classical Chinese it clearly contained a "space-time" concept. According to the \textit{Huainanzi}, "The time span from antiquity to the present is called zhou; four directions and above and below is call yu; the Dao is within them and yet no one knows where it is."\textsuperscript{88} As Needham himself, through the discussion of the \textit{Mozi}, a book believed to be composed not much later after the philosopher Mozi's death, convincingly demonstrates that to Mozi, time, space, and movement are seen as closely interacting one with another and unimaginable as separate, independent, and fixed elements.\textsuperscript{89} Even today folk sayings like "Doubing zhidong, tianxia jiechun (When the handle of the Big Dipper points to east, spring will pervade all under the heaven)" still connect the four seasons with the four directions—spring with the east; summer with the south; autumn with the west; and winter with the north.
Not only is *shi* spatialized, but it is also specified with human affairs. As the above quoted *Erya* illustrates, *shi* is defined all together with the agricultural cycle, human action, and human attitude. Thus Mencius warns us in a saying still frequently cited today: "Do not go against the *shi* of agriculture [Buwei nongshi 不違農時]."\(^90\) He has also suggested that "Axes should enter the mountains and forest in *shi* [appropriate time]."\(^91\) *Shi* then is understood more as particular occasions, opportunities, circumstances and situations for corresponding actions rather than as an abstract flow independent from specific human conditions. Thus Sima Qian would repeatedly claim that "*shi* is difficult to have but easy to lose [Shi zhe nande er yishi 時者難得而易失]."\(^92\) He warns: "If *shi* comes and you don't act, you will turn out to be the victim of it [Shizhi buxing, fanshou qi yang 時之不行，反受其殃]."\(^93\) And he sighs: "Oh, *shi*, you will never come again [Shi hu shi, bu zai lai 時乎時，不再來]!"\(^94\) From the documents produced several hundred years before and to Sima Qian's life-time, we can find "shizhong 時中 [timely mean];",\(^95\) "shizheng 時政 [timely governing];",\(^96\) "Yushi 遇時 [to live at the right time];",\(^97\) "daishi 逮時 [to catch the right time];",\(^98\) "shishi 失時 [to miss the right time];",\(^99\) "daishi 待時 [to wait for the right time];",\(^100\) "guoshi 遇時 [passed the right time];",\(^101\) "ningshi 明時 [to understand the right time/current situation];",\(^102\) "shiming 時命 [fate, destiny];",\(^103\) "shishi 時勢 [the current situation, the trend
of the time]."^{104} etc. It is with such an understanding of the "shì" that the Classics of Rites may proclaim: "As far as the Rite is concerned, 'shì' is most important [Li, shì wei da 礼，時為大]."^{105} And the Mencius can call Confucius "the 'shì' person of the sages [Kongzi, sheng zhi shì zhe 孔子，聖之時者也]."^{106}

These specific meanings of shì, namely that time is inseparable from space as well as specific human conditions, though apparently at odds with the temporal concepts developed mainly through science from 17th century to the beginning of this century, form a very interesting parallel with some contemporary leading theories in modern physics, particularly, the Einsteinian theory of general relativity. "Before 1915, space and time were thought of as a fixed arena in which events took place, but which was not affected by what happened in it."^{107} "Absolute, true, and mathematical time," as Newton once said, "of itself and by its own nature, flows uniformly, without regard to anything external."^{108} While this idea certainly has had its appropriate function in the history of science, it has unfortunately been used as a universal generally applicable to all historical writings and narratives. A work which embodies the concept of independent and absolute time is regarded as that which represents a more advanced or maturer senses of historical awareness and self awareness, whereas a work reflecting spatialized and humanized time is thought of as somewhat more primitive. Time or temporality have become
an almost obsessive subject in the study of historiography and narrative whereas elements of space and spatiality have been largely ignored. Interestingly, one of the premises of modern Einsteinian physics is to "accept that time is not completely separate from and independent of space, but is combined with it to form an object called space-time." Furthermore, "Space and time not only affect but are also affected by everything that happens in the universe. Just as one cannot talk about events in the universe without the notions of space and time, so in general relativity it became meaningless to talk about space and time outside the limits of the universe." The interesting parallel between the concept of time and space in traditional Chinese thought and that in modern physics is: they put more emphasis on the interactive relationships among, than on the properties of, events, time, and space. When an event occurs, it determines the forming of space-time, and the structure of space-time in turn restrains the way in which events happen.

As to Needham's argument that, to the ancient Chinese, time is not only flexible and conditional, it is also "continuous," the meaning of "continuous" needs to be further defined. When the Zhuangzi says that "Time has no ending [Shi wu zhi 時無止]!" and Confucius, while standing by a river, points out with a sighs that "What has passed on is just like you, running day and night!" they appear to actually be expressing their anxiety over the passing of time rather than their recognition of time's continuance or
development. The *Zhuangzi* once took great pain to deny the absolute point of
beginning, saying:

There is a beginning. There is a not yet beginning to be a beginning. There is a not yet beginning to be a not yet beginning to be a beginning. There is being. There is nonbeing. There is a not yet being to be nonbeing. Suddenly there is nonbeing. But I do not know, when it comes to nonbeing, which is really being and which is nonbeing.\(^{114}\)

On another occasion, the *Zhuangzi*, by interpreting the space-time (yuzhou), again denied the absolute points of both beginning and end and suggested that all are but recurrence of cycles:

There is reality yet there is no place where it resides--this refers to the dimension of space: yu. There is duration but there is no beginning nor end--this refers to the dimension of time: zhou. There is life, there is death, there is a coming out, there is a going back in--yet in the coming out and going back its form is never seen.\(^{115}\)

If time has neither beginning nor end, it has no direction and thus no development. It may pass by us at any point, but its movement is not linear, but rather, cyclical. The yuzhou--space-time--is not a flat space frozen at one point in time; nor is it merely a unilinear process running through the same place in different times. Rather, it is a comprehensive, multi-dimensional ever-present existence where human affairs are performed. As the *Liezi* asserts:

The ends and beginnings of things are not absolute. The beginning of one thing may be the end of another; the end of one may be the beginning of the next. Who can distinguish between these cycles?\(^{116}\)
With the above understanding of *shi*, I would now like to discuss the specific meaning of *bian* (changes). Some modern scholars have argued that the fact that the *Shiji* pays such great attention to *bian* reflects that, to Sima Qian, history is not static but "evolutionary" and "developmental." History to Sima Qian is "a constant process of growth." Sima Qian indeed places great emphasis on *bian*, and, as we quoted above, he spells out very clearly that one of his goals for writing the *Shiji* is to "penetrate the changes from the antiquity to the present." However, while there is little doubt that the *bian* stands out as the opposite of static and unchanging, it is very questionable that its specific meaning in the *Shiji* and other ancient classics refers to "evolution" or "development."

The Chinese have always paid great attention to changes occurring in history. The *Yijing*, or *Book of Changes*, a text reflecting ancient practice for divine prediction and reinterpreted by Confucian scholars through the centuries before Sima Qian, deals particularly with the changes. But, what does *bian* specifically mean to the ancient Chinese? and why do they want to penetrate it? The "Appended Commentary" of the *Yijing* asserts that "The firm and the soft replace each other, and this gives birth to the changes and transformations" and that "Changes and transformations are images of moving forward and returning back." Changes here are understood as the
indications as well as results of the dialectical interplay and replacement between two oppositional forces. *Bian* may signal differences, but it does not profess itself to be a force that may bring on progress or development. Admitting that *bian* implies interplay and difference but not evolution or development does not mean that the concept was unimportant to the ancient Chinese. On the contrary, the *Yijing* believes it is the key to the undertaking of the sages:

What is above form is called *Dao*; what is within form is called implements; what transforms and appropriates them is called changes (*bian*); carrying it out is called penetration; setting it forth for all the people under the heaven is called the undertaking [of the sages].

"When a set of changes have run its course," the *Yijing* continues, "other changes occur; when changes occur, penetration is carried out; when penetration carried out, [the undertaking] will be everlasting (jiu 久 )." Thus, in order to maintain stability, one must pay great attention to instability; or, to say it the other way, the reason one will study the dynamics between different forces is to obtain permanence, not development. *Bian* (changes) are what are presented to us regardless of whether we realize or want; *tongbian* (to penetrate the changes) is the means by which we may achieve what we really want—"jiu" or everlasting constancy.

The desire for *jiu* is also apparent in the Laozi. The *Laozi* places great emphasis on passiveness because it believes that it is the way leads to *jiu*:
Heaven lasts; earth endures [tian change di ju 天長地久]. They last and endure because they do not live for themselves. And thus can live forever. Therefore, the sage position himself behind and yet stays ahead. He denies himself and so is preserved. Is it not because of his selflessness that he completes his own?\(^{122}\)

The *Laozi* argues that every advancement can only move itself to its opposite position, and thus it negates itself instead of achieving *jiu*, the assumed common goal. The *Laozi* gives its reader two sets of examples which illustrate two approaches that leads to opposite results in regards to the central issue.

First:

Those who rise on tiptoe cannot stand. Those who stride cannot walk. Those who hold to their views cannot be enlightened. Those who are self-righteous cannot shine. Those who boast cannot receive credit. Those who are arrogant cannot last long.\(^{123}\)

On the other hand:

To yield is to have the whole. To be crooked is to be straightened. To be hollow is to be filled. To be worn out is to be renewed. To have little is to get more. To have a lot is to be confused. Therefore the sages sets an example for the world by embracing the One. By not insisting on his view, he may become enlightened. By not being self-righteous, he may become illustrious. By not boasting, he may receive credit. By not being arrogant, he may last long.\(^{124}\)

The *Laozi* does not merely emphasize the advantage of inaction, moreover; it upholds the necessity of returning (*fan 反*, *fu 復*, and *fugui 復歸*). According to the *Laozi*, only the nonbeing period of the world or the infant stage of a human being is closest to the essence of Dao; other than that,
everything is set on a course towards self-negation. Thus we not only need to be inactive, but we also must "return to the origin [fugui qi gen 復歸其根]." 

"return to the unhewn wood [fugui yu pu 復歸於樲]." 

"return to being a baby [fugui yu yinger 復歸於嬰兒]." 

"return to nothingness [fugui yu wuwu 復歸於無物]." It is in this sense that the Laozi proclaims: "Returning is Tao's motion [Fanzhe Dao zhi dong 反者道之動]."

Besides philosophically exploring the idea of "returning," the Laozi also advocates the political concept of "small state and few people [xiaoguo guamin 小國寡民]." a period believed to be perfect and existing long before this self-destructive mass called "civilization":

Let the people return to tying knots and using them. Relish their food. Appreciate their clothes, secure in their homes, happy with their customs. The neighboring states will be so close that they can see each other, and hear the sounds of roosters and dogs. But the people will grow old and die without having visited each other.

In terms of social reform, Confucius is very different from, and may not be as extreme as, the Laozi. But he nevertheless shares the same belief that the golden age in history has already passed, proclaiming that "At one change Qi can become Lu, and Lu, at one change, can become the Dao." Here we see that, first, Confucius undoubtfully recognizes the necessity of changes; and second, the goal of the changes is Dao, not a dream lying in the future
waiting to be realized, but the origin of history. In other words, what we need to do is to return to, and to reenact the glorious past. History, then, is not an evolutionary process which will develop itself from a lower stage to a higher one; rather it shows cycles of reoccurrence. In Confucius case, the golden age of history was particularly the Western Zhou dynasty (11 century B.C.-771 B.C.). "Having before it the example of the two previous dynasties," Confucius said, "the Zhou is resplendent in culture. I follow the Zhou." He was so confident about the cyclical recurrence of history that when one of his students asked him if they would be able to know what would happen ten generations hence, he gave a very positive answer: "The Yin built on the rites of the Xia. What was added and what was omitted can be known. The Zhou built on the rites of the Yin. What was added and what was omitted can be known. Should there be a successor to the Zhou, even a hundred generations hence can be known." It was based on these Confucian teachings that Sima Qian's senior contemporary, the Han Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu , developed his theory of "sanwang zhi dao [the way of the Three Dynasties]." These were good faith for the Xia , piety for the Shang , and refinement for the Zhou. Each represented a particular aspect of the Dao, and each in turn was and would be the rectification for its predecessor. History thus is the ever recurring of the circles of good faith-piety-refinement.
Sima Qian, while thinking on the one hand that Laozi's idea of returning to the "small state and few people" is impractical, and paying more attention on the other hand to the dynamics of history than Dong Zhongshu, nevertheless subscribes to the theory of the historical cycle (xunhuan 循環). He argues that

The government of the Xia dynasty was marked by good faith, which in time deteriorated until mean men had turned it into rusticity. Therefore the men of Shang who succeeded to the Xia reformed this defect through the virtue of piety. But piety degenerated until mean men had made it a superstitious concern for the spirits. Therefore the men of Zhou who followed corrected this fault through refinement and order. But refinement again deteriorated until it became in the hands of the mean men a mere hollow show. Therefore what was needed to reform this hollow show was a return to good faith, for the way of the Three Dynasties of old is like a cycle which, when it ends, must begin over again.

Elsewhere Sima Qian repeats again: "The way of the Three Dynasties is just like a cycle: when it runs its course, it must return to its origin [三王之道正若循違，窮則返本]." Here we see the blend of Confucian interpretation of the nature of history and the Taoist conception that everything will eventually run its course and turn to its opposite; both emphasize the return to the origin.

Sima Qian also pays great attention to the cycle of prosperity and decline. He holds that "things run from prosperity to decline--such is the changes that must take place [物盛而衰，因其變也]." Nothing
can go on forever; everything must eventually turn to its opposite position. History, then, is the cyclical recurrence of prosperity and decline, not an evolutionary process that develops itself from nothingness to prosperity, and toward ever greater improvement. Thus Sima Qian observes that

When a thing has reached its height it must begin to decay, and when an age has gone to one extreme it must turn again in the opposite direction; therefore we find periods of rude simplicity and periods of refinement alternating with each other endlessly.\(^{140}\)

Thus the temporal aspect of the changes is largely defused into the totalization of history. Changes, as the indication and the result of the interplays between different forces, are understood spatially as the replacements between these forces rather than temporally as the developmental course of the forces. As the Yijing goes: "There is Yin, there is Yang----such is called Dao [Yiyin yiyang wei zhi dao 一陰一陽為之道]."\(^{141}\) Or, as Mencius believes, "It has been a long time since there were people under the heaven: it has been nothing but the alternation of order and chaos."\(^{142}\) Furthermore, there are patterns to the changes, and, more importantly, these patterns may repeat themselves every now and then. Again, although the recurrence of the patterns must be taken place in time, they are mainly grasped in spatial terms such as xunhuan (cycle, or, literally, following the ring) and zhouer fushi 周而復始 (go a round and begin again). Sima Qian in the Shiji insists that "Those who govern the country must
regard as precious the Three and Five." The Three and Five here means that every thirty years there will be a small change; and every five hundred years there will be a great change. In short, the above views on time and changes may be summarized as, as one critic has put it, "complementary bipolarity" and "multiple periodicity." The linguistic fact that the bian, seen from the above quotations of Chinese classics, has been exclusively used as a nominal phrase meaning "the changes" rather than a verbal expression meaning "to change" suggests that the dynamics of the changes has been nominalized and comprehended as a static, atemporal and structuralized object. Such an object is always there, and it is the historian's responsibility to penetrate it so that the yuzhou (space-time) in which the historian lives, can become comprehensible, meaningful and manageable. Therefore, as the next two chapters will further indicate, the Shiji to Sima Qian is not an attempt to describe a unilinear process in which evolution and development take place; rather, it is an attempt to map out the system of the entire multi-dimensional and ever-present "space-time" known to him.

Indeed, Sima Qian was responding to the era that stimulated the need for, and the enthusiasm of, making generalizations of the known civilization. Sima Qian's life-time was basically paralleled with the reign of the Martial Emperor of the Han (Han Wudi 漢武帝, 156-87 B.C.), a period representing the height of the dynasty, during which China was once again united and
expanded. The Han experienced an unprecedented development and
generalization of Chinese civilization to the extent that today the Chinese
people are called "the Han people [Hanren 漢人 or Hanzu 漢族 ],," Chinese
language the "Han language [Hanyu 漢語 ]," and the study of Chinese culture
the "Han study [Hanxue 漢學 ]." The Han, in particular, the period of
Emperor Wu, was in a way the answer to the great social chaos as well as
great intellectual break-throughs of the previous several hundred years.
During those years, China experienced the Spring and Autumn period, the
Warring States period, the short and harsh unification under the Qin dynasty,
and the uprisings that overthrew the Qin and established the Han. All these
periods are marked by unpredictable changes, ruthless power struggles, and
countless wars which in turn resulted in what Sima Qian calls an
unprecedented "extreme of suffering." However, Sima Qian also believes,
"when some thing reaches its extreme, it must return to its origin [qiong ze fan
ben 窮則返本 ]." The reason that the Qin unification failed, according
to Sima Qian, was because it did not correct the mistakes of the preceding
dynasties and start a new cycle; instead, it went to a further extreme and
added even more harshness. It was the Han who turned away from this dead
end and return to the "good faith" of the Xia. Here, what is referred to is the
fact that the early period of the Han dynasty, the seventy plus years from the
establishment of the dynasty to the period of Emperor Wu, was characterized
by "the air of rude, hearty simplicity." During this time the nation enjoyed a relatively relaxed and peaceful life, and it soon recovered and prospered. As Sima Qian observed:

By the time the present emperor had been on the throne a few years, a period of over seventy years had passed since the founding of the Han. During that time the nation had met with no major disturbances so that, except in times of flood or drought, every person was well supplied and every family had enough to get along on. The granaries in the cities and the countryside were full and the government treasuries were running over with wealth. In the capital the strings of cash had been stacked up by the hundreds of millions until the cords that bound them had rotted away and they could no longer be counted. In the central granary of the government, new grain was heaped on top of the old until the building was full and the grain overflowed and piled up outside, where it spoiled and became unfit to eat. Horses were to be seen even in the streets and lanes of the common people or plodding in great numbers along the paths between the fields, and anyone so poor as to have to ride a mare was disdained by his neighbors and not allowed to join the gatherings of the villagers. Even the keepers of the community gates ate fine grain and meat. The local officials remained at the same posts long enough to see their sons and grandsons grow to manhood, and the higher officials occupied the same positions so long that they adopted their official titles as surnames. As a result, men had a sense of self-respect and regarded it as a serious matter to break the law. Their first concern was to act in accordance with what was right and to avoid shame and dishonor.

This economic prosperity, along with Emperor Wu's territorial and cultural expansions in all directions—to fight with the Xiongnu in the north, to conquer Korea to the northeast, to destroy Loulan and Dawan in the northwest, to incorporate Yue in the south, and to crush the Xinayi in the southwest, had made China an unprecedentedly unified and overwhelmingly powerful country.
On the other hand, during the several hundred years preceding the Han, mainly from early Zhou to the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring State period, China had experienced an intellectual breakthrough during which many major systems of thought, such as Confucianism, Taoism, Legalism and other "hundred schools," had been formed. The Shiji particularly discussed the basic principles of the six schools: the school of Yin and Yang, Confucianism, Moism, the school of Names, Legalism, and Taoism. The Shiji also described the consequences of such intellectual development. According to Sima Qian,

the Qin scattered and discarded the old writings and burned and destroyed the Book of Poetry and the Book of Documents. Therefore the plans and records of the Illustrious Hall and the stone rooms, of the metal caskets and jade tables, became lost or confused.

Then the Han arose and Xiao He put in order the laws and commandments; Han Xin set forth the rules of warfare; Zhang Cang made the regulations and standards; and Shusun Tong settled questions of rites and ceremonies. At this time the art of letters began again to flourish and advance and the Book of Poetry and the Book of Documents gradually reappeared. From the time when Cao Can put into practice master Kai's teachings of the yellow Emperor and Laozi; when Jia sheng and Chao Cuo expounded the doctrines of the legalist philosophers Shen and Shang, and Gongsun Hong achieved eminence for his Confucian learning, a period of some one hundred years, the books that survived and records of past affairs were all without exception gathered together by the Grand Historian.

If the pre-Qin period witnessed the origination of the Chinese "high culture," the early Han period saw its renaissance, or, its systematization and reformation in the forms of re-editing and generalization. In fact, almost all the
existing major texts that are supposed to be the works of the pre-Qin thinkers were Han editions. The Han scholars also produce works which attempted to summarize the thoughts of the pre-Qin thinkers, works such as the Taoist *Huainanzi* and the Confucianist *Baihu tongyi*. Emperor Wu accepted Dong Zhongshu’s suggestion and established an imperial academy (“taixue”) to train Confucian scholars (“rusheng”). The unification and development of the great empire, the ever stronger awareness as well as curiosity of the world, the country, the people, and the self called for generalizations of knowable history and culture so that the totality of each can be comprehended. The *Shiji* was apparently one of the most outstanding answers to the call. As Liang Qichao once pointed out:

> The time of Sima Qian was about four hundred years after Zuo Qiu [the author of the *Zuozhuan*]. If we take the Chinese society of these four hundred years as the waters, then it will be like the situation where, after great rushing and surging, the waters of hundreds of rivers finally converged into a calm lake. Nations were changing from divided to united, the political systems from enfeoffment to dictatorship, the spheres of learning from exploring new ideas to summarizing the old ones: Sima Qian’s *Shiji* was written within this period.\(^5\)

The result was that “the *Shiji* took the entire knowable human events of several thousand years since the birth of civilization and melted them into a single boiling pot.”\(^4\) Since it was different from other contemporary works, however, the *Shiji* had no close examples to follow. It is neither an annual or chronicle, nor a one-plot narrative. It is neither concerned with one particular
area or period, nor one particular subject. Instead, it is the sum total of the whole world as known to Sima Qian. As he proclaims,

I have sought out and gathered together the ancient traditions of the empire which were scattered and lost; of the great deeds of kings I have searched the beginnings and examined the ends; I have seen their times of prosperity and observed their decline. Of the affairs that I have discussed and examined, I have made a general survey of the three Dynasties and a record of the Qin and Han, extending in all back as far as Xuan Yuan and coming down to the present.\(^\text{155}\)

The idea of "bu-xiu 不朽" ("everlasting," "immortal") also plays an important role in the writing of the *Shiji*. In the *Shiji*, one can read phrases such as "si bu-xiu 死不朽 [dead but not decaying]\(^\text{156}\)" and "Shengren bu-xiu 聖人不朽 [The sage is immortal].\(^\text{157}\) But what are the aspects of immortality that "bu-xiu" is referring to? Lu Jia 魯賈 (216-172 B.C.) in his *Xinyu 新語* connects "bu-xiu" with "names": "[The sages'] deeds will stand without end, and [their] names will be passed on forever [功垂於無窮，名傳於不朽].\(^\text{158}\) Under the 24th year of Duke Xiang 農公, the *Zuo zhuan* records a discussion regarding the meaning of "bu-xiu." Fan Xuanzi 范宣子 once asked Mu Shu 穆叔 what did the ancient phrase "dead but not decaying" really referred to. When Mu Shu did not answer his question, Fan Xuanzi speculated that it might mean that the ancestors' state had passed on to their offsprings. Mu Shu first discarded this speculation because it only meant "hereditary house." As he explains further:
I have heard that the highest meaning of it is when there is established virtue; the second, when there is established successful service; and the third, when there is established words. When these three are not forgotten with the length of time, this is what is meant by the saying 'They do not decay.'

"The superior man hates the thought of his name not being mentioned after his death," Sima Qian once quoted Confucius in the Shiji. He argues that there are five qualities that a superior man ("junzi") should possess, and they are as follows:

....to devote oneself to moral training is the storehouse of wisdom; to delight in giving to others is beginning of humanity; that proper giving and taking are the mark of man's sense of duty; while times of shame and disgrace determine his courage; and that making a name for himself is the aim of all action.

In fact, when Sima Qian's father Sima Tan was dying, he asked Sima Qian to continue as an historian and to finish the Shiji. The most important thing in filial piety, said the elder Sima, is to "make something of yourself so that your name will be passed on to the future generations and thus glorify your parents." Sima Qian himself believes that what an "impassioned man or lieshi wants is simply a good name. "The hermit-scholar hiding away in their caves may be ever so correct in their givings and takings," he sighs, "and yet the names of them and their kind are lost and forgotten without receiving a word of praise. Is this not pitiful?" He explains why the "zhuan," a section consisting of seventy biographies or memoirs of such impassioned
men, was needed, "Upholding righteousness, masterful and sure, not allowing themselves to miss their opportunities, they made a name for themselves; of such men I made the seventy 'Memoirs'." It is a fact that out of the total of 130 chapters in the *Shiji*, 112 are biographies of all kinds of historical figures.

A critic may thus say that, to Sima Qian, there is "no such thing as 'a general history' outside the lives of the individual." While in some cases one chapter presents a single person, in other cases one chapter contains biographies of groups of people. Of these individuals, some 120 are so-called "tragic figures," or "failed heroes." This, of course, has much to do with Sima Qian's tragic personal experience; he was unjustly accused and cruelly punished with castration by the emperor. In Sima Qian's opinion, success in a man's life-time does not necessarily guarantee that he will be immortal. In his letter to Ren An, Sima Qian explains why he had chosen not to die after such a shameful punishment:

> It is the nature of every man to love life and hate death, to think of his relatives and look after his wife and children. Only when a man is moved by higher principles is this not so. Then there are things which he must do....the reason I have not refuse to bear these ills and have continued to live, dwelling in vileness and disgrace without taking my leave, is that I grieve that I have things in my heart which I have not been able to express fully, and I am shamed to think that after I am gone my writings will not be known to posterity.

To Sima Qian, "Too numerous to record are the men of ancient times who were rich and noble and whose names have yet vanished away. It is only
those who were masterful and sure, the truly extraordinary men, who are still remembered." The extraordinary men who failed in their life time will still be remembered in the future if their histories were put down in words. Sima Qian in the same letter discusses a series of individuals who had tragic experiences in their life-time, but who managed either to have their deeds recorded or to have written some things themselves, and thus have been well remembered and highly regarded by posterity ever after. He concludes with many examples:

When the Earl of the West was imprisoned at Yuli, he expanded the Zhouyi; Confucius was in distress and he made the Chunqiu; Qu Yuan was banished and he composed his poem Liscio; after Zuo Qiu lost his sight, he composed the Guoyu; when Sun Zi had his feet amputated, he set forth the Bingfa; Lu Buwei was banished to Shu but his Lu Lan has been handed down through the ages; while Han Fei Zi was held prisoner in Qin, he wrote the Shuonan and the Gufen; most of the three hundred poems of the Shi were written when the sages poured forth their anger and dissatisfaction. All these men had a rankling in their hearts, for they were not able to accomplish what they wished. Therefore they wrote about past in order to pass on their thoughts to future generations. Those like Zuo Qiu, who was blind, or Sun Zi, who had no feet, could never hold office, so they retired to compose books in order to set forth their thoughts and indignation, handing down their theoretical writings in order to show to posterity who they were.

In short, as Sima Qian summarizes on another occasion, people "write books in order to show themselves to the later generations [著書以自現於後世]." Moreover, not only will those who write books become themselves immortal, but also those they write about. Thus Sima Qian wrote a
biography for Su Qin 苏秦 (?-284 B.C.), a "political consultant" of the Warring States period, so that he could clear the "bad name" that had been attached to him [吾故列其行事，次其时序，毋令独蒙恶声焉]。"\(^{172}\) Sima Qian once explained that the reason for him to write the biographies of assassins was that, among them "some succeeded in their mission while others failed; but all were equally determined and loyal to their cause."\(^{173}\) For people like these, Sima Qian believes, it is well justified to pass on their names through the ages [名垂后世，岂妄也哉]。"\(^{174}\) The fate of Li Ling 李陵 (?-74 B.C.) is another good example. Li Ling was a famous army general in the period of the Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. According to Sima Qian, he was both brave and kind, as well as upright and gentle. He won many battles against the Xiongnu, but he finally failed in one battle and surrendered himself to the enemy. Sima Qian tried to defend Li's name in the court by explaining Li's good virtue and speculating that Li must have had a good reason to do what he did. The result was only that Sima Qian got himself into deep trouble: he was imprisoned and condemned to castration. When Sima Qian later had the chance to finish his Shiji, he wrote a biography for Li Guang 李广, Li Ling's grandfather who was also a well-known general. In this biography, Sima Qian presented a good, promising, and very able man who never received appropriate honors for his stellar deeds and eventually came to a tragic end. A short biography of Li Ling was then appended to the
end of Li Guang's biography and to form a very effective parallel. In his letter to Ren An, Sima Qian explicitly described Li Ling as a man who was filial to his parents, honest to his friends, loyal to his country, kind to his soldiers, and brave in battle. He further described the extremely difficult and complex situation in which Li Ling fought his last battle, and openly argued again that Li Ling must have had good reason to do what he did. Since then, both Li Ling's name and Sima Qian's name have been tied together and well remembered, in the way Sima Qian clearly wanted. Just as Sima Qian used to say that "things of the same light illumine each other; things of the same class seek each other out." Thus

When I have truly completed this work, I shall deposit it in the Famous Mountain. If it may be handed down to men who will appreciate it, and penetrate to the villages and great cities, then though I should suffer a thousand mutilations, what regret should I have?

In this sense, Sima Qian surely can rest in peace, because the Shiji has indeed made him and his beloved characters immortal.
CHAPTER II


2. Ibid.


4. Allen III, ibid. p. 34. On the same page he also agues: "The being is not an appeal to emotion but to empiricism, to historical truth. A large part of the benji and shijia sections probably are meaningless in the sense that they do not attempt to generalize. The biao section in this sense would seem to be entirely meaningless." Later in page 48 he holds again that "many parts of the Shiji are empirical history with authorial manipulation at a minimum." Also see, Pritchard, ibid. pp. 198-99.

5. Cf. Ban Gu (39-92), Hanshu (The History of Han), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), p. 1701. The "Yiwen zhi" ("The Treaty of Literature") of the Hanshu already discussed "wei-yan" ("subtle words") and "da-yi" ("great principles") in the Chunqiu and other Confucian classics. The treaty was basically written by Liu Qin (53 B.C.-23 A.C.) and later taken into the Hanshu.


8. *Lunyu zhushu*, in *Shisanjing zhushu*, p. 2506. Tran. by Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, rpt. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), p. 171. I have changed his translation from "....words will not be in accord [with one's actions]" to "....words will not be in accord" for the reason explained in the following page of this thesis. At this particular problem, I benefitted from several conversations I have had with Mr. Minru Li.


10. See *Lunyu zhushu*, p. 2507.


18. See *ibid.* p. 1827.


24. Chunqiu Zuo zhuang zhengyi, p. 1913. My translation. Similar comments can also be found in Chunqiu Zuo zhuang zhengyi, p. 2126.


35. Cf. Shiji. p. 1344: "As for the movement of the heaven, there is a small change every thirty years, medium change every one hundred years, and great change every five hundred years." My translation.

Cf. Chen Zhi, "Taishigong shu ming kao" ("The Examination of the
Titles for the Book of the Grand Historian"), in Wenshizhe Zazhi ed. Sima Qian

Qian Daxin, "Preface," in Liang Yusheng, Shiji Zhiyi (Questioning the

Cf. Watson, Early Chinese Literature (New York: Columbia

Cf. Wang, "Early Chinese Narrative: The Zuozhuan as Example,"
p. 15.

For example, Cf. discussions in Lu Ji's (261-303) Wenfu.

See Qian, ibid. p. 164.

Lu Xun, Han wenxueshi gangyao (Outlines of the History of
Literature of the Han Dynasty), Lu Xun quanji (The Complete Collection of Lu

See Jun Zhisheng, Cong gongyang xue lun chunqiu de xingzhi (On
the Nature of the Chunqiu from the Perspective of the Gongyang

Wangyang Ming, Yangming quanshu, SPPY. 1.5b-6a. My
translation.

Quoted in Ling Zhilong's Shiji pinglin, in Yang Yanqi et al. ed. Lidai

Gu Yanwu, Rizhi lu, SPPY. 26.1b.

Shiji, p. 3297. translation by Anthony C. Yu, "History, Fiction and the
REading of Chinese Narrative," Chinese Literature Essays, Articles, Reviews,
10: 1 & 2 (July, 1988), p. 3. The original sentence reads: "wo yu zaizhi
kongyan, bu-ru xianzhi yu xingshi zhi shenqie zhuming ye." Watson translates
it as: "If I wish to set forth my theoretical judgements, nothing is as good as
illustrating them through the depth and clarity of past affairs." Watson also
argues that the phrase "kongyan" in this particular case does not mean "empty
words" or "vain speeches" but "moral judgements." (Watson, Ssu-ma Ch'ien:
Grand Historian of China, pp. 87-89.) However, if we compare the
grammatical structure of the parallel phrases "zaizhi kongyan" and "xianzhi yu xingshi," we can see "kongyan" here, like "xingshi," refers to the possible means that might be used by the historian to convey his thoughts and not the "moral judgement" itself. "Kongyan" here is also used to contrast and set forth the uniqueness of "xingshi. 'Apparently, Watson's understanding and translation of the phrase do not fully reflect the nature of Sima Qian's statement.

Among the works of major pre-Qin thinkers, the Zhuangzi is the one that expresses its meaning through fable instead of historical events. And that is precisely where Sima Qian shows his dissatisfaction about the work. According to Sima Qian, the contents of the Zhuangzi are "all airy words without facts." See Shiji, p. 2144.


51. Liang Qichao, Yaoji jieti jiqi dufa (Explaining the themes and Reading Methods of the Important Books) (Beijing: Qinghua congkan, 1925), p. 40. Many years after Liang, we still read statements like that "even the Shiji is still too embroiled with ancient ritualistic considerations to meet the test of straightforwardness and true objectivity we demand of historical writing today." See Watson, Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China, p. 135.

52. The word is "zuo" ("to make, to create"). The phrases "zuo Chunqiu" and "chunqiu zuo" appear in the Mengzi zhushu, pp. 2714, 2727 respectfully. The Phrase "zuo Chunqiu" appears in the Shiji, pp. 1943, 3295, 3297, and 3299.

53. See Mengzi zhushu, p. 2725.

54. Lunyu zhushu, p. 2481.


57. See Shiji, pp. 3299-3300.


60. Hanshu, p. 2735.


63. See Yang Xiong, Yangzi fanyan, SPPY, 10.9b. and 12.2b.

64. See Hanshu, pp. 2737-2738.

65. See Fan Ye, Houhanshu, 40b.16a.


68. Zhuangzi. 1.25b.

69. Zhuangzi. 3.2b.

70. Lunyu zhushu, p. 2479.


Erya guozhu, SPPY, 5.4a-4b.

Shiming, Baibu congshu jicheng, 1.3a.

Huainanzi, SPPY, 11.9b-10a.


Ibid.

Shiji, pp. 1480, 2625. Also, Huainanzi, SPPY. 1.9b.

Shiji. p. 2624.

Ibid. p. 2625.

Zhongyong, SPPY. 2.3a.

Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi, Shisanjing zhushu, p. 1845.

Xunzi, SPPY. 20.18a.

Ibid. 8.5a

Lunyu zhushu, p. 2524.

Mengzi zhushu, p. 2684.

Chunqiu gongyangzhuan zhushu, p. 2204.

Shiji, p. 1257.

Zhuangzi, SPPY. 6.4a.

Ibid. 17.18a.

Liji zhengyi, Shisanjing zhushu, p. 1431.
106. Mengzi zhushu, p. 2741.


110. Ibid. p. 33.

111. This sentence is the modification of the statement that "when a body moves, or a force acts, it affects the curvature of space and time----and in turn the structure of space-time affects the way in which bodies move and forces act." ibid. p. 33.

112. Zhuangzi, 6.7b.

113. Lunyu zhushu, p. 2491.


115. Ibid. 8.7b. Tran. by Watson, ibid. p. 257. I have made modifications for this translation.


117. Watson, Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China, p. 143. See also, Zhang Dake, Shiji yanjiu, pp. 370-75; Nie Shiqiao, Sima Qian lungao, pp. 66-71; Han Zhaoqi, Shiji pingyi shangshi, pp. 11-15; Gao Guokang, Zhongguo gudai shixueshi gaiyao, pp. 81-83. Watson has given somewhat contradictory statements about this matter. On the one hand, he asserts: "History to him [Sima Qian] was a constant process of growth, and it was impossible to think of returning to some static golden age of the past." On the other hand, he believes that the 'conception of the recurrence of history had a great effect upon Ssu-ma Ch'ien." According to this conception, "history is not a single line stretching through the ages, but a series of circles which pass..."
repeatedly through the same or similar point." See Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China*, p. 143.


135. See *Hanshu*, pp. 2498-2523.
136. See *Shiji*, p. 3153. Li Changzhi in his major study of the *Shiji* has argued that the biography of Laozi, in which this assertion occurs, was not written by Sima Qian, but by his father Sima Tan. See Li Changzhi, *Sima Qian zhi renge yu fengge*, p. 136.


139. *Shiji*, p. 1420.


141. *Zhouyi zhengyi*, p. 78.


143. *Shiji*, p. 1344.


145. Watson has made the point that when Sima Qian wrote the *Shiji*, he in fact was writing a book for the entire knowable past. See, Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China*, pp. 3-4.


Shiji, p. 2311.

Ibid. p. 3292.


Shiji, p. 3295.


There are six exceptions (chapter 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, and 123) which are accounts of ethnic groupss or countries.


175. Liang Yusheng has argued that the biography of Li Ling was not written by Sima Qian but by someone else who later inserted the biography into the *Shiji*. See Liang Yusheng, *ibid*, p. 1380. Watson also seems to share the same assumption. See Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, Vol. II, p. 154. On the other hand, Li Changzhi has pointed out the inter-illuminating effect between Li Guang's biography and Li Ling's biography. See Li Changzhi, pp. 269-70. Also, Allen in his study has made a very convincing analysis of the parallel between the biography of Li Guang and the biography of Li Ling, and the parallel between Sima Qian's letter to Ren An and the two biographies. While not knowing for sure whether Sima Qian did or did not write Li Ling's biography, Allen suggests that Sima Qian would at least mean to present the biography the way it is now.

176. See *Hanshu*, pp. 2729-2730.


CHAPTER III
THE CONSTRUCTION AND CHARACTERIZATION
OF THE SHIJI

We have mentioned earlier that, except for the sections of Biao and Shu, the other three sections in the Shiji—112 chapters out of a total of 130—are biographies. Thus any discussion of the Shiji's construction must start with the discussion of the construction of the biographies, just as any discussion of the narratology of the Shiji cannot avoid dealing with the issue of characterization. It is through the study of these two areas, in fact, that some of the most intriguing questions regarding traditional Chinese narrative can be raised.

In his study of the Shiji, Joseph Allen has applied Robert Scholes' interpretation of Tzvetan Todorov's theory on Bocaccio's Decameron and has classified the plot structures of these biographies into two categories: those of law (action) and those of attribute (theme). In the former, action is the core of the narrative and the incidents are unified by a unilinear, progressive causal movement "that is purposely directed towards a certain end"; the characters here perform in the movement of the plot. In the latter, a particular theme is
the core of the narrative and the movement of the narrative is not unilinear but episodic; the incidents are thematically associated in an "acausal" and "atemporal" manner; and the characters here perform the movement of the plot. While we may be attracted to the neatness of the oppositional bipolarity, we must be cautioned by the fact that most biographies in the Shiji are much more complex than this bipolarity may suggest. The following examination of Chapter 47, the biography of Confucius, will show that, while the incidents or anecdotes are by and large chronologically (hence temporally) arranged, they are thematically selected and sensationally presented to bring out with rhetorical force an underlining moral theme. Likewise, the characters in these biographies display themselves as the strong force that perform the movement of the plot, and at the same time, they show that they inevitably perform in, or respond to, the course of the events. As Sima Qian indicates in his biography of Su Qin, both lieqi xingshi 列其行事 (presenting/displaying his deeds) and ciqi shixu 次其時序 (ordering/arranging his chronology) are devices applied in the same biography. The Shiji itself in fact features the combination of both devices. The Tang critic Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721) once pointed out that the form of the combination of ji 紀 and zhuan 傳 was first created by Sima Qian. Liu explained that "ji means to arrange the chronology; zhuan means to display the events [傳者, 列事也]. Also, as we discussed in the last chapter, to Sima
Qian, *lieshi* (to present the events/actions) and *lizhi* (to set forth the theme) are not two oppositional activities but two sides of the same coin: they are two different operations which are nevertheless integrated and complementary in any piece of narrative writing. Liang Qichao once pointed out that, in his biographies, Sima Qian breathes life into his characters on the one hand ("其面目活現"), and through them illuminates the historical condition in question ("借人以明史") on the other.6

The biography of Confucius, like most other biographies, presents the main character's life chronologically from his birth to his death. It actually starts with a very brief introduction of Confucius' family history before him, from his great grandfather to his father and mother, and then to his birth. Following this the historian presents us a great number of incidents or events which cover various stages in, and different aspects of, Confucius' life. It ends with Confucius' death and a very brief introduction of his offsprings. After that, like the majority of the biographies, there is a *zan* (太史公曰), the section for the historian's remarks ("太史公曰"), through which the historian makes explicit comments on the individual in question.7 As a whole the presentation is not only basically chronologically arranged but also meticulously dated, with frequent reference either to the subject's age--"when Confucius was seventeen years old," "at that time Confucius was thirty years old," "Confucius' age was thirty-five," "at the age of forty-two," "this year, Confucius was
sixty-three"—or to the specific year in the reign periods of Lu, Confucius' native state—"the 20th year of Duke Zhao of Lu," "five years after Duke Ding claimed his throne," "in the spring of the 10th year of Duke Ding," "this year, Duke Ding die"—or to both—"in the 20th year of Duke Zhao, Confucius was thirty years old," "when Confucius was forty-two years old, Duke Zhao die in Ganhou and Duke Ding claimed his throne," "that year was the 3rd year of Duke Ai and Confucius was already sixty years old," etc. Of course, when compared with the Jiayu, the Zuozhuan and other ancient texts, the dates in this biography are not at all without inconsistencies and thus the "real" temporal relationship between some of the events becomes rather questionable. For example, after the introduction of Confucius' early youth and before the presentation of the major activities of his adulthood and later years, Sima Qian presents to us the event of Confucius visiting Laozi. It tells us that Confucius once studied rites in Zhou and there he met Laozi. When he was leaving, Laozi gave him the following parting words:

I have heard that the rich and noble offer farewell gifts of money while the good offers words. I am not rich and no noble and I have stolen the name of a good man, so I am offering you these words: 'He who has a bright mind and keen eyes risks his own life because he is prone to criticize others; he who is broadly learned and well versed endangers himself because he exposes the faults of others. A filial son must never thrust himself forward, and neither may a good subject.'
This particular incident, unlike the presentation of other incidents which are clearly dated, interestingly offers no date at all. Some traditional commentators have pointed out that, chronologically speaking, this incident was out of place. They argued that, according to the Zhuangzi, a book also acknowledged by Sima Qian, "when Confucius was fifty-one years old, he went south to visit Laozi" and complained that the conditions of the roads were too difficult to travel on, an indication that he was not young. It is apparent that Sima Qian purposefully inserts the incident in its current place and deliberately left out its date in order to gain special and important effects for the narrative as a whole without breaking down the general sense of the temporal and causal relationships in the narrative. The insertion implies to the reader that the incident must have taken place after Confucius' formative age and before the major part of his life. Thus the parting words of Laozi function as a prediction-realization or promise-fulfillment device that serves as the moving force for the advancement of the narrative; at the same time, they sound an underlying theme that serves as the organizational device for the rest of the episodes in the biography.

Indeed, the biography convincingly presents to us a Confucius who was without question very wise and widely learned but nonetheless was repeatedly denied opportunities to put himself into service; who truly believed in, and persistently tried to push forward, an ideal that was obviously unpopular at the
time, and thus put himself in numerous difficult and even dangerous situations; who made a life-long effort to regulate the reality according to his ideal but was unavoidably also the product of the reality. Let us now look at four incidents presented in this biography.

When Confucius was thirty-five years old he left his native state Lu, which was in chaos, and went to Qi to serve as Gao Zhaozi's steward in the hope of getting an introduction to Duke Jing of Qi. When he was asked by the Duke about governing, Confucius gave two answers. The first answer was about maintaining proper social structure—"Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father and the son a son [君君臣臣父父子子]." The second one was about economy in the use of wealth, particularly encouraging frugality. ("政在节财") Duke Jing was pleased and was about to give Confucius a fief. At this moment, Yan Ying, Duke Jing's prime minister, protested. He said to Duke Jing:

These scholars are such unruly windbags, so arrogant and self-willed that there is no controlling them. They set great store by long mourning and bankrupt themselves for a sumptuous funeral; it would never do if this became the custom. A beggar who roams the land talking is not a man to entrust with affairs of state. Ever since the passing of the great ages and the decline of the Zhou dynasty, the rites and music have fallen into decay. Now Confucius lays such stress on appearance and costume, elaborate etiquette and codes of behavior that it would take generations to learn his rules--one life-time would not be enough! To adopt his way of reforming the state would not be putting the common people first."
The next day when Duke Jing saw Confucius, he did not ask him about rites. On another day he told him: "To rank you as first minister, that I cannot do." When other ministers of Qi conspired to injure Confucius, Duke Jing said to him: "I am old, and I cannot make use of your service." Thus Confucius left Qi and returned to his native Lu.

At the age of fifty-six, Confucius reached the height of his short-lived official career, he was appointed both chief justice and prime minister of Lu ("dasikou 大司寇"). According to the Shiji, Confucius immediately started to reform the country.

After three months of his administration vendors of lamb and pork stopped raising their prices, men and women walked on different sides of the street, no one picked up anything lost on the road, and stranger coming to the city did not have to look for the officers in charge for everyone made them welcome.  

When the men of the neighboring Qi heard about this they became frightened and decided to foil the reforms. They selected eighty beautiful girls who danced well and dressed in gay costumes and sixty dappled horses as gifts to the Duke of Lu. When these women and horses were displayed just outside the Gao Gate to the south of Lu city, Ji Huanzi 季桓子, the highest ranked noble and the most powerful subject of Lu, went in disguise several times to see them, and finally persuaded the Duke to go there by a roundabout way. They watched for days and neglected official affairs. When no meat was
offered to ministers at the immediately followed sacrificial ceremony, a sign of further neglect. Confucius ceased his reform effort and left Lu for Wei.

Later, when Confucius was living between Chen and Cai, Chu sent him an invitation. "Before he could accept it, however," the Shiji reports, "the ministers of Chen and Cai discussed the matter and said:

"Confucius is an able man who has laid his finger unerringly on the abuses in every state. He has spent a considerable time between Chen and Cai and disapproves of all our measures and policies. Now powerful Chu has sent for him. If he serves Chu, so much the worse for us!"

They sent men to surround Confucius in the countryside, so that he could not leave. His supplies ran out, his followers were too weak to move, but Confucius went on teaching and singing, accompanying himself on the lute.

Zilu went to him and asked indignantly, "Does a gentleman have to put up with privation?"

"A gentleman can stand privation" answered Confucius. "A mean man exposed to privation is prone to do wrong."

As Zigong looked displeased, Confucius asked him, "Do you think me a learned, well-read man?"

"Certainly," replied Zigong. "Aren't you?"

"Not at all," said Confucius. "I have simply grasped one thread which links up the rest."

Knowing that his disciples were in low spirits, Confucius called Zilu and said to him, "The old song runs: 'I am neither rhinoceros nor tiger, yet I go to the wilderness.' Is our way wrong? Is that why we have come to this?"

"Maybe we lack humanity and therefore men do not trust us," replied Tzu-lu. "Or perhaps we are not intelligent enough for them to follow our way."

"Do you really think so?" countered Confucius. "If the humane were always trusted, how do you account for what happened to Bo Yi and Shu Qi? If the intelligent always had their way, how do you explain the case of Prince Bi Ban?"

After Zilu left, Zigong came and Confucius put the same question to him. "The old song says, 'I am neither rhinoceros nor tiger, yet I go
to the wilderness.' Is our way wrong? Is that why we have come to this?"

Zigong answered, "Master, your way is too great for the world to accept. You should modify it a little."

"A good farmer can sow but may not always reap a harvest," said Confucius. "A good craftsman can use his skill but may not be able to please. A gentleman can cultivate his way, draw up principles, recapitulate and reason, but may not be able to make his way accepted. Now your aim is not to cultivate your way but to please others. Your ambition is not high enough."

After Zigong had left, Yan Hui came and Confucius again put the same question to him.

"Master, your way is too great for the world to accept," said Yen Hui. 'All the same, you should persist in it. What does it matter if they cannot accept it? That just shows that you are a superior man. We are at fault if we do not cultivate the true way. Yet if we cultivate it fully and it is not adopted, it is the rulers who are at fault. What does it matter if they cannot accept your way? That just shows that you are a superior man."

Confucius smiled with pleasure and exclaimed, "Well said, son of Yan! If you had great wealth, I should like to administer it for you."^12

In the last few years of his life, the feeling of intellectual loneliness and the desire to make the last effort to push forward his ideal reached their heights within Confucius. The Shiji tells us that about two years before his death, Confucius once exclaimed "My way has come to an end!" and lamented "No one understands me!"^13 The Shiji also tells us that, a year later, Confucius sighed: "Alas! Alas! What a gentlemen dreads is to die before his name is known. My way is not popular. How shall I make myself known to later ages?"^14 Thus he made the Chunqiu, whose significance was, in Sima Qian's words, "to use these examples to guide the contemporary world [推此類以繕當世]."^15 Confucius himself believed that the making of the
Chunqiu is the most important event in his life, and he proclaimed: "It is the Chunqiu by which later men will know me, and it is the Chunqiu which will make men condemn me." The next year he fell ill. When Zigong, his former student, went to see him, he sang a song to him:

"Mount Tai crumbles,
The great beam breaks,
The wise man withers away."

With tears he told Zigong, "The world has long strayed from the true way and no one can follow me...."

He died seven days later at the age of seventy-three.

There are many other incidents presented in between and after these episodes. The biography itself is not about one particular action, but about many actions through which a particular character and the particular time during which he was living were represented. No matter how erroneous it may seem when comparing some of the dates recorded in this biography with those in other ancient texts, the chronological order within the biography is nevertheless consistent and clear. The willful displacement of some events in terms of their "real" chronological order helped to create the thematic unity of the narrative, and at the same time, the historian was careful enough to modify his presentation so that the displacement would not break the temporal flow. Step by step, the narrative, moved by the characterization of Confucius, reaches an end which is promised at the beginning and presented as the
"natural" conclusion of the course of the events. The Shiji records that when Confucius was living in Song 宋, he once expounded the rites to his pupils under a great tree. Huan Dui 樊 魖, the war minister of Song who wanted to killed Confucius, sent men to fell the tree. When Confucius' pupils urged him to hurry away, Confucius replied: "Heaven has implanted virtue in me. What can men like Huan Dui do to me?" Such an interplay between the preconceived character as such and the "objective" law of the movement of the events, is precisely what underlies the narrative. The episodic, self-contained incidents or units in the biography are thematically selected and at the same time chronologically arranged. In other words, they are simultaneously linked and organized by the temporal flow and the shared thematic frame-work. The interplay between the clearly maintained sense of temporal succession and the effectively established thematic association of the episodes suggests to the reader that while the character was the moving force behind the events, the events also left clear imprints upon his life. The character performed the movement of the narrative, but he was not free from the particular context of space and time, and thus his performance at the same time was the response to, and restrained by, the movement itself. Should Confucius not be the man he was, there would be no such events that occurred in the biography; should those events not played out themselves the way they did, there would be no such man as Confucius. There is no doubt
that the characterization of Confucius, rather than the representation of one complete action, is the major organizational force of this biography, and consequently the way the incidents are presented is basically episodic in nature. Even though "the line of one episode does not connect with that of another," a reader familiar with the convention of traditional Chinese historiography will nevertheless be able to feel to a certain degree the cause and effect relationship between them. For example, if, in our first example above, Yan Ying did not protest Duke Jing of Qi's attempt to promote Confucius, and Duke Jing were able to give a fief to Confucius and to utilize his service, he might have stayed in Qi and not gone back to Lu, thus the second example which tells us that Confucius were once again driven out of Lu, might not have happened. Should this be the case, Sima Qian's well-known description of the sequence in the biography, namely, that "subsequently [Confucius] left Lu, was dismissed from Qi, driven out of Song and Wei and ran into trouble between Chen and Cai, and finally returned to Lu [已而去魯，斥乎齊，逐乎宋、衛，困於陳蔡之間，於是反魯]." would not be found anywhere. It is in this sense that a modern critic's remark that the chronological order in this type of biography, (i.e., that which may be classified as attribute) "basically does not matter" is too insensitive to the type of narrative with which we are dealing. As the *Shiji* records it Confucius once admitted that his broad learning is the result of his never having held office
Thus a character is the creator as well as the product of his own life. In other words, in the biography of Confucius, the theme of a great but unfortunate sage functions as the reason for, as well as presented as the result of, the narrative.

The customary historian's remark at the end of each biography reenforces the interplay between the theme and the law. On the one hand, it provides the historian with the opportunity and the relatively greater freedom to synthesize and explicate the theme. The following are the remarks following the biography of Confucius:

The Grand Historian says: The *Classic of Poetry* has it, "The great mountain, I look up to it! The great road, I travel it!" Although I cannot reach him, my heart goes out to him. When I read the works of Confucius, I try to see the man himself. In Lu I visited his temple and saw his carriage, clothes and sacrificial vessels. Scholars go regularly to study ceremony there, and I found it hard to tear myself away. the world has known innumerable princes and worthies who enjoyed fame and honor in their day but were forgotten after death, while Confucius, a commoner, has been look up to by scholars for ten generations and more. From the emperor, princes and barons downwards, all in China who study the Six Arts take the master as their final authority. Well is he called the Supreme Sage!\(^23\)

The quotation from the *Classic of Poetry*, the expression of personal feeling, and the description of Confucius current status, all convey the unequivocal message: "This is a great man!" (It has been well-known that, from all the ancient materials we now have, Sima Qian was the first one who called Confucius the "Supreme Sage [zhisheng 正聖 ]," by which Confucius has
been known ever since.) At the same time, the contrast between the mention of innumerable princes and worthies who achieved fame and honor in their lives and the omission of Confucius status in his own life-time implies the unfortunate and frustrated life Confucius had. It is this theme, that of a great man ultimately disappointed in life, that runs through the entire biography and illustrated step by step and bit by bit, by the numerous episodes preceding the concluding remarks.

On the other hand, the phrase "taishigong yue" ("The Grand Historian says"), which signals the coming of those remarks, serves as an artificial dividing line between the biography proper and the direct statement of its theme. It informs the reader explicitly that he is about to read personal comments. And at the very same moment, it implies quietly but forcefully to the reader that what he has encountered to this point is nothing but facts. Thus the strongly and subjectively colored remark increases the objective feel of the preceding narrative and adds authority to the preceding episodes so that at the end the theme of the biography could be perceived as the "natural" conclusion, rather than the initiating force, of the narrative.

The concluding remarks, which are clearly worked out, also set off other commentaries inserted in the narrative body of the biography. In the Shiji, these commentaries are so integrated into narrative that they appear to be part of the "real" event and not subjective commentaries. In the biography of
Confucius, such commentaries are made by the main character himself as well as by other characters. The incident of Laozi's parting words, cited above, is a good example. The following are three other examples. Once, the Duke of She asked Confucius' student Zilu about Confucius, and Zilu did not reply. When Confucius heard this he said:

Why didn't you tell him, "He is a man who never wearies of studying the Dao, never tires of teaching others, but who in his eagerness forgets his hunger and in his joy forgets his bitter lot, not knowing that old age is creeping on?"  

Another time, while visiting Zheng, Confucius and his students became separated, so that he was standing alone at the East Gate. A local person remarked to Zigong, who was looking for his teacher, that "There is a man at the East Gate with a forehead like Yao, a neck like Gao Yao and shoulder like Zichan, and just three inches shorter below the waist than Yu. Lost as a stray dog he looks!" When this was repeated to Confucius, he chuckled. "The appearance is unimportant," he said, "But it's true that I'm like a stray dog. That is certainly true!"

Yet another time, a "mad man" of Chu passed by Confucius singing:

Ah, phoenix, phoenix,
How weak your virtue is!
What has passed cannot be stopped,
What is coming can still be caught.
Today there is danger
For those involved in state affairs.
Confucius stepped out of his carriage to speak to the man, but he ran off before Confucius could do so.26

Each of these accounts about Confucius are presented in various points of the biography and have double status. On the one hand, they themselves are concrete incidents in the life of the subject and are presented in the biography as historical incidents rather than subjective commentaries; on the other hand, they also serve as explicitly expressed variations and repetitions of the main theme that underscores the whole narrative, and they thus help to channel the reader's attention. As quoted in last chapter, the famous Qing scholar Gu Yanwu once pointed out that the Shiji "does not have to wait for [the historian's] commentary but through the narration of the events to show its theme [不待論断而於敘事中即現其旨]."27 The fact is that the Shiji seamlessly blends some of the commentaries into the "narration of the events" instead of presents them in the clearly separated historian's remarks. In this way, these commentaries, which are undeniably explicit repetition of the theme, are perceived merely as parts of the "historical facts." The process of conceptualizing the narrative is thus carried out "naturally."

Not all the historian's remarks are in consonance with the biographies to which they are appended. Some of the remarks even appear to be at odds with the corresponding biographies. In the case of Chapter 92, the biography of Han Xin (7-196 B.C.), the reader can feel rather strongly the
paradoxical tension between what is conveyed through the narrative and what is expressed in the historian's remarks. Judging from the *Lidai mingjia ping Shiji* (Commentaries on the Shiji by Well-known Writers of All Generations), one can see clearly that the narrative effectively wins the reader's affection and sympathy for Han Xin, who was a great general and strategist accused of "conspiring to revolt" and who was killed by the emperor and his wife that he had served. The historian's remarks following this biography, however, startles and puzzles the reader by justifying the execution of Han and his family up to third degree kinship on the grounds that he attempted to revolt. (*" 天下已集，乃谋畔逆，夷厥宗族，不亦宜乎 "*) Whether Han Xin did indeed conspire to rebel has continued to be a debatable issue among Chinese scholars. The interesting phenomenon, however, is that both sides of the debate usually retain a great affection and sympathy for Han Xin and nearly everyone believes his death was unjustified, whatever he may have been planning. We see this in the twisted title of a contemporary article: "Han Xin Did Suffer Injustice; 'Treason' Was Not A False Accusation [ 韩信诚蒙冤，谋反亦不诬 ]." Since all these discussions use the *Shiji* as their primary source for reference, it appears that the historian's remark has "failed" to convey the surface meaning of its words. Several traditional critics have already concluded that the remarks were made that way to keep Han's biography at least in
appearance in line with the contemporary official position so that it would be allowed. In fact, the remarks serve another two functions. First, their callous tone irritates the reader so that he would side with the character in an even more passionate way; and second, the ironic tension caused by the difference between the remarks and the narrative alerts the reader to reconsider the biography again, and in this way sets forth the underlining theme of the narrative even more effectively.

While the above discussed biographies are so-called danzhuan 单傳 ("single biography," which presents one individual's biography within a chapter/unit [juan 卷 ]), a great number of the biographies in the Shiji are presented in hezhuan 合傳 ("combined biographies"), in which a single chapter under a single title presents biographies of two or more individuals who are often neither temporally nor causally related. In some of the hezhuan, the common characteristic of the individuals in the biographies is clearly indicated in the titles—"The Biographies of the Assassins [ 刺客列傳 ]," "The Biographies of the Jesters [ 滑稽列傳 ]," "The Biographies of the Harsh Officials [ 酷吏列傳 ]," "The Biographies of the Money-makers [ 賄殖列傳 ]," etc. In others, no such categorization is given, but the reader would not have much difficulty in discerning the reason for the grouping. "The Biographies of Laozi and Han Fei [ 老子韓非列傳 ]," for examples, are about several pre-Qin philosophers; "The Biographies of
Sunzi and Wuqi [孫子吴起列傳 ]," concerned with military strategists; "The Biographies of Qu Yuan and Jia Sheng [屈原贾生列傳 ]," deal with men of letters. In still others, the groupings are not only based on the individuals' professions--what individuals do--but, more importantly, also on how they do it. The chapter on the "The Biographies of Lu Zhonglian and Zou Yang [魯仲連邹阳列傳 ]" is a good example. There are no direct temporal or causal relations between Lu Zhonglian and Zou Yang. While both men belong to the "shi 士 " or literati class, they have been grouped together, as Sima Qian suggests, mainly because both of them were very good at conducting expansive and elaborated discourse (" 高談闊論 ") and neither of them wanted to bend even a bit to those who were rich and powerful (" 不可稍為富貴權勢所屈挠 ").

"The Biographies of Fan Sui and Cai Ze 范雎蔡泽列傳 " is an interesting case. On the one hand, there are sensible temporal succession and causal relationship between the two biographies----Fan Sui was the prime minister of Qin, and upon his retirement, Cai Ze took over his position; Fan Sui's decision to retire was influenced by Cai Ze who convinced him that it was time. The reason for Cai Ze's attempt to seek for the position in the first place was the news that Fan Sui was concerned with losing the trust of the Duke of Qin. On the other hand, such temporal and causal relations do not imply or reveal why the two men were who they were and did what they did. To the
reader, the chapter seems to emphasize the parallel quality more than the connection in time between the two lives. They both are wildly learned and very skillful in oral argument and presentation; they both had humble beginning, humiliating and frustrated early lives, sudden prosperity upon meeting the right ruler, and relatively peaceful retirement in their later years. In fact, in the concluding "historian's remarks," Sima Qian comments on the two at the same time as if they were one individual:

Fan Sui and Cai Ze were great orators, who tried to impress different lords with their eloquence, yet had no luck until their hair turned white. This was not for any lack of eloquence, but because their prospective patrons were too weak. When they later went as strangers to Qin, each in turn became a minister and prime minister and accomplished great deeds known to all in the world, due to the difference in Qin's relative strength. None the less, much depends on chance. For the number of men as able as these two whose ambitions were frustrated is past counting. It was desperation, moreover, that goaded them out.32

As we presented in the last chapter, Sima Qian believes that "things of the same light illumine each other; things of the same class seek each other out [同明相照，同類相求]."33 Thus one may first "compare things and connect those of the same kind [比物連類]"34 even though the events may happened in different times ("異時事有類之者"),35 one may also "connect those of the same kind to argue for principles 連類以爭議."36 Therefore, the organizational principle of these "combined biographies" is neither temporality or causality, but categorization based on the
individual's social functions. These functions are perceived and recognized in a comparative manner and then grouped in the atemporal categories (lei 雷) --categories divided according to their relative differences in overall qualities rather than their own developmental changes through time. We have pointed out earlier that Prusek, while mistakenly believing that the Chinese historian never creates but only arranges his history, keenly observes that the historian arranges his material "into certain categories" instead of "successive chains."37
The significance of these two different types of historical writing, as we have also discussed earlier, are that they in fact reflect as well as reinforce two kinds of historiographical concept: history as division, and history as development; history as an interplay of relations, and history as the result of internal dynamic; history as a system, and history as the hard work of freedom.38

Besides categorization, the Shiji also employs devices such as juxtaposition, cross-reference, contrast, and endings that are not closures. Such devices have been largely viewed as "improper moves" in the game of the narrative proper because they weaken and even destroy the senses of temporal succession and inward development. However, precisely because of such functions, these devices are particularly effective in the game of grasping together through spatialization.
To juxtapose is to place things side by side in space without explicitly specifying relationships between them. In order to illustrate such strategy and its effects, I would like to compare a poem written by the Tang poet Zhang Ji (?767-?830) with its English rendering by a well-known translator.

Witter Bynner’s English translation:

While I watch the moon go down, a crow caws through the frost: Under the shadows of maple-trees a fishman moves with his torch; And I hear, from beyond Su-chou, from the temple on Cold Mountain, Ringing for me, there in my boat, the midnight bell.

In the English translation, there are personal pronouns (“I”) and words that specify certain kinds of relationships (“while,” “under,” “from,” “for”), both of which the Chinese text does not have. One major school in the Chinese poetic tradition believes that a poem should reach the realm of yijing 意境. Roughly translated, the first character means feelings and/or meaning, and the second scenery and/or settings. When the two fuse at once into one space, a poem has realized its destiny. However, poetry, as a kind of verbal act, must utter
its words one by one, which means the reader inescapably perceives images separated by time. To overcome the difficulty, the poet adopts the strategy of juxtaposition--placing the images side by side without pronouns and words to specify relationships. The omission of pronouns and relational words makes the narration or description in the poem seem to be free from any particular point of view, and makes vague the temporal, spatial, and logical relationships between the images. Thus the poem on the one hand provides a condition in which images are flowing around and are simultaneously perceivable in a single space, allowing the reader to perform the act of "grasping together." On the other hand it creates the impression of "pre-conceptualization" and thus hides away its master-plan and implies to the reader that events are presented "as they are."\footnote{42}

There are several levels of juxtaposition in the Shiji. Within a chapter, the historian may juxtapose different aspects of the same individual, or, in the case of "the combined biographies," the same aspect of different individuals. In "The Biography of Confucius," aspects of the subject are presented in a manner that they are perceived not as development through time but as a totally present entity shown a bit at a time and under different circumstances. As we discussed earlier, Sima Qian in this biography mainly presents the reader a sage who was full of humanity, who was persistent about his ideals, but who failed to achieve popular acceptance in his life because of historical
circumstances beyond his control. Between the major episodes that contribute
to such an image there are many minor incidents that reveal other aspects of
the man. There are incidents, for example, that tell how broadly learned
Confucius was. Through his reasoning alone, Confucius knew that since the
ancients assigned spirits to different parts of nature, what was found in an
earth-ware pot in a well must have been a sheep (_above_ ), instead of a dog,
as people believed. When Wu attacked Yue and destroyed the town of Kuaiji
会稽，a huge skeleton was discovered. No one knew what it was except
Confucius, who also knew in great detail the history behind it. When a falcon
fell dead after it was shot by a thorn arrow eighteen inches long with an
arrowhead of stone, Confucius immediately knew the origin and the
circumstances concerning the arrow. Again, Confucius was right; and again,
the reason he knew the answers to all these strange questions was not
because he was a psychic but he was widely learned. There are other
incidents that reveal the not so admirable aspects of Confucius. Several times
he was on the verge of giving in to the temptation of joining the political
mainstream and began to deviate from his own teachings. Though reluctant at
first, he did go to see Duke Ling of Wei's wife Nanzi 南子 because she
openly demanded that whoever wanted to establish a relationship with the
duke must first call on her. Once Confucius was even willing to answer a call
sent by the rebel Gongshan Buniu 公山不狃 As he himself explained, he
chose to enter the house of an evil-doer simply because he has waited too long to be accepted by those in power. When Confucius was appointed as attorney general and prime minister ("dasikou 大司寇"), his face showed gratitude. He was embarrassed when asked by his students to reconcile this evident show of gratitude and his teaching that "a gentleman would show no fear in the face of calamity, no joy in the face of good fortune." The biography indicates that Confucius would even lie in order to survive. As he was passing through Pu 薄 to go to Wei, Confucius was detained by men there who did not want him to go on. So he promised them that if they would release him, he would not go to Wei. As soon as he was released, however, he went back his word and proceeded to Wei. Answering his students' queries on the matter of keeping one's word, Confucius replied that "I gave it under pressure: the gods will not count it." As Sima Qian records it, Confucius even had a cruel side to his personality. When he was in a position to do so, Confucius would relentlessly push his ideals forward even though it might involve violence. While he was serving as the minister of Qi, he ordered the bodies of several jesters and singers' cut in half because in performing in front of the duke during an official state occasion, they violated the rules. As soon as he became the attorney general and prime minister of Lu, Confucius executed Shao Zhengmao 少正卯, a minister who had made trouble for the government.
No explicit logical or causal connection was made between these incidents. The historian relates them one after another without any transition in between. Taken together, the juxtaposed incidents form a large picture which shows the many sides of the character; what they do not show is a developmental process which emphasizes change and growth. These many sides to the character are assumed to have always been there; they need only be revealed under different situations as the narrative unwinds. The appearance of certain sides but not others at any one point in time is the result of the interplay between the constant person as such and the ever-changing situations around him. That different aspects of the individual moving back and forth in space rather than succeed or replace one another in time points to the totalization of the individual in the narrative. From his biography we know rather comprehensively what kind of person Confucius was; we may even "hear" his deep sigh or "see" his smile, even though we are not told how he had become the man he was. In other words, although the process through which the individual has grown is unclear or even untouched, the general image of him is often distinctive, convincing, and ready to be received in the way the historian designs him to be received. In addition, because of the lack of the appearance of subjective connections and organization, such juxtaposition gives the impression of pre-conceptualization, which in turn creates the illusion that the way by which events and characters are presented
is "the way it was." The reader may not see structures of the representation; but he still sees the "natural course" of history. He may not see developmental characterization but he encounters in his reading "real people" acting in "their own way." As we can see from the above discussion, such an impression and illusion even deceived some of the modern scholars who insist on that traditional Chinese historiography only records, lists, or arranges facts.

While the "single biography" juxtaposes different aspects of the same individual, the "combined biographies" juxtaposes the same aspect of different individuals. In "The Biographies of Assassins," Sima Qian presents to the reader five individuals, namely, Cao Mo, Zhuan Zhu, Yu Rang, Nie Zheng, and Jing Ke, who lived in widely different locales and periods but whose lives show similar characteristics.

During the treaty-signing ceremony between Lu and Qi, Cao Mo, a general of Lu, seized Duke Huan of Qi by the altar, threatened him with a dagger in front of all the guards, and made him agree to return all the territory wrested from Lu. After this, "Cao Mo tossed aside his dagger and descended from the altar to join the other attendants respectfully facing the rulers north. He had not changed color or spoken less suavely than usual."

In order to kill King Liao of Wu, Zhuan Zhu, during a banquet, hid a dagger inside a fish and presented the fish to King Liao. When he reached King Liao, Zhuan Zhu "broke open the fish and stabbed the king with
the dagger, dispatching him in an instant." Zhuan Zhu was killed immediately by the king's attendants.

Yu Rang was a native of Jin, and in the later part of his life he made every effort to assassinate Zhao Xiangzi who had killed Yu Rang's beloved master Zhi Bo. Carrying a dagger, he disguised himself as a convict to mend the palace privy. But before he made his move, Zhao Xiangzi's attendants seized him. "The attendants wanted to kill him but Zhao Xiangzi said, 'This is a man of honor. I shall just keep out of his way. Zhi Bo died without heirs, yet this follower tried to avenge him. He must be a most worthy man.' With that he released Yu Rang. Later Yu Rang lacquered his skin to cause scabies and swallowed charcoal to hoarsen his voice, changing himself out of all recognition." When one of his friend pleaded with him to seek Zhao Xiangzi's patronage, Yu Rang refused because he believed that if he served Zhao Xiangzi and then assassinated him, he would be guilty of disloyalty. One day, Yu Rang hid himself under a bridge which Zhao Xiangzi would be crossing. But again, before Yu Rang could make his move, he was discovered and captured. Sighing and shedding tears, Zhao Xiangzi decided not to let Yu Rang go this time. Yu Rang answered that he was ready to die, but requested Zhao Xiangzi's coat to run through as a token of revenge. "Greatly moved by his loyalty, Zhao Xiangzi ordered his coat to be given to Yu Rang, who unsheathing his sword leapt and ran it through three times. 'Now I
can go down and report to Zhi Bo!' He cried. with that he fell upon his sword and died.**

Zhi  of native Nie Zheng at first refused Yan Zhongzi's commission to assassinate Han's prime minister Xia Lei because he had to take care of his mother. Immediately after his mother's death, Nie Zheng went to see Yan Zhongzi, thanked him for his recognition and understanding, and took on the mission. Nie Zheng marched into Xia Lei's office and stabbed him to death. After killing few dozen of Xia Lei's attendants, Nie Zheng "gashed his face, gouged out his eyes and stabbed himself so that his guts spilled out and he died. Nie Zheng's corpse was exposed in the market-place in Han and inquiries were made but no one knew who he was."**

When Nie Zheng's sister Nie Rong heard about this, she knew right away it was her brother. She went to Han and identified him and herself. When asked why she would risk her life to do what she did, Nie Rong replied: "Because I was still alive, he mutilated himself to hide his identity. But how can I, for fear of death, let my noble brother perish unknown?"**

The last and the longest biography in "The Biographies of the Assassins" is the biography of Jing Ke. Jing Ke was a native of Wei and "he loved to read books and practice swordsmanship.（好書學劍）**

"Jing Ke once went to Yuci to discuss swordsmanship with Gai Nie, but walked out when Kai Nie lost his temper and glared at him."**
Another time "Jing Ke went to Handan , where he fell out with Lu Koujian while gambling; and when Lu shouted angrily at him he left without a word, never going to seek Lu again." Later Jing Ke went to Yan and became friends with a dog butcher and lute player named Gao Jianli and a retired scholar named Tian Guang. At that time, fearing Qin's aggression, Prince Dan of Yan had decided to assassinate the king of Qin. Prince Dan consulted Tian Guang who in turn recommended Jing Ke to the prince. Seeing Tian Guang off, Prince Dan cautioned him not to disclose a word of their conversation to anyone else but the two of them and Jing Ke. Tian Guang smiled and agreed. After passing on the message to Jing Ke, Tian Guang killed himself partly to show to the prince that he would not talk but also rebuke the prince for his lack of trust. Jing Ke went to see Prince Dan and accepted the mission. In order to be able to get close to the king of Qin, Jing Ke needed the head of Fan Yuqi who used to be a Qin general but who had defected to Yan. Because of the defection, the king of Qin killed Fan Yuqi's whole family and offered a thousand catties of gold for his head. Upon hearing Jing Ke's plan, Fan Yuqi "bared one arm and advanced clasping his wrists. 'This is the chance for which I have been waiting day and night, gnashing my teeth and burning with rage!' he cried. 'Now you have pointed out the way.' Thereupon he killed himself." All Jing Ke needed now was his assistant who was late in coming, and Prince
Dan lost his patience. He sent instead a youth named Qin Wuyang to go along with Jing Ke and urged Jing Ke to proceed immediately.

"Why send a boy to certain death?" roared Jing Ke in a rage. "I am going to powerful Qin armed only with a dagger. I was waiting for a friend to go with me on this desperate mission. But if you are so impatient, I will leave now."

So he set out. The prince and those who knew of the plan dressed in white mourning clothes, escorted him to the River Yi where they sacrificed to the god of the roads before he began his journey. Kao Jianli played the lute and Jing Ke sang a plaintive air which moved all who heard it to tears. Then he stepped forward and chanted:

The wind is wailing, cold the River Yi,
And a hero sets forth, never to return.

After this he sang a stirring, martial air, which made their eyes bulge with anger and their hair stand on end. then he mounted his carriage and drove off without further ado.

Jing Ke was killed in the Qin court where he almost succeeded in his assassination attempt. Six years after Jing Ke's death, the king of Qin united China and became the emperor of the whole country. Gao Jianli changed his name and became a waiter, but he was eventually discovered and brought before the emperor. Thinking highly of Gao Jianli's lute playing, the emperor did not kill him but put out his eyes and made him perform at court. "And the emperor enjoyed his music so much that little by little he let the blind man approach him. Then Gao Jianli weighted his lute with lead and when he was close enough raised it to strike, but he missed the emperor. He was immediately put to death."
Between each of these episodes there is a transitional sentence which
does not link them beyond indicating simple chronological sequence. The
basic formula is "After X years, in the state of Y, there was the case of Z." (For
example, "A hundred and sixty-seven years after this, in the state of Wu, there
was the case of Zhuan Zhu [其后百六十有七年而吴有专诸之事]."57
"Two hundreds and twenty some years after this, in the state of Qin, there was
the case of Jing Ke [其后二百二十余而秦有荆柯之事]."58) This kind
of transition on the one hand pins down the exact spatial and temporal location
in which the episode occurred and thus adds to the feeling of historical
authenticity; on the other hand, its clearly indicated different place names and
dates deny any inherent relation between the episodes and thus further
obscure any sense of temporal succession and logical development. Each
episode, therefore, is not perceived as the result of the last one and/or the
cause of the next, but simply as one more stroke on a painting. The lack of
specified relations in effect aids the reader's recall, directing him to reread and
rethink, steps necessary to the final result of "grasping together." While no
real connection is made between episodes, the account for the individual in
each episode is relatively brief and highly selective. All the accounts mainly
concentrate on one particular aspect of the individuals: their loyalty to the
cause, their determination to accomplish the mission, and the way through
which they accomplished (or failed to accomplish) the mission to which they
commit themselves. While the reader is not given any causal plot or unilinear account of how these individuals became what they were, or much about the parts of their lives not dealing with their missions, he is nevertheless gripped, rather strongly and effectively, by the dramatic and emotional representation of the one particular aspect of life, one particular type of people, and one particular interpretation of loyalty, friendship, and determination.

The other level of juxtaposition occurs between chapters (biographies). This level of juxtaposition is mainly used for comparison and/or contrast, or, to use Jin Shengtan's 金聖叹 (1610-1661) term, *beimian pufen fa 背面鋪粉法* ("whiting the background," as John Wang translates it; or "emphasis through contrast," as Richard Irwin paraphrases it). The majority of the biographies are presented in a parallel instead of a successive manner and may be more accurately perceived as blocks of a building rather than rings of a chain. It could be naive, however, to think that they are presented in a random order. An interesting phenomenon is the tradition of the reading chapters of the *Shiji* in pairs or groups. Examples include: the biography of Xiang Yu 項羽 (Chapter 7) and the biography of Liu Bang 劉邦 (Chapter 8), two leaders of the late Qin period uprisings that aimed to overthrow the Qin dynasty and establish their owns; the biography of Su Qin 蘇秦 (Chapter 69) and the biography of Zhang Yi 張儀 (Chapter 70), two strategists and political consultants of the Warring State period; the biographies of Lord Mengchang
孟嘗君 (Chapter 75), Lord Pingyuan 平原君 (Chapter 76), Lord Xinling 信陵君 (Chapter 77), and the Lord Chunshen 秦申君 (Chapter 78), four princes of the Warring States period well-known for their patronage of undiscovered worthies; the biographies of Peng Yue 彭越 (Chapter 90), Ying Bu 英布 (Chapter 91), and Han Xin 韓信 (Chapter 92), the three highest ranked generals of the early Han period who fought for the founding emperor Liu Bang but, who after the establishment of the dynasty, were killed by him on the same excuses of rebellion and treason; the biography of Li Guang 李廣 (Chapter 109), the accounts of the Xiongnu 匈奴 (Chapter 110), and the biography of Wei Qing 武 建 (Chapter 111), two early Han period generals associated with the Xiongnu campaigns; etc. It is important to note that the reason certain biographies are presented and read together is not because they represent different steps in a developmental process. Neither is it because the individuals in the biographies lived at the same time or had the same profession. The biographies were paired by Chinese readers because they contrast and set off each other and thus distinctively reveal certain aspects of life or certain types of human beings.

The pairing of Xiang Yu and Liu Bang well illustrates the working and effects of such comparison and contrast. The famous episode of Hongmen Banquet 鴻門宴 demonstrates by contrasts how different characters acted in the same circumstances. The banquet was one of the few occasions
in which Xiang Yu and Liu Bang directly and closely interacted with one another. When he learned that Liu Bang was one step ahead of him and had already occupied Xianyang, the capital of Qin, Xiang Yu became extremely angry and was about to lead his army, which was four times larger, to eliminate Liu Bang's. When his uncle Xiang Bo's 项伯 argued that because Liu Bang was loyal to him, attacking Liu would be violating the concept of righteousness (yi 義), Xiang Yu changed his mind and agreed to treat LiuBang accordingly. As for Liu Bang, he was prepared to claim the throne of China, but had been so frightened by the prospect of Xiang Yu's attack that he had pledged to marry his children with Xiang Bo's, in order to obtain the later's good offices with Xiang Yu. The next day Liu Bang went to visit Xiang Yu to apologized. Liu also suggested that it was an unworthy individual (xiaoren 小人) who caused the misunderstanding between them. Xiang Yu agreed and pointed out that the xiaoren was Cao Wushang 曹无伤, one of Liu Bang's officers. Xiang Yu then set up a banquet for Liu Bang, during which he would have several opportunities to kill the latter. When Fan Kuai 韩信, Liu Bang's bodyguard, rushed into the room to loudly voice his suspicious of Xiang Yu's bad intentions, the latter not only did not have him killed, but gave him wine to drink and food to eat in appreciation of his strength and courage. Liu Bang, on the excuse of going to the latrine, sneaked out of Xiang Yu's place, and had Cao Wushang killed immediately after he reached his camp.
The *Shiji* also compares and contrasts how different characters acted in similar situations at different times. Both Xiang Yu and Liu Bang faced several life-and-death crises during their lifetimes, but their responses were quite different. In his last days, Xiang Yu, with only a few hundred followers, was surrounded by Liu Bang's army and faced a final battle. He responded by drinking and singing, and worried only about his beloved horse and woman. At the end of the battle, Xiang Yu was chased to the bank of the River Wu. The station master there had a boat moored and waiting. He urged Xiang Yu to cross the river quickly, and told him that since this was the only boat available, once they left, Liu Bang's army would not be able to follow them across the river. Xiang Yu refused, saying that even if he could get to the other side of the river safely he would still not be able to hold up his head and face the people there in the eyes.

He turned to the station master. "I can see you are a worthy man. For five years I have ridden this horse, sweeping all before me, often galloping a thousand li in one day. I cannot bear to kill him. I give him to you." Then Xiang Yu turned to Lu Matong, a former friend now a cavalry officer in Liu Bang's army and seeking Xiang Yu's life:

"I hear Liu Bang has offered a reward of a thousand gold pieces and a fief of ten thousand families for my head. Let me do you a good turn!" With that he cut his own throat.
As for Liu Bang, he once lost a battle in Pengcheng, and escaped with his family in a carriage. Worrying that the carriage may be slowed by too much weight, Liu Bang thrice threw his children out.

Through these comparisons and contrasts, we are presented with two very different characters. Whether or not historically speaking Xiang Yu and Liu Bang were really the individuals in their biographies is not important to the present argument. The important point is that ever since the *Shiji*, Sima Qian's interpretation of their lives has become the accepted view, attesting to the power of the historian's characterization. Presenting biographies in pairs or groups instead of in successive chains brings a strong sense of parallelism which in may weaken the temporal and developmental link but aids the act of "grasping together." Again, what are being compared and contrasted are not the different stages in the characters' inward growth, but different aspects of life of different types of men. Thus, what is being set forth is not a process developed through a period of time but quality frozen in multi-dimensional space.

The device of *hujian fa* ("the method of cross-reference") is also very important in the construction and characterization of the *Shiji*. Similar to the *beimian pufen fa* discussed above, the *hujian fa* also makes use of comparison and contrast. But while the comparisons and contrasts in the *beimian pufen fa* are implied through simple juxtaposition, those in the *hujian*
fa are made more direct and explicit by a clearly expressed connection. For example, during the presentation of the biography of Zhang Liang, Sima Qian twice advises his reader to refer to the biography of Xiang Yu, which has been previously presented, and once tells his reader to refer to the biography of Han Xin, given after Zhang Liang's. One of the reasons for applying this hujian fa, as some critics have pointed out, is for the sake of economy. By doing so, when an event related to different people and the biographies of these people are presented separately, the historian will not have to narrate the same event more than once. The other important function of this device is that it guides the reader to grasp events he encountered elsewhere together with the events he is presently reading, and thus enriches the reader's general comprehension of the history in question.

The hujian fa also refers to the method of presenting the same event separately in different biographies. The "Hongmen Banquet" incident, for example, appears in the biography of Xiang Yu, the biography of Liu Bang, the biography of Zhang Liang, and the biography of Fan Kui. To be sure, these four presentations of the "same" event are different in terms of length and perspective. Nevertheless, such overlapping encourages the reader to link several people and events together, not in the sense of temporal sequence, since the events had already been presented, but in the sense of putting them into a complex of multiple relationships.
Under *hujian fa* the history of an individual would often be presented in different biographies, again from different perspectives. The biography of Confucius, the biography of Xiang Yu, and the biography of Liu Bang are the three longest individual biographies in the entire work. In these chapters, the historian has more room to juxtapose numerous episodes to show different aspects of the character in question. Other biographies in the *Shiji* are rather short and selective, and so contain only those telling incidents or episodes to set forth one or a few major characteristics. Chapter 61, the biographies of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, is the most extreme example. In this chapter Sima Qian gives us only one incident to illustrate that "while a degenerate age scrambled for profit, they alone hastened to righteousness."  

On reading each biography, therefore, the reader will go away with a distinct image of the character in question, but also with the impression that the character is one-dimensional. However, the *Shiji* was designed and expected to be read as a whole. To make sure this is understood, Sima Qian many times explicitly advises the reader of a biography to refer to other biographies. This can be seen in the well-known biographies of Lord Xinling (Chapter 77) and Fan Sui (Chapter 79).

At the beginning of the biography of Lord Xinling, Sima Qian states that the character in question was a man who treated all talented men with kindness and humility, regardless of whether they were virtuous or famous.
The biography consists of three major episodes, all illustrating this quality. The first concerns Hou Ying, an learned old man in his seventies who lived in poverty and worked as the warden of Yi Gate in the capital. Lord Xinling went through all kinds of trouble, including public humiliation, to be friendly with him, and finally to make him one of his major advisers. The second episode tells of the request Lord Xinling received from Lord Pingyuan, whose country (Zhao 趙) was threatened by an army from Qin. In response, Lord Xinling stole the tally of his native Wei (魏), used it to command the Wei army against the invaders, and so saved Zhao. The third episode concerns Lord Xinling’s relationship with Mao Gong (毛公), who lived among gamblers, and Xue Gong (薛公), who lived among porridge-vendors. In spite of their lowly social status, Lord Xinling sought them out and enjoy their company.

In the biography of Fan Sui, however, Sima Qian shows us the other side of Lord Xinling. One episode in this biography is about Fan Sui’s revenge over Wei Qi (魏齊). A man who rose from poverty to become the prime minister of the powerful Qin, Fan Sui, was once severely beaten and humiliated under orders from Wei Qi, then the prime minister of Wei. At the beginning of the episode, Wei Qi, fearing Fan Sui’s revenge, was hiding in the house of Lord Pingyuan of Zhao. The king of Qin invited Lord Pingyuan to Qin for a "friendly meeting," but placed him under house arrest soon after his arrival, threatening never to release him until he turns Wei Qi in. Lord
Pingyuan's response was: "Even the rich and noble cleave to old friends who are obscure and poor. Wei Qi is my friend. Even if he were in my house, which he is not, I could not surrender him." Later the Qin sent troops to surround Lord Pingyuan's house. Wei Qi fled at night to Yu Qing, who was then the prime minister of Zhao. Knowing that the king of Zhao would not want to help, Yu Qing gave up his position and left with Wei Qi. They planned to meet Lord Xinling, hoping that he would help them flee to Chu. But Lord Xinling, fearing reprisals from Qin, hesitated to admit them. "What sort of man is this Yu Qing?" he asked. Hou Ying, who was standing by, criticized him: "When Wei Qi turned to him in desperation, Yu Qing, without a thought for his high position, relinquished his seal of office and his fief to help a gentleman in trouble escape. But now that they come to you, you ask, 'What sort of man is he?'" Even though later Lord Xinling did decide to welcome them, Wei Qi, however, had learned of his initial reluctance and in his anger killed himself with his own sword.

Through two biographies, therefore, we see a man who was kind, humble and respectful to those who had real talent, but on the other hand, could at times act like a selfish coward. If all these episodes were put into the biography of Lord Xinling, the image of the character and the idea of respecting all learned men regardless of their social status would not be expressed as sharply and clearly as Sima Qian wanted. If the episode in the
biography of Fan Sui were not mentioned at all, the image of the character would be incomplete, too one dimensional, and too flat. Indeed, as Hou Ying, after hearing of Lord Xinling's insincere question about what sort of man Yuqing was, cried out in disappointment: "Men are not easy to understand, and to understand men is not easy!" Again, the way through which Sima Qian leads his reader to comprehend the character is, on the one hand, to present incidents that will show several aspects of the character; and on the other hand, apply devices that will weaken the temporal and causal relationships between the incidents. The evident goal is to represent the overall quality, rather than the process of development, of the character.

Another level of cross-reference goes beyond the work itself. As discussed in the last chapter, in the Chinese tradition, a narrative work has never been considered a complete and self-sufficient world but only part of the universe. The reader, therefore, is expected to perceive, enjoy, criticize, and evaluate the work not just by itself but to connect it with its corresponding background. Sima Qian repeatedly reminds his reader that what has been presented in the biographies is not the whole story but only parts of it. In each of the chapters on Guan Zhong 管仲 and Yan Ying 姚 英 (Chapter 62), on Sima Rangju 司馬穰苴 (Chapter 64), and on Sunzi and Wuqi, for example, Sima Qian explicitly admits to his reader that he is only giving accounts of the more obscure aspects of the character or characters since other aspects are
much better known and easily accessible to the world. In other words, to comprehend an individual, one needs to read his biography as well as references in other biographies, and then connects his reading with an understanding of the corresponding background. It is because he fails to do this that Joseph Allen in his study of the Shiji, misses one of Sima Qian's reminders and therefore an important point. According to Allen, the biographies of Guan Zhong and Yan Ying are mainly character sketches. "These sketches, as Sima Qian admits, omit much material that could have been used to construct a much more ample biography...." In fact, what Sima Qian admits is that, Guan Zhong and Yan Ying's writings, "are ample in the world" and so "I am not making account for [their writings] here but only some of their anecdotes [至其書，世多有之，是以不論，論其較事]". In other words, the biography was intentionally concise and incomplete, because the expected readers were already familiar with the corresponding backgrounds and hence capable of making the corresponding connections. Also, just as in art we should not automatically assume that a fully detailed portrait is always better than a sketch, we should not automatically assume that, regardless of circumstances, an ample biography is always better than a concise one. The fact that we call them all "biography" today does not deny another fact—that they were activities that were supposed to have different aims and effects. Other biographies in the Shiji show clearly that, had he
chosen to do so, Sima Qian could easily have composed a full-scale biography. It was a matter of choice that some of the biographies appear to be more sketchy than others. Today we may regret that some of the material were omitted from the biographies of Guan Zhong and Yan Ying, but the historian and his expected readers may never felt that way. On the contrary, judging from the reader responses toward to this particular chapter collected in the *Lidai mingjia ping Shiji*, traditional readers generally felt that the biographies were sharp, distinct, touching, and right to the point on the one hand; and lively and comprehensively presented on the other. The historiographer Liu Zhiji once did criticize the accounts of Guan Zhong and Yan Ying as too thin; yet at the same time, he complained that the biography of Confucius was too thick. According to Liu, since Confucius' Analects had been so well known, adding more material to his biography could only made it boring and extraneous (只覺煩贅). On the other hand, since Guan Zhong and Yan Ying's writing had in fact not been as popular, not including them into the biographies indeed prevented the dissemination of unusual information (貴杜異聞). Thus Liu criticized Sima Qian for not eliminating what could be eliminated and not taking what may be suitable to be taken (可除而不除, 宜取而不取). The point is that the disagreement between Liu Zhiji and Sima Qian is not that a historian should always attempt
to write an ample biography instead of a sketchy one, but what subject ought to be given an ample biography and what subject a sketchy one.

At this point we have discussed the constructions and characterizations in individual biographies and the interplay between these biographies. We shall now pay attention to the relationships between the five large sections and hence examine the working and effects of the Shiji-form as a whole.

As mentioned earlier, the Shiji consists of five large sections. The first section is named "Basic Annals" in which twelve chapters chronologically present histories of the emperors from the mythical five sage-emperors (wudi traditionally, 2697-2599 B.C.) to Emperor Wu of Han (Han Wudi 漢武帝, 140-87 B.C.), the emperor of Sima Qian's own time. Each of the first five chapters presents histories of a group of "emperors" of a period of time from the known beginning to the end of the chaotic Warring State period. From Chapter Six to Chapter Twelve, or, from the great unification by the First Emperor of Qin ( 秦始皇 ) to the historian's own life time, each chapter presents one "emperor's" history with more details. The functions of these annals are on the one hand to represent the histories of the "sons of the heaven," and on the other hand, to underline, or to lead into, the whole work. Sima Qian himself explains: "Of the affairs that I have discussed and examined, I have made a general survey of the Three Dynasties and a record of the Qin and Han, extending in all back as far as Xuan Yuan [the Yellow
Emperor] and coming down to the present, set forth in the twelve 'Basic Annals.' In this way I put the system and its divisions into proper orders."76

The second section consists of "Tables." Sima Qian says: "Because there were differences in chronology for the same periods and the dates were not always clear, I made the ten 'Tables.'"77 There are ten chapters and each provides one table. The tables group historical figures into certain categories and then list important events related to these figures with dates in the forms of tables. While the ten tables cover roughly the same time period that covered in the "Basic Annals" section, each table lists who did what or what happened to whom and when within a specific time frame. Within a table, events and people are listed in chronological order. The tables are also listed in basic chronological order, but with two exceptions: part of table five lists events and people that actually came later than those in chapters six, seven, eight, nine, and ten; some events and people listed in table ten actually had existed before those in chapters five, six, seven, eight and nine. Such exceptions show that the tables are not strictly chronological that they also serve to classify people. Some people are mentioned earlier than others in the tables because they are put into classes higher than others. Thus the functions of the tables are both chronological listing and categorical classification.
The third section consists of eight essays under the heading of "Treatises." Each essay occupies one chapter and deals with a specific cultural, political or social topic. The essays give historical backgrounds of the topics in question and discuss them in detail with concern of the affairs of the author's own time. These essays are presented in the following order: the Essay on Rites, The Essay on Music, The Essay on Musical Pitch, The Essay on Calendar, The Essay on Stars (military affairs), The Essay on Feng and Chan Sacrifices (religions affairs), The Essay on River and Canals (agricultural affairs), and The Essay on the Balanced Standard (economical affairs). All these topics were deemed extremely important by the historian: "Of the changes in rites and music, the improvements and revisions of the pitch pipes and calendar, military power, mountains and rivers, spirits and gods, the relationships between heaven and man, and the faulty economic practices that were handed down and reformed age by age, I have made the eight 'Treatises'".78

The "Hereditary Households" is the subject of the fourth section, which consist of thirty chapters and presents histories of thirty eminent feudal families.79 No specified relationships are mentioned between the chapters, that is, between a history of one family and that of the other. While the histories are arranged in a loose chronological order with overlaps and alternations, the time period covered in this section is within that covered in the
"Basic Annals." Sima Qian describes the contents of the section as follows: "As the twenty-eight constellations revolve about the North Star, as the thirty spokes of a wheel come together at the hub, revolving endlessly without stop, so the ministers, assisting like arms and legs, faithful and trustworthy, in true moral spirit serve their lord and ruler; of them I made the thirty 'Hereditary Houses.'" The spatial-oriented metaphors used here suggest to the reader a system which is also spatially divided (as opposed to a process temporally periodized). Such an impression will be further enhanced when the reader reaches next and the last section of the work.

This is the section containing the biographies, or, in Watson's interpretation, "Memoirs." The seventy chapters of the section provide accounts mainly of all sorts of individuals, but also including nations, countries, and the historian himself. Sima Qian himself claims: "Upholding righteousness, masterful and sure, not allowing themselves to miss their opportunities, they made a name for themselves in the world; of such men I made the seventy 'Memoirs.'" Someone has calculated that in this section alone, Sima Qian has given accounts for the lives of more than three hundred individuals. Within each biography, the presentation is basically in chronological order; between the biographies, as discussed above, the relationships are more in the nature of classification, comparison, and contrast
than that of plot development, temporal progression, and beginning-middle-end.

It is interesting to note that while the endings of some chapters of the *Shiji* have been studied by some scholars, the ending of the work as a whole has hardly been mentioned by anyone. Perhaps, because of the *Shiji*'s format, it would seem to be odd to talk about its ending since it just stops at the last chapter of the "Biography" section, with no formal, totalizing closure for the entire work. If we take the chapter of "The Historian's Self-expression" as some kind of postscript or delayed introduction, the last chapter of the section as well as the whole book will be the biographies of a group of merchants. There is no "promised end" to which the rest of the presentation is supposed to lead, nor is there a climax or sense of finality for the whole. It is directionless as well as endless. If a historical work is constructed with a temporally progressive structure and a definite, conclusive ending, the reader is directed to take the past as a section of a homogeneous flow and to look for where it starts and where it goes; in other words, history is perceived and presented as a process developed from a lower stage to a higher one. Without such a structure and ending, the past is presented as a piece of space where changes and developments are totalized and historical figures and events move back and forth ever-present. In this way, a general image of the
subject in question may be formed and a general idea about the past may arise.
CHAPTER III

1. See End-note 161 of Chapter Two of this Dissertation.


3. Although Sima Qian himself has never directly admitted, the tradition of the reading of the Shiji indicates that the Shiji shows strong characteristics of "qi" (extraordinary). For examples, both Yang Xiong (53 B.C.-18 A.D., Yangzi fayan, SPPY, 12.2b.) and Liu Xie (?465-?532, The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragon, p. 170) have used the term "aiqi" (love the extraordinary), Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072, Ouyang wenzhong ji, SPPY. 43.6a.) uses the term "haoqi" (enjoy the extraordinary), and Zhang Lei (1054-1114, Sima Qian lun, in Lidai mingjia ping Shiji, p. 15.) uses the term of "qidan" (extraordinary and strange) to describe the Shiji.


7. Structurally speaking, there are tow kinds of "taishigong yue" ("The Grand Historian says") in the Shiji: one made before the main text of the individual chapter, called "xu," the other made at the end of it, called "zan." Out of the 130 chapters that the Shiji has, there are 23 "xue"s and 106 "zan"s.


34. *Shiji*, p. 2479.


60. Quoted ibid.


66. For examples, see the biography of Zhou (Chapter 4), the biography of Qin Shihuang (Chapter 6), the biography of Xiang Yu (Chapter 7), the biography of Liu Bang (Chapter 8), the biography of Tu Taihou (Chapter 9), the biography of Xiao Wen (Chapter 10), the biography of the House of Zhao (Chapter 43), the biography of Xiao He (Chapter 53), the biography of Zhang Liang (Chapter 55), the biography of Zhou Bo (Chapter 57), etc.


72. Shiji, p. 2136.


74. Liu Zhiji, ibid. p. 4.8.

75. Strictly speaking, some figures pesented in this section were not emperors though they were close to this status, e.g., the Qin family before the Emperor Qin, Xiang Yu, and Empress Lu. the speculation for this has been that because Sima Qian regards these figures highly, he deliberaly raises them to be equal to the emperors. Cf. Zhu Ziqing, "Shiji daodu," rpt. in Huang


77. *Shiji*, p. 3319. Tran. by Watson, *ibid.* p. 56. I have made modifications for the last sentence.


79. Again, there are "exceptions." Confucius' family and Chen She's family were not "hereditary houses" but nevertheless were included in this section. There is no doubt that Sima Qian regards both individuals very highly.


81. See Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China*, pp. 120-34.


84. See, Li Changzhi, *Sima Qian zhi renge yu fengge*, pp. 268-70.
CONCLUSION

BUILDING A SYSTEM OF TOTALIZATION
AND MOLDING AN IMAGE IN MULTI-DIMENSIONAL SPACE

Taken together, all the sections in the Shiji may be seen to form a pagoda-shaped system with clearly defined and mutually interrelated levels and divisions. The system built in a hiatus where all the spaces in all directions have been surveyed and all the times that have been passed through have been totalized. While the "Tables" and the dates given in individual biographies provide a sense of historical authenticity as well as reference for chronological order should it be needed, the system with its non-action atemporal framework strongly suggests a sense of timelessness. The historian was not interested in penetrating the developments of a particular period of time but the basic characteristics and overall quality for the whole human history known to him. Far from attempting to represent a process by telling one story, he seeks to construct a system by juxtaposing many episodes, each of which appears very much to be a story-like narrative. But the nature of the general framework that holds these episodes together is more descriptive than narrative. In other words, the episodes neither causes
nor follows one another in time but compares, contrasts, underlines, and supports one another in space. The final result of the "grasping together" of these episodes is not a representation of a path which could be followed but a formation of a stratified system which could be apprehended. Andrew Plaks has argued, after analyzing the narrative structure of the Honglou meng, that "the sum total of human experience is conceived therein not as a unilinear process of historical development, but as an ever-present ground of flux that has neither beginning nor end." To represent such an experience, a temporalized one-story narrative is simply the wrong form to use.

The historian applies many devices, such as juxtaposition, contrast, cross-reference, non-action framework, and non-closure ending, to break down the temporal flow and to bring the events and characters back and forth so that they can be perceived atemporally in the same space. Such spatialization directs and ensures the desired act of "grasping together" and thus the apprehension of the intended pagoda-shaped system. In addition, spatialized construction bring about the impression of non-fictional reality before conceptualization. Thus it effectively convinces its reader to take its structure and themes as facts rather than as interpretations. Such an effect not only ensures that the historian's messages get across, but also enhances the enjoyment of the readers who are assured that the extraordinary stories they are reading are also historically real. People are fascinated by fantastic
facts. The widespread popularity of the contemporary Chinese Profiles or \textit{Beijing Ren 北京人} is a good example of this. Constructed with a hundred short stories, this work was widely read in the Chinese literary circles during the mid-eighties. Each of the one hundred stories is an account of an individuals' life expressed in the first person--someone talking about his or her own life. There are many incidents and episodes, but no single story-line that links the stories. Why write a book in this format? Co-author Zhang Xinxin explains that because she feels "that there really is no point in writing fiction....half an hour's talk, or a few hour's talk, gives you a story, a whole human life, a sculpture that needs no reworking." Sang Ye, the other co-author, also holds that "this is a form that gets closer to reality." He also believes that "readers generally prefer immediacy and actuality." All these claims show the importance of "being" real; and one important way to appear to be real is to present the subject in a spatialized form.

Spatialization is also evident in characterization of the \textit{Shiji}. Most characters in the work are either one or multi-dimensional, like a painting or a statue in space, rather than temporally developmental. Their images are sharp, distinct, and eye-catching. On reading their biographies, the reader knows who they were and even feels what they look and act like, but at the same time understands very little about why and how they became the individual they are shown to be. Different aspects of their lives in different
moments and under different circumstances are shown without any sense of becoming or developing as if the aspects were always there and were only waiting for the proper moment to reveal themselves. Individual histories in the Shiji are totalized and frozen in a single space-time, and the differences or the inconsistence in individual lives are perceived and presented not as different stages of growth but different sides of overall qualities.

In his book The Rise of the Novel Ian Watt has contrasted the "timelessness" of the narrative before the novel with the emphasis on "time process" in the novel. As he observes, in the narrative before the novel, "the sequence of events is set in a very abstract continuum of time and space, and allows very little importance to time as a factor in human relationships." On the other hand, "the novel in general has interested itself much more than other literary form in the development of its characters in the course of time." Indeed, when modern critics talk about character, they are always looking for the changes and developments within the character, or, in the words of Scholes and Kellogg, they are looking for "the developing character who changes inwardly." Watt is certainly right that he links such ideas of characterization, that is, the "inward development," the "particularity" and the "individuation," to the development of the novel, a literary genre which began its rise in the eighteenth century Europe. However, such a link has been overlooked by many modern critics, who tend to regard the novel as the
highest stage in the development of narrative art, and who apply ideas derived from the novel to narratives of any culture in any historical period. In their book *The Nature of Narrative* Scholes and Kellogg has a chapter entitled "Character in Narrative." Of the forty-six pages in the chapter, they devote forty-four to discuss the "inward development" of character, reserving only the last two pages to touch upon what they call "flat" and "static" type characters. They are not unaware of the imbalance of the treatment, and explain that "our belief that insofar as a character is a type, he is less a character,"²⁸ and that they are thinking of "['flat' and 'static' characters] not as characters in themselves but as elements which contribute to the whole, aspects of the plot or meaning of a work."²⁹

From our discussion, we can see that Sima Qian was operating under very different circumstances. The human condition he responded to and the tradition to which he as well as his expected reader made reference are all very different from those of a modern Western novelist. The historian knew what he wanted and what type of the people his characters were (or at least he believed he knew). He was not set out to "explore" the inner worlds or paths of growth of the characters. His mission was, rather, to "set the record straight," or, to use Confucian terms, to *zhengming* (to rectify the names) and to *chuanming* (to pass on the names). He was, therefore, more interested in the characters' general images and their proper places in the total system.
A character's image is constructed with his selected deeds and speeches. First, a character is put into the Shiji at all is because of his social functions. In other words, in the Shiji, a character is always a public figure and thus his seeable deeds and speeches related to public affairs are most important. In addition, to the ancient Chinese, while a inner, private world was not totally out of the question, only deeds and speeches were considered as extension, expression, and realization of a man and thus have real and ultimate value. Secondly, not all the deeds and speeches would be necessary or effective in constructing the preconceived general image. The historian was not merely trying to represent any individual; more precisely, he was recording particular aspects of general human quality and/or human character types. To make the image vivid, eye-catching, and self-validating, only a few incidents in a character's life is needed. In addition, while these incidents may occur at different times of a character's life, the very fact that they all illustrate the same controlling conception of the character relegates to the time factor the role not of providing the sense of temporal progression but of providing the sense of historical authenticity. It is the tension between the temporally ordered, essentially public, and seemingly realistic incidents and their highly selective applications to the preconceived atemporal framework that seduces, intrigues, guides, and convinces the reader of the Shiji to accept its characters as they are represented in the work.
While the overall quality of a character is preconceived and presented as unchanged, his "fate," his environment, and the paths he has to go through are often unpredictable and uncontrollable. Thus creates a tension between the *chang* (constant, eternal) and the *wuchang* (inconstant, uncertain). It is the interplay between these two forces which gives the biographies a positive and sometimes defiant tone and, paradoxically, a pessimistic and sometimes ironic attitude. This reveals in the historian Sima Qian a strong if not over optimistic faith in the power of "human nature," and simultaneously a deep-rooted pathetic passiveness in man's "fate."

We have seen how characterization in dimensions of space, rather than through duration of time, severs Sima Qian's particular ends. Apprehending the totality of the character and exploring the path of his inward development are two alternative strategies which emerge from and serve two kinds of needs. For a long time modern criticism has tended to take the former as the premature stage of the later. Individuality and psychological exploration have been taken to be the proper and final goals of any serious or worthwhile narrative. However, if we look around today's world, we will find that, even though characterization through duration of time has long been well developed, characterization in dimensions of space not only has not passed away, but remains very active. In our everyday life, when we are asked "What do you think of X?" we are not expected to distinguish every important stage of
X's inward development, but to present a general impression of X that can be immediately grasped. When we are asked "Tell me something about X," we are only expected to give one or two examples of X as such. These examples may be presented in their chronological order, but they are selected mainly for their suitability to illustrate the preconceived conception of X. The same kind of process and technique are also applied by the so-called "image making consultants" or "publicists" for their clients such as the celebrities and the politicians. Just think of the presidential campaigns in this country. Characterization through spatialization as an art of representing (or creating) images of human qualities certainly has been working very effectively in history, literature, and human affairs, and thus demands fuller critical considerations if not critical respect.
Notes:

CONCLUSION


3. Ibid. p. 367.

4. Ibid.


6. Ibid. p. 22.


8. Ibid. p. 204.

9. Ibid.
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