

1

Marriage, Divorce and Revolution

Reading between the Lines of the *Book of Changes*

The enigmatic images contained in the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經 or *Zhouyi* 周易) have been interpreted, since shortly after the final redaction of the text, to refer to universal themes, transforming a text that was originally used in divination into a repository of wisdom for the ages.¹ While this tradition continues strong, more than 2,500 years after its first emergence, it has been challenged in the present century by a new historiographical tradition that has attempted to return ancient Chinese texts to the immediate historical contexts of their composition and to interpret their language within the strictures of that context.

Perhaps the first work of this new historiographical tradition to attract considerable notice was Gu Jiegang's 顧頡剛 (1893–1980) "*Zhouyi guayaoci zhong de gushi*" 周易卦爻辭中的故事 (Stories in the Hexagram and Line Statements of the *Book of Changes*), first published in 1929 and subsequently reprinted as the lead article in the volume of *Gushi bian* 古史辨 (Debates on Ancient History) devoted to the *Zhouyi*.² In this study, Gu rejected the notion that the *Zhouyi* was the product of inspired sages. By examining five historical vignettes that appear in the line statements of the *Zhouyi*, he argued that the text was compiled, over a long period of time, by a process of grouping together numerous individuated records of divination. These five vignettes span a period from before the Shang dynasty until the early Western Zhou dynasty. Briefly summarized, the five vignettes are: that Wang Hai 王亥, a predynastic leader of the Shang people, lost a herd of cattle ("Da zhuang" 大壯 34/5, "Lü" 履 56/6³); that Gaozong 高宗, temple name of the Shang king Wu Ding, well known from the numerous oracle-bone inscriptions deriving from

his reign, defeated an alien state known as Guifang 鬼方 or Devilland (“Jiji” 既濟 63/3, “Wei Ji” 未濟 64/4); that Di Yi, the penultimate king of the Shang dynasty, gave his daughter away in marriage, presumably to King Wen, leader of the Zhou people (“Tai” 泰 11/5, “Guimei” 歸妹 54/5); that Jizi 箕子, a Shang nobleman, feigned madness in order to escape the abuses of Di Xin, the last king of the dynasty (“Mingyi” 明夷 36/5); and that the Lord of Kang 康侯, younger brother of King Wu of Zhou, founder of the Zhou dynasty, received an award of investiture (“Jin” 晉 35).

Gu’s study has been supremely influential in what has come to be known as the “new” *Zhouyi* studies, with both the selection of individual vignettes and his general conclusions informing much of the past half-century’s scholarship regarding the text.⁴ Since my own past work on the *Zhouyi* has put me within this tradition,⁵ it is perhaps appropriate that I should also turn my attention to Gu’s study. In this chapter I will examine one of the five vignettes—that involving the marriage between Di Yi’s daughter and King Wen of Zhou—in the light of its historical context. Like Gu, I will also attempt to draw from this vignette more general conclusions regarding the nature of the *Zhouyi*, conclusions that I believe will show both advantages and disadvantages of the “new” tradition of *Zhouyi* exegesis.

The primary locus for this, the third of Gu Jiegang’s five historical vignettes, is the fifth line of “Guimei” (The Marrying Maiden, 54) hexagram:

帝乙歸妹，其君之袂不如其娣之袂良

Di Yi marries off his daughter; the primary bride’s sleeves are not as fine as the secondary bride’s.

Traditional commentators have preferred to see a universal moral principle inspiring the text of the *Zhouyi*, and interpretations of this line are not exceptions. Most of these commentators have viewed the text of the hexagram (i.e., the hexagram and line statements) and the hexagram picture (here, “Guimei” ䷵) as a single integral unit. Representative of this tradition with respect to this line of “Guimei” would be the Northern Song thinker Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1108). Cheng explains that the fifth line of “Guimei,” being a broken or *yin* line, represents a female, the “daughter” referred to in the line statement, and that its position in the fifth place in the hexagram picture, regarded as the ruling position of a hexagram, indicates a woman who is in a position of respect, such as the daughter of a king. But, Cheng continues, the image in the line statement is intended to illustrate the sense of morality proper for a woman; just as the primary bride dresses in lesser finery than the secondary

bride, so, too, should even the daughter of a king not have a haughty attitude or lose the way of compliance.⁶

We can let pass the question of just how universal this wisdom might be. As noted above, at least Gu Jiegang and his many recent followers have contended that the *Zhouyi* can be better understood by associating its images with particular historical references; in the case of this line in “Guimei,” they see a reference to the wedding of Shang king Di Yi’s daughter with King Wen of Zhou. Perhaps representative of scholars who have been influenced by Gu’s historical interpretation of this line is Hellmut Wilhelm (1905–90), who explained the description of the bride’s clothing in light of this historical context.

We know from other sources that the cultural disparity between the Shang and Chou was large. [Original note: According to one tradition, King Wen would have been born in a pigsty. See Eduard Erkes, “Das Schwein im alten China,” *Monumenta Serica* 7 (1942, 76).] The Shang princess, now dressed in Chou costumes, must have paled before her handmaidens, attired in the full splendor of Shang garments.⁷

We can also let pass the question of the relative cultural development of the Shang and Zhou peoples. A question that I would like to consider, however, is the use of images in the text of the *Zhouyi*. Wilhelm’s reading strikes me as overliteral at the very least, denying to the author of the line any consciousness of the symbolic associations of images. What is more, despite the literalness Wilhelm brought to the interpretation of this line, he failed to consider the entirety of Gu Jiegang’s own reconstruction of the marriage of the Shang princess and King Wen (a failing, I might add, in which he is joined by every other adherent of the “new” tradition known to me). It is true, of course, that Gu related this line to the wedding of Di Yi’s daughter to King Wen, a wedding he found further described in the poem “Da ming” 大明 (Great Brightness; Mao 236) of the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*).

大邦有子	The great state had a child;
倪天之妹	She was as if a daughter of heaven.
文定厥祥	[King] Wen determined their luck
親迎于渭	And personally met [her] on the [Wei River],
造舟爲梁	Building rafts into a bridge;
不燁其光	Illustrious was her radiance!

The “great state” (*da bang* 大邦) referred to in the first line of this stanza has generally been interpreted to be a predynastic Zhou euphemism for the state of Shang, an interpretation that Gu accepted. He also accepted the traditional interpretation that the remainder of the stanza describes King Wen’s wedding with this “child” of Shang. But Gu did not stop with this. Instead, he continued his reading into the next stanza of “Da ming.”

有命自天	There was a mandate from heaven
命此文王	Commanding this King Wen
于周于京	In Zhou, in the capital.
纘女維莘	The successor lady was [the one from] Shen,
長子維行	The elder child was [the one] to go,
篤生武王	And she faithfully bore King Wu.

Gu noted the curious description here of the mother of King Wen’s son, King Wu, as being the “successor lady” (*zan nü* 纘女) from Shen, a small state traditionally said to have been ruled by descendants of the former Xia dynasty. Most commentaries to this poem explain that the mother of King Wu, known by tradition as Tai Si 太姒, is so characterized because she “succeeded” to the position of honor formerly held by Tai Ren 太妊, the mother of King Wen and the topic of an earlier stanza of this poem. However, as Gu argued, this raises the question of why a woman from the relatively insignificant and non-Shang state of Shen should have been referred to in the preceding stanza as being from the “great state,” elsewhere thought to refer exclusively to Shang. Because of this, Gu proposed that this “successor lady” from Shen succeeded the child of the “great state,” assumed from the line statement of the *Zhouyi* to be the daughter of Shang king Di Yi, when this Shang princess failed to produce an heir to the Zhou kingship. This would then explain the symbolism of the *Zhouyi* line statement that “the primary bride’s sleeves are not as fine as the secondary bride’s,” an image that seems to suggest that the secondary bride enjoyed greater favor or success than did the primary bride.

Perhaps because of his general argument that the text of the *Zhouyi* was compiled over a long period of time from records of more or less unrelated divinations, Gu focused his discussion of this vignette on just this one line statement, calling his interpretation little more than a “guess.”⁸ I believe that if he had also considered the other line statements of “Guimei” hexagram, he would have found further evidence regarding the failed marriage of Di Yi’s daughter. The text reads in its entirety:⁹

- 54 *Guimei* ䷛: to campaign: inauspicious; nothing beneficial.
 54/1 The marrying maiden with her younger sisters:
 The lame is able to walk;
 to campaign: auspicious.
 54/2 The blind is able to see;
 beneficial for a dark person's divination.
 54/3 The marrying maiden with the older sisters:
 Returns with the younger sisters.
 54/4 The marrying maiden misses the time:
 She slowly returns to wait.
 54/5 Di Yi marries off his daughter:
 The primary bride's sleeves are not as fine as the
 secondary bride's;
 the moon is nearly full:
 auspicious.
 54/6 The woman holds the basket: no fruit;
 The man stabs the sheep: no blood.

For instance, the fourth line of the hexagram (54.4), that immediately preceding the line with which we have been concerned to this point, consists of a rhymed couplet:

歸妹愆期，遲歸有時
 The marrying maiden misses her time [*gja]
 And slowly returns to wait [*dja].¹⁰

It does not seem overly impressionistic to take Gu's insight a step further and see in this line, also, an intimation that all was not well with the marriage. An even more compelling image of marital failure is to be found in the top line of the hexagram (54.6), immediately following the line noting the flaw in the primary bride's sleeve. This line consists of another rhymed couplet, this time of five-character lines, including the only clear example in the *Zhouyi* of conscious internal rhyme.

女承筐无實，土剗羊无血
 The lady holds the basket [*khwjan]: no fruit [*djit];
 The man stabs the sheep [*ljan]: no blood [*hwit].

If the image of a fruitless basket were not obvious enough to evoke the notion of a barren woman, the term *cheng kuang* 承筐, here translated literally as

“holds the basket,” was by no later than the early Han dynasty a conventional euphemism for the vagina. The term appears, for instance, in a poem found at Mawangdui describing the movements of lovemaking, and has been translated by Donald Harper as “the receiving cannister.”

The recipe for whenever one will be conjoining Yin and Yang:
 Grip the hands, spit on the Yang side of the wrists.
 Stroke the elbow chambers.
 Go under the side of the armpits.
 Ascend the stove frame.
 Go under the neck zone.
 Stroke the receiving cannister.¹¹

I have no way of knowing whether this vaginal sense was already current in the Western Zhou period or if (as I suspect) it was a literary flourish derived from this line of the *Zhouyi*. The parallel with the second line of the couplet, “the man stabs the sheep” (*shi kui yang* 土剗羊), the sexual symbolism of which strikes me as no less explicit, would seem to support the grammar I have used in rendering *cheng kuang* as “holds the basket.” But there seems to be no mistaking the symbolism of this line: that the primary bride’s basket held no fruit implies that she was barren and produced no offspring.

While the major insight here is drawn more or less directly from Gu’s study, the consistent theme throughout these three line statements of “Guimei” hexagram, that there was some kind of problem in the marriage between Di Yi’s daughter and King Wen of Zhou, seems to undermine his general thesis that the line statements of the *Zhouyi* derive from individuated records of divination and, therefore, do not share a consistent authorial perspective. Indeed, I think we can readily find other evidence of coherence within this single hexagram. For example, the role reversal between the primary bride and the secondary bride would seem to be intimated in the first two line statements of this same hexagram, “the lame is able to walk” (*bo neng liu* 跛能履) and “the blind is able to see” (*miao neng shi* 眇能視). (I will return to this notion of role reversal in the concluding section of this chapter.) But, and this is significant, I think we can find in other hexagram texts still more evidence of a consistent authorial perspective on the marriage of Di Yi’s daughter.

Both traditional and modern scholars of the *Zhouyi* have noted that the sixty-four hexagrams of the text are arranged in thirty-two pairs, based either on an inversion of the hexagram picture (i.e., the bottom line becoming the top, the second the fifth, and so on; e.g., “Tun” [3] ䷁ is followed by “Meng”

[4] ☵) or, in the eight cases where this would result in the same picture, the change of each line into its opposite (e.g., “Qian” [1] ☰ is paired with “Kun” [2] ☷). In numerous cases, the two hexagrams of a pair share common wording and images. Among the historical vignettes studied by Gu Jiegang, for instance, one might note that two lines seem to refer to Gaozong’s attack on the Guifang or Devilland, and that these lines appear in the complementary hexagrams “Jiji” ☳ (After Completion; 63) and “Weiji” ☱ (Before Completion; 64).

63/3 商宗伐鬼方, 三年克之
Gaozong attacked the Devilland,
in three years conquering it.

64/4 震用伐鬼方, 三年有賞于大國
Zhen therewith attacked the Devilland,
in three years having an award from the great state.

Moreover, when we consider that “Jiji” and “Weiji” share the same basic hexagram picture, the latter simply being the inversion of the former, it will be seen that the third line of the one hexagram is none other than the fourth line of its complement.

Many similar examples exist elsewhere in the *Zhouyi*. Sometimes these interhexagrammatic relationships are formal and obvious, as in the following image found in both the fifth line of “Sun” ☱ (Decrease; 41) and the second line of “Yi” ☱ (Increase; 42).

41/5, 42/2 或益之十朋之龜, 弗克違
Someone increases it with ten strands of turtles;
they cannot be disobeyed.

In other cases, hexagrams seem to be related only through repetition of a single word, which may even be used in two different senses, as in the case of the word *fou* 缶, “earthenware” or “drum,” used in the fourth line of “Kan” ☵ (29) and the third line of “Li” ☲ (30).

29/4 樽酒簋貳, 用缶
A beaker of wine and two tureens; use *earthenware*.

30/3 日昃之離 不鼓缶而歌, 則大耋之嗟
The cleavage of the sun’s obliquity:
if one does not beat the *drum* and sing,
then the old man this will sigh.

And, in still other cases, two complementary hexagrams might share just a general image, such as the dragon that appears throughout “Qian” (1) hexagram and again in the top line of “Kun” (2).

- 1/1 Submerged dragon.
- 1/2 See the dragon in the fields.
- 1/4 Now jumping in the depths.
- 1/5 Flying dragon in the sky.
- 1/6 The throated dragon.
- 1/7 See the flock of dragons without heads.
- 2/6 The dragon battles in the wilds; its blood is black and yellow.

As I believe I have demonstrated elsewhere,¹² the dragon here is an astronomical image, its motion through “Qian” hexagram corresponding to the motion of the constellation Green Dragon through the dusk skies from the middle of winter until the middle of autumn. The dragon’s reappearance in “Kun,” the other images of which seem to be related to the autumn harvest, signals its reunion beneath the dusk horizon at the beginning of winter with the constellation Bi 龜 (Turtle), with which it is variously thought to do battle or to join in sexual union.

The complementary hexagram to “Guimei” ䷵, the fifty-fourth hexagram, is “Jian” ䷋ (53), the text of which reads as follows.

- 53 *Jian* ䷋: the woman returns:
auspicious; beneficial to divine.
- 53/1 The wild goose advances to the mountain stream:
the little child has difficulties;
danger; no harm.
- 53/2 The wild goose advances to the large rock:
Drinking and eating merrily;
auspicious.
- 53/3 The wild goose advances to the land:
The husband is on campaign but does not return,
The wife is pregnant but does not give birth.
- 53/4 The wild goose advances to the tree:
And now gains its perch;
no harm.
- 53/5 The wild goose advances to the hillock:
The wife for three years is not pregnant;
In the end nothing overcomes it.¹³

53/6 The wild goose advances to the hill:¹⁴
 Its feathers can be used as insignia;
 auspicious.

The only wording in this text obviously shared with “Guimei” is the hexagram statement, “the woman returns,” which, due to the ambiguity of the word *gui* 歸, can either mean “the woman marries” or “the woman returns (to her own home),” an ambiguity that, as noted above (n. 10), seems to be deliberately employed in the fourth line of “Guimei.” However, I would suggest that Gu Jiegang’s insight that the marriage between Di Yi’s daughter and King Wen ultimately failed allows more associations to be seen on a conceptual level. It is not difficult, for instance, to see an association between the third and fifth line statements of “Jian”: “The husband is on campaign but does not return; The wife is pregnant but does not give birth” and “The wife for three years is not pregnant; In the end nothing overcomes it,” and the poetic couplet that comprises the top line statement of “Guimei”: “The woman holds the basket: no fruit; The man stabs the sheep; no blood.”

More important, I think it is possible to perceive a formal literary association between the two hexagrams once we recognize the structure of the individual line statements within “Jian.” Each of these statements is introduced by a four-character phrase containing the image of a wild goose’s advances to higher and higher topographic points (an organizational structure evident in the line statements of several other hexagrams as well; see, for instance, “Xian” [31], “Ding” [50] and “Gen” [52]). These repeated descriptions of the goose’s advance, similar to what has been termed “incremental repetition” in the *Shijing*, are followed by descriptions of the human condition, and are formally related with them through rhyme. As many modern scholars have noted, this is analogous to the use of nature imagery in the *Shijing* to evoke (*xing* 興) corresponding events in the human realm. Indeed, the wild goose itself appears frequently in the *xing*-evocations of the *Shijing*, where contrary to its later symbolism of marital union, it consistently evokes the theme of marital separation. For instance, the first stanza of the poem “Hong yan” 鴻雁 (Wild Goose; Mao 181) reads:

鴻雁于飛	The wild goose in flight,
肅肅其羽	Whoosh, whoosh, its wings:
之子于征	This man on campaign
劬勞于野	Toiling in the wilds;
爰及矜人	Coming to the pitiable man
哀此鰥寡	Sorrow for this solitary widow.

The image of the wild goose as a harbinger of marital separation (perhaps because it was seen flying in formation at the onset of winter, the time when military campaigns were launched) is by no means unique to this poem. Among further examples is a poem that juxtaposes the goose image with a different nature evocation, a fish, which Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899–1946) has shown persuasively to be a sexual image, generally representative of the male sexual member.¹⁵ The poem “Jiu yu” 九罟 (The Many-Stringed Net; Mao 159) begins coquettishly with the first blush of romantic involvement between a young woman and her lover, but when, in the second stanza, a goose appears, in wording almost exactly the same as the lines of “Jian” hexagram, problems arise in the relationship.

九罟之魚	The many-stringed net's fishes:
鱒魴	Rudd and bream.
我覩之子	I meet this man:
袞衣繡裳	Fine-woven jacket and embroidered skirt.
鴻飛遵渚	The wild goose flies along the sandbar:
公歸无所	The duke has no place to which to return
於女信處	A spot to sleep with you.
鴻飛遵陸	The wild goose flies along the hill:
公歸不復	The duke returns but does not come back
於女信宿	To sleep the night with you.

Consider, too, the final stanza of the poem “Xin tai” 新臺 (New Terrace; Mao 43), a poem that has traditionally been viewed as a veiled criticism of Duke Xuan of Wei 衛宣公 (r. 718–700 B.C.) for carrying on an affair with the wife of his son.

魚網之設	The fish net, this is set;
鴻則離之	A wild goose then is caught in it:
燕婉之求	A pretty one this he sought:
得此戚施	But got this ugly toad-buffoon. ¹⁶

In all three of these cases, the wild goose evokes a theme of marital separation or romantic discord. I would suggest that the image of the wild goose in the individual line statements of “Jian” hexagram, which are, after all, closely contemporary with the *Shijing*, shares this same evocative value. Thus, the image of the wild goose advancing to the “land” in the third line (53/3) evokes the response in the human condition that “the husband is on campaign but

does not return; the wife is pregnant but does not give birth,” or, somewhat less directly, that its advance to the “hillock” in the fifth line evokes the response “the wife for three years is not pregnant; in the end nothing overcomes it.”

I would like to go further than this to suggest that this evocation governs not only the individual line statements of “Jian,” but that the entire hexagram with the wild goose as its primary image serves as a sort of *xing*-evocation for its complementary hexagram “Guimei.” Just as the introductory image of the “wild goose advancing to the land” in the third line of “Jian” necessarily evokes the association in the human realm that “the husband is on campaign but does not return; the wife is pregnant but does not give birth,” so, too, does the general image of the wild goose of “Jian” necessarily lead to the description of human events in “Guimei” in which the marriage of Di Yi’s daughter went awry, presumably because of the daughter’s barrenness.

If this suggestion has any merit at all, the *Zhouyi* would reflect considerably more than the random compilation of individuated divination records. While I would not want to go so far as to suggest that it is the product of sagely inspiration, it is not too much to say that considerable creative consciousness is apparent in the composition of the text. If the reader’s interest in the *Zhouyi* were purely aesthetic, it would suffice to note the consistency with which images operate throughout the texts of these hexagrams. But throughout history, readers have perceived the *Zhouyi* to be something more, a book that not only comments on the human condition but that also provides insight into it. Without making any claims that the *Zhouyi* is, in fact, a storehouse of universal wisdom, I think it is possible to show that the author or authors of the text attempted to draw out some of the implications of these imagistic associations.

It is not difficult to imagine that a failed marriage between the king of the Zhou people and the daughter of the king of the then-reigning Shang dynasty, a dynasty that the Zhou would overthrow within about fifty years, would be regarded as a portent in its own right for the developing political relations between the two peoples. While it perhaps is surprising that these political implications do not seem to be noted in the texts of “Jian” and “Guimei,” they do not go unremarked elsewhere in the *Zhouyi*. There is one other reference, in the fifth line of “Tai” 泰 (11) hexagram, to the marriage of Di Yi’s daughter.

11/5 帝乙歸妹以祉; 元吉

Di Yi marries off his daughter with happiness;
primary auspiciousness.

While nothing else in the text of this hexagram appears to be explicitly related to this marriage,¹⁷ it is not difficult to see associations with the more abstract theme of inversion present in the first two lines of “Guimei,” in which the lame come to walk and the blind come to see. Indeed, inversion is such an integral part of the interpretation of “Tai” hexagram, the name of which seems to mean “Happiness,”¹⁸ that it has invariably been read together with its hexagram complement “Pi” 否 (Negation; 12) as a conceptual pair. Since the two hexagrams are related in all of the ways noted above, formally, lexically, and conceptually, it is best to consider them together.

Tai

- 11 *Tai* 泰: The small go, the great come;
auspicious; receipt.
- 11/1 Pluck the madder with its stem;
to campaign: auspicious.
- 11/2 Bundle the dried grass and use it to wade the river:
Do not distance yourself from friends left behind;
you will not gain favor in the central ranks.
- 11/3 There is no flat without a slope, no going without a return:
Do not commiserate with the captive;
In food there is good fortune;
divining about difficulty: no harm.
- 11/4 Flit-flitting: not wealthy with his neighbors:
Unguarded against capture.
- 11/5 Di Yi marries off his daughter with happiness:
primary auspiciousness.
- 11/6 The city wall falls into the moat:
Do not use troops;
From the city announce the mandate;
divining: trouble.

Pi

- 12 *Pi* 否: Not beneficial for the young lord to divine;
The great go, the small come.
- 12/1 Pluck the madder with its stem;
Divining: auspicious; receipt.
- 12/2 Bundle the offering:
For the small man auspicious,
For the great man not fortunate.

- 12/3 Bundle the meat.
 12/4 There is a mandate:
 Fields separate happiness;
 no harm.
 12/5 The beneficence is negated:
 They're lost, they're lost;
 Tied to the bushy mulberry;
 for the great man: auspicious.
 12/6 Falling into naught:
 At first negative, later happy.

These two hexagrams contain at least three and perhaps four points of formal textual similarity. First, the hexagram statements, “The small go, the great come” and “The great go, the small come,” are obvious reversals of each other (their wording doubtless also being significant). Second, the first lines, “Pluck the madder with its stem,” are identical in both hexagrams; and third, the second and third lines of “Pi,” “Bundle the offering” and “Bundle the meats,” share the same structure as the second line of “Tai,” “Bundle the dried grass.” Finally, the repetition of the word “mandate” (*ming* 命) in the top line of “Tai,” “from the city announce the mandate,” and in the fourth line of “Pi,” “There is a mandate,” may be significant.

In a more general sense, it is clear too that these two hexagrams share a common theme. Whatever the original meaning of the words *tai* 泰 and *pi* 否, words which have come to be understood—because of their use here in the *Zhouyi*—as an antithetical pair symbolizing happiness and sadness, good and bad, the central theme of the two hexagrams is the inevitability of reversal. This is announced most clearly in the reversal of the hexagram statements, each of which by itself also reflects reversal (“The small go, the great come”). The line statements as well reflect this theme. Thus, the third line of “Tai” states “There is no flat without a slope; no going without a return,” while the top line of “Pi” echos this with “At first negative, later happy.” I suspect that some of the more concrete images in the two hexagrams also refer to this theme, such as “The city wall falls into the moat” in the top line of “Tai,” and “The beneficence is negated” in the fifth line of “Pi.”

I am confident this interpretation of the relationship between these two hexagrams is in line with traditional *Yijing* exegesis, and I suspect that even Gu Jiegang and his adherents, who consider the text to be but a random compilation, would be hard-pressed to deny either their formal or conceptual coherence. But Gu’s historical insight has proven too important in the

interpretation of “Guimei” to be dismissed out of hand. I think it is again possible to synthesize the two exegetical positions, tying the text to a particular historical referent but seeing a conscious attempt to draw general philosophical implications from it.

Assuming that the image of “Di Yi marrying off his daughter with happiness” is the governing image of “Tai” (Happiness), then knowing that this marriage proved to be unsuccessful (at least for Di Yi’s daughter), it becomes a simple matter to see why this hexagram must be followed by “Pi” (Negation). Indeed, assuming an association between this fifth line of “Tai” and its structural complement, the second line of “Pi,” it is probably also possible to see in the technical divination terminology of that line, “For the small man (woman?) auspicious, For the great man [woman?] not,” a reference both to the primary bride’s (“the great man”) barrenness and also to the secondary bride’s (“the small man”) eventual “succession” to bear King Wu. This successful reversal may also be intimated in the final line of “Pi,” which ends “At first negative, later happy.”

While the failure of this particular marriage is the primary image informing this hexagram pair, I think this image came in turn to portend the failing relations between the Shang and Zhou peoples. With the eventual Zhou conquest of Shang (in 1045 B.C.), the more general notion of role reversal seen in “Guimei” hexagram’s contrast between the primary bride and the secondary bride would naturally also have been associated with the Zhou replacement of Shang, the “great state.” If so, then I think, too, that the image of “the city wall falling into the moat” (*huang* < *gwan 隍) in the top line of “Tai,” the line that follows immediately after the reference to the marriage of Di Yi’s daughter, can readily be associated with the Zhou conquest, a sense made all the more explicit by the rhyming phrase “From the city announce the mandate” (*ming* < *mjn 命). But by the time of the text’s composition, probably toward the end of the Western Zhou (771 B.C.), at a time when the Zhou mandate had come in its own turn into peril, the Zhou conquest and mandate themselves must also have come to be viewed almost as portents, or at least as topics deserving of yet another level of generalization and abstraction.

I hope this brief analysis of four hexagrams of the *Zhouyi* has demonstrated that, while Gu Jiegang’s vignette-based interpretation of the text has proven to be an exceptionally powerful exegetical insight into the meanings that individual lines had in their original context, by focusing exclusively on individual lines Gu, and particularly his followers, failed to see the meaning behind the meaning. Indeed, it seems to me that traditional interpreters such as Cheng

Yi and thousands of others, despite their often ahistorical impressionism, have come closer to perceiving why, if not how, the *Zhouyi* came to be composed. I use the word “composed” here deliberately. Certainly, the *Zhouyi* is not the product of divine inspiration; but, given the sorts of associations that tie these four hexagrams together,¹⁹ both formally and conceptually, neither is it just a random compilation. Future studies of the *Zhouyi* would do well to combine the particularistic historicism of the “new” scholarship with the associative reasoning of traditional interpretations to divine anew the hand of human creativity.

NOTES

1. The *Book of Changes* developed within the mantic tradition of ancient China and was especially related to the type of divination using milfoil or yarrow stalks practiced by the Zhou people. The manipulation of the stalks produced a numerical result that came to be expressed as either a solid or broken line, which when grouped together in sixes produced a set of sixty-four different graphs or hexagrams. By perhaps the end of the Western Zhou dynasty (1045–771 B.C.), texts were associated with each of these hexagrams and also with each of the six lines of each hexagram. It is difficult today to know just how these hexagram and line statements, usually terse evocations of the human or natural world, were used to divine the future. By the late third century, several commentaries (usually enumerated as ten, and thus termed the “Ten Wings”) came to be attached to the text. It was these commentaries, traditionally believed to have been written by Confucius (551–479 B.C.), that transformed the original divination manual into a wisdom text, a status formally recognized in 135 B.C. when the *Book of Changes* was ranked as the first of all classics.

To differentiate between these two strata and functions of the *Book of Changes*, I use the title *Zhouyi* (Changes of Zhou) when referring to the hexagram and line statements of the text, especially as understood in the context of their original (Western) Zhou composition. On the other hand, I use the title *Yijing* (Classic of Changes) when referring to the text complete with its canonical commentaries (the so-called “Ten Wings”) and especially when regarded as a classic.

2. Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, “Zhouyi guayaoci zhong de gushi,” *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報 6 (1929), 967–1006; rpt. in *Gushi bian*, ed. Gu Jiegang (1931; rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982), vol. 3, 1–44.
3. Here and throughout this essay, I refer to hexagram and line statements

- by the name of the respective hexagram, its number in the standard sequence of sixty-four, and, following a slash, the number of the line from one to six, starting from “one,” representing the bottom line (*chu* 初), and ending with “six,” representing the top line (*shang* 上).
4. See, e.g., Gao Heng 高亨, *Zhouyi gujing jinzhu* 周易古經今注 (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1947); Li Jingchi 李鏡池, *Zhouyi tanyuan* 周易探源 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978); Li Jingchi, *Zhouyi tongshi* 周易通釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981); Gerhard Schmitt, *Sprüche der Wandlungen auf ihrem geistesgeschichtlichen Hintergrund*, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Institut für Orient-forschung Veröffentlichung, Nu. 76 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970); Hellmut Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 56–62; Richard Alan Kunst, “The Original ‘Yijing’: A Text, Phonetic Transcription, Translation, and Indexes, with Sample Glosses” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1985).
 5. Edward L. Shaughnessy, “The Composition of the *Zhouyi*” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1983).
 6. Cheng Yi, *Zhouyi Chengshi zhuan* 周易程氏傳 (Preface dated 1099; rpt. in *Wuqiubei zhai Yijing jicheng* 無求備齋易經集成, ed. Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峰 [Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1975], vol. 15), p. 265.
 7. Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes*, 62.
 8. Gu Jiegang, “*Zhouyi guayaoci zhong de gushi*,” 14.
 9. For textual notes and substantiation of the translations offered here, see Shaughnessy, “The Composition of the *Zhouyi*,” 239. Note that the presentation of the line statements in this translation is inverted from the positions of the lines in the hexagram picture; i.e., the bottom line of the hexagram (54.1) is given at the top of the English text. Note also that variations in the indentations of lines reflect what I perceive to be their different strata: Topic (no indentation); Injunction (single indentation); and Divination Terminology (double indentation). For discussion of this intralinear stratification, see *ibid.*, 136–58.
 10. Two uses of the word *gui* 歸 in this couplet seem to be consciously differentiated, the first referring to the maiden’s “marriage” and the second to her “return” to her own home. Reconstructions of the Old Chinese pronunciations are those of Li Fanggui as given in Axel Schuessler, *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).
 11. Donald Harper, “The Sexual Arts of Ancient China as Described in a Manuscript of the Second Century B.C.,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987): 204.

12. Shaughnessy, “The Composition of the *Zhouyi*,” 266–87; Xia Hanyi 夏含夷 (Edward L. Shaughnessy), “Zhouyi Qiangua liulong xinjie” 周易乾卦六龍新解, *Wenshi* 文史 24 (1985): 9–14.
13. There is some question here whether this phrase “In the end nothing overcomes it,” forms a couplet with the preceding phrase, “The wife for three years is not pregnant,” or if it is technical divination terminology that falls outside of the line’s imagery. The rhyme between *ling* 陵 < *ljen, “hillock,” and *sheng* 勝 < *sthjenh, “overcome,” perhaps supports the former interpretation, which informs the translation given here.
14. I here follow Li Jingchi, *Zhouyi tanyuan*, 126, and the Qing scholars that he cites in emending the *lu* 陸, “land,” of the received text to *e* 阿, “hill.”
15. Wen Yiduo 聞一多, *Wen Yiduo quanji* 聞一多全集 (1948; rpt. Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1982), 117–38.
16. I here follow Bernhard Karlgren’s wonderful translation of the last word, *cishi* 戚施, “toad-buffoon”; see Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Odes* (1944; rpt. Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1974), 29.
17. Perhaps the image of “madder” in the first line does suggest some kind of romantic disruption, as it does for example in the *Shijing* poems “Dongmen zhi shan” 東門之墀 (The East Gate’s Altar; Mao 89) and “Chu qi dongmen” 出其東門 (Exiting its East Gate; Mao 93). As I will show below, “Tai” is also very closely related to its hexagram complement, “Pi,” so the image of a “bushy mulberry” in the fifth line of that hexagram may also be pertinent. For a *Shijing* poem where the mulberry serves as a *xing*-evocation for a divorce, see “Meng” 氓 (The People; Mao 58).
18. I say “seems” because, even though *tai* is consistently interpreted to mean “happiness” from the very beginning of the *Yijing* exegetical tradition, there is no etymological evidence to substantiate this meaning in the Western Zhou period.
19. I have been asked on several occasions, most recently by one of the anonymous referees of this paper, to comment on just how pervasive interhexagrammatic relationships are within the *Zhouyi*. Certainly, I think it is an easy matter to see relationships, both formal and conceptual, between such hexagram pairs as “Lin” ䷒ (Look Down Upon; 19) and “Guan” ䷒ (Look Up At; 20), “Sun” ䷒ (Decrease; 41) and “Yi” ䷒ (Increase; 42), and “Jiji” ䷒ (Already Across; 63) and “Weiwei” ䷒ (Not Yet Across; 64). And, as mentioned above, I think there is also no question but that “Qian” ䷀ (1) and “Kun” ䷁ (2) are bound into a single conceptual unit, as must also be, for instance, “Ge” ䷒ (Revolution; 49) and “Ding” ䷒ (Caldron [with an extended meaning of Stabilization]; 50). Thus, the brief answer

is that such pairs govern about one-quarter of the entire text of the *Zhouyi*. However, this answer leaves me dissatisfied. I wish I could say to what extent the apparent lack of the feature among the other three-quarters of the sixty-four hexagrams is due to their differing compositional origins (the question of the textual stratification of the *Zhouyi* is one that both I [Shaughnessy, "The Composition of the *Zhouyi*," 326n82] and Richard Kunst ["The Original 'Yijing'," 33, 52, 123, etc.] have commented upon in various exploratory ways but one that requires much more study) or even to my inability to understand them (which I am not embarrassed to admit remains substantial).