BRET HINSCH

The Composition of *Lienüzhuan*: Was Liu Xiang the Author or Editor?

As with many of the books that passed through Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79–8 BC) hands, his precise contribution to *Lienüzhuan* 列女傳 continues to spark discussion and debate. No one disputes the fact that *Lienüzhuan*, the first independent collection of narratives about women, pioneered an absolutely unprecedented literary genre. There were no previous books dedicated exclusively to women's matters. Even more importantly, *Lienüzhuan* was probably the first Chinese book made up entirely of just independent biographical narratives, either female or male, thereby establishing "miscellaneous biographies" (*zazhuan* 雜傳) as a standard genre apart from history.

Although there were no earlier collections of stories about women, various writings about women existed here and there in earlier documents, and some of these found their way into *Lienüzhuan.* Because earlier transmitted versions of some tales have been passed down to us in other works, in some cases we can reconstruct a story's exact provenance. Even so, the origins of many narratives in the collection remain unclear. Generally speaking, the manner in which *Lienüzhuan* was composed seems to have been unusually complex, and it is not immediately clear whether we should regard Liu Xiang primarily as the author or editor. This is an important distinction. Whether Liu Xiang wrote *Lienüzhuan* primarily as a work of ideological fiction or cobbled it together from existing documents, the manner of composition should determine how scholars today view and use this seminal text on early Chinese women.

Liu Xiang achieved his place as the prominent scholar of the late-Western Han by writing and editing many important works. Today he is remembered largely for his leading role in a monumental official project to collect and collate standard editions of major Zhou-era books,[1] and

[1] Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠, *Jiaochou tongyi* 校讎通義 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985); Sun Deqian 孫德謙, *Liu Xiang jiaochou xuezuanwei* 劉向校讎學纂微 (Taipei: Dingwen, 1977); Du Minxi 杜民喜 and Du Hongquan 杜宏權, "Liu Xiang jiaoshu dui houshi de yingxiang" 劉向校書對後世的影響, *Qiushi xuekan* 求是學刊 1999.2, pp. 107–9.

we still use many of his editions. For example, Liu Xiang pared down an unwieldy hodgepodge of 322 sections from *Xunzi* 荀子 to produce a standard text of thirty-two coherent chapters.

In addition to his official editorial duties, Liu also wrote original works under his own name. For instance, *Wujing tongyi* 五經通義, now lost, contained his personal views on the classics. Some of his lengthy memorials are preserved in *Hanshu* 漢書, and these are still considered exemplars of elegant rhetoric. An examination of Liu Xiang's prodigious oeuvre proves that he was highly capable of both original writing and comprehensive editing, either of which he may have used to produce *Lienüzhuan*.

Generally speaking, previous scholars have taken four main positions regarding Liu Xiang's *Lienüzhuan*. One school of thought, exemplified by Luo Genze 羅根澤, holds that Liu Xiang was merely an editor. Luo forcefully argues that Liu did little more than gather existing writings to produce a coherent collection.[2] A second interpretation holds that Liu took existing stories to form the basis of *Lienüzhuan*, then extensively rewrote them to make these older tales reflect his own ideas and turn them into clear moral admonitions. The bibliographic expert Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 took this compromise position.[3]

The third opinion is the most radical. In his seminal discussion of historiography titled *Shitong* 史通, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) accused Liu Xiang of simply inventing many of the episodes in *Lienüzhuan* and his other narrative collections and passing them off as real historical episodes.

> When it came to creating *Hongfan wuxing* and the various biographies *Xinxu*, *Shuoyuan*, *Lienü [zhuan]*, and *Shenxian*, all broadly narrate fictional matters and are largely made out of forged language. It was not that his knowledge was incomplete or his talent

[2] Luo Genze 羅根澤, "*Xinxu*, *Shuoyuan*, *Lienüzhuan* buzuo shi yu Liu Xiang kao" 新序說苑列女傳不作始於劉向考, in Jiang Fucong 蔣復聰 and Luo Genze, eds., *Zhongguo shuji kao lunji* 中國書籍考論集 (Hong Kong: Zhongshan, 1972), pp. 176–78. A similar view is expressed in Zhang Hong 張弘, "Jianlun 'Lienüzhuan' de bianzhuan yu jiazhi" 簡論列女傳 的編撰與價值, *Funü wenhua* 婦女文化 46 (2000.3), pp. 14, 21–22.

Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: State U. of New York P., 1998), pp. 87–112, seems to have a similar view of the matter. She discusses five stories in detail, showing how they derived from Warring States precedents, implying that much of the work was taken from earlier sources. Although her ultimate conclusions on the nature of Liu Xiang's contribution to the text are not stated very clearly, she seems to see Liu Xiang as an editor who compiled *Lienüzhuan* from earlier sources.

[3] Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, *Gushu tongli* 古書通例 (Shanghai: Guji, 1985), p. 106.

> insufficient, but because people of the world are gullible. Alas! Future generations should be fearful, for what age lacks people as careless as this? Now transmitted accounts lack veracity and events are inaccessible, and people cannot avoid this. It has reached the point that heterodox accounts deceive posterity, and overcoming this is difficult. 及自造洪範五行, 及新序說苑列女神仙諸傳. 而皆廣陳虛事, 多搆僞辭. 非其識不周而才不足, 蓋以世人都可欺故也. 嗚呼. 後生可畏, 何代無人而輒輕忽若斯者哉. 夫傳聞失實, 蓋事有不獲已, 人所不能免也. 至於故爲異說, 以惑後來, 則過之尤甚者矣.[4]

In other words, Liu Zhiji dismisses *Lienüzhuan* as a misleading forgery.

A fourth position is relatively subtle. Shinomi Takao 下見隆雄 has conducted the most thorough philological analysis of *Lienüzhuan* to date. Shinomi is sympathetic to Liu Zhiji's highly critical position, although he tempers it. Like Liu Zhiji, Shinomi also claims that Liu Xiang often used historical facts as the starting point for composing fictional stories. However, unlike Liu Zhiji, in his philological analysis Shinomi also often points out precedents for many of the narratives.[5] In his view, some of the *Lienüzhuan* narratives should be regarded as akin to historical fiction, with creative original stories posed against a real historical background, while others are grounded in prior narratives.

Scholarly opinion remains divided on the relative merits of each of these four interpretations, so the question demands further examination.

A fragment attributed to Liu Xiang and preserved in Xu Jian's 徐堅 Tang-era compendium *Chuxueji* 初學記 suggests how Liu himself may have publicly portrayed his creation of *Lienüzhuan*: "The 'Lienüzhuan,' as collated by [myself] the official Xiang and by palace attendant Xin. 臣向與黃門侍郎歆所校列女傳."[6] If this statement is authentic, it would suggest that Liu Xiang publicly billed himself and his son Liu Xin (50 BC–20 AD) as editors of previous narratives rather than authors of an original work. Bolstering this view is the fact that Ban Gu 班固 clearly saw Liu Xiang as an editor. He wrote that Liu "gathered and obtained what was recorded about virtuous consorts and chaste wives in *Shijing* and *Shangshu* to be a standard for reviving the state and making families prominent, as well as of evil favorites and the destructive, and put them

[4] Liu Zhiji 劉知幾, *Shitong* 史通, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 edn. (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1996) 18, p. 9b.

[5] Shinomi Takao下見隆雄, *Ryū Kō Retsujoten no kenkyū* 劉向列女傳の研究 (Tokyo: Tōkai Daigaku, 1989), pp. 42–59.

[6] Xu Jian 徐堅, *Chuxueji* 初學記 (SKQS edn.; Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu, 1983), vol. 890, *j.* 25, p. 6b.

in order as *Lienüzhuan* in eight chapters (*pian*) to warn the son of heaven 故採取詩書所載賢妃貞婦, 興國顯家可則及孽嬖亂亡者, 序次爲列女傳, 凡八篇以戒天子."[7] By describing Liu Xiang's role as "gathering," "obtaining," and "putting into order," Ban implied that Liu was an editor of past texts rather than the author of an original work of creative fiction.

Medieval bibliographies do little to clarify the question. The sixth-century authority Liu Zhao 劉昭 wrote, "*Lienüzhuan* in eight chapters, by Liu Xiang 劉向撰列女傳八篇."[8] Liu Zhao used the word *zhuan* 撰 to describe Liu Xiang's role, an ambiguous term that can imply either editorial selection or original composition. An anonymous note to the *Suishu* bibliography also describes the authorship of *Lienüzhuan* as "*zhuan*."[9] *Suishu* annotations usually employ *zhuan* to refer to original works of writing, such as *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, and also to collections believed to be made up of previous narratives, such as *Xinxu* 新序 and *Shuoyuan* 說苑.[10] Given this ambiguous terminology, the medieval bibliographies add little to the debate.

Looking over the text's bibliographic history, the most important piece of evidence is the *Chuxueji* quotation in which Liu Xiang describes himself as editor rather than author. Although at first glance this might seem to settle the matter, in fact substantial doubts still remain. Even if this quotation is authentic, it is not necessarily authoritative. *Lienüzhuan* was written as an overtly ideological treatise intended to influence the morals and politics of the day. Liu was probably far more interested in impact than veracity. Even if Liu wrote large parts of the work himself, he may have decided to legitimize his forgery by claiming that he had simply copied these stories from earlier documents. The Han dynasty was the golden age (or dark age) of Chinese forgery, and authors of the day blithely attributed their own new works to earlier writers or supernatural origins. Liu Xiang's son Liu Xin, who seems to have helped his father put together *Lienüzhuan*, is remembered as one of the most infamous forgers in Chinese history.[11] Given the nonchalant attitude of so

7 Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書, annotated by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 36, pp. 1957–58.

8 Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, annotated by Liu Zhao 劉昭 and Li Xian 李賢 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965) 10B, p. 438, n. 3.

9 Wei Zheng 魏徵, *Suishu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973) 33, p. 978.

10 Wei, *Suishu* 34, p. 997. In fact, a great deal of these two works is also probably Liu Xiang's original creation.

11 Debate over the extent of Liu Xin's culpability for his forgeries was a hot topic in early-20th-c. historiography. Liu Wei 劉巍, "'Liu Xiang Xin fuzi nianpu' de xueshu beijing yu chushi fanxiang" 劉向歆父子年譜的學術背景與初始反響," *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 2001.3, pp. 45–64; Li Guihua 李桂花, "Qian Mu 'Liu Xiang Xin fuzi nianpu' yu xiandai yigu yundong" 錢穆劉向歆父子年譜與現代疑古運動, *Sixiang zhanxian* 思想戰線 27 (2001.4), pp. 129–32.

many Han scholars toward questions of authenticity, it is very possible that Liu Xiang was being deliberately mendacious when he claimed that he was merely the editor of *Lienüzhuan*. In view of these considerable caveats, it seems that even if the *Chuxueji* fragment is genuine, it does not conclusively settle the problem of authorship.

Having looked over the relevant material, it is clear that surviving contemporary records do not mention how *Lienüzhuan* was written, and subsequent bibliographic evidence is indeterminate. Nevertheless, an invaluable piece of evidence remains – the text itself. The contents of *Lienüzhuan* ought to include clues as to how it was written. The only way forward is to subject the text to a close reading in an attempt to uncover traces of the method of composition. Fortunately, Shinomi Takao has made this line of research much easier by having undertaken an enormous amount of philological yeoman's work. His magnificent *Ryū Kō Retsujoten no kenkyū* 劉向列女傳の研究 is not only an impressive tribute to scholarly perseverance, it also highlights invaluable details that reveal how this collection was produced. Shinomi's philological glosses make it possible to understand how the book was put together, and to determine whether Liu Xiang should be regarded as author or editor.

Shinomi's analysis includes examinations of transmitted earlier versions of every story in the collection. Of course there is always a chance that he may have missed something, but his work on the key problem of provenance seems quite thorough. Upon close reading, it is apparent that the *Lienüzhuan* stories can be divided into three general types. First, some stories are based on a tale recorded in an earlier work. These narratives are inevitably rewritten to some extent, often extensively. In many cases, the original "story" is no more than a terse sentence in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 or another early work and in fact is not a true narrative. Regardless of the length of the original source, Liu Xiang fleshes out each tale to produce a satisfying narrative complete with coherent plot, elegant style, poetic accompaniment, and clear moral. The second category consists of stories based on a historical character (or more frequently the wife, mother, or daughter of a historical figure) that lack a transmitted earlier version. In other words, these stories do not have a known precedent, but are nonetheless set in a particular historical context. Finally, the third category consists of stories that lack any precedent whatsoever. There is neither any previous mention of the characters, nor do transmitted texts contain any earlier version of the story.

Of course dividing Liu Xiang's narratives into these three categories requires subjective judgments. In some cases, a story's precedent is so terse that it is hard to decide whether to call it a previous "version" or simply an earlier reference to the same character. Despite these unavoidable ambiguities, this classification scheme still has heuristic value, as shown below. Using this typology, we can classify the stories in *Lienüzhuan* as follows:[12]

CHAPTER NUMBER	EARLIER VERSION	EARLIER HISTORICAL CHARACTER	NEITHER EARLIER VERSION NOR CHARACTER
1. Muyi 母儀	10	1	3
2. Xianming 賢明	10	3	2
3. Renzhi 仁智	10	0	5
4. Zhenshun 貞順	3	3	9
5. Jieyi 節義	7	0	8
6. Biantong 辯通	6	5	4
7. Niebi 孽嬖	15	0	0
TOTALS	61	12	31

This table shows that the text of *Lienüzhuan* encompasses considerable internal diversity, and Liu Xiang seems to have performed different types of authorial or editorial work with each thematic section of our received text – a text that goes back to a Song-era editing. For example, chapter seven ("Niebi") is well grounded in previous tales of evil women, and every story in the section has a clear precedent in earlier writing. In this chapter, Liu Xiang appears to have acted more like an editor, choosing and rewriting earlier tales to piece together a composite argument for limiting female participation in government.

In contrast, chapter four ("Zhenshun") seems least influenced by previous writings. Here original portions are most clearly visible. Not only do few of the stories in this section have transmitted precedents, but their values also differ considerably from earlier writings. Zhou au-

[12] The transmitted version of *Lienüzhuan* was heavily edited during the Song dynasty and may not be identical with Liu Xiang's original. In particular, the order of the stories might be quite different. See Bret Hinsch, "The Textual History of Liu Xiang's *Lienüzhuan*," *MS* 52 (2004), pp. 95–112. The fifteenth story in chapter one has been omitted from consideration because it is extremely dubious and probably not part of Liu Xiang's original collection. For a discussion of the authenticity of this story see Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, pp. 251–54.

thors may have employed some concepts related to chastity 貞節, such as inner 內 and outer 外, but in general they do not seem to have held very strong views about issues such as widow remarriage and female reclusion.[13] The radical ideas expressed in chapters four and five go far beyond mere widow chastity (itself a fairly novel idea at the time), promoting even self-mutilation and suicide in the name of virtue. These extreme views on female integrity seem to have only begun to take hold late in Western Han, and even then were limited to a small, hardline ideological faction. Self-mutilation and suicide in the name of female virtue were definitely far outside mainstream thought and behavior of the time. It would have been virtually impossible for Liu Xiang to find a number of narratives about early Eastern Zhou women who adhered to these radical new moral values. As a result, in this section Liu seems to have worked more as author than editor, creating stories to legitimize his own novel ideological vision by anachronistically projecting it back into the past.

Shinomi has already discussed the origins and contents of each story in the collection. In this article, it would be impossible to recapitulate the contents of every narrative and deal with their previous versions and characters in detail, nor is this even necessary. Instead it is sufficient to examine a few selected stories, each chosen to exemplify one of the collection's broader structural or stylistic types, to illustrate how different parts of the work were created.

TYPE ONE: NARRATIVES WITH EARLIER VERSIONS

Adhering Closely to a Previous Version

When Liu Xiang acted as editor, the degree of his intervention into the texts he had at hand varied considerably with each story. The *Lienüzhuan* tale of the daughter of Shanghuai of Qi (Qi Shanghuai *nü* 齊傷槐女) in chapter six, lifted from *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, presents a good example of a narrative that Liu transferred into the collection largely intact.[14] Liu was intimately familiar with *Yanzi chunqiu* because of his editorial work on the text as part of the official collation project. The transfer of this particular story from one narrative collection

[13] Chen Xiaofang 陳筱芳, "Chunqiu shiqi de zhenjieguan" 春秋時期的貞節觀, *Xinan Minzu Xueyuan xuebao, zhexue shehui kexue ban* 西南民族學院學報哲學社會科學版 21.1 (2000), pp. 105–9; Zhao Dongyu 趙東玉, "Zhoudai, 'nannü youbie' he 'fufu youbie' de fangfang mianmian" 周代男女有別和夫婦有別的方方面面, *Kongzi yanjiu* 孔子研究 2 (2000), pp. 76–89; Bret Hinsch, "The Origins of Separation of the Sexes in China," *JAOS* 123.3 (2003), pp. 595–616.

[14] Yan Ying 晏嬰, *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (Taipei: Dingwen, 1977) 2, pp. 100–2; Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, p. 668.

to another shows how Liu Xiang sometimes did only minimal editing when assembling the collection. The use of such a lengthy previous narrative is somewhat unusual. In most of the cases where Liu Xiang worked from a previous version, he took a very brief account from a historical document and expanded it considerably to create a satisfying narrative. Nevertheless, there are a few instances in which he found long and highly developed previous narratives that suited his purposes, and include them with few changes.

However, even in a case such as this, when Liu was being extremely faithful to an earlier source, traces of his fingerprints are still apparent. There is one extremely significant difference between the two versions. Interestingly, although the original *Yanzi chunqiu* story does not give a timeframe, the *Lienüzhuan* narrative specifies that these events took place during the reign of duke Jing 景 of Qi 齊 (r. 547–490 BC). Moreover, the daughter of Shanghuai refers to the reign of duke Jing 景 of Song 宋 (r. 516–469) as having been in the past.[15] Liu seems to have added an explicit timeframe to the existing *Yanzi chunqiu* text to make the setting feel more realistic, thereby legitimizing the story in readers' minds as truly historical.

When we compare these dates, however, it seems that Liu was a bit sloppy and failed to crosscheck his chronology. In fact the reign of duke Jing of Song ended after that of duke Jing of Qi, so the character's reference to that reign as having happened in the past is blatantly anachronistic. This contradiction is absent from the original *Yanzi chunqiu* version, so the anachronistic timeframe was obviously superimposed onto this narrative after it was first written. Presumably Liu Xiang added a flawed chronology in his *Lienüzhuan* version. By injecting this minor error into the text, Liu unwittingly highlighted his original contribution.

Rewriting a Previous Version

Many stories in the collection have their origins in *Zuozhuan* 左傳. A close examination of them reveals how Liu Xiang took relatively terse existing narratives, in which women are often very marginal figures, as the starting point for creating highly developed stories that served his rhetorical purposes. Although Liu Xiang initially gained fame for his familiarity with the *Gongyang* 公羊 and *Guliang* 穀梁 commentaries, some suspect that he secretly preferred the *Zuo*, which has a far more

[15] Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, p. 60.

dynamic narrative style.[16] The latter was certainly the favorite of his son Liu Xin 劉歆, who may have initially studied the *Zuo* under his father. However, given Liu Xiang's goals for *Lienüzhuan*, it was virtually impossible for him to lift stories directly from *Zuozhuan*, as the style and contents were unsuitable for his project. To create a story that could engage a contemporary audience, and to redirect its content to suit his own moral agenda, Liu usually had to modify stories from the *Zuo* through extensive rewriting and additions.

The tale of the wife of duke Mu of Xu (Xu Mu *furen* 許穆夫人) from chapter three of *Lienüzhuan* shows how a story from *Zuozhuan* was radically transformed into something appropriate for his new collection. The roots of the tale are straightforward. *Chunqiu* briefly records the destruction of the state of Wei 衛 by foreign invaders, a catastrophic event that *Zuozhuan* fleshes out with a compelling narrative.[17] The narrative begins with a description of the preparations for battle.

> In winter, during the twelfth month, Di 狄 invaded Wei 衛. Duke Yi 懿 of Wei was fond of storks, which were driven about in carriages appropriate for high officials. When time came for battle and the men received their armor they said, "Use the storks. They have an official salary and high position. How can we fight?" 冬十二月, 狄人伐衛. 懿公好鶴.鶴有乘軒者. 將戰國人受甲者皆曰: "使鶴. 鶴實有祿位. 余焉能戰."
>
> The duke gave Shi Qi 石祁 his jade semicircle and Ning Zhuang 甯莊 an arrow and had them guard the city saying, "Use these to aid the state. Choose what is most advantageous and do it." 公與石祁子玦與甯莊子矢, 使守曰: "以此贊國. 擇利而爲之."
>
> He gave his wife an embroidered robe saying, "Listen to these two officials." 與夫人繡衣曰: "聽於二子."[18]

Next the battle and its disastrous consequences are described.

> Qu Kong 渠孔 was his charioteer and Zibo 子伯 his guard. Huang Yi 黃夷 was in the vanguard and Kong Ying 孔嬰 in the rear. They engaged the Di at Yingze 熒澤. The Wei army suffered ignominious defeat and was annihilated. The marquis would not leave his banner, which only added to the defeat. 渠孔御戎, 子伯爲右. 黃夷前驅, 孔嬰齊殿. 及狄人戰于熒澤. 衛師敗績遂滅. 衛侯不去其旗, 是以甚敗.

[16] Wu Zhenglan 吳正嵐, "Lun Liu Xiang *Shijing* xue zhi jiafa" 論劉向詩經學之家法, *Fuzhou daxue xuebao* 福州大學學報 14.2 (April 2000), p. 118.

[17] Du Yu 杜預 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 et al., annots., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (N.p.: Ruan Yuan edn., 1815; Taipei: Yiwen, 1955) 11, p. 189 (Min 2).

[18] Du and Kong, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 11, p. 191.

Subsequent passages describe the war's conclusion and immediate aftermath. First there is a short account of two officials who were taken prisoner but managed to trick their captors into letting them warn compatriots of an impending attack. Then the people of Wei are defeated again as they flee, although some manage to cross a river to safety. The story concludes with the brief appearance of the woman central to Liu Xiang's rewritten version.

> The remnants of Wei amounted to only 730 men and women. There were five thousand when the people of Gong and Teng were taken into account. Duke Dai was enfeoffed and lived in a hut in Cao. The wife of Mu of Xu composed "Dai chi." 衛之遺民, 男女七百有三十人, 益之以共滕之民爲五人. 立戴公, 以廬于曹. 許穆夫人賦載馳.

This account of the destruction of Wei constitutes the *locus classicus* for Liu Xiang's tale. However, the original *Zuo* story is surprisingly different from the *Lienüzhuan* version. *Zuozhuan* focuses on the war itself – its course, consequences, and the cause of Wei's defeat. As usual with this work, the narrative is cleverly structured to provide an implicit moral interpretation of events. That is why this episode begins with what at first seems like an irrelevant description of duke Yi's strange fondness for storks. *Zuozhuan* uses this eccentricity to symbolize Yi's decadence, which has disastrous consequences. The sight of storks being driven around in luxurious carriages angers his soldiers, who hesitate to defend such a degenerate ruler. In this demoralized state, Wei's army is quickly overcome by the invading Di. Wei then falls into chaos as its inhabitants are either taken prisoner or else flee abroad to safety, dramatizing the debauched ruler's unhappy fate. The episode ends with the new lord of Wei reduced to living in a hut.

The wife of Mu of Xu enters this story with only the briefest cameo after the war is over, and her appearance comes as a minor digression from the main plot. Although Liu Xiang identifies her as the daughter of duke Yi of Wei, *Zuozhuan* only introduces her as the wife of duke Mu of Xu. She has no part in the action, and is mentioned only because she composed the poem "Dai chi" in which she expressed her sadness over the fall of Wei. The poem gained canonical status through inclusion in the *Shijing* collection, so of course its origin would be of interest to the *Zuo*'s readers. Nevertheless, the *Zuo* commentary does not give a detailed description of the woman, the poem, or the circumstances surrounding its composition. Instead it keeps the reader's attention directed toward the main point – the disastrous consequences of duke Yi's bad rulership.

The story is retold in a more dramatic form in the third-century BC collection *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, where it is cloaked in a new style to suit evolving taste in prose.[19] To prove duke Yi's depravity, the retold version mentions not just his love of storks, but also that he paid excessive attention to his palace women. By enhancing his sins, this version amplifies his decadence and clarifies the moral implications. As in the earlier *Zuo* version, duke Yi's soldiers hesitate to fight on his behalf. This account, however, has the duke killed and eaten by the cannibalistic invaders. Being mutilated or eaten was considered a terrible disgrace in ancient China, so this gruesome image was not merely a dramatic trope, but also emphasized the horror of his precipitous fall.[20] Significantly, the story concludes not with the poem by Mu's wife, but with the reactions of a loyal official and neighboring ruler. The woman at the center of Liu Xiang's narrative, though marginally present in the *Zuo* narrative, has been completely excised from the *Lüshi chunqiu* version. Her original role, guiding the reader's reactions to events by expressing empathy, is now played by two politically prominent men.

When Liu Xiang turned the *Zuozhuan* account of the fall of Wei into the story of the wife of duke Mu of Xu, he shifted the focus from the duke's immorality to the woman who warned him of impending doom. This change not only gave the story a completely different protagonist, but it also altered its general moral import. In the *Zuo* original as well as the subsequent *Lüshi chunqiu* version, the stress is on duke Yi's immorality. In Liu Xiang's adaptation, the new focus becomes the prescient advice of the duke's daughter. The basic moral theme is shifted from a ruler's depravity to a woman's wisdom. Although Liu was recycling old material, he used the basic building blocks that he had inherited to construct a strikingly different narrative.

This new tale begins not with duke Yi and his beloved storks, but his daughter and her sagacious advice.[21]

[19] Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (ed.), *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, annot. Gao You 高誘; see Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, annot., *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋 (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1984) 11, pp. 588–89.

[20] Cannibalism as a symbol of degradation, and its eventual transformation into a positive sign of moral martyrdom, has been well studied. Kuhabara Jitsuzō 桑原隲藏, "Shinajin no shokujinniku hōshū" 支那人の食人肉風習, *Kuhabara Jitsuzō zenshū* 桑原隲藏全集 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 454–59; Kuhabara, "Shina ningen ni okeru shokujinniku no hōshū" 支那人間に於ける食人肉の風習, ibid., vol. 2, pp. 153–205; Robert des Rotours, "Quelques notes sur l'anthropophagie en Chine," *TP* 50.4–5 (1963), pp. 386–427; Robert des Rotours, "Encore quelques notes sur l'anthropophagie en Chine," *TP* 54.1–3 (1968), pp. 1–49; Key Ray Chong, *Cannibalism in China* (Wakefield, New Hampshire: Longwood Academic, 1990).

[21] This passage has been previously translated in Albert Richard O'Hara, *The Position of Woman in Early China: According to the Lieh Nü Chuan "The Biographies of Chinese Women"* (Taipei: Meiya, 1971), pp. 78–79.

The wife of Mu of Xu was the daughter of Duke Yi of Wei and wife of Duke Mu of Xu. At first the ruler of Xu sought her as a wife, but the ruler of Qi also wanted her. Duke Yi was about to give her to Xu when she said to him via her governess, "In ancient times when rulers had daughters, they used them like precious gifts to ally with large states. Speaking of the present, Xu is small and distant while Qi is large and nearby. Nowadays the strong are considered heroes. If there were bandits and foreigners along the borders and you wanted to maintain order in the realm, wouldn't it be better if you could go and report matters to a big country where I was living? Now we are abandoning the near for the faraway and leaving the large for the small! One day you may face the disaster of fleeing in a cart. Don't you care about the altars to the land and grain?" The ruler did not listen and married her off to Xu.

Afterwards Di invaded Wei and destroyed it, but Xu could not help them. The duke of Wei then fled to ford the river and went south to Chuqiu 楚丘. Duke Huan of Qi came to him so he survived, building a town and settling at Chuqiu. Thereupon the ruler of Wei regretted that he had not heeded her words. After the defeat, the lady of Xu galloped on her horse to condole with the ruler of Wei. Due to her resentment she wrote a poem that went: 許穆夫人者, 衛懿公之女, 許穆公之夫人也. 初許求之, 齊亦求之. 懿公將與許, 女因其傅母而言曰: "古者諸侯之有女子也, 所以苞苴玩弄繫援於大國也. 言今者許小而遠, 齊大而近. 若今之世強者爲雄. 如使邊境有寇戎之事, 維是四方之故, 赴告大國妾在, 不猶愈乎? 今舍近而就遠, 離大而附小. 一旦有車馳之難. 孰可與慮社稷?" 侯不聽而嫁之於許. 其後翟人攻衛, 大破之, 而許不能救. 衛侯遂奔走涉河而南至楚丘. 齊桓往而存之, 遂城楚丘以居. 衛侯於是悔不用其言. 當敗之時許夫人馳驅而弔唁侯. 因疾之而作詩云

> I galloped home to condole with the lord of Wei, driving my horses far. 載馳載驅, 歸唁衛侯, 驅馬悠悠
> At Cao an official struggled forward to meet me and I felt grieved. 言至于漕, 大夫跋涉, 我心則憂
> You do not think well of me but I cannot stop thinking about it. 既不我嘉, 不能旋反
> You disapprove of me but I cannot keep my thoughts away from it 視爾不臧, 我思不遠.[22]

The gentleman praises her compassion and forethought.

[22] A literal English gloss for the poem is found in Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950), pp. 34–36.

> The eulogy says: "When the daughter of the duke of Wei was not yet married and the rulers of Xu and Qi were being considered, she said to her governess, 'Qi is large and reliable.' The ruler of Wei did not listen to her. As a result, later he fled and Xu could not help him. His daughter composed the poem "Dai chi." 君子善其慈惠而遠識也. 頌曰: "衛女未嫁, 謀許與齊, 女諷母曰: '齊大可依.' 衛君不聽, 後果遁逃, 許不能救. 女作載馳.

As seen from the enormous differences between the *Zuozhuan* original and the new version, Liu Xiang extensively rewrote the tale to make it suitable for his collection. In fact, the plot has been inverted. In the original *Zuo* narrative, almost all of the description concerned the war, which is barely alluded to in the new version. Instead the daughter of duke Yi, the most marginal character of all in the original plot, takes center stage in Liu's rendition. Moreover, a lengthy excerpt of her poem is quoted at the end, a considerable expansion from the *Zuo*'s passing allusion to the writer and her poem.

The biggest difference between the two narratives is the woman's long and eloquent speech in Liu's rendition, which is completely absent from earlier accounts. This speech seems to have been invented from scratch by Liu Xiang, since it does not exist at all in the *Zuo* original. In fact Liu had no choice but to invent this speech to make the wife of duke Mu worthy for inclusion in a collection of stories about exemplary women. The mere fact that she wrote a moving poem about her homeland being destroyed might show her to be a talented artist, but this does not necessarily make her a moral exemplar appropriate for *Lienüzhuan*. Even a bad person can feel sad when her family has been ruined. So Liu added a speech in which the daughter of duke Yi sagely predicted disaster if her father went through with her impending nuptials, and suggested that he use her marriage to ally Wei to a powerful state instead. This speech marks her as both wise and prescient, making her worthy of emulation.

Duke Yi retains his former role as the fool who destroys his country through bad judgment. However, his main blunder has changed. In the *Zuo*, his odd love of storks symbolizes his immorality and demoralizes his soldiers. *Lüshi chunqiu* keeps the storks and adds an excessive fondness for beautiful women as an additional sign of decadence. The rewritten *Lienüzhuan* version, however, has neither storks nor seductive palace beauties. The duke's downfall now comes because he fails to listen to good advice from a wise and loyal remonstrant.

Comparing the *Zuozhuan* and *Lienüzhuan* versions, it is evident that very little of Liu Xiang's narrative was lifted from an earlier text. Although there were previous accounts of the fall of Wei, their contents make up only a tiny fraction of Liu Xiang's version. Instead he took a marginal woman who appears very briefly in the *Zuo*, made her the main character of the tale, then enveloped her within a sophisticated narrative that includes a lengthy discourse on proper foreign relations. Her eloquent remonstration to an immoral ruler was a stock plot device that echoes numerous similar remonstrative speeches on good government from Liu Xiang's *Xinxu* and *Shuoyuan* collections. By masterfully remaking an existing character in earlier literature to suit his own ideological and rhetorical ends, Liu Xiang was able to build up a narrative appropriate for his innovative collection of didactic stories about women.

Aside from the story's altered plot and structure, the language of the *Zuo* and *Lienüzhuan* versions is also quite different, and this linguistic discrepancy provides some telling clues about its general date of composition. Although the wife of Duke Mu lived during the Spring and Autumn era, the prose style of her speech as reported in *Lienüzhuan* is completely different from anything written so early. Long dramatic speeches became increasingly popular at the end of the Eastern Zhou and were a staple rhetorical device in Western Han literature, as seen in the famous narrative history *Shiji* 史記 and also in Liu Xiang's other moralistic collections *Xinxu* and *Shuoyuan*. In contrast, Spring and Autumn literature tended to be extremely terse and had yet to evolve speechifying to such a high degree of refinement. The grammar and language of the woman's speech is typical of the so-called *guwen* 古文 style used in the Western Han, which was quite different from the archaic prose style of the Spring and Autumn era. Given the evolved language and style of this oration, it most likely dates from the first-century BC and was probably written by Liu Xiang himself.

So even though the story of the fall of Wei had prior versions, these were only a minor part of the piece included in *Lienüzhuan*. Liu used the *Zuozhuan* account as little more than historical background for what is essentially an entirely new story. Although Liu can be considered to have done some editorial work on this piece, to the extent that he integrated some details into his narrative, by and large the bulk of his story about the wise and prescient wife of duke Mu can be considered an original work of ideological fiction. Many of the other stories in *Lienüzhuan* build on brief precedents in a similar manner. So even when Liu Xiang worked in an editorial capacity, integrating earlier nar-

ratives into the collection, he often did very extensive rewriting and injected considerable original content.

Working from a Lost Narrative

The stories in *Lienüzhuan* do not always have a transmitted prior version. In some cases, Liu Xiang seems to have been working from documents that have since been lost. An excellent example is the tale of Dingjiang 定姜 of Wei 衛 (Wei *gu* Dingjiang 衛姑定姜) in the first chapter.[23] The famed classicist Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648 AD), writing about the *Shijing* 詩經 poem "Yan yan" 燕燕, observed that "this poem's notes take it as a poem about lady Dingjiang 此詩注以爲夫人定姜之詩."[24] In attributing his remark to earlier annotations, Kong seems to have been passing on an interpretation from the rich, early exegetical tradition surrounding *Shijing*, much of which has since been lost. This particular interpretation of "Yan yan" was also probably current during the Han and seems to have been the source of the *Lienüzhuan* story.

It is not at all surprising that Liu Xiang was intimately familiar with the *Shijing* commentaries. Although Liu was publicly associated with the *Chunqiu* 春秋 and its exegetes, he had also grown up immersed in ancient poetry. *Shijing* scholarship was a Liu-family tradition dating back to his ancestor Liu Jiao 劉交, king of Chuyuan 楚元 and younger half-brother of the dynasty's first ruler Han Gaozu 漢高祖.[25] Liu Jiao wrote a commentary called *Yuanwang shi* 元王詩 and had his sons educated in the *Shijing*. In addition to *Shijing* studies, Liu Xiang edited *Chuci* 楚辭 as part of his grand collation project, and he mentions it in his own poems.[26] Poetic training clearly was important in the Liu family. Liu Xiang's father Liu De 劉德 wrote poetry, and Liu Xiang also composed original poetry that circulated in literary circles.[27]

Not only did Liu read and study *Shijing* poems, he also seems to have been familiar with their commentaries. As was often the case in antiquity, classical texts circulated in rival editions, each appended with different exegeses. Liu Xiang is often believed to have been a partisan

23 Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, pp. 168–69.

24 Mao Gong 毛公, *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義, annot. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 et al. (N.p.: Ruan Yuan edn., 1815; Taipei: Yiwen, 1955) 2, p. 78.

25 *Hanshu* states that Liu Jiao had the same father as Liu Bang. Yan Shigu notes that this wording implies that the two were born of different mothers. This would make Liu Jiao a half-brother of Liu Bang; Ban, *Hanshu*, 36, p. 1921, n. 1.

26 Li Zhi 力之, "*Chuci zhangju* qian shiwu juan de qianxu Liu Xiang zuo boyi" 楚辭章句前十五卷的前序劉向作駁議, *Huanggang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 黃岡師範學院學報 20.4 (Aug. 2000), pp. 36–40.

27 Li Mengzhi 李夢芝, "Liu Xiang ji qi zhushu lunlue" 劉向及其著述論略, *Lishi jiaoxue* 歷史教學 1994.3, p. 10, lists the locations of extant *fu* 賦 and the names of some lost ones.

of the Lu 魯 school of *Shijing* studies. Unfortunately, this line of interpretation is little understood and its commentaries have been lost.[28] Whether or not Liu Xiang adhered to this interpretation, it is apparent from his writings that he had access to *Shijing* commentaries that have since disappeared. It seems that some exegete recorded the story of Dingjiang in a lost *Shijing* commentary as a way to read meaning into the enigmatic "Yan yan." The original commentary apparently inspired Liu Xiang's narrative, and a reference to the commentary survived into the Tang, where it informed Kong Yingda's annotation.

The story of Dingjiang exemplifies how Liu Xiang sometimes acted as editor by copying and reworking stories from sources that have since been lost. There are a number of other stories in the collection that seem to be based on *Shijing* commentaries: wife of the ruler of Xi (Xijun *furen* 息君夫人), woman Shen of Shaonan (Shaonan Shen *nü* 召南申女), wife of duke Mu of Xu (Xumu *furen* 許穆夫人), governess of the woman of Qi (Qi *nü chuanmu* 齊女傳母), and wife of a man from Zhou Nan (Zhounan *zhi qi* 周南之妻).[29] These tales might even include details or narrative from some of the lost commentaries of the Lu school.

In creating *Lienüzhuan*, the importance of *Shijing* cannot be overstated. Each story ends with a quotation from *Shijing* that supposedly exemplifies the virtues or vices of the woman in question, followed by an original eulogy (*song* 頌) written by Liu Xiang to sum up her moral character. For this reason, Liu cannot be considered just an editor for any of the stories in the collection. At the very least, he added a *Shijing* quotation and eulogy. In almost every case, he did much more as well.

TYPE TWO: STORIES BUILT AROUND AN EARLIER CHARACTER

For about ten percent of the stories in *Lienüzhuan*, although no prior version has been transmitted to the present, earlier sources mention the name of the main character or one of her family members. Some of these might be lost historical narratives about real people. It is more likely, however, that most are historical fiction written by Liu

28 Tanaka Kazuo 田中和夫, "Lienüzhuan yin shi kao" 列女傳引詩考, *Hebei shiyuan xuebao* 河北師院學報 1997.4, pp. 78–82; Katō Jitsu 加藤實, "Lun Liu Xiang guanyu 'Youli' shidai de Shijingxue" 論劉向關於幽厲時代的詩經學, *Jilin Shifan xueyuan xuebao* 吉林師範學院學報 19.4 (1998.7), pp. 25–29; Wu, "Lun Liu Xiang *Shijing* xue zhi jiafa," pp. 116–20; Dai Wei 戴維, *Shijing yanjiushi* 詩經研究史 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu, 2001), pp. 49–113; Li Yinsheng 李寅生, "Lienüzhuan yin shi deshi chuyi" 列女傳引詩得失芻議, *Qinzhou shifan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao* 欽洲師範高等專科學校學報 17.1 (2003.3), pp. 26–29.

29 Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, p. 298.

Xiang and deliberately positioned within specific historical contexts to lend them credibility.

In almost every one, any claim to historicity rests not with any facts about the female protagonist herself, but rather through her relation to a male family member mentioned in an earlier text. Chapter six includes several of these stories. For example, although the mother of Jiangyi 江乙 of Chu 楚 (Chu Jiangyi *mu* 楚江乙母) never appears in any surviving record prior to *Lienüzhuan*, her son was a prominent official mentioned in *Han Fei zi* 韓非子.[30] Similarly, Liu Xiang describes the discerning woman of rural Chu (Chu *ye biannü* 楚野辨女) as the wife of one Mr. Zhao (Zhao *shi* 昭氏). The Zhao were one of the great families of Chu, so linking this obscure woman to a man surnamed Zhao gave her something of an exalted social background without having to be too specific. Then there is the story about the mother of Foxi (or Fuxi) of Zhao (Zhao Foxi *mu* 趙佛肸母). Although Liu Xiang was the first to mention this woman, he describes her as the mother of an ancient historical figure mentioned in *Lunyu* 論語, *Mozi* 墨子, and elsewhere.[31] It seems extremely suspicious that the mothers and wives of so many prominent men went unmentioned in any record prior to the late-Western Han, then suddenly appear *ex nihilo* in *Lienüzhuan* as the main characters of such long and elegant narratives, mouthing words that happen to precisely reflect Liu Xiang's own ideas.

Interestingly, one of these stories is marred by a blatant contradiction that clearly marks it as a later forgery. The story of Boying, wife of king Ping of Chu (Chu Ping Boying 楚平伯嬴), appears amid the largely spurious narratives of chapter four. This tale begins in the usual manner by identifying Boying as the daughter of king Mu of Qin 秦穆王 and the wife of king Ping of Chu 楚平王. However, as Shinomi points out, when we compare the usual dates for these two monarchs, a major inconsistency becomes apparent. According to the conventional chronology, Mu of Qin reigned from 659–621, while king Ping of Chu reigned from 528–516, putting a gap of 93 years between the end of Mu's and the beginning of Ping's era. Even if we assume that king Mu fathered this daughter while in his dotage and king Ping was willing to marry a very old woman, the temporal gap is still far too large to bridge.[32] Moreover, the story claims that Boying bore king Ping a son

[30] Han Fei 韓非, *Han Fei zi* 韓非子 (Taipei: Chengwen, 1980) 9, pp. 518, 533; Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, pp. 649–51.

[31] He Yan 何晏 and Xing Bing 邢昺 et al., annots., *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1955) 17, p. 155; Mo Di 墨翟, *Mozi* 墨子, annot. Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (Taipei: Huazheng, 1987) 9, p. 278.

[32] Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, pp. 59, 493.

who became king Zhao of Chu 楚照王. This means that she would have given birth to a son when quite elderly.

There are two possibilities that might explain the flagrantly spurious chronology. First, perhaps an anonymous author wrote this ideological fiction centuries earlier. To lend the narrative more authority, he connected the female character with two prominent rulers, but carelessly associated two kings from different eras. Liu Xiang then came across the forged document, accepted it as authentic, and credulously inserted it into his collection.

More likely, Liu Xiang invented the story himself. Its content involves a woman who threatens to kill herself to preserve her chastity, a subject alien to authentic Zhou rhetoric but dear to Liu Xiang. Moreover, this tale repeats prohibitions on contact between the sexes, as found in the "Neize" 內則 section of *Liji* 禮記.[33] Although "Neize" was widely circulated during the late-Western Han, it may not even have been written down yet during the sixth century BC, when the story supposedly occurred.[34] Putting language from it into the mouth of a sixth-century woman raised in Qin and living in Chu, both marginal to the Confucian culture that produced "Neize," is blatantly anachronistic. Given these contradictions in chronology and content, it seems that Liu invented the story of Boying to support his radical ideas about female chastity. He hoped to legitimize new ethical views by projecting them back into the past and attributing them to an ancient woman of high birth. However, when writing this tale, Liu failed to notice his skewed chronology. His error is a forgivable oversight, as each state had a separate royal genealogy and matching them up was often no easy matter. Liu probably took a cavalier attitude toward his dates on the assumption that no one would bother to put together chronologies from two different states and crosscheck his timeframe. This, together with ideological content characteristic of the late-Western Han, strongly suggests that the story was written by Liu Xiang and falsely attributed to antiquity.

With the story of Boying, Liu Xiang's chronological oversight happens to reveal a fake. His other narratives about the kinswomen of prominent men lack such blatant contradictions, so it is difficult to prove conclusively that they were written by Liu. Even so, the other

[33] Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, KongYingda 孔穎達 et al., annots., *Liji zhushu* 禮記注疏 (N.p.: Ruan Yuan edn., 1815; Taipei: Yiwen, 1955) (sect. "Neize" 內則) 28, p. 538.

[34] Jeffrey K. Riegel, "Li chi" 禮記, in Michael Loewe, ed., *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1993), pp. 293–97.

women, whom Liu identifies as historical solely through propinquity to historical male figures, seem quite similar to Boying. There are no previous versions of them, nor are the women mentioned in earlier documents. Moreover, the content is often an anachronistic projection of late-Western Han ideas about ideal female behavior into the distant past. It seems likely that most of these tales are historical fiction composed by Liu Xiang and set in the Spring and Autumn period to give them an air of veracity, strengthening their rhetorical force by falsely portraying them as literal historical records.

TYPE THREE: STORIES WITH NO SURVIVING EARLIER VERSION

The final category consists of narratives that lack any evident precedent. For almost a third of the *Lienüzhuan* tales, not only is there no earlier version, there is not even any previous reference to the character (or her kinsmen) at the center of the story. Of course the authenticity of this class of stories is most doubtful of all, and these are most likely to have been created by Liu Xiang in their entirety.

The number of stories without precedent varies considerably in each section. Since every chapter in the Song edition is built around a general moral topic, the uneven distribution of this category of story suggests that some of Liu's didactic themes are more thoroughly grounded in earlier texts and ideas than others. Examining where these stories occur also helps reveal the extent of Liu Xiang's original contribution to each section. As mentioned above, the stories about the evil consorts of ancient rulers in chapter seven are based most securely on prior works. In contrast, chapters four and five include the largest number of narratives that lack any precedent, and happen to laud women who accepted restrictions on their autonomy. The fact that so many of the stories and even characters in these two chapters lack any forerunner in earlier writings reflects the novelty of some of Liu's ethical beliefs.

Many of the narratives about obscure women seem to be modeled after a genre of tales that was well regarded late in Western Han. In Liu Xiang's other collections *Xinxu* and *Shuoyuan*, a large number of stories concern a wise person of low status who remonstrates with a misguided ruler or another high status person.[35] This was a dangerous thing to do, as the ruler in the tale sometimes becomes furious and threatens

[35] Wang Sufeng 王蘇鳳, "Lun Liu Xiang Xinxu de shehui zhengzhi sixiang" 論劉向新序的社會政治思想, *Henan daxue xuebao* 河南大學學報 40.3 (2000.5), pp. 42–47.

to execute the remonstrant for his temerity. In the end, however, the ruler always recognizes the wisdom of this good advice and proclaims the true worth of this lowly sage.

There are numerous permutations. For example, in one *Xinxu* story, a ruler remarks on a musician's blindness. The musician responds with an eloquent speech in which he uses blindness as a metaphor for political faults.[36] Another tale describes a ruler who becomes livid toward a bystander who had inadvertently scared away a flock of birds during a hunting expedition. The enraged noble wants to shoot the unfortunate spectator as punishment for ruining his hunting. At this point the ruler's carriage driver steps forward to tell a story about the importance of moral leadership, convincing the ruler that it is not a good idea to murder his subjects.[37] In yet another story in the same genre, a ruler becomes lost in a swamp while hunting. A local fisherman shows him the way out of the morass, then treats the ruler to a well-expressed oration that compares getting lost in a swamp with bad statesmanship.[38] There are many examples of this sort in Liu Xiang's oeuvre, especially since this type of didactic story was clearly in vogue during his lifetime.

Many of the stories about obscure women in *Lienüzhuan* have a similar theme and structure. A woman demonstrates her sagacity by giving a speech in which she urges her audience, usually a man, on the need to uphold high moral standards. The most famous example is the tale of Mencius' mother, who cuts the thread on her loom to accompany a dramatic speech about the importance of diligent study.[39] In many cases, these monologues are addressed to a husband. For example, the wife of Zhao Shuai 趙衰 uses an eloquent speech, ornamented with two appropriate quotations from *Shijing*, to urge her husband to take back a former wife.[40] In another story, an old woman speaks very articulately to the king of Wei 魏 about female propriety and moral government.[41]

Many of the *Lienüzhuan* stories written in this genre entirely lack precedent, and their main character is totally unknown. Why do so many of the stories about obscure women, not mentioned in previous records, have such similar themes and structures? One possibility is

[36] Ye Youming 葉幼明 and Huang Peirong 黃沛榮, eds., *Xinxu duben* 新序讀本 (Taipei: Sanmin, 1996), I/17, pp. 29–39

[37] Ibid., II/10, pp. 54–55.

[38] Ibid., II/13, pp. 54–57.

[39] Shinomi, *Ryū Kō*, I/11, pp. 219–20.

[40] Ibid., II/8, p. 310.

[41] Ibid., III/14, pp. 430–31.

that they are true. A large number of ancient women happened to have behaved very similarly; their long speeches were faithfully recorded and preserved for centuries outside the transmitted records available to us; then Liu Xiang finally brought together such scattered ancient documents and edited them.

It does not, however, seem probable that the words and actions of so many insignificant women would have been preserved for very long. It is more likely that these female characters are so similar because they are fictional products of an author working within the confines of a clearly defined genre. The style and structure of this category of *Lienüzhuan* stories clearly parallel the tales inspired by wandering persuaders that were popular in antiquity, as exemplified by *Zhanguoce* 戰國策, a book that also underwent heavy editing and rewriting by Liu Xiang.[42] Because of his experience putting together *Zhanguoce*, Liu was intimately familiar with this specific literary genre. *Xinxu* and *Shuoyuan* employ many such tales about men making moralistic speeches to their superiors. It seems likely that Liu's stories about otherwise unknown women are original works of fiction. Since their style and structure are so repetitious, they were likely written as a group, probably by Liu Xiang himself.

CONCLUSION

After examining three groups of narratives, the overall impression is that Liu Xiang combined editorial work with original writing when he put together *Lienüzhuan*. In fact, this seems to have been his only alternative. There were no previous books dedicated to women, so he only had at his disposal piecemeal scraps of scattered names, remarks, and narrative. Only by adding a considerable amount of new text could Liu possibly turn this scanty and incoherent hodgepodge into a lengthy story-collection with unified themes, style, and structure.

Liu's creative contribution seems to outweigh the inherited portion in both length and importance. By writing or heavily rewriting most of the stories in *Lienüzhuan*, he was able to turn out a series of pointed ideological essays in narrative form. To appreciate this work, we must not forget that Liu composed it as a piece of didactic ideological literature. Liu Xiang was a brilliant rhetorician who put across his controversial views in an impressive variety of media: classical commentary, portent prognostications, memorials, essays, and histori-

[42] Tsuen-hsuin Tsien, "Chan kuo ts'e 戰國策," in Loewe, ed., *Early Chinese Texts*, pp. 1–11.

cal fiction. Moreover, he lived in an age when the forgery of classical documents was common, and this jaded intellectual milieu seems to have given him a flexible attitude toward historical truth. It is clear that with *Lienüzhuan*, Liu was far more concerned with getting across his own beliefs than upholding high standards of veracity.

Early-Eastern Zhou rules of normative female behavior were far more generous than those formulated in subsequent eras. During the Western Han, due to a radical backlash against the interference of powerful women and their kinsmen in politics, some prominent thinkers became determined to reduce female autonomy. Liu Xiang was the most famous exponent of this new way of thinking. Liu and others advocated restricting key areas of female behavior, thereby containing women physically, financially, and sexually. Those opposed to the machinations of consort kin hoped that keeping women out of politics might salvage the increasingly fragile Han dynasty. Because the theories Liu advocated were relatively new, he could not rely completely on received texts to express his position. To achieve his rhetorical goal, he had no choice but to interpolate a considerable amount of new material into the collection.

This exploration of the composition of *Lienüzhuan* began with an overview of the four major previous views toward the legitimacy of this text. As stated at the beginning, Luo Genze saw Liu as little more than a faithful editor of earlier documents, Yu Jiaxi admitted that Liu had done heavy rewriting on the collection's stories, and Liu Zhiji attacked Liu Xiang as a forger. Shinomi Takao tends to view Liu as the author of a mix of both original fiction and previous narratives. Of these previous scholarly assessments, Shinomi's is by far the most subtle, as he repeatedly emphasizes the diversity and textual complexity of the work. As we have seen through close readings of a few stories, it is impossible to characterize Liu Xiang solely as either editor or author of *Lienüzhuan*. He acted in both capacities, playing a slightly different compositional role with each story. In conclusion, we should regard Liu Xiang as both the author and editor of China's first collection of female biographies, although his original contribution to the work seems paramount.

Given these findings, scholars who rely on *Lienüzhuan* as a historical source should exercise extreme caution. Some historians have approached it with the attitude that Liu Xiang was merely editing narratives written much earlier, and have treated these tales as if they are historical documents. In fact, many narratives seem to date back no further than the closing decades of Western Han and cannot be used

to understand women's lives in the Spring and Autumn era. *Lienüzhuan* is an intricate mix of fiction and fact. Separating the two strains is far from easy.

Nevertheless, even if we look at *Lienüzhuan* as primarily a work of historical fiction, it still deserves earnest study. Compared with earlier Chinese narratives, this story collection evinces highly sophisticated rhetoric, marking a new highpoint in the technical development of prose, and bringing to it increased length, complexity, and beauty.[43] Furthermore, it demonstrates the intricate problems that challenge our analyses of history and fiction. In China, fiction largely developed out of historical narrative. *Sanguozhi* 三國志 eventually begat *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演藝 rather than vice-versa. *Lienüzhuan* occupies an early gray area between the extremes of fact and fiction, and thus constitutes another kind of literary genus.

Even though Liu Xiang invented much of the content of *Lienüzhuan*, his collection remains an extremely important intellectual artifact that reveals ideas and values characteristic of his time. In terms of substance, we ought to view *Lienüzhuan* as an eloquent and highly persuasive ideological treatise, one that employs a largely fictional narrative masquerading as literal history. As such, it provides detailed insights into some of the novel ideas about women that were gaining currency in the dynamic, fin de siècle intellectual atmosphere. Radical new concepts such as the desirability of female suicide in the name of virtue were just beginning to emerge. *Lienüzhuan* embedded this new hard-line view of gender ethics within a powerful rhetorical medium, thereby guaranteeing that these ideas would have an influential readership for centuries to come. This work spawned many imitators in the same genre, and its ideas crossed over into other forms of expression, making it probably the most ideologically influential work on gender ever written in China. Even if large sections of *Lienüzhuan* are fictional, many readers, from Liu Xiang's time onward, took them as literally true, thus exerting a profound impact on the development of Chinese culture.

[43] Jiao Qingyan 焦慶艷, "Shilun 'Lienüzhuan' de yuyan yishu" 試論列女傳的語言藝術, *Xi'an Shiyou xueyuan xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 西安石油學院學報 (社會科學版) 12.2 (2003), pp. 81–85; Min Zeping 閔澤平, "Liu Xiang wenzhang fengge lun" 劉向文章風格論, *Zhoukou shifan xueyuan xuebao* 周口師範學院學報 21.1 (2004), pp. 33–36.