



EDITORIAL

Between the Lines

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The editorial committee is pleased to present volume 5 of the Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies, which opens with a special section on "Commentary and Exegesis".

編委會榮幸地推出《歐洲漢學學會學刊》第五期。本期特設“註釋與詮釋”專題，作為開篇內容。

Keywords: Editorial, China, Sinology, Commentary, Exegesis, Hermeneutics

關鍵詞： 編委，中國，漢學，詮釋，批註，註釋，解讀

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The editorial committee is pleased to present volume 5 of the *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* which opens with a special issue section, dedicated to commentary and exegesis. This section starts with an introduction by Marie Bizais-Lillig, which delineates the contours of the topic under study. It is followed by ten research articles organised in chronological order within three large textual categories. We are extremely glad that the papers of the two finalists of the EACS 2024 Young Scholar Award fit in the special issue and, thanks to the efforts of their authors, could be integrated in this volume.

The first category entitled “poetry and fiction” (*shifu ji xiaoshuo* 詩賦及小說), spans from pre-imperial *Chuci* 楚辭 (Songs of Chu) to the contemporary novels of Yan Lianke. It starts with a long diachronic panorama on the interpretation of the *Songs of Chu* from the Han down to the Qing dynasty, which **Michael Schimmelpfennig** chooses to analyse minutely by focusing on the poem “Yunzhong jun” 云中君 (The Lord Amidst Clouds). The author identifies five landmarks, namely commentaries by Wang Yi 王逸 (2nd century CE), the Tang dynasty Five Ministers 五臣 commenting upon the *Wenxuan* 文選 pieces, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), Wang Yuan 汪瑗 (?–1565), and Lin Yunming 林雲銘 (ca. 1628–1697), which operate as testimonies to the different choices commentators make when it comes to dividing a base text into meaningful segments, structuring a commentary, integrating external materials, associating texts, or identifying elements and personae within a text. Given that commentators were aware of their predecessors, adding a new stratum equates to accepting a challenge to promote one’s reading and interpretative techniques.

In contrast, **Olga Lomová** narrows down the attention to one single piece, the *Shanju fu* 山居賦 (Rhapsody on dwelling in the mountains) by Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), accompanied by one single commentary by the same author, the length of which is approximately similar to that of the *fu* proper. The article examines the different functions performed by the unprecedented device of *zizhu* 自注 (self-commentary) appended to a long poetic autobiography that describes the Southern estate where Xie Lingyun retired due to political turmoil. It argues that commentaries not only serve to shed light on meaning and intertextual references or funnel the interpretation: self-commentary anticipates the possible challenge to the imperial central power carried by the grand *fu* style piece, and works as a muffler.

Tian Xiaofei 田曉菲 takes a different stand on the role played by self-commentary in Xie Lingyun’s *Rhapsody on dwelling in the mountains* where she sees a means to individualise and substantiate a description that would otherwise echo the abstract rhetoric of the Han *fu*. The analysis of Xie Lingyun’s work inaugurates a larger reconstruction of the early history of self-commentary in the belletrist tradition, which shifts from rhapsody to *shi* 詩 poetry, continuing with Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–590s) and Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) as exemplary figures. The paper shows how self-commentaries embody a wish to maintain the readability and to communicate the tone or the implications of a text for a larger audience—in time in particular. It also demonstrates how commentaries reveal deficiencies in a base text, impose themselves as necessary, and build a dialogic relationship with both the text and life. The paper finally suggests that the broad adoption of poetic auto-commentary from the late eighth century onwards reflects a transformation in the representation and value of the belletrist field.

After a great leap in time that brings us to Yan Lianke 閻連科 (1958–), **Roman Lashin** invites us to pay attention to two novels, namely *Fengyasong* 風雅頌 (Ballads, Hymns, Odes) and *Jianying ru shui* 堅硬如水 (Hard Like Water), whose titles are connected to the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry). This paper shows that the history and practice of *Shijing* exegesis were an inspiration to Yan Lianke and that, from many aspects, the tribulations and struggles of the novels' main characters can be better understood if observed through the lenses of commentarial Confucian traditions on the love poems in the anthology. On the one hand, Yan's work illustrates the tension between bodily desire and political discourse, along with the possible censorship this tension may produce. On the other, the novels evidence the socio-political power of words in a world continuously reinterpreted through a hermeneutic process that resembles commentarial discourse on texts.

The second textual category, which corresponds to the traditional category of "history" (*shi* 史), starts with a paper at the junction of literature and history by **Evan Nicoll-Johnson**. This article focuses on Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 (462–521) annotations to the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (New stories from worldly talks) compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444). A close examination of a set of annotations that contain quotations from the collected literary writings (*bieji* 別集) of historical figures reveals the dialogic relationship established between the base text and the commentaries, to the point that the anecdotes may sometimes appear as subordinate to Liu Xiaobiao's text. Even more strikingly, the commentarial method twists the usual understanding of the anecdotes as testimonies of highly oral and performative social interactions: Liu Xiaobiao deciphers them from the standpoint of text, in a world where literary collections and texts (as opposed to masters' texts *zi* 子) gain more and more symbolic value.

Hsienmin Chu 朱先敏 sheds light on a complementary dimension of commentaries, that of memory and sensation, in an article dedicated to Li Daoyuan's 酈道元 (d. 527) *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Commentary on the Classic of Waterways) and Yang Xuanzhi's 楊銜之 (fl. 528–547) *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (The Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang), to which is appended the author's own commentary. Beside supplementing diverse types of information, mainly topographical, historical, and textual, both commentaries deepen the experience of the reader, mediated by accounts of perception of the landscapes. Annotators capture keywords and distinguish between seeing (*jian* 見) and observing (*guan* 觀), Hsienmin Chu argues, to highlight sensory experiences, which turn the objective world recorded in texts into something spectacular.

The third and last category corresponds to masters' texts, *zi* 子, and the associated philosophical and religious debates. **Shad Gilbert** illustrates how a commentary, in this case Zhang Zhan's 張湛 (fl. 370 CE) annotations to the *Liezi* 列子 chapter "Heaven's Gifts" (*tianrui* 天瑞), can be read as a piece of intellectual work proper. This paper scrutinises the commentary almost independently from its base text to reconstruct Zhang Zhan's perspective on the issue of ontological continuity. It thus shows how commentaries may be the place for parallel discourses, attached to a network of texts thanks to their physical position on the page.

In his paper on the case of Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200 CE) and Lu Zhi's 盧植 (?–192) commentaries to the *Notes on Mores* (Liji 禮記), **Marco Pouget** reminds us that transmitted texts can be understood only within a historical context of reading, which is made available to us thanks to collections and fragments of commentaries. His analysis sheds light on the connexion, similarities, and contrast in reception and transmission of two commentaries from the same era. It shows how Eastern Han commentaries attached to canonical texts contributed to the prestige, and possibly promotion, of their author, and how this might explain that such commentaries mirrored individual hermeneutic practices rather than engaging in interpretative debates.

Finally, **Rusha Jin** 金如沙 unpicks the dynamics underway in the process of quoting and paraphrasing from external sources in Zhanran's 湛然 (711–782) commentary to one of the “Three Major Works of Tiantai Buddhism”, namely the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great Cessation and Contemplation). Specifically, this paper focuses on the use of non-Buddhist sources in the commentary. Rusha Jin argues that non-Buddhist sources undertake multiple functions. On the one hand, they reflect Zhanran's training as a Confucian scholar, especially in the case of glosses and exposition of peripheral knowledge. On the other hand, non-Buddhist sources, which are clearly divided into Confucian and Daoist thought, embody the competition outside the text and serve to pursue the commentator's purpose of promoting the Tiantai tradition 天台宗. In other words, when deployed in doctrinal discussion, these sources reveal their alignment or their inferiority in relation to Buddhist doctrine.

This volume contains one spotlight, linked to the special issue, which offers a counterpoint to our analysis of commentary and exegesis in China through displacement to a Japanese context. **Michel Vieillard-Baron** presents a double commentary to the first anthology of Japanese poetry, the *Kokin waka shū* 古今和歌集. The two layers of commentary were composed by two poets, Kenshō 顕昭 (1130?–1209) and Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241), who represented to rival schools. The article includes extensive translations from Fujiwara no Teika's afterword and from the annotated anthology. While we can find similarities in the commentaries, which supplement information both factual and lexical considered essential to the understanding of the poems, the contrast is also striking: this double commentary stands as an exception in a world where schools relied on oral transmission in order to protect the secret of their reading techniques, but where, as this case illustrates, their divergences in view are not always salient.

The stand-alone research section of the volume consists of one article only. **Su Qian's** 蘇謙 paper on “Epistolary Activities in the Early Southern Ming Period (1644–1652)” examines the circulation of letters by five Ming loyalists during the most active period of Ming resistance following the fall of Beijing. The collapse of the Ming postal system, followed by Qing repression of subversive activity, required these correspondents to find innovative ways of getting their letters to their intended recipients, who often included more than just the named addressee. Personal correspondence thus morphed into a means of circulating political and military intelligence between different regional bases of Ming resistance, in the absence of a functioning Ming governmental information system. The author

thus argues that private correspondence during this fraught period was of much more than private significance.

The editorial committee invites submission of research articles on any topic which pertains to the fields of Sinology, Chinese Studies or Taiwanese Studies. For any information on formats and submission process, please consult the journal [website](#).

Four book reviews provide critical perspectives on recent publications in English and Chinese. The selection consists of one translation review on pre-modern literature, and three book reviews ranging from the history of the Silk Road between 800 and 1000 to the avant-garde of the post-Maoist era, and reaching out to the dissemination and reception of Taiwanese literature in the contemporary world.

The journal warmly welcomes reviews in English of sinological works and translations in all European languages as well as in Chinese.

JEACS volume 5 ends with the usual list of PhDs defended in 2024 in European Universities. Although the list is by no means exhaustive, we were able to gather 53 dissertations. Besides abstracts and general information, links are provided when available to freely downloadable versions from their respective universities.

Supervisors and successful doctoral candidates are encouraged to send information about their dissertation to the editorial board at any time using the online form accessible at this [address](#).

This volume benefitted from the arrival on the editorial committee of Elizabeth Smithrosser, a specialist in intellectual history whose research interest lies in the study of humour and publishing in late imperial China.