

Fěi 匪 and Certain Related Words

E Bruce Brooks 白牧之

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

WSWG Note 294 (31 July 2004)

I here attempt to clarify the relationship between two classical Chinese equational negatives, the frequent fēi 非 and the rare fěi 匪, both “it is not.”

Previous Opinions. No difference in meaning has ever been pointed out:

- von der Gabelentz **Grammatik** (1881) §1221: 匪: “wenig gebräuchlich, scheint kaum von 非 verschieden zu sein.”
- Kennedy **Negatives** (1954): “pveei 匪 is a ?poetic variant of pvei 非.”
- Pulleyblank **Fei** (1959) 180n1: “The graph 匪 is used regularly for 非 in the Shih. In later times this was read in the shang-sheng, whereas 非 was read in p’ing-sheng. There seems to be no way of telling, however, whether, in the sense of ‘not,’ 匪 really had a different tone from 非 in the time of the Odes. It seems best to treat them simply as different graphic forms of the same word. The same applies to 隸, which occurs along with 匪 in the Shu.”
- Pulleyblank **Outline** (1995) 106: “In preclassical language we sometimes find 匪 or 隸 instead of 非.”

The Shī

Fěi 匪 is normal in the Shī, in both folklike and literary poems, and equally in all geographical sections of the Fǔng 風. There are only two seeming cases of fēi 非:

Shī 189I describes the very humble lot of a girl baby (compared with a boy baby). The last three lines of the stanza, 189I5-7, in Legge’s translation, read:

無非無儀	It will be theirs neither to do wrong nor to do good.
唯酒食是議	Only about the spirits and the food will they have to think,
無父母詒罹	And to cause no sorrow to their parents.

Legge puts all three lines in the future. So does Karlgren, who translates 189I5 as “They shall have nothing which is not void of dignity.” The commentators note the wife’s duty to have neither vices nor virtues, but to be submissive.¹ The problems with this are formal: (1) 189H describes the boy infant in the present, and only in the last two lines envision him as a future leader. If this is relevant to 189I, then Legge’s “will” (and Karlgren’s “shall”) are wrong: we look for a parallel to the boy baby’s playthings. (2) In all other Shī lines of the form 無 A 無 B, the A and B are always objects.²

¹For example, Mǎ Rǔwèi-chǔn at this point notes the Yí Lǐ instructions to a bride by her father (夙夜毋違命) and by her mother: (夙夜無違宮事).

²無冬無夏 (136), 無衣無褐 (154), 無罪無辜 (193, 198), 無拳無勇 (198), 無聲無臭 (235), 無畜無害 (245) ~ 無災無害 (300), 無怨無惡 (249), 無小無大 (299), and 無貳無虞 (300).

Consistently with these literary constraints, Waley renders the line as:

無非無儀 For her, no decorations, no emblems.

. . . taking the fēi 非 as standing for fěi 斐. Karlgren rejects this as “an unnecessary text alteration.” Waley (Notes ad loc) cites in support the line 有匪君子 in Shī 55, quoted in the Dà Sywé as 有斐君子.³ The unproblematic equation 匪 fěi ~ 斐 fěi is accepted by Karlgren for Shī 55. The difficulty in Shī 189 is with the tone difference. However that difficulty may be resolved, it is literarily clear that 非 in 189I5 is a noun. With an eye to the “ritual propriety” sense of 儀, we might emend Waley as:

無口無儀 For her, no adornments, no courtesies.

In any case, this line vanishes as a case of negative 非 in the Shī.⁴

Shī 205B. 非 here *does* mean “not,” but the lines containing it clash with the rest of the stanza, and with the rest of 205. They also express a late political ideal. Waley:

溥天之下	‘Everywhere under Heaven
莫非王土	Is no land that is not the king’s.
率土之濱	To the borders of all those lands
莫非王臣	None but is the king’s slave.’
大夫不均	But the ministers are not just;
我從事獨賢	Whatever is done, I bear the brunt alone.

Waley puts the first four lines in quotes, and asks “Proverbial saying?” The lines are much quoted in later times, and they may have been put there *in order* to be quoted. If there is an interpolation here, what is its extent? Waley’s translation of line B6:

我從事獨賢 Whatever is done, I bear the brunt alone

labors to avoid an inconsistency; the clear meaning is “I alone, attending to the service, am wise” (Karlgren). Such complaints are sounded in other Shī, but not in the rest of 205, which voices other grievances. Then 205B as a whole (and not just its first four lines) is foreign to 205, and that stanza was thus probably added, as unification propaganda, to an existing Shī poem, but failing to imitate the standard Shī usage 匪 “is not.”

The Yì

Both occur, 匪 in the hexagram and line texts and in the Twàn 象 and Syàng 象 commentaries (the oldest commentaries on the hexagram and line texts, respectively) *when quoting* those texts, and 非 in the Syàng,⁵ Wǎn-yén 文言, and Syì-tsí 繫辭 commentaries otherwise. Manifestly, the line texts are earlier than the commentaries on them. Then as with the Shī, 匪 is the earlier form and 非 the later, in a cluster of texts and commentaries which seems to have accumulated over a period of time.⁶

³This was apparently the Chí school reading, rather than a variant version of the Máu text; according to JDSW ad loc, the Hán school text at this point had instead bèi 鄙 “handsome.”

⁴For the possibility that stanzas H-I are not original to Shī 189, see Brooks **Shī 189**. That possibility is not assumed, and is not required, in the present investigation.

⁵非 occurs 2× in the Syàng, 0× in the Twàn. The smaller size of the Twán (one-sixth that of the Syàng) makes the absence of 非 in the Twán not statistically significant.

⁶But for the Yì data, 匪 in the Shī might be dismissed as an artifact of musical performance.

The Dzwǒ Jwàn

匪 occurs 12×, 11 of them in Shī quotes. The only non-Shī DJ use of 匪 is in a highly dramatic passage in Syī 15/4, describing the defeat of the ruler of Jīn, and his arrival as a captive in Chín. Mù-jī 穆姬, the wife of the Lord of Chín, but also a daughter of the Jīn ruling line, mounts a tower with her children, treading penitentially on faggots as she does so, and from that eminent position sends a messenger clad in mourning to deliver her words to the Lord of Chín:

上天降災，使我兩君。匪以玉帛相見，而以興戎，若晉君朝以入，則婢子夕以死，夕以入，則朝以死。唯君裁之。

Heaven on High has sent down calamity, making my two Lords see each other, not with gems and silks, but having raised the weapons of war. If the Lord of Jīn comes here in the morning, your handmaid and her children will die in the evening; if he comes in the evening, we will die in the morning. It is for my Lord to decide.

On which, the Lord of Chín houses his captive elsewhere than in the Palace, and presently restores him to his state. The rest of this long DJ passage contains no less than two Yì divination results, with extended interpretation of those results. It also contains a four-line quote from Shī 193, the first two lines being:

下民之孽 The calamities of the people below
匪降自天 are not sent down from Heaven

which injects the word 匪 into the immediate literary context. Mù-jī's own speech begins with what might be seen as an echo of Shī 258A5:

天降喪亂 . . . that Heaven sends down death and disorder

The whole poem is a cry of helplessness in the face of disaster. The DJ passage is impressively solemn, and Mù-jī's ultimatum, delivered literally from on high, halts a wrong in the process of happening. It reaches a level of dramatic eloquence seldom achieved in ancient literature.⁷ For present purposes, which are not literary, it suffices to say that the Dzwǒ Jwàn is a 非 text, using 匪 only in Shī quotations, or in dramatic moments which were literarily inspired by Shī poems containing 匪.

The Shū

Both 非 and 匪 occur, but 非 regularly in the “new text” or relatively genuine Shū, and 匪 only in the gǔ-wén 古文 or “old text” Shū,⁸ which are forgeries of a later period.⁹ It seems that the forger of at least some of these later Shū overdid it, using what he probably thought was the appropriate antique form 匪, and not noticing that, for the previously accepted Shū canon, it is rather 非 that is standard.

⁷It also provides evidence that the DJ was not pasted together out of ancient records collected by the states, but is rather an artistic product inspired by the Chūn/Chyōu and written de novo in the 04th century, with all the tools and advantages of the 04c literary tradition.

⁸The “gǔ-wén” or forged Shū 12, 17, 23, 48, 54 contain 匪; of them, all but Shū 12 and 48 also contain 非. The gǔ-wén texts Shū 3, 11, 15, 16, 22, 28-29, 33, and 49 contain only 非. The jīn-wén text Shū 55 呂刑 contains one instance of 匪; I leave it for now as an anomaly.

⁹The early 4th century AD. See Shaughnessy in Loewe ECT 384f, Brooks Shū.

Conclusion

From the data considered above, it seems possible that the line separating (1) the zone where fēi 匪 (save for later interpolations) is the normal equational negative, and (2) the zone where fēi 非 has that function, in which 匪 occurs only in quotes from early texts or in passages influenced by such quotes, may define an early / late division among some of the major texts and their interpolations or early commentaries. Thus:

Shī, including Shī 205A and 205C-F

Yì hexagram and line texts

Shū

Shī 205B, a very late interpolated stanza

Dzǔ Jwàn

Yì commentaries Twàn, Syàng, Wín-yén, Syì-tsí

The chief surprise here will be the Shū, which, for all their seeming antiquity in some details, have Warring States standard 非. Is it possible that the Shū as a group are later than the Shī?¹⁰ It may be suggestive that Shī poems appear in Warring States texts as early as the quote by the dying Dzǔgdž (LY 8:3, c0436), whereas the Shū are unattested until they are cited, first as tradition (傳曰), and later as Shū, in the Dzǔ Jwàn and in some Mician essays in the early and middle 04c.¹¹ Some Shū are generally agreed to be of Warring States date.¹² Perhaps *all* the Shū, which focus on themes of interest to 04c political theory and neglect other topics, are Warring States texts, more or less successfully (with 非 and 匪, less successfully) imitating earlier literary models.

Works Cited

- A Taeko Brooks. Heaven, Li, and the Formation of the *Zuozhuan*. OE v44 (2003) 51-100
 A Taeko Brooks. The Historical Value of the Chūn/Chyōu 春秋. WSP v1 (2010) 71-74
 E Bruce Brooks. Shī 189 斯干 and Its Group. WSP v2 (2018) 53-59
 E Bruce Brooks. Shī 195 and Shū 32. WSP v1 (2010) 43-45
 Georg von der Gabelentz. Chinesische Grammatik. 1881; Niemeyer 1960
 Paul R Goldin. The Hermeneutics of Emmentaler. WSP v1 (2010) 75-78
 George A Kennedy. Negatives in Classical Chinese (1954); in Selected Works (Far Eastern 1964) 119-134
 Mǎ Rǔwèi-chún 馬瑞辰. 毛詩傳箋通釋; in 清人注疏十三經, 中華 1936
 E G Pulleyblank. Fei 非, Wei 唯 and Certain Related Words; in Egerod (ed), *Studia Serica*, Munksgaard (1959) 178-198
 Arthur Waley. The Book of Songs. 1937; Grove 1960
 Arthur Waley. The Book of Songs: Supplement. Allen & Unwin 1937

¹⁰On this possibility see further Brooks **Shī 195**.

¹¹Shū quotes in Dzǔ Jwàn do not contradict this statement since DJ is itself an 04c text; see for example Goldin **Emmentaler**, Brooks **Heaven**.

¹²See for example Brooks **Shī 195** p57 (the Húng Fàn, citing Nylan).