

The Negative Jwāng Jōu

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It has been suggested¹ that Jwāng Jōu is unlikely to have written JZ 1-7, in which he figures *as a character*. This can be put more strongly: Would Jwāng Jōu have written anything in which he figures as an *imperceptive* character? Consider:

- **JZ 2:11** (The Butterfly Dream). Jwāng Jōu cannot distinguish between his dreaming and his waking state. The narrative voice names the distinction (as “the transformation of things” 物化) and calls it necessary: 必有分矣.²
- **JZ 18:4** (The Skull). Jwāngdǔ wrongly sympathizes with the dead man, who corrects him: the Next Realm is instead one of pleasure. Same error as 2:11.

There are also passages where Jwāngdǔ (or Jwāng Jōu) at first errs, but then comes to a better understanding:

- **JZ 18:2** (His Wife Died). At first Jwāngdǔ mourned for her, but *later realized* that her death was part of the natural process of change 變, and instead loudly rejoiced (Hwèidǔ had criticized his lack of natural feeling in doing so).
- **JZ 20:1** (The Useless Tree). Jwāngdǔ expounds the theory of the Useless Tree. His disciple calls to his attention the refutation of the Useless Goose. Jwāngdǔ *then recommends* wandering 浮遊 with the Ancestors of Things, holding no constant position, dwelling in the Land of Dào and Dó 道德之鄉.
- **JZ 20:8** (Dyāu-líng Park). Jwāng Jōu aims at the bird, but *suddenly realizes* that the bird, in its own search for prey, has forgotten its true nature 忘其真. In distress, he flings down his crossbow and flees, remaining unhappy for months. In an afterstory, *he himself* expounds his error, lest the reader miss the point.

Rehabilitation. In the first group above, Jwāngdǔ³ is simply unaware of the larger picture. In the second, he comes to realize it, and expounds it. The latter amount to rehabilitation: a figure *previously criticized* is salvaged as an expounder of the higher understanding. Are there other devices of rehabilitation? Note these places where a negative Jwāngdǔ story is retold *with someone else* as the mistaken person:

- **JZ 2:4.** Lady Lǐ wept when taken to the ruler’s palace, but later enjoyed its pleasures, and *regretted that she had wept* (compare “His Wife Died,” 18:2).
- **JZ 18:6.** Lyèdǔ, seeing a skull, *is uncertain* whether he or the dead man is happier (compare “The Skull,” located in the same chapter at 18:9).

These make the required point, *without* portraying an erroneous Jwāngdǔ.

¹See Brooks **Disunity** 115

²Jwāngdǔ is not the only Dàoist criticized in the “Inner Chapters;” there is also Lyèdǔ (1:3), Lǎu Dān (3:5), Yáng Dǔ-jyū (Yáng Jū?, 7:4) – all, oddly enough, in odd-numbered chapters.

³Neither “Jwāng Jōu” nor “Jwāngdǔ” regularly correlates with a positive or negative figure.

Also to be considered are two consecutive stories where Jwāngdǔ, who is here positive, preaches a higher reality *to another person*, in both cases Hwèidǔ:⁴

- **JZ 1:7.** Hwèidǔ cannot use his large gourd; Jwāngdǔ says (with a parable of the chapped-hands salve as an example) that he should use it to drift 浮 (that is, to wander) among the rivers and lakes.
- **JZ 1:8.** Hwèidǔ has a tree too big to be useful; he claims Jwāngdǔ's words are also useless. Jwāngdǔ first (as in the previous story) suggests that Hwèidǔ enjoy an aimless⁵ sleep beneath it; he then *expounds the uselessness of the tree* as an advantage to its long life, echoing such stories as JZ 4:4.

In JZ 1:8, Jwāngdǔ preaches uselessness. In 20:1, Jwāngdǔ explicitly admits that the “useless tree” stratagem will not always work. Then in terms of developing doctrine, the JZ 1:8 “useless tree” story must be earlier than JZ 20:1, its refutation. The point is that the Jwāngdǔ character is the spokesman for this development *at both points*.

The Afterstory Voice. Some anecdotes in the text are complete in themselves; others have a second scene, an afterstory, where someone *comments on* the story, sometimes deepening, and sometimes reversing, its message. In all cases, the afterstory voice must be taken as having the text's last word on the subject. The list of persons who speak in afterstories includes imaginary characters, but also several recognizable ones. Among these, Jwāngdǔ is almost absent. The most common afterstory speakers are Lǎudǔ and Confucius. For much of the text, then, though on balance Jwāngdǔ comes across as largely positive, he cannot be said to be its chief spokesman.

The Final Jwāngdǔ. It may have been only in Hàn that Jwāngdǔ came to occupy the position he had in Six Dynasties chīng-tán 清談 discussions, and ever afterward.

- The expository voice of the text is never identified, and conversely, the characters in stories do not speak at length. There is an exception in **JZ 26:8**, where a long discourse is introduced by “Jwāngdǔ said” 莊子曰. Like some other long expositions, this one includes some examples in passing.
- Almost at the end of what was probably intended to be the last chapter in the work,⁶ **JZ 32:14** tells of Jwāngdǔ's death, emphasizing his indifference toward being buried. His detachment is now complete. He is not confused about death, as he had been in the Wife Died (18:2) and Skull (18:4) stories.

From their high numbers, JZ 26 and 32 are probably late chapters within the Jwāngdǔ.

It is clear that the work of sorting out Jwāng Jōu in the Jwāngdǔ still lies before us. But these passages may suggest an outline: Jwāngdǔ is at one point a negative figure, is subsequently rethought as positive, and ends up as the signature voice of the text.

Works Cited

- A Taeko Brooks. Jwāngdǔ 33. WSP v2 (2018) 138-142
 E Bruce Brooks. The Disunity of the Jwāngdǔ “Inner” Chapters. WSP v2 (2018) 115-122

⁴To be distinguished from stories where Hwèidǔ represents logic as against intuition.

⁵syāuyáu 逍遙; it is this phrase that now provides the chapter title.

⁶Not JZ 33, which is a later essay; see Brooks **Jwāngdǔ 33**.