

# “Hati-Colt”: a Chinese-oriented Literary Theory

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## Abstract:

In this age of literary theory and criticism, all various theories originated in the West have been imported into China; many Chinese academics have followed what the Western theorists have advocated passionately and indiscriminately.

On the other hand, Western academics have virtually paid no attention to what their Oriental counterparts have written. Traditional Chinese literary criticism has even been denounced as vague, lacking of analysis and conceptual system, and unsuitable for modern-day literary discourse; it is suggested that traditional Chinese criticism should transform itself to become modernized.

The author, while being benefited from Western theory and criticism, maintains that much of the traditional Chinese criticism is very valuable for its brilliant ideas, its high analytical quality, its systematic presentation and its capability for critical application. He has thus developed a literary theory based upon China's paramount classic on literature, *Wenxin Diaolong*. In the process of construction, he draws ancient and modern ideas from China and the West as materials for support, illumination, supplementation and East-West comparison. The theory is labeled “Hati-Colt” in which “Hati” means “Heart-art and Tradition-innovation,” and “Colt” means “Chinese-oriented literary theory.”

This paper is in the main an abridged version of the author's long article written in Chinese concerning “Hati-Colt.” To demonstrate the applicability of “Hati-Colt,” a few examples in practical criticism are given in this paper. The author maintains that “Hati-Colt” covers important elements in the study of literature and it aspires to be a common poetics suitable for universal discourse.

**Keywords:** *Wenxin Diaolong*(*WXDL*) , literary theory, comparative poetics

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## 1. “Grand commonality” between Chinese and Western poetics

The 20<sup>th</sup> century and the present decades have been an age of literary theory and criticism. Various critical theories such as Marxism, psycho-analysis, New Criticism, archetypal criticism, structuralism, feminism, reception aesthetics, deconstruction, post-colonialism and new historicism came on stage one after another. They all originated in the West and have been imported to China where critics since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have adopted these sundry theories in their critical endeavors, many of them following passionately and indiscriminately what the Western theorists advocate.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Western scholars and critics have virtually paid no attention to what their Oriental counterparts, modern and ancient, have written. In treatises by T.S. Eliot, René Wellek, Northrop Frye and Terry Eagleton, to name but a few, we

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to Appendix I for remarks on “difficult criticism.”

do not find any statement from Confucius, Liu Xie, Qian Zhongshu or James J.Y. Liu.<sup>2</sup> There are misunderstandings and perhaps even bias shown in some Sinologists' studies on traditional Chinese literary theory.<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, Chinese academics of literary theory are found having lost the ability to speak or write about their own discipline on the international level—the so-called “suffering from aphasia,” (181-223) a term made popular by Cao Shunqing. Not a few of them have even gone so far as to denounce Chinese literary criticism as impressionistic, vague, lacking analysis and conceptual system, and unsuitable for modern-day literary discourse, while praising Western criticism for its precision, analytical quality and systematization. Some Chinese scholars have suggested that traditional Chinese criticism should transform itself to become modernized.<sup>4</sup>

Does this accusation against traditional Chinese literary criticism hold good, and for that matter, can we thus infer that Chinese literary criticism and Western literary criticism are vastly different?<sup>5</sup> To explore this issue, we may first look into the classical period of literary criticism; and perhaps to our surprise we discover that there is quite a “grand commonality” (“*datong*”) between Chinese and Western poetics. Take Ben Jonson's long poem in praise of Shakespeare published in 1623 for example (this present year of 2016 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bard's death).

In his “To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us,” Jonson declares that he would try to appraise Shakespeare's work as fairly and objectively as he could; then through comparison, he extols Shakespeare's greatness and uniqueness. He further notes that Shakespeare cherishes nature as well as art; and that the master is gifted as well as hard working. The concepts Jonson has adopted (which might be considered commonsensical to-day) and the rhetoric he has used in praising the English dramatist indeed come close to those in Liu Xie's *WXDL (Wenxin Diaolong)*, which in one translation is *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, and in another one——my own one——is *The Heart and Art of Literature*, and in other treatises of classical Chinese criticism as well. Jonson hails Shakespeare's artistic brilliance and compares the English bard to the sweet swan of Avon; these metaphors remind one of such remarks on authors and their works as “with glittering words and flying high like a singing phoenix” (Liu Xie's words), “glorious lights with a thousand-mile length” (Han Yu's words) and “morning sun and singing phoenix” (Zhu Chuan's words) in classical Chinese criticism.

Ben Jonson is definitely neither a descendant of Ban Gu nor Jiang Kui; however, he has written, as this poem praising Shakespeare demonstrates, a piece of literary criticism with Chinese characteristics. Or, to put it in another way, Liu Xie, Han Yu and Zhu Chuan have written pieces of literary criticism with English characteristics.<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, there are differences and sometimes vast differences in things Chinese and things Western; nevertheless, as the late Qian Zhongshu, a scholar of great erudition, has contended, “the hearts and minds of peoples by the East Sea and by the West Sea are the same.”(1) What Qian recognizes here is the

2 See also Wong Waileung. “20th century literary theories: China and the West”.

3 See also Wong Waileung. “Notes on Chinese and Western ways of thinking—an issue in comparative poetics”.

4 See Part I (“Introduction”) of Wong Waileung. “Heart-art and tradition-innovation: construction of a Chinese-Western literary theory based on *Wenxin diaolong*” to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Cultural Studies and Literary Theory* published by Sichuan University Press.

5 While traditional Chinese literary criticism has been denounced as impressionistic, vague, and indulgent in using metaphorical language, there is a case in which a well-respected Western critic has written his theoretical essays in such a “Chinese” style. Janet Sanders and Laurence K.P. Wong, et al, have criticized the vague language in Walter Benjamin's discourse on translation theory. Please refer to Sanders. “Divine Words, Cramped Actions: Walter Benjamin—an Unlikely Icon in Translation Studies” in *TTR*, 16.1 (2003): 163. Wong draws readers' attention to Benjamin's “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” (“The Task of the Translator”) translated by Harry Zohn. In that article, Wong asks us to see a “heady cultural cocktail” at work, to see how “eminently quotable,” how “meshed with the thoroughly enigmatic” it is. Below are a few quotations from this article: “While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds” (79). “Unlike a work of literature, translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one” (79-80). “Indeed, the problem of ripening the seed of pure language in a translation seems to be insoluble, determinable in no solution” (80). The above information (including the quotes from Benjamin) is quoted from Laurence K.P. Wong's book *Dreaming across Languages and Cultures: A Study of the Literary Translations of the Hong lou meng*. New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014:43.

6 For sources concerning Jonson's criticism and other related quotations in the above paragraphs, see also Wong Waileung. “Ben Jonson's literary criticism in ‘Chinese’ style—Ben Jonson's praise of Shakespeare and Chinese and Western comparative poetics”.

sameness in the basic values, psychology and archetypal patterns of behavior of the humanity; and Qian in his works including the four-volume *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* (*Guanzhuei bian*) has provided us with hundreds and thousands of pieces of evidence to illustrate his view.<sup>7</sup> The function of literary criticism is to analyze and to appraise works of literature and their authors, this idea being as Chinese as it is Western. The above-quoted metaphors used by Liu Xie and Ben Jonson, one phoenix and the other swan, are different but they are both beautiful birds; moreover, the use of metaphors is a common practice in describing literary styles among critics Chinese and Western. To cite one more comparison, the ancient great Chinese poet Qu Yuan is hailed by Liu Xie as “casting influences on generations of writers,” while Shakespeare is proclaimed by Ben Jonson in the afore-mentioned poem “not of an age, but for all time.”<sup>8</sup> Great writers of the East Sea and of the West Sea are alike in their influence—their “grand commonality.”

## 2. Introducing “Hati-Colt” based on WXML or Heart and Art of Literature

Since 20<sup>th</sup> century, literary criticism in the West and then in the East has become a very complex and even difficult matter with “grand diversity.” Different theories one after another enter and exit on the literary stage; criticism is an academic discipline and research enterprise universally at universities. Literary criticism with a large quantity of terminology and complexity in operation has striven to become a science, with its fact-oriented, analytical, logical, systematic and objective characteristics emphasized by literary researchers. Although I for one do not believe that literary criticism is a science—simply because criticism involves evaluation and evaluation is bound to be subjective to a certain extent, we have no reason to reject a literary theory (including a critical theory of literature) with the above-mentioned scientific qualities.

As regards the accusation that traditional Chinese criticism is vague, lacking analysis and conceptual system, and therefore unscientific and unsuitable for modern-day literary discourse, I opine differently. For all the benefits I have earned from Western criticism ancient or modern, I ought to say that much of the traditional Chinese criticism is very valuable for its brilliant ideas, its high analytical quality, its systematic presentation and its potential for contribution to a common poetics. For this reason I have developed a theory of literature based upon the ideas in China’s paramount classic on literature, *Wenxin Diaolong* (hereafter *WXML*), written about 1500 years ago by Liu Xie. First of all, a few words about *WXML*: It is a book of theory and criticism characterized by its magnificent magnitude and comprehensive coverage; it analyzes and evaluates literature; is systematic in presentation. Its main ideas are: literature is an artistic expression of the “heart” (literature is the art of language); literature has pragmatic values; to excel, a literary work should be innovative.

In the process of constructing this theory, other ancient and modern concepts are drawn from China and the West as materials for support, illumination, supplementation and East-West comparison. This theory can thus be considered as a study in comparative poetics.

This theory I label “Hati-Colt,” in which “Hati” means “Heart-art and Tradition-innovation,” and “Colt” means “Chinese-oriented literary theory.” Here “heart” is a translation of the Chinese word *qing* meaning the emotion, inner idea, content or substance of a literary work; while “art” is a translation of the Chinese word *cai* meaning the rhetoric, language, form or technique of it. As to “tradition,” it is from the Chinese word *tong*; and “innovation” is from the Chinese word *bian*. Both “*qingcai*” and “*tongbian*” are chapter titles in the 50-chapter *WXML*. The theory is so called because its two terms “heart-art” and “tradition-innovation” can most aptly serve as the backbone of the entire theory; they should also be credited for their strength in neatly coordinating the major ingredients of the theory. I need to point out by the way that *WXML* is itself a systematic discourse on literature; however, its organization of contents is not perfect

7 *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* (*Guanzhuei bian*) was published in 1979 by Zhonghua Book Company. For a brief introduction to Qian Zhongshu’s thought and a general discussion of “grand commonality” (*datong*) between Chinese and Western poetics, please consult Wong Wai-leung. “Sameness of hearts and minds of peoples by the East sea and by the West sea—on the ‘Grand commonality’ of Chinese and Western cultures”.

8 *Ibid.*

in the sense that there have been disputes concerning the division of the entire fifty chapters into proper categories among modern experts on this classic. With all these explanations, it should be clear that “Hati-Colt” is not my own invention, but rather a restructuring (and at times interpretation) of the basic contents in *WXDL* with the additions of various Chinese and Western ideas of literature.

“Hati-Colt” has five main parts, namely,

- (I) “Heart-art” (content and form);
- (II) “Heart-art,” “style” and “genre”;
- (III) “Analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism);
- (IV) “Tradition-innovation” (evaluation through comparison of various works/authors);
- (V) “Great values of literature”

Further division of contents of “Hati-Colt” is as follows:

**(I) “Heart-art” (content and form)**

(1) “Heart”: “It is endowed with seven [various] emotions; when moved, they are naturally expressed in words.”

(2) “Art”: It is seen everywhere—“in the sun and moon, in the mountain and river” and “in the books of the sages.”

(3) “Heart” occupies the main position and “art” is subordinate in literature; ideally “heart” comes first and “art” follows.

[The concept of “the oyster produces pearls when diseased” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of tragedy and that of psycho-analysis in the West.]

[From “heart” to “art,” the concept of “imagination” is involved, which is comparable to the same Western concept.]

**(II) “Heart-art,” “style” and “genre”**

(1) “Physical world”; “time”; “talent”; “learning”—factors casting impacts on the “heart-art” and style of a literary work

(2) Classification of “styles”

[The style “sublime” in *WXDL* is comparable to Longinus’s “sublimity” and to Matthew Arnold’s “grand style.”]

(3) Classification of “genres”

[The concept “physical world” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of archetypal criticism, and that of “humorous and comical” to melodramatic theories in the West.]

**(III) “Analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism)**

(1) “Difficulty in appraisal”; “difficulty in encountering a discerning critic”

(A) Difficulty in “deep understanding of a work”

(B) “Each critic holding fast to his own interpretation”

[This is comparable to theories of reader’s response and reception aesthetics in the West.]

(2) “Objective and balanced judgments” (ideal attitude in criticism)

(3) First four points of the “Six-point” theory

(A) “Theme-structure-style-genre”

[The emphasis on structure is comparable to the Aristotelian concept of structure.]

(B) “Subject-matter and ideas”

(C) “Rhetoric”

(D) “Musicality”

[Principles of “rhetoric” and “musicality” are comparable to traditional rhetoric, 20th century Russian Formalism and New Criticism in the West. This part of “Hati-Colt” can be enriched by narrative theories in the West which may come under the heading “theme-structure-style-genre.” By the same token, feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, neo-historicism, and gay-lesbian-queer theories, etc, can be put under the umbrella of “subject-matter and ideas.”]

#### (IV) “Tradition and innovation” (comparing the performance of authors and their works)

- (1) The last two points of the “Six-point” theory
  - (A) “Conformity and counter-conformity”
  - (B) “Tradition and innovation”[The concept “tradition and innovation” is comparable to the ideas in T.S. Eliot’s widely influential essay “Traditional and the Individual Talent.”]
- (2) “Tradition and innovation”; literary history; literary canon; comparative literature
  - (A) “Time changes and literature in content and form also changes.” (literary history)
  - (B) “A classic is that which reigns supreme and does not perish.” (literary canon)
  - (C) Comparative literature[Comparative approach in criticism is commonly found in WXDL but obviously there was no such discipline as comparative literature in Liu Xie’s time.]

#### (V) “Great values and functions of literature”

- (1) “Glorifying the sages and promoting such virtues as benevolence and filial piety” (contributions of literature to the society)  
[These ideas are comparable to the pragmatic theories in the West including Marxism.]
- (2) “Devotion to literature being the only way to achievement and fame” (attainment of fame by means of literature)

With the above added sub-divisions, this framework is still a simple structure. The reader is referred to my fifty-thousand-character article written in Chinese which, to appear in a journal, is a largely amplified version of the above skeleton (hereafter “amplification”). In this skeleton, words, phrases and sentences in quotation marks (“”) are all from *WXDL*<sup>9</sup>; in the “amplification,” major ideas and related quotations are also from *WXDL* and other Chinese treatises on literature (which are to be combined and compared with their Western counterparts). This signifies that “Hati-Colt” has strong Chinese characteristics. It should be noted that the Chinese philosophical concept *yin-yang* (connoting a binary opposition as well as a binary cooperation) is also in the theory since both of the key terms “heart-art” and “tradition-innovation” are with such a *yin-yang* nature. With all its “Chineseness,” this theory (both the skeleton and the “amplification”) also has strong Western characteristics because, apart from the existence of Western terms and concepts in the theory, almost all of its key words and concepts can be similarly or at least roughly expressed in English, a very important Western language.

Translation can never be perfect; inaccurate translation is found everywhere. Translation may even become a “creative treason” against the original text, as Xie Tianzhen has argued. (Xie 13) Furthermore, terms appearing identical or similar in Chinese and in a Western language are not necessarily identical or similar. We also need to bear in mind that a translated term may carry a certain amount of national “colors” of the target language, as Cao Shunqing’s “variation theory” (*bianyi xue*) has maintained. (Cao 153) In spite of what have just been mentioned, this theory aspires to be a common poetics, which is based upon the afore-said “grand commonality” principle (although this theory does not overlook differences between the East Sea and the West Sea); it is a poetics combining the Chinese and Western essential elements in literary study. Even if one is opposed to the idea of “grand commonality” and the reliability of translation, I still contend that in the above skeleton of the theory, we as theorists and critics can find common grounds for our dialogues, and that no one would deny that all of its key terms represent common points of interest and common issues for discussion in any literary discourse, be it Western or Oriental.

<sup>9</sup> See also Wong Waileung, “Heart-art and tradition-innovation: construction of a Chinese-Western literary theory based on *Wenxin diaolong*” to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Cultural Studies and Literary Theory* published by Sichuan University Press.

### 3. Application of “Hati-Colt” and the “Six-point” principle as a critical system

For the whole contents of “Hati-Colt,” please refer to the “amplification.” Instead of elaboration on the contents of “Hati-Colt,” let us here have some glimpses of the applicability of the theory. Discourse in rhetoric is a major element in *WXDL*; among its fifty chapters, there are at least five devoted to rhetorical figures including simile-metaphor, hyperbole and antithesis. These three major figures in rhetoric have been cherished by critics since Aristotle in ancient Greece to the 20th century New Critics. We may use Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* as an example to demonstrate the applicability of a relevant concept in *WXDL*. Shakespearean scholars agree that *Romeo and Juliet (RJ)* is particularly rich in rhetoric among all the works of the playwright; there have been monographs and articles analyzing wordplay, oxymoron (language of paradox) and other figures of speech in this drama. With the concept of “parallel-verbal-pairing/ antithetical-verbal-pairing” (*lici*) in *WXDL* as a tool for analysis, we discover a feature in *RJ* that is otherwise overlooked. In this play, phrases and sentences frequently appear in “pairs,” which are strictly or loosely symmetrical both in syntax and in meaning.

In Act 1 Scene 1, the Prince of Verona has this to say when he reprimands the feuding young people :

That quench the fire of your pernicious rage  
with purple fountains issuing from your veins ,

“Purple fountains issuing from your veins” and “fire of your pernicious rage,” though not symmetrical in syntax, are an antithetical verbal pair, “fountains” and “fire” being opposite in physical nature. The father of Romeo inquires about the cause of the feud, asking “Who set the ancient quarrel new abroad?” Here “ancient quarrel” and “new abroad,” symmetrical in syntax, are also a pair. Many more pairs follow in the dialogues or soliloquies of the play. Perhaps the most quotable one is this:

Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books;  
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks. (II,ii)

Here “toward love” vs “from love” and “from their books [meaning “from school”]” vs “toward school” form the core of the *lici* of this couplet. To be sure, the above-quoted phrases or sentences are not *lici* in the strict sense of the Chinese term; still, the perception of this Chinese term would certainly sharpen the eye of the critic in discerning an important ingredient of the rhetoric in *RJ* which has not been noted by a Western critic. Furthermore, as Robert O. Evans has argued that oxymoron in *RJ* contributes to forming the theme and structure of the play which is about love-hatred and life-death, one may venture to say that, in addition to the antithetical nature of love-hatred and life-death in *RJ*, the acts of matching, pairing and coupling of the two young lovers Romeo and Juliet might be linked to the eminent existence of *lici*. The abundant use of the rhetorical device *lici* also plays an important role in achieving a luxuriant style of this drama.<sup>10</sup>

Martin Luther King’s famous speech “I Have a Dream” is another example. It is well known and analyzed that this speech is heavily loaded with similes and metaphors such as “great beacon light of hope,” “flames of withering injustice,” “joyous daybreak,” “long night of captivity,” “lonely island of poverty” and “great vaults of opportunity.” Again, applying the concept of *lici* in *WXDL*, we would say that while the simile-metaphor figure is certainly important in catching the ears or eyes of the audience, the device of “antithetical-verbal-pairing” has added a striking effect to the speech. King has his similes-metaphors posited in antithetical pairs, such as “great beacon light of hope” vs “flames of withering injustice”; “joyous daybreak” vs “long night of captivity”; “lonely island of poverty” vs “great vaults of opportunity.” Here *lici*,

<sup>10</sup> For *Romeo and Juliet* in the light of *WXDL*, and the statement from Evans, see also Wong Waileung. “Applying Chinese theories to the criticism of Western literature: an analysis of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* using Liu Xie’s concepts”.

which frequently joins hand in hand with simile-metaphor, is the most important rhetorical figure in this address. From the two instances, one concerning *RJ* and the other King's oration, we see that the use of antithesis as a rhetorical device is common in Chinese and Western literature; we further discover that by applying the *lici* concept in practical criticism, we have a better understanding of how the theme of antithesis is used.<sup>11</sup>

As stated in "Hati-Colt," "promoting such virtues as benevolence and filial piety" is a function that a work of literature should perform if it is deemed valuable. The Korean TV series *Daejanggeum* (or *DJG*, debut in 2003) is such a work that would win high praise from the author of *WXDL* if he were a viewer. Well-structured with a line of characters properly delineated, the melodrama *DJG* is elegantly produced with colourful costume, delicate cooking, herbal medicine, natural landscape, comic figures and an enduring romance; above all, with a heroine embodying all Confucian virtues and great beauty. The drama is most ably wrought to achieve the style *yali* (elegant and beautiful) that is highly regarded in *WXDL*. Although we could interpret *DJG* in the light of various Western critical theories, *WXDL* has indeed provided an appropriate critical base for analyzing and evaluating this Korean TV series that has been tremendously popular in Asian countries.<sup>12</sup>

As a Chinese-oriented literary theory, "Hati-Colt" has doubtlessly proven itself very valuable in dealing with Chinese literature. Take Qu Yuan's masterpiece "Encountering Sorrows" ("Lisao") for instance. Experts on the great ancient poet and his works have different opinions regarding the lyrical and narrative structures of this long poem, the problem being that for centuries there has been no consensus as to how to divide the entire poem into small sections or paragraphs. I myself have tried to find a clear line of progression of events and emotions in the poem but failed. This failure might be attributed to an authorial lack of orderly design of the work. Liu Xie has warned that "if the author indulges himself in words, he, being prolix, would suffer from confusion". This might be the case of Qu Yuan while writing his "Lisao." The heart of the poet was apparently sorrowful, grieved, puzzled and confused in his tragic encountering of life; he did not work his experiences and emotions into an orderly structure. I contrast Qu Yuan's case with those of Du Fu and Dante, both saddened and very likely puzzled in their hearts when putting their life experiences in words, but the principle of orderly structure was upheld and carried out in their writings of "Qiuqing" ("Autumn Meditation") and *Divine Commedia* respectively.<sup>13</sup>

"Hati-colt" is proved very valuable in treating modern Chinese literature as well. Let us here apply the theory to the works of the contemporary poet-essayist-critic Yu Guangzhong, who is versatile, prolific and widely admired and influential in the Chinese communities around the world, and see how the ancient theorist Liu Xie could contribute to our task. In an article "The *WXDL* [The Heart and Art] of Yu Guangzhong" written in Chinese<sup>14</sup>, I "open" Yu's heart to reveal his themes of love, patriotism, politics, diaspora and environmental protection, etc., and illustrate his art of literature as rich imagery (Yu is a master of simile and metaphor), clarity and readability (which is not generally existent in contemporary poetry written in Chinese) without sacrificing bountifulness of artistic significance. Concerning his craftsmanship of imagery, I invoke a passage in *WXDL* to describe his performance: "To the eye, it is brocade or painting; to the ears, sonorous music; it is sweet and mellow in taste, and fragrant as scented pendants [flowers]. In these achievements, one reaches the pinnacle of literary writing." Yu has established a literary style by blending the Chinese and Western traditions and then producing fresh pieces of art of his own—he is like a superb craftsman carving dragons (the words *diaolong* in the title of *WXDL* can mean "carving dragons"). Yu Guangzhong's works demonstrate great diversity in content and skill; one sentence in *WXDL* aptly captures the brilliance of this poet-essayist: "with splendid language and high-flying spirit, he is a singing phoenix

11 For King's "I Have a Dream" viewed in the light of *WXDL*, see also Wong Waileung. "Let the carved dragon fly—examples of applying theories in *Wenxin diaolong* to modern Western literature".

12 See also Wong Waileung. "Korean TV series *Daejanggeum* viewed in the light of *Wenxin diaolong*".

13 See also Wong Waileung. "On the structure of Qu Yuan's 'Encountering Sorrows' ('Li Sao'): a commentary based on the theories in *Wenxin diaolong*".

14 Wong Waileung. "The *WXDL* [The Heart and Art] of Yu Guangzhong".

in the literary sky.” In this piece of criticism I do not hesitate to summon the help of 20<sup>th</sup> century theories such as post-colonialism to reveal the “heart” of Yu’s writing; this maneuver is exactly in line with the way I have taken in constructing “Hati-Colt”: it is *WXDL*-oriented while enriching itself with other Chinese and Western critical concepts.

#### 4. “Hati-Colt” as a common poetics

In “Hati-Colt”, emphasis is given to the “Six-point” (*liuguan*) principle as a system of practical criticism. Critics since the 19<sup>th</sup> century have hoped to make literary criticism a science; now it is still an art, at best a semi-science, or a “sweet-science.” Of course we can use basically scientific methods to analyze the “heart” and “art” of a literary work, including the type of imagery it presents, the number and type of allusion it has, the number and type of simile-metaphor it employs, the point-of-view it uses as a narrative, the school of thought or philosophy it embodies, and so on; when we come to evaluation, the scientific method fails because evaluation is often a matter of taste, a matter of subjective judgment. Can a critic be objective? It is very difficult but he can try to be less subjective. *WXDL* advises that “One can be considered a good musician only after one has played a thousand tunes, and a collector of arms can be considered a connoisseur only after he has seen a thousand swords. So broad experience and learning are *sine qua non* of true wisdom.” It also maintains that a good critic should “judge impartially, like a balance; and reflect [the reality] without distortion, like a mirror.”<sup>15</sup>

We could borrow the word “anatomy” from Northrop Frye’s seminal *Anatomy of Criticism* to describe the operation of the “Six-point” principle. A work of literature should not be judged from a single point of view, but from as many points as we think appropriate. As charted above, there are six aspects: “theme-structure-style-genre”; “subject-matter and ideas”; “rhetoric”; “musicality” “conformity and counter-conformity”; and “tradition and innovation.” The “Six-point” principle is meant to be comprehensive and systematic, suitable for anatomizing and evaluating literature traditional and modern, Chinese as well as Western.

The fact that modern-day theories such as Marxism, feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, and Gay-lesbian-queer theories were not in the mind of the author of *WXDL* and thus apparently absent from his book is not necessarily a problem if we remember, as afore-mentioned, these Western theories could be included in one of the six points, i.e., “subject-matter and ideas.” If the Confucian-honored values in *WXDL* seem to be at odds with the thought of a Western author who believes in Christianity, there again is a solution: Liu Xie advocates that literature should, again as quoted in the chart, “glorify the sages and promote such virtues as benevolence and filial piety.” Here “sages” are the “hidden God,” be it Christian or Islamic or belonging to some other religions<sup>16</sup>, and we believe that human virtues do not exclude honesty, courage, justice, sympathy, etc.

I have in the past two decades written critical essays employing concepts and terms in *WXDL* with Western concepts and terms incorporated (but the writing of the “amplification” and this present article was just completed in recent months). Chinese and Western elements meet in my critical endeavors without any conflict. In particular, I have produced a number of essays using the “Six-point” methodology in a point-by-point systematic manner<sup>17</sup>; however, since a systematic methodology may turn mechanical and monotonous, I did not encourage myself to frequently do practical criticism in this way. Keeping the possibility of the practice becoming mechanical and monotonous in mind, we can still take up the practice of the “Six-point” methodology in teaching undergraduates how to analyze and evaluate in a comprehensive manner a piece of literature; of course, the students should be warned that substantial evaluation cannot be achieved

15 Two quotations here are both from the chapter “zhiyin” in *WXDL*. In this paper, quotations from *WXDL* are my own translations or those by Vincent Yu-chung Shih; please refer to Shih, translated and annotated, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*.

16 I borrow the term “the hidden God” from Cleanth Brooks’s book title, *The Hidden God* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1963).

17 The first article I published using the “Six-point” methodology was written in Chinese. This article has an English version: “A Look at Pai Hsien-yung’s ‘Ashes’ through Liu Hsieh’s ‘Six-point’ Theory”.



without a wide breadth of learning of literary works.

Criticism is, in the words of Douglas Bush, “to define and analyze both the substantive materials and the aesthetic components of a particular work, both being considered as the means of expressing a theme; it seeks also to interpret that theme and to assess the total value of the work in itself and in relation to comparable works.” (703) All the key elements in Bush’s statement are included in the “Hati-Colt.” It is my belief that a proper application of critical principles in “Hati-Colt” will do justice to a work of literature. However, if one finds this Chinese-oriented theory inadequate in any respect, one can supplement it. Again quoting Bush’s opinion, when it is found that the old literary history, the history of ideas and myth-and-symbol critics do not contain any criteria of aesthetic value, the critic “may acquire such criteria from elsewhere and use them” in his practical criticism.(702) To put it metaphorically, if we would like to develop more theoretical sub-branches and leaves, “Hati-Colt” is a huge growing tree capable of doing so; if we would like to accommodate more critical concepts, it is a big umbrella capable of doing so; if we would like to cover more headings of literary discourse, “Hati-Colt” is an extra-large-size hat (“hat” from the abbreviation “Hati”) capable of doing so. It is, in short, an open-ended theoretical system.

The establishment of this “Six-point” methodology and, more importantly, the construction of the whole theory of literary art “Hati-Colt,” to speak from the bottom of my heart, is a rebuttal of the accusation that traditional Chinese literary criticism is handicapped by vagueness, lack of analysis and system, and is unsuitable for modern usage. Chinese scholars including comparatists like Wang Ning have urged that Chinese literary theories should go to the world (83) or that we should develop a theory of literature with our own features. I well understand that my “Hati-Colt” is but a prototype and there is room for enhancement and adjustment. Having put forth the skeleton of the theory (in a drafted version) in the 1990s and having repeatedly applied concepts and terms in *WXDL* including the “Six-point” methodology in my critical practices, my humble voice intended to do “poetic justice” to traditional Chinese poetics has been heard and supported by dozens of academics.<sup>18</sup> I hope to receive even more responses in the future. Most importantly, I hope that *WXDL*, the “carved dragon” will become a flying dragon, first flying over the land of China and then further and further reaching across the entire globe.

## Appendix I: On “difficult criticism”

There is a kind of criticism which may be labeled “difficult criticism”: it usually comes with a great amount of new technical terms, mostly fashionable at the time of writing the piece of criticism, or of the author’s own coinage; the terms are often not clearly defined; there are usually long and complex sentences; the theme of the text is difficult to grasp. A number of critics are opposed to “difficult criticism”; for example, Douglas Bush in 1963 complained that texts of criticism are filled with “horrid pseudo-scientific diction embedded in shapeless, jagged, cacophonous sentences”; he also remarked that “jargon does not make simple ideas scientific and profound; it only inspires profound distrust of the user’s aesthetic sensitivity.” (The statements are quoted from Douglas Bush, “Literary criticism and Literary History,” in W.J. Bate, ed., *Criticism: The Major Text*, enlarged edition, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1970; This article is a speech delivered at the Ninth Congress International Federation for Modern Languages and Literature held at New York University, August 25 to 31, 1963.)

Another complaint is from C.T. Hsia夏志清 who in 1970s said that the theory of structuralism is “somewhat like calculus; it is several times more difficult than algebra and geometry that we had studied in high school.” Please refer to C.T. Hsia’s book 《人的文学》 published in 1977 by 纯文学出版社 in台北, p.126-127.)

Still another one is from Qian Zhongshu钱锺书 who remarked in 1980 in a personal letter to this author that there has been misuses of jargons in present-day criticism, quoting an European scholar reprimanding

<sup>18</sup> I would like to take this opportunity to announce that my new book entitled *Wenxin Diaolong: A Chinese-oriented Theory and its Application* (*Wenxin Diaolong: tixi yu yingyong*) which includes most of my articles mentioned in this paper is planned for publication in October, 2016.

manding his peers whose “technical terms are pushed to and fro, but the investigation stands still.”

The persistently fashionable “difficult criticism” reached a ridiculous “climax” when Professor Alan Sokal had his submitted and reviewed article published in the *Social Text* spring/summer 1996 “Science Wars” issue. Entitled “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity,” Sokal’s article is in fact a hoax, its author identifying it as “a pastiche of left-wing cant, fawning references, grandiose quotations, and outright nonsense... structured around the silliest quotations [by post-modernist academics] he could find about mathematics and physics.” This kind of “criticism” is more than difficult; it is “outright nonsense” but it had passed through peer-reviews and got published. “Difficult criticism” continued to appear after Sokal’s Hoax.

Wayne Booth in 2003 wrote to deplore the loss of intelligibility in critics’ writing. In a letter to “The Future Editors of *Critical Inquiry*” published in the Winter 2004 issue of *Critical Inquiry*, Booth sadly stated that in *Critical Inquiry* “a surprising number of current entries leave me (and other older readers I’ve talked with) utterly confused and turned away”; he wished that he could have taught [some VIP critics whose names are omitted in this present quotation] how to construct intelligible sentences and paragraphs”; he urged the journal to “publish no article that the editors themselves don’t fully understand, even if the author happens to be famous.” (pp. 3501-352)

A considerable number of Chinese academics have welcome Western criticism in a wholesale manner; they study their works (often through less-than-accurate translations), and write their papers which are often less than intelligible. Sometimes they complain about the “difficulty” of Western critics like Jacques Derrida but admire and follow their theories anyway.

## Appendix II : Terms in “Hati-Colt” with Chinese characters and *hanyu pingyin* inserted

In order not to bother the reader who does not read Chinese with the original Chinese terms in *hanyu pingyin*, all those terms are omitted in the main text. They are now supplied in the following.

- (I) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art” (content and form);
- (II) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art”, “*ti*体” or “style” and “*wenbi*文笔” or “classification of genres”;
- (III) “*pouqing xicai*剖情析采” or “analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism);
- (IV) “*tongbian*通变” or “tradition-innovation” (evaluation through comparison of various works/authors);
- (V) “*wente*文德” or “values of literature” (functions of literature).

Further division of contents of “Hati-Colt” is as follows:

### (I) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art” (content and form)

- (1) “*qing*情” or “heart”: It is endowed with seven emotions; when moved, they are expressed in words.
- (2) “*cai*采” or “art”: It is seen everywhere--- in the sun and moon, in the mountain and river and in the books of the sages.

(3) “*qing*情” or “heart” occupies the main position and “art” is subordinate in literature; ideally “heart” comes first and “art” follows. (discussion on relationships between content and form)

[The concept of “*bangbing cheng zhu*蚌病成珠” or “the oyster produces pearl when diseased” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of tragedy and that of psycho-analysis in the West.]

[From “*qing*情” or “heart” to “*cai*采” or “art”, the concept of “*shensi*神思” or “imagination” is involved, which is comparable to the same Western concept.]

### (II) “*qingcai*情采” or “heart-art”, “*ti*体” or “style”, and “*wenbi*文笔” or “genre”

(1) “*wuse*物色” or “physical world”; “*shixu*时序” or “time”; “*caiqi*才气” or “talent”; “*xuexi*学习” or “learning”— factors casting influences on the “heart-art” and style of a literary work.

(2) classification of “*ti*体” or “style”

[The style “*zhuangli*壮丽” is comparable to Longinus’s “sublimity” and to Matthew Arnold’s “grand style.”]

(3) “*lunwen xubi*论文叙笔” or “classification of genres”

[The concept of “wuse物色” or “physical world” in *WXDL* is comparable to the theory of archetypal criticism, and that of “xie谐” or “humorous and comical” to melodramatic theories in the West.]

**(III) “pouqing xicai剖情析采” or “analysis of heart-art” (practical criticism)**

(1) “wengqing nan jian 文情难鉴” or “difficulty in appraisal”; “zhiyin nan feng知音难逢” or “difficulty in encountering a discerning critic”

(A) difficulty in “pi wen ru qing披文入情” or “deep understanding of a work”

(B) “ge zhi yiyu zhi jie各执一隅之解” or “each critic holding fast to his own interpretation.”

[This is comparable to theories of reader’s response and reception aesthetics in the West.]

(2) “pingli ruo heng, zhaoci ru jing平理若衡,照辞如镜” or “objective and balanced judgments” (ideal attitude in criticism)

(3) the first four points of the “liuguan六观” or “Six-point” theory

(A) “weiti位体” or “theme-structure-style-genre”

[The emphasis on structure is comparable to the Aristotelian concept of structure.]

(B) “shiyi事义” or “subject-matter and ideas”

(C) “zhici置辞” or “rhetoric”

(D) “gongshang宫商” or “musicality”

[“zhici置辞” (rhetoric) and “gongshang宫商” (musicality) are comparable to traditional rhetoric and 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian Formalism and New Criticism in the West; this part of “Hati-Colt” can be enriched by narrative theory in the West which may come under the heading “weiti位体” (theme-structure-style-genre); by the same token, feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism, neo-historicism, and Gay-lesbian-queer theories, etc, can be put under the umbrella of “shiyi事义” or “subject-matter and ideas”.]

**(IV) “tongbian通变” or “tradition and innovation” (comparing the performances of authors and their works)**

(1) the last two points of the “liuguan六观” or “Six-point” theory

(A) “qizheng奇正” or “conformity and counter- conformity”

(B) “tongbian通变” or “tradition and innovation”

[The concept “tongbian通变” or “tradition and innovation” is comparable to the ideas in T.S. Eliot’s widely influential essay “Traditional and Individual Talent.”]

(2) “tongbian通变”; literary history; literary canon; comparative literature

(A) “shiyun jiao yi, zhiwen dai bian时运交移, 质文代变” or “Time changes and literature in content and form also changes.” (literary history)

(B) “hengjiu zhidao, bukan hongjiao恒久至道, 不刊鸿教” or “a classic is that which reigns supreme and does not perish.” (literary canon)

(C) comparative literature

[Comparative approach in criticism is commonly found in *WXDL* but obviously there was no such discipline as comparative literature in Liu Xie’s time.]

**(V) “wende文德” (values and functions of literature)**

(1) “guangcai xuansheng, bingyaorenxiao光采玄圣, 炳耀仁孝” or “glorifying the sages and promoting such virtues as benevolence and filial piety” (contributions of literature to the society/nation)

[These ideas are comparable to the pragmatic theories in the West including Marxism.]

(2) “tengsheng feishi, zhizuo eryi腾声飞实, 制作而已” or “devotion to literature being the only way to achievement and fame” (attainment of fame by means of literature)

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**Note:**

This paper is in the main an abridged version of my article written in Chinese and entitled 《“情

采通变”：以《文心雕龙》为基础建构中西合璧的文学理论体系》(“Heart-art and tradition-innovation: Construction of a Chinese-Western Literary Theory Based on *Wenxin diaolong*”). With fifty thousand characters in length, this article will appear in a recent issue of《中外文化与文论》(*Cultural Studies and Literary Theory*) published by Sichuan University Press. Apart from the abridged content of the original article, certain ideas related to literary criticism are added in this paper.

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