

Meaning beyond Images in the *Yinxiu* Chapter in *Wenxin diaolong*: With *Zhouyi* as a Major Reference

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Abstract

As one of the major chapters on the theory of literary creation, the chapter “Yinxiu” did not receive adequate attention in previous research on *Wenxin diaolong*. There are three reasons for this: suspicion on a large added paragraph in the chapter, authority of Liu Xie’s discussion of the theoretic interpretation and aesthetic features, and the chapter *Yinxiu*’s close and direct ties with *Zhouyi*, a major reference of *Wenxin diaolong*. However, these arguments neglect a key issue: there is an implicative chain of literary theoretic evolution, i.e., *Zhouyi-Yinxiu-yijing*. Nonetheless, we can also provide strong refutations of this chain and provide new perspectives. We need to transcend the objective textual debates and focus on the history of interpretation of the paragraph added to the chapter *Yinxiu* to await the final judgment of the academic community. It is the Xiang Thought originated from *Yixue* that became the aesthetic origin of the concept of *Yinxiu*, which further formed the early stages of the evolution of the theory of *yijing*. In summary, the image of *yinxiu* is an open and appealing image, and the aftertaste of which requires further pondering.

Keywords: *Wenxin diaolong*, “Recondite and Conspicuous,” *Longxue*, *Zhouyi*, *Yijing*

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In the comparison between the literature of the East and the West, the continuous apprehension of one concept, or one type of feature, of the performance of literature is shared by both sides: the obscurity or ambiguity of the poetic language in literature. If we regard the *Seven Types of Ambiguity* by William Empson as the most representative banner reflecting the understanding of the vagueness in the linguistic strategies in the creation of literature, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*; hereafter *Wenxin*), would be the corresponding masterpiece in the history of literary theory in China, to elucidate the similar concepts in literary creation theories. In the domain of *longxue* 龍學 (scholarship of *Wenxin diaolong*), the comparative study between *Wenxin diaolong* and *Zhouyi* 周易 (*The Book of Changes*) is also a heated issue bringing about fresh and fruitful debates in the field of the scholarship of traditional literary theory of China. The reference to *Zhouyi* is, most of the times, applied in the research of those most renowned chapters and topics in *Wenxin diaolong*, such as “Wenbi” 文筆 (“Writings with Rhymes and Writings without Rhymes”), *Dao* of Nature 自然之道, “Fenggu” 風骨 (“Wind and Bone of Literature”) and “Qingcai” 情采 (“Emotion and Literary Expression”), and so on. However, as one of the most important chapters on the theory of literary creation, the chapter of “Yinxiu” 隱秀 (“The Recondite and the Conspicuous”) did not receive adequate attention compared to the above-listed chapters, especially regarding the comparison of *longxue* with *yixue* 易學 (scholarship of *Zhouyi*), which is one of the most popular *longxue* topics both in China and overseas.

In summary, there are three major reasons for this phenomenon:

First, when discussing the chapter, Wai-ye Li claimed: “Unfortunately, we no longer have the complete chapter, and the present version has little to say about the functioning of the principle of latency (i.e., 隱 the Recondite)” (Cai page number?). As we know, the historical text of the chapter *Yinxiu* was incomplete, and there was a paragraph of about four hundred characters added later to the original text. It was for this reason that Dao’s ultimate grace had been neglected in *Wenxin* (Liu 140). In this respect, the added paragraph was rarely accepted by *longxue* scholars in the last two hundred years, and it became a traditional practice to only refer to the remaining paragraphs when discussing the chapter “Yinxiu,” neglecting the four-hundred-character replenishment. And it might be for this reason that the chapter “Yinxiu” did not acquire equal status in *longxue* compared to chapters such as *Fenggu*, *Shensi* 神思 (“Spiritual Thought or Imagination”), *Bixing* 比興 (“Metaphor and Allegory”), and so on.

Second, since Liu Xie had made a detailed and integral interpretation of *yin* (re-

condite) and *xiu* (conspicuous) in the remaining fragments of “Yinxiu”, it seems that the two concepts have been thoroughly elucidated, and no further discussion on the aesthetic value on the concepts are necessary in the literary study in the domain of *longxue*.

Finally, in the present statement of *yixue*, there seems to be not much to reveal the relationship between *Zhouyi* and *Wenxin*. After scanning the remaining fragments of *Yinxiu*, we can easily find evidence of citing of *Zhouyi* as a metaphor to expound *yin* and *xiu*, which has become a universally accepted argument.

Based on the three aspects discussed above, it seems quite certain that no further debate is necessary on the chapter “Yinxiu”. However, if we reverse the angle from textual study to the reception history of the concepts, new ideas and interpretations would still be produced in the further excavation.

1. The *Wirkungsgeschichte* (History of interpretation) vs. Textual Falsification: The First Debate

First, regarding the identification of the authenticity of the added paragraph, we cannot be convinced by the interpretations of the concepts of *yin* and *xiu*, which are confined within the study of the remaining fragments. At this point, Zhou Ruchang and Zhan Ying’s refutations are the most persuasive. In his *New Debates on Previous Suspicions of the Chapter Yinxiu in Wenxin Diaolong*, Zhou Ruchang pointed out that the famous quotation of Zhang Jie’s “Emotion beyond language is called *yin*, and description of high fidelity is summarized as *xiu*” (Zhang, 9-10) might not necessarily be determined as the lost sentence from the chapter *Yinxiu*, for this might come from his remembrance which was not so reliable. This is possible because Chinese historians seldomly copied every character strictly from the original: “In many quotations are not only omitted the heads and ends but deleted the characters, words, and sentences or even rebuilt paragraphs” (Zhou 18). In this respect, it is not so persuasive to apply the difference of quotations as the solid evidence in support of determining the added paragraph as a falsification. While referring to Tao Yuanming as Pengze in the added paragraph, Ji Yun pointed that this reference was not seen in texts in the Six Dynasties era (222–589 AD), but Ji’s discovery was refuted by Zhou Ruchang: “Only recently did we see scholars’ reference of Tao Pengze from *Collections of Bao Mingyuan* 鮑明遠, and hence Ji’s authoritative discussions had been defeated” (Zhou 20). Regarding other phrases such as “working all out of soul” (嘔心吐膽) and “forging for lives and ages” (鍛歲經年), the *Siku* (四庫, *Siku quanshu*, A collection of classics, history, philosophy and literature organized by the imperial court of Qing dynasty) seemed to recognize them from

the *Liuyi Comments on Poetry* (六一詩話), *Minor Biography of Li He* 李賀小傳, and *Grades of Poetry* 詩品, which had all been refuted by Zhou. Zhan Ying also pointed out that quotations such as “Yang Xiong had nightmares because of his inability to continue writing” (揚雄輟翰而驚夢) found in chapter *Shensi* and “Ziyun’s ideas may be considered the most profound both in the language he employs and the themes he treats (...) and in his untiring efforts to think things through” (子雲屬意, 辭人最深……而竭才鑽思) in “Cailue” 才略 (“Literary Talents”) were all similar approaches to citation as the situation in chapter *Yinxu* (Zhan 25). Thus, Zhan Ying continued, “given all evidence above, it is arbitrary to determine the quotation of ‘working all out of soul’ was cited directly from Li Shangyin’s *Minor Biography of Li He*” (Zhan 25). “Forging for lives and ages could never explain the suffering of life” also aligns with this situation. And the argument that recognizes the reference of Ban Jieyu as the “Common Lady” from *Grades of Poetry* could not stand as solid evidence either (Zhou 19).

Moreover, one more piece of evidence was very convincing, i.e., Huang Kan’s comment:

Furthermore, the original text clarified that the convergence of ideas was a natural process other than artificial fabrication, even the supplements also acknowledge the principle that no man-made decorating and revising were necessary, as of the inclusion of “galloping minds” (馳心), “indulging thoughts” (溺思), “all out of soul” (嘔心) and “forging ages” (鍛歲), and so on, which developed into such serious obtuse contradictions far beyond the original styles of yanhe. 彦和 (Huang 195)

In his view, phrases such as “working all out of soul” and “indulging minds” had all betrayed the pursuit of naturalness in literary writings expressed in Liu Xie’s remaining chapters. Particularly against this, we can see Zhan Ying’s refutation indicated his equal concern for natural beauty and artificial beauty:

Natural beauty (自然會妙) is like that of plants lit up in the splendor of their blossoms, and the colorful adornment may be compared to silk dyed red and green. The red and green of dyed silks are deep and, indeed, rich and fresh; and the blossoms that brighten the trees, whose beauty is completely exhibited on the surface, glow in blazing glory. (Liu 360)

The “colorful adornment” is the product of writers’ “forging for ages,” which

is apparently different from the “painstakingly engraving and carving to attain artistry,” which was strongly opposed by Liu Xie. In his other chapters, Liu Xie did not show a thorough opposition against the artificial conception in writing, as was stated in chapter *Shensi*:

A spirited scholar, with the essentials of the art of writing in his mind, is quick to meet situations with an instantaneous response even before he has time for consideration; while a man of profound thought, whose emotional reactions are complicated and who is ever aware of all possible alternatives, achieves light and maps plans only after prolonged questioning and inquiring. (Liu 244)

若夫駿發之士，心總要術，敏在慮前，應機立斷；覃思之人，情饒歧路，鑒在慮後，研慮方定。

This means that the so-called “man of profound thought” must go through very careful considerations before their creation of literary work comes to an end. Therefore, there could not be any deep abyss between the pursuit of naturalness and prolonged consideration. Thus, this evidence proving the added paragraphs as falsification does not hold water.

In our view, the identification of the authenticity of the added paragraph is correlated to the objectivity of the whole book, which entails such a question: Is it convincing if we cite sentences from the added paragraph to expound the literary theory of Liu Xie? But we also have to face another question: Is it justified to neglect the four hundred suspicious characters from the discussion on *yin* and *xiu*? To date, in the study of Liu Xie’s literary theory, the verification of authenticity is, first of all, a part of the textual study, which is a fraction of the overall study of *Wenxin*. Since *Wenxin* is an overall summary of literary practices and theories before Liu Xie, we should try to transcend the domain of verification on texts but put emphasis on the metaphysical understanding of the literary theory of Liu Xie.

Evidently, the literary theory indicated in the added paragraph coincides with the remaining paragraphs and even the whole book. For instance, the sentence “Orthodoxy at first and marvelous in the end, illuminating in the core and genteel from the outside, making itself continuously and everlastingly attractive to readers” (始正而末奇，內明而外潤，使玩之者無窮，味之者不厭) shows a close undertaking of the metaphors of “mutual bodies and reversing lines” and “rivers contain pearls and jade” in the former paragraphs and stresses that, *yin*, as a substantive concept would be a transmission of information between various layers of interpretation. In this

sense, the literal interpretation is the branch and outer stratum, while the meaning hidden beyond the linguistic expression is the origin and inner layer. Such a natural and hidden beauty would definitely allow the readers an endless aesthetic aftertaste, which is an interpretation of *yin* in descriptive language. In another sentence, “Luscious clouds are formed naturally, without artificial decoration; the elegant styles are set tactically, with no need of measuring” (煙靄天成, 不勞於妝點; 容華格定, 無待於裁熔), the key feature of *xiu* has been stressed: what is “formed naturally” does not require extra artificial decoration. This idea not only echoes the discussion of “painstakingly engraving and carving to attain artistry” in later chapters but also complies with the Dao of Nature, as the key term of theory in *Wenxin*. Here, Ji Yun’s comment seemed quite reasonable: “Endless pursuit of naturalness is the ultimate goal of Liu Xie, which is an undoubtable fact.” (source?) Even Ji Yun agreed that the consilience of the added paragraph to Liu Xie’s literary theory. From “As of the literati who were conceiving” (夫立意之士) to “how could they define the hardship” (奚能喻苦), Huang Kan asserted that this pursuit of arduous work contradicted the former chapters, but this argument was refuted by Zhou Ruchang and Zhan Ying. However, it is necessary to add that the previously mentioned “pursuit of naturalness” was, in a greater sense, a natural and lively fusion of an aesthetic horizon and a hidden beauty in the readers’ eyes. Furthermore, the “motivating mind” and “forging ages” in this paragraph focused on literary creation and indicated that any stroke of genius of writers had come from the years of arduous work. Only after endless arduous work can writers achieve the state of “hiding talent in language” and “displaying wisdom beyond text,” which renders readers “delighted after discovering beauty” and “hilarious for embracing elegance.” Apparently, the literary ideas in this paragraph display a diachronic process from the conception of an idea to the completion of the work, which, in the end, is appreciated by the readers. When a finished work of literature is presented to a reader, the aesthetic significance must be implicitly indicative and naturally elegant; thus, this aesthetic tendency does not contradict the explanation of the fusion of subjective effort in the process of literary creation. In reverse, those who can unveil the hidden aesthetic beauty in a literary work must be those who have achieved a high level of aesthetic appreciation, i.e., those “aesthetically implicative” (蘊藉者) and “outstanding and penetrative” (英銳者). In another instance in chapter “Zhiyin” 知音 (“An Understanding Critic”), Liu Xie said:

Men of unrestraint and frank type will beat time in appreciation when they hear a tune; those who are aesthetically implicative are often keenly

perceptive, inclining to the lofty way of retirement; the superficially clever will look at ornate patterns with throbbing hearts, and those who love the extraordinary will listen to what is odd with ears picked up. (Liu 442)

慷慨者逆聲而擊節，醜藉者見密而高蹈；浮慧者觀綺而躍心，愛奇者聞詭而驚聽。

Actually, the most important discussion focused on the two sentences of “recondite passage” and “conspicuous sentence,” which were referred in the added paragraph to explain *yinxiu*. On the sentence, “To verify the hidden beauty, a few articles can be referred” (將欲徵隱，聊可指篇), Ji Yun commented that “there is one paragraph missing in the book, and the study on the Recondite should not be limited to poetry only” (see Huang 133). On “If you would discuss *Xiu*, citing sentences is the only measure,” Ji Yun thought that it “went even further from the original” (see Huang 133). However, in Zhan Ying’s study, the instance in the added paragraph was also a good match to the remaining paragraph, like “Chensi’s (陳思) *Yellow Siskin* (黃雀), Gonggan’s (公幹) *Green Pine* (綠鬆), both were prodigal and high spirited, rendering themselves significant in allegory,” which corresponds to the “Heroic in giving free play to their vitality, open and artless in the application of their talents” (慷慨以任氣，磊落以使才) in chapter “Mingshi” 明詩 (“An Exegesis of Poetry”) (Liu 40). Another sentence in “Mingshi,” “Only Xi’s works [Xi here refers to the family name of Ji Kang 嵇康] are characterized by pure and lofty emotions, and Ruan’s far-reaching and profound in meaning” (嵇志清峻，阮旨遙深) (Liu 43), together with “Tixing’s” 體性 (“Style and Nature”) “Sizong was free and easy, he sang in a spirit of a recluse a tune which wafted into the distance; Shuye was romantic and gallant, gave us high spirit and bright colors” (嗣宗倜儻，故嚮逸而調遠；叔夜俊俠，故興高而采烈) (Liu 43), could also make an inter-verification. It could match the example of “The conception was mysterious and thought decent, so (his poems) were significantly graceful” (境玄思澹，而獨得乎優閒) (Liu 43), which was cited in the added paragraph from Ruan Ji’s *Poems from My Heart* 詠懷詩。

Thus, although its academic status remains controversial, we can see that in terms of literary theory, the added paragraph did not break apart from the remaining paragraphs or other chapters in *Wenxin*. Furthermore, if we turn to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* by Gadamer as the kernel of the evaluation system for the textual study, the value of the latter interpretation could never be neglected. Even though we admit that the paragraph was added by someone other than Liu Xie, it is still an excellent expounding of Liu Xie’s literary theory. In this sense, it is not de-

sirable to ignore the added paragraphs of *Yinxiu* when outlining and reframing Liu Xie's literary theory. However, since the status and content of the added paragraph remain challenged by the majority of the academic community, even if we believe that the added paragraph should not be discarded, we still cannot equate it with the parts that were definitely written by Liu Xie. If we cite it as evidence for study, we need to indicate the specific circumstances of the added paragraph to wait for the academic judgment.

2. From Theory of *Yinxiu* to *Yijing* 意境: The Implicative Correlation

Second, though Liu Xie had made a clear and thorough explanation of the meaning of *yin* and *xiu*, there is still some room for further interpretation, not only of the aesthetic features of the two concepts but also of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the interpretation of Liu Xie on the concepts. In the history of Western literary theory, dual concepts such as irony and paradox, also appeared often. However, most dual pairs of concepts in the West were restrained in the close reading of text, focusing on linguistic skills; while the pairs of concepts in China would always transcend from the linguistic level to the aesthetic understanding. Tong Qingbing categorized the various ideas of interpretation of the aesthetic features of *yin* and *xiu* into four schools (Tong 7).

First, the Rhetoric School 修辭說, with Huang Shulin 黃書琳, Huang Kan, Fan Wenlan 范文瀾, Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, Shen Qian 沈謙, and so on as major representatives. Huang Shulin summarized *yin* as implicative beauty and *xiu* as outstanding, both interpreted as skills in literary creation (Huang 132). Zhou Zhenfu also clarified: "*Yin* and *xiu* can be defined as being implicative and outstanding respectively in the theory of rhetoric" (Zhou 350). Shen Qian also said so in another way: "With the two concepts, Yanhe made a good metaphor of the aesthetic conception in a state of linguistic implicativeness and grammatical prominence, i.e., the rhetoric implicativeness and prominence" (See Zhang 601).

Second, the Literary Style School 風格說, with Liu Shipai 劉師培, Fu Gengsheng 傅庚生, and Zhan Ying as representatives. Liu Shipai separated the two groups of concepts of "fenggu" and "yinxiu" as opposing styles in literature: one tends to be rigid and the other flexible (See Zhan 1486). Fu Gengsheng summarized *yin* as "deliberate decoration" and *xiu* as "natural beauty" (See Zhan 1489). Zhan Ying regarded *yin* and *xiu* as two mutually opposing and supporting styles (Zhan 1489).

Third, the School of Artistic Expression Methods 藝術表現方法說, with Zhong Zi'ao 鍾子翱 as the representative. His description of this view is following:

When a piece of literary work is forming an artistic figure, the perfect method is the combination of the two styles of *yin* and *xiu*. Only under such a circumstance can readers see an actively touching and lively characteristic figure in the literary work. (See Tong 6)

Fourth, the Artistic Image School 意象說, with Yu Yuan 郁沉 as the representative, who said:

The chapter *Yinxiu* focused on the discussion of the features of artistic images. *Yin* concerns the view of the idea, and *xiu* concerns the view of the image. *Yin* correlates the descriptions of “implications beyond text,” “duplicate indications beyond text” or just “duplicate implication,” i.e., the implications in the artistic image are multi-layered, one stratum being expounded, yet another or even two following strata are hidden. And *xiu* should be the “outstanding in a passage,” (...) *xiu* is not only referring to the marvelous sentences but also includes satisfying and concrete descriptions. (Yu 61)

If we make an overall observation on the structure of *Wenxin*, it gives no cause for much criticism to regard the concepts of *yin* and *xiu* as the categories of skills in literary creation or, in other words, “rhetoric methods” or “styles of creation.” It is here that we could make an intricate comparison between *yinxiu* and “ambiguity,” for the concepts share similar values and strategies in rhetoric theory. However, the authentic comparison would not rest on the stratum of language, for the strata of image and metaphysical features were the ultimate purpose for comparison. From introductions in Liu Xie’s “Xuzhi” 序志 (“Preface”), we can see that *Yinxiu* could be included in the creation theory of “analyzing emotions and outlining styles,” while chapters such as “Kuashi” 誇飾 (“Exaggeration”), “Shilei” 事類 (“Categories”) and “Lianzi” 練字 (“Word Choice”) are all closely connected to chapter *Yinxiu*, and all of the chapters mentioned above discuss concrete and specific literary creation topics. However, the aesthetic features of *yinxiu* have gone far beyond the domain of literary creation.

On the one hand, the interpretation of *yin* has exceeded the horizon of chapter *Yinxiu*. The concept of *yin* appears fifty-three times in the book of *Wenxin*, in chapters such as “Yuandao,” “Zhengsheng,” “Zongjing,” “Zhengwei” 正緯 (“Emendation of Apocrypha”), “Xieyin” 諧譏 (“Humor and Enigma”), “Shizhuan” 史傳 (“Historical Writings”), “Yinxiu,” and so forth—all together nineteen chapters. The

discussion on *yin* as a skill in literary creation is not confined to chapter *Yinxiu*. For instance, the descriptions such as “couched in rich and cryptic language, they contain subtle meanings, solidly grounded and profound” (符采復隱, 精義堅深) in *Yuandao*, “to use obscure language to hide ideas or to employ an artful parable to point to certain facts” (遁辭以隱意, 譎譬以指事) in “Xieyin”, and “not deemed as outstanding with abstruse implications” (不以環隱為奇) in “Yidui” 議對 (“Discussion”) are all theoretically indicative and in line with the gist of *Yinxiu*. In the view of the integral book, the description of *yin* is not limited to skill but refers to an aesthetic effect as well. The examples include: “it has boundless implications, its critical judgments are of high literary quality, and its symbolism deep” (旨遠辭文, 言中事隱) in “Zongjing” and “the purpose of the work is deep and profound, and the language connotative and terse” (睿旨幽隱, 經文婉約) in *Shizhuan* and so forth. All of the above examples could function as responses to chapter “Yinxiu”; for instance, the statement of “Orthodoxy at first and marvelous in the end, illuminating in the core and genteel from the outside, making itself continuously and everlastingly attractive to readers” is also a description focusing on the aesthetic effect.

What is more noteworthy is that Liu Xie did not simply stress the positive value of *yin* but indicated the negative side of *yin* as well. In chapter *Zhengwei*, “the records are so obscure so long ago” (世復文隱) was also described as one of the reasons why “a body of strange and fantastic literature has developed” (好生矯誕). In *Shensi*, “When the key works smoothly, there is nothing which will not appear in its true form; but when its operation is obstructed, the spirit loses its rationale” (樞機方通, 則物無隱貌; 關鍵將塞, 則神有遁心) proves that *yin* happens to make an opposition to the patency and smoothness of ideas. Other examples, such as “its facts should stay evident (as in bulletin) and its meaning should remain obvious” (露板以宣眾, 不可使義隱) in *Xiyi* 檄移 (“War Proclamation and Dispatch”), and “in dealing with events he should strive for clearness and thoroughness, and he should never seek originality by seemingly profound but vague presentation” (事以明覈為美, 不以深隱為奇) in “Yidui”, all argue that *yin* is not always effective and influential especially in certain types of literary work. Thus, in the overview of the whole book of *Wenxin*, different from the intention of William Empson, Liu Xie did not limit the interpretation of *yin* as a skill in literary creation or aesthetic effect.

In this sense, though he picked out the idea that “their work may have profundity, but not the quality of recondite” in *Yinxiu*, Liu Xie was not making a negative argument on the inappropriate instances of *yin* in the previous quotations; the key fact in this quotation is the distinction between profound (abstruse, *ao* 奧) and implicative (*yin* 隱). Similarly, *xiu* has been expounded many times in other chapters

besides “Yinxiu”. But the most essential, or conspicuous, *xiu*, described as “colorful decoration and detailed description” (繪事圖色), is not always stressed in a positive tone.

On the other hand, the theoretical relationship between *yin* and *xiu* is also worth revealing. The two concepts are opposite and complementary to each other at the same time. *Yin* stresses functions such as implicative and indicative, *xiu*—outstanding and exemplifying. In other words, the two concepts belong to the field of idea and the field of linguistic expression, respectively. Liu Xie juxtaposed such paired concepts in many chapters other than “Yinxiu,” for example, in “Fenggu,” “Bixing,” “Rongcai,” and so on. However, on many occasions, Liu Xie put two concepts into one comprehensive category, such as “If *fenggu* is not adapted, any literary skill will lose its magic” (風骨不飛, 則振采失鮮), “To be firm and exact in diction, and in resonance sure, without being heavy: this is meant by the vigor of *fenggu*” (捶字堅而難移, 結嚮凝而不滯, 此風骨之力也) in chapter “Fenggu”; “Bixing of ancient poets are perfect perceptions resulting from their responses to the stimuli of facts” (詩人比興, 觸物圓覽) in chapter Bixing; “Without *rongcai*, how could it procure beautiful employment” (非夫熔裁, 何以行之乎) in chapter “Rongcai” and so forth. In contrast, *yin* and *xiu* have almost never been connected to one concept; whether in the remaining fragment or the added paragraph, the two are always so different according to standards in various levels (an opposing position). Throughout the entire chapter of *Yinxiu*, *yin* and *xiu*, the two concepts are always discussed separately and have never been juxtaposed as a conceptual pair except appearing together in the title of the chapter. What makes this study curious is that Huang Kan connected the two concepts into one in his *Supplement of “Yinxiu”* 補隱秀, such as “however, the origin of ‘Yinxiu’ is formed in ‘shensi’”; “Thus we know the achievement of ultimate naturalness could naturally render an authentic beauty of *yinxiu*; the recourse to artificial art could only breach the essence of *yinxiu*”; “the procuring of *yinxiu* is top rarity” (Huang K. 196).

In this situation, on what basis do we judge the relationship of the two concepts as both opposite and complementary to each other? The backgrounds are not limited to parallel sentences such as “The beauty of the Recondite lies in its mystery, and the most spectacular elements of the Conspicuous are displayed in the startling transcendence” (隱以復意為工, 秀以卓絕為巧) and “the passages of *yin* are illuminating the realm of literature, and the texts of *xiu* are promoting the aesthetic level of collection of literature” (隱篇所以照文苑, 秀句所以侈翰林) but are based on the cultural interests of Liu Xie in *Wenxin*, i.e., his pursuit of eclecticism. Liu Xie’s construction of literary theory always starts from a living Dao of Nature that has

transcended common lives and stresses an epistemology that “when the stem stands up, the branches naturally follow; and when one understands a unifying principle, he understands all about the ten thousand categories” (振本而未從，知一而萬畢) in chapter “Zhangju” 章句 (“Paragraph and Sentence”). Therefore, although *yin* and *xiu* are in separate (opposing) situations, the two can always act in unity on the horizon of the Dao of Nature.

It is in this sense that the *yinxiu* interpreters of later generations regarded the two concepts as one unified aesthetic category, which is mutually opposing and simultaneously mutually dependent. Furthermore, these two concepts, with their interpretations, also make up a rhetorical correlation of mutual illustration, though their aesthetic features are separately introduced. The illuminating lines such as “the practice of forming a new hexagram by realigning the limits of another, or recalling how rivers contain pearls and jade,” and “realignment of the lines of a hexagram gives birth to the ‘four images,’ and the pearls and jade in the depths of the water cause the formation of square and round waves” can serve as metaphors to describe both *yin* and *xiu*. What is even more curious is that “natural beauty” and “colorful adornment” have also summarized the common essence of *yin* and *xiu*, which is the integration of natural and artificial beauty, and the integration has come to a perfect state. It is in this context that the statement “The expressions of *yin* is no different from *xiu*” (隱處即使秀處) has arisen.

Thus, the discussion on the two concepts have gone far beyond the level of rhetoric skill or literary creation styles and have extended to various angles, which makes it possible for researchers in the fields of literary creation theory, literary texts, and literary appreciation to understand and reveal the theoretic secrets in the “Yinxiu” chapter.

In fact, a heated and sufficiently discussed literary concept has already found its aesthetic correlation with the “Yinxiu” chapter, and this concept is *yijing* 意境.² The aesthetic features of *yin* and *xiu*, such as the ultimate and unlimited implications and indications of *yin*, the attractive emotions and outstanding expressions of *xiu* could just form the best verification for “the perfect fusion of emotion and nature,” which is regarded as the most typical definition of *yijing*. In the “Yinxiu” chapter, the metaphor that “realignment of the lines of a hexagram gives birth to the four images” not only describes the aesthetic features of *yin* and *xiu* but also indicates the aesthetic state of beauty beyond images, which is also the essence of

2 Related research on *Yijing* and hexagrams is also noticed in the academic communities oversea; see Liu N. However, most of the research focuses on studies from the Tang dynasty, not on the pre-Six-Dynasties comparison .

yijing. As we know, the most profound implication of *yijing* is the metaphoric transcendence or transmission of the aesthetic it signifies. This metaphor inspires poetic comments with reference to the “music beyond the chords and meaning outside the texts” (弦外之音、言外之意). Mei Shengyu’s 梅聖俞 “describing the unimaginable scenes in a state of face-to-face display, and infiltrating endless illuminations beyond linguistic expression” (狀難寫之景如在目前, 含不盡之意见于言外), and Yanyu’s 嚴羽 metaphors below are cases in point.

The marvelous poems are always so crystal pure that it is almost untraceable, like the music in the void, expression in illusion, the moon in the water and reflection in the mirror, illustrating a state of unlimited extensiveness beyond the limited linguistic expressions. (Yan 139)

These examples reflect the aesthetic influence of the *Yinxiu* chapter, forming a theoretical chain in the history of Chinese literary theory.

In this sense, Tong Qingbing remarked that the aesthetic significance of *yinxiu* had exceeded the four schools mentioned previously and should be redeemed as the most pioneering concept for the formation and perfection of the literary concept of *yijing*, which is no doubt the core category of literary theory of China. As he commented,

Yin stresses the principles of abstraction of *yi* (意) in *yijing*, and *xiu* stresses the criteria of description on *jing* 境 in *yijing*. When both the principles and criteria are achieved, *yijing* is thus formed. If we borrow Sikong Tu’s (司空圖) theory of ‘Image beyond Image’ (象外之象) to enhance the discussion, *xiu* is the first *xiang*, and *yin* makes the second, the requirement of image inside the image is *xiu*, which can be outlined as outstanding and colorful, as if it is alive in the near sight. The image inside the image is only a start toward image beyond the image, and the requirement of the image beyond image is *yin*, which is described as duplicated implications, emotions beyond language, complicated implications beyond text, and implicative inclusiveness of indicated meaning. (Tong 8)

Xiao Honglin also made a comment on the relationship between *yin* and *xiu*, pointing out that the meaning beyond text in “Yinxiu” is major evidence for the famous “aftertaste” in the history of literary theory of China. The description of the untold but imaginable “taste beyond taste,” which formed the theory of aftertaste,

converged with the rich implications in limited language—the “taste within taste.” This aftertaste revealed a key feature of Chinese literary theory—the preference for the void rather than the solid. As Xiao commented, “such interpretation made itself a mutual reinforcement of the void and the solid as well as the fusion of emotion and scene” (Xiao 359-360). Gu Feng also remarked that Liu Xie’s *Wenxin* formed the foundation of the *yijing* theory, while the theory of *yinxiu* established the theoretical basis for the lively and profound fusion of emotion and scene (Gu 48). In summary, the most important aesthetic value of the *Yinxiu* chapter lies within its relationship with the theory of *yijing*.

3. The Interpretive Chain: *Zhouyi-Yinxiu-Yijing* 周易—隱秀—意境

Finally, the discussion arrives at the aesthetic connection between the “Yinxiu” chapter and *Zhouyi*. “Yinxiu” quotes *Zhouyi* on three occasions. As we have indicated above, the quotations of *Zhouyi* concern the “Four Images,” “Mutual Body,” and “Reversing Lines.” Though controversies exist in the study of the interpretation of those quotations, the impact on the interpretation of the literary phenomenon of *yinxiu* is limited. However, a couple of issues still remain.

First, on a literal level, the links between the chapter “Yinxiu” and the book *Zhouyi* only include the three quotations, and previous studies seldom go beyond these citations. In this respect, Liu Xie could have borrowed only a few parables of interpretation of *Zhouyi* in the Han dynasty to outline the aesthetic characteristics of *yin* and *xiu*, and this approach is only limited to the technical level of literary creation because the linguistic morphologies of “Yinxiu” are similar to the symbolic structures and combinations of lines and hexagrams in *Zhouyi*. However, is this summary convincing to all?

Second, since the so-called “Mutual Bodies,” “Reversing Lines,” and “Four Images” were not systematically elucidated in the pre-Qin version of *Zhouyi* but existed in *Zhouyi* research in the Han dynasty, can we still compare *Wenxin* research with the earliest state of *Zhouyi* research and the pre-Qin edition of *Zhouyi*?

Third, we already know that the concept of *yinxiu* is not only theoretically related to *yijing*, but further formed the theoretical preparation for the birth and evolution of the very concept. In this process, the influence and traces of *Zhouyi* are evident because it was the metaphors of the “Four Images” and the transcendent and far-reaching features of “Mutual Bodies” and “Reversing Lines” that inspire scholars’ association with the “Image Beyond Image,” “Fusion of Emotion and Scene” 情景交融, and the “Realm Beyond Image” 境生象外. However, in terms of the receptive or interpretive chain of *Zhouyi-Yinxiu-yijing* 周易—隱秀—意境, the analyses

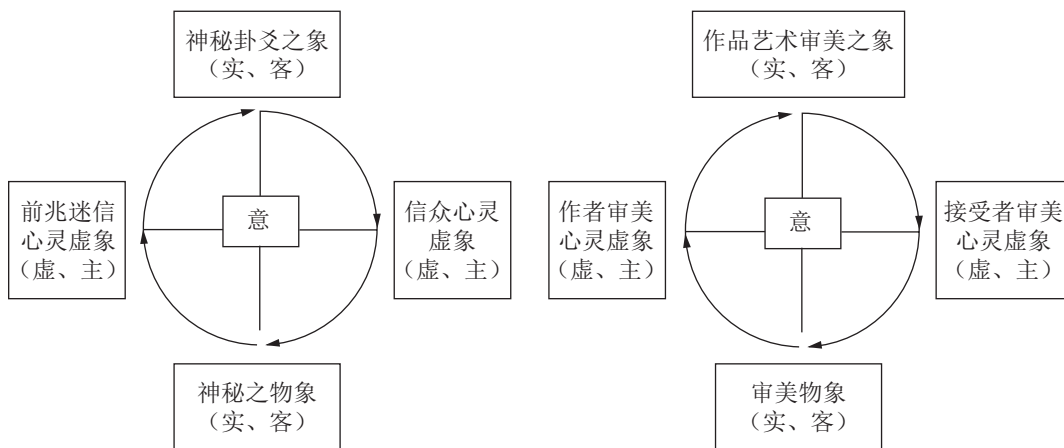
or debates always remained vague and uncertain. In fact, all three issues discussed above lead to a topic which is very fundamental in *Wenxin* research and even in the study of Chinese literary theory as a whole—the chronical theoretical process from “Yinxiu” to *yijing*, and *Zhouyi* is the most important reference that we cannot easily skip. Now, along the route of thoughts presented by the three issues, we would like to explore the aesthetic features of *yinxiu* in reference to *Zhouyi*.

As we know, Liu Xie embraced *Zhouyi* in a comprehensive manner. The starting point of Liu Xie’s literary theory, the Dao of Nature is very closely related to *Zhouyi*. While his theory of literary creation, literary stylistics, and literary criticism were illuminated, the influence of *Zhouyi* was ubiquitous, whether in the overall structure of the whole book or on such topics as *zhezong* 折衷 (compromising idea), *tongbian* 通變 (change and development), *zhiyi biwan* 知一畢萬 (acquiring unifying principle leads to omniscience of knowledge), *qizheng hucan* 奇正互參 (inter-referencing between odd and original), and *yanyin zhixian* 沿隱至顯 (along the course of the recondite to the conspicuous).

We can find even more evidence of quoting and transforming concepts and images from *Zhouyi*. From the perspective of the whole book, the quotations in the “Yinxiu” chapter are widely spread. However, none of the “Four Images,” “Mutual Body,” or “Reversing Lines” can show a strict and direct correspondence with the concept of *yinxiu*. For example, we cannot define *yin* or the feature of the recondite as an “illusion” (假象), let alone *xiu* a “real image” (實象). Neither the irreversible *shaoyang* (少陽) and *shaoyin* (少陰) nor the reversing *laoyin* (老陰) and *laoyang* (老陽) can correspond to any end in the mutually interpreting pair of concepts as *yinxiu*. As for the *bengua* 本卦 (original hexagram), *zhigua* 之卦 (reversed hexagram), *biegua* 別卦 (category hexagram), and *fugua* 復卦 (complex hexagram) in the process of interpreting hexagrams, none of the above can directly refer to the noumenon of the *yin* or *xiu*. Therefore, when Liu Xie referred to the ontology of the recondite or the conspicuous or used the metaphor of “rivers containing pearls and jade,” he used the approach of association, in addition to defining *yinxiu* with the four images or reversing hexagrams. Apparently, Liu Xie adopted the methodology of the “use of image” (用象之法) from *Zhouyi*, but his interpretation of *yinxiu* has stretched far beyond this use of image. The other scholars’ notes on the sentence of “The recondite, as a form, (...) unobtrusively reveals hidden beauty” usually stress that Liu Xie’s original intention was to describe the implicative feature with the metaphor of the “impermanent principle while defining the hexagram” (取義無常). However, this explanation on the recondite is not convincing enough. The so-called recondite as a feature of the implicative is not simply a description or reappear-

ance of the process of the conversion from *bengua* to *zhigua* but a metaphor of the paradigm of the divination process. Now, how do we describe this paradigm? It is a mode of thinking, and in the context of *Zhouyi*, this mode of thinking transcends the specific procedure of divination and can, conversely, provide guidance for every process of divination. It is therefore embedded in each use of image, but it has also transcended the definition of use and is instead a unification of “noumenon and function” (即體即用). And it is the mode of thinking in *Zhouyi* that becomes the noumenon for the recondite introduced by Liu Xie.

The existence of such a mode of thinking in *Zhouyi* has long been recognized by the academic community. Since the occurrence of the cultural phenomenon of divination, it has existed along with every process of divinatory activity. Divination practices were inevitably guided by this paradigm, while constantly reflecting, summarizing, and describing this mode of thinking, deepening people’s understanding of it. Therefore, since the text of *Zhouyi* was formed, this paradigm has deeply penetrated the spirit of the Chinese culture. This symbolic system is mainly based on simple divinatory symbols. When people interpreted these symbols and hexagrams, they would also follow the direction of this paradigm and produce a new metaphysical cognition of the meaning of the line or hexagram, with the stratum of the image system as the media in the process of cognition. This is a cyclical process going from *yi* 意 (cognition of meaning) to *yan* 言 (language) via *xiang* 象 (image), which represents the process of divination. Conversely, from *yan* to *yi* via *xiang* is the process of interpretation. In this regard, Wang Zhenfu produced two illustrations to depict the paradigm in both *Zhouyi* and the formation of the aesthetics of art (Figure 1).



The picture on the upper left can be regarded as a “mode of transition from ‘meaning’ to ‘image’” (“意” “象” 的轉換模式); Wang continued, “[T]hese are the four strata from ‘meaning’ to ‘image’ in original divinations.” Correspondingly, the

transition of “artistic aesthetic” following the same pattern is depicted in the picture the top right. In this regard, Wang Zhenfu further explained:

Structurally, the aesthetics of art is similar and interrelated to witchcraft. As was pointed out by Lukács in his *die Eigenart des Aesthetischen*, “The practices of witchcraft carried the seeds and sprouts of the prototype that later developed into independent scientific attitude and art.” This statement appears to be most appropriate for the divinatory culture of witchcraft of *Zhouyi* in China. The images and numbers in *Zhouyi* did match the criteria as the sprouts for the future art aesthetic and scientific attitude. For the “Image,” Kong Yingda made a convincing comment in the *Rectification of Zhouyi*: “The Essence of *yi* is Image. To clearly expound the human society with reference to physical image is a good resemblance of the metaphor in poetics” (凡易者，象也。以物象而明人事，若詩之比喻也). In his *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通義 (*On Literature and History*), Zhang Xuecheng also remarked: “The images of *yi* are interrelated to the *bi* and *xing* in poetry” (易象通于詩之比興). Now it’s clear that *yi* is interrelated to poetry for the aesthetic appearance of “Image.” (Wang 258–260)

This graphical process depicts the relationship between literature and the application of image and number as the media in thought in *Zhouyi* research, which is a good interpretation for the paradigm embedded in the process of “Realignment of the lines of a hexagram gives birth to the four images,” which, in a much widely accepted interpretation, is called the “Xiang Thought” “象思维,” or thinking in terms of images.

In this sense, Liu Xie’s reference of *Zhouyi*, his metaphor of the “Mutual Body” and the “Four Images” as the “Noumenon of Yin” had all been inspired by the paradigm of “Xiang Thought” in *Zhouyi* research, which formed the ultimate foundation for the interpretation of the aesthetic concept of *yinxiu*. At the same time, the concept of *yinxiu* invented by Liu Xie can serve as the most vivid manifestation of the “Xiang Thought,” rendering the concept beyond the realm of linguistic and rhetoric discussions. This can be demonstrated by the following statement from the added paragraph in “Yinxiu”: “Working all out of soul (...) defining the hardship,” which stresses training in thoughts. The training is in an arduous and time-consuming *zhuta putuan* 竹榻蒲團 (personal cultivating on a bamboo bed and futon) cultivation style in Chinese Buddhism, which does not simply refer to the process

of literary conception. Hence, could we see the metaphors, such as “it resembles the ignorance of an erudite scholar when a passage lacks reconditeness, and it’s like the lacking treasure in an elegant house when a sentence is weak in the conspicuous,” from the added paragraph? That is, only after arduous and painful work can one procure the penetrating and transcending way of thought, and only after the procuring of the “Xiang Thought” can a scholar be rich in thoughts and literary expressions.

Furthermore, *Yizhuan* 易傳 (*Commentaries on Yijing*) provides the following comments:

The scholars would observe the images and ponder the statements when staying tranquil, and would investigate the changes and study the divination. (Huang 531)

君子居則觀其象，而玩其辭；動則觀其變，而玩其占。

Observe up into the adornment in the sky, investigate down on the logic of the land, and acquire the ultimate truth in the universe. Retrospect the origin of the world, to fully understand life and death. (Huang 535)

仰以觀於天文，俯以察於地理，是故知幽明之故。原始返終，故知死生之說。

And it is only after that could researchers of *Zhouyi* “receive blessing from the heaven, which is absolute auspicious” (Huang 133) (自天祐之，吉無不利)。

After clarification of the origin of the mechanism of thought of the *yinxiu*, we can make further analysis on the recondite and conspicuous in the “Yinxiu” chapter. The so-called “ideas which are beyond linguistic expression and are comprehended indirectly through abstruse overtones, which unobtrusively reveal hidden beauty,” are not defining a concept but depicting an aesthetic state. And the metaphor of “the practice of forming a new hexagram (...) contains pearls and jade” simply refers to the state of *yinxiu*. Evidently, the noumenon of *yin* is not depicted as an entity in the field of ontology, nor as a concept in a strict sense, but described as a non-entity, a metaphysical and dynamic existence, which is similar to the images of lines and hexagrams in *Zhouyi* that keep changing in cycles. In this sense, the value of the noumenon of *yin* is “change” (變) and “aggregate” (蘊)—both are dynamic descriptions rather than static definitions. As of *xiu*, “Elegant mist pervades in the mountains, and gorgeous ladies possess their extreme beauty” (遠山之浮烟靄，變女之靚容華); both stressing a vague and shadowy beauty, which is difficult to de-

fine and describe. Therefore, *yin* and *xiu* are two different levels of concepts, applying to two different scopes.

Furthermore, the “Marking Passage” (指篇) and “Quoting Sentences” (摘句) have both focused on the foiling of an implicative image like “Various depths and different densities display themselves naturally to readers” (深浅各奇, 穠纤俱妙), and the metaphor of “The red and green of dyed silks are deep and, indeed, rich and fresh; the blossoms that brighten the trees, whose beauty is completely exhibited on the surface, glow in blazing glory” (朱綠染繒, 深而繁鮮; 英華曜樹, 淺而燁燁) also stresses the use of *yinxiu*, which is the use of the image. The “brightened trees” and “dyed silks” do not strictly correlate with one tree or one piece of silk but describe a symbolic image that is based on the entity of the image and transcends it with a state of “Image beyond Image.” This kind of image is transcendental, and also intuitive and sensible, therefore enabling itself to “move the mind and startle the ears” (動心驚耳). In summary, the image of *yinxiu* is an open and appealing image, and the aftertaste of which requires further pondering, like “The observers and recipients enjoy the endless aftertaste from inside” (玩之者無窮, 味之者不厭). And only after that can the “aesthetically implicative perceive the recondite and relaxed, the outstanding and penetrative disclose the conspicuous and delighted” (使醞藉者蓄隱而意愉, 英銳者抱秀而心悅).

In conclusion, it is the dynamic process of forming the objective and materializing image into a transcendental and intuitively sensible “Image in the Idea” (意中之象) with descriptive language that vividly depicts the essence of the “Yinxiu” chapter. In this process, not only the shadow of *Zhouyi* but also the origin of the theory of *yijing* appear. Many scholars regard Liu Xie’s introduction of the concept of image (意象) as the starting point of *yijing* theory. In fact, it is the “Xiang Thought” illuminated by the system of hexagrams and lines in *Zhouyi* that connects the theory of *yijing* and all the theoretical preparations in the “Yinxiu” chapter.

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