ZHONG RONG'S SHIPIN
AND THE AESTHETIC AWARENESS OF THE SIX DYNASTIES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Zhong Rong’s (ca.463-520) Shipin (Classification of Poetry) has been recognized by modern scholars as the first and one of the most important critical works in the history of Chinese literary theories. It deals exclusively with the subject of poetry and discusses many basic but important poetic issues.

As a critical work, the Shipin is markedly different from earlier criticism. It is not a mixture of socio-political and literary comments but a work that was consciously written to fulfil the increasing demand for literary criticism of that time. It treats poetry as an autonomous entity that ought to be justified on its own terms.

This study is an attempt to explore the significance and innovation of the Shipin in a systematic manner. More specifically, it probes the following issues:
First, it introduces and examines the theoretical debate and the discussion of the Six Dynasties to see how the *Shipin* benefited from them in terms of its theoretical framework and poetic terminology. Second, it studies the key concepts and critical methods in the *Shipin* by placing it in a broader context of the aesthetic pursuit of the Six Dynasties. Third, it observes how the *Shipin* embodies the aesthetic awareness of the Six Dynasties and subsequently contributes to Chinese poetics in general.

The study concludes that the *Shipin* is a serious critical endeavour. Its emergence signified that pure poetry criticism independent of canonical exegesis had come to light and critical methodology that centred on aesthetic appreciation had been established. The study also concludes that the *Shipin* brings order and system to the previously random and scattered discussion of poetry; its concepts and vocabulary prove to be beneficial to later poetics.
To Yongqing and Annie Fang
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INTRODUCTION

Zhong Rong's (ca. 463-520) *Shipin* (Classification of Poetry)¹ has been recognized by modern scholars as the first and one of the most important critical works in the history of Chinese literary theory.² Dealing specifically with the subject of poetry, it focuses primarily on evaluating the writers of five-character poems (wuyan shi³). Although there were earlier critics who had conducted such evaluations, Zhong Rong found them inadequate, and wished to formulate his own critiques.

Many of the poets of that time strove to make their poems exceptional by the use of allusion, or imitation of celebrated writings. However Zhong Rong considered this harmful to the art of poetry. The main purpose of the *Shipin* was to influence the direction of contemporary poetry, a direction with which he was extremely dissatisfied. Zhong Rong's method of evaluation was inspired by and in line with the traditional interest in classifying and evaluating human character, and interest that

¹Zhong Rong, *Shipin Quanyi*. Ed. Xu Da, (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1990). In conducting the current study, six editions of the *Shipin* have been consulted, for example, Chen Yanjie, ed. *Shipin Zhu* and Yang Zuyu, ed. *Shipin Jiaoze*, both to compare texts and commentary. Xu Da’s *Shipin Quanyi* is cited throughout this thesis for convenience. Please refer to the bibliography for the complete list of the six editions.

reached a culminating point around Zhong Rong's times. Zhong Rong evaluated one hundred and twenty-two poets and their works, classifying them into three groups, namely, those of high, middle, and low rank, according to the literary merit of their poems. He not only provided his appraisal of each poet, tracing the origins of some of their styles to an earlier source, but also discussed certain basic, yet important concepts of poetry. The value of the Shih, nevertheless, should not be judged solely on the above contributions. In my opinion it ought to be recognized as a work which reflects an aesthetic awareness of its era -- the Six Dynasties (220-589 A.D.).

The modern scholar Chia-ying Yeh points out that since the Great Preface to the Shijing (Shi daxu) (hereafter it shall be referred to as the Great Preface),

critics have tended to attach too much importance to the praise and blame of government and doctrines [in their commentary of poetry], and have often tended to distort facts in order to force the illustration of their particular interpretation. At the same time, as a result, they have often neglected the basic role in poetry of the release of feelings, that is the moving

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A careful reading of the Shihpin will help one to see that Zhong Rong instead of following the inadequate approach mentioned by Yeh, focused more on the aesthetic aspects of poetry. For Zhong Rong, poetry was not a by-product of political or philosophical traditions, as certain critics and theorists before him tended to believe. It was, rather, an independent realm which should be justified on its own terms and, in my view, it is in this concept that the major attraction of the Shihpin lies.

The Six Dynasties witnessed a transformation in the history of Chinese art, literature and criticism. During this period great changes were brought about not only in arts and literature \textit{per se}, but also in the conception of art and literature. In spite of several literary anthologies which amazed the later generations, there is for the first time specific literary criticism with far-reaching insights and ideas, enlightening contemporary literary theory and influencing the later development of poetics. They are Cao Pi's (187-226) \textit{Dianlun Lunwen}.\footnote{Chia-ying Yeh and Jan W. Walls, "Theory, Standards, and Practice of Criticizing Poetry in Chung Hung's Shih-pin," in Ronald C. Miao ed., Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics (San Francisco: Chinese Material Centre, 1978), 79.}
Rather than preoccupying themselves with political and didactic concerns which were a common practice of the Han critics, each author partook in some general or specific literary discussion concerning stylistic, creative, structural, or rhetorical questions. Lu Xun,\(^5\) a prominent modern Chinese writer and critic, calls this period "an era of literary awareness," or an era of "art for art's sake," -- an expression which he borrowed from modern critics.\(^6\) The reason that he characterized this period as such was that truly specialized literary criticism emerged, and the aesthetic aspects of literature were consciously emphasized during this time.

Although, it is hard to pinpoint what exactly made literature and literary theory prosper during this time, the breakdown of a unified state might have created an opportunity for diversity in the theoretical domain in general, and literary criticism in particular. Here, we need to take into consideration some historical facts. Following the collapse of the Han

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\(^5\) Lu Xun. "Wei Jin fengdu ji wenzhang yu yao ji jiu zhi guanxi" (The style and writings of the Wei-Jin period and their relationships to drugs and wine). In *Lu Xun lun zhongguo gudian wenxue*, edited by Xiamen daxue zhongwenxi, 196-212. (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1979), 199.
Empire, small states and dynasties replaced each other frequently, political chaos and philosophical confusion marked characteristic features of the Six Dynasties period. Even Confucianism which was prominent in Chinese thinking for about one thousand years by then was losing its status, owing to the emergence of the "profound learning" (xuan xue⁴) as well as developing Daoist and Buddhist ideas. The latter had always coexisted with Confucianism but was surpassed by it. At a time when there is no rigid orthodoxy, a relatively creative atmosphere can emerge in literature as well as in criticism.

The idea that the Wei-Jin style of thought, primarily the "profound learning" enlightened and nurtured the literary theory of the Six Dynasties has been popular among Chinese scholars and literary historians. The thought-provoking debates and discussions in the process of the "profound learning" provided theoretical framework and methodology for literary theorizing, and facilitated the aesthetics of the literary critics. Some of the important concepts later became catchwords in art and literary criticism. Since the "profound learning" has played

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such an important role in the development of the Six Dynasties literary theory, it is worthwhile to examine this dominant style of thought as a basis for understanding the aesthetic evolution of the Six Dynasties.

**Profound Learning**

The *xuan xue*, or "profound learning," also variably translated as "metaphysical discourse," "abstruse learning," was a leading school of thought in the Six Dynasties. It was Daoist in essence but incorporated some Confucian teaching in it. Wang Bi (226-249) and He Yan (D. 240) were the exponents of this school. Xuan xue is famous for its quest for "spiritual meaning" and/or "transcending the limited, to search for the unlimited." Tang Yongtong, the Chinese philosopher, characterizes xuan xue as "the ontological mode of questioning" which is in contrast to the Han Dynasty scholars' "cosmology probing." That suggests that as the Han scholar Dong Zhongshu (ca.179-104 B.C.) was famous for his endeavour in cosmological issues, the Six Dynasties thinkers, however, were well known for their focus on the matter of being. Dong Zhongshu engaged himself with the meaning of the five phases or five elements (*wu xing*), the correspondence of man and the numerical categories

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of Heaven and the transcendent justification for political and morality, whereas the xuan xue scholars took on what they considered the original and authentic meaning of things. Emphasizing the significance and value of human existence, it probes into the kind of "ideal personality" which is spiritually free, independent and not constrained by the Confucian laws and rites.9 Wang Bi believes "there is a limit, and end, to all external things and achievements; only the internal spiritual being is primary, fundamental, limitless, and endless."10 This overall shift from cosmological to ontological, from external to internal, embodies a kind of "human awakening,"11 that is to comprehend the Dao12 in itself, to understand underlying structure and truth of things from within, and the faith in the human potential. The questioning of the traditional beliefs and values also enables the Six Dynasties thinkers to "rediscover," "reassess" and "pursue" human existence and its destiny13.

The reasoning and opinions of the "profound learning" were spread mainly through the interpretation and exegesis of three


10See Li Zehou (Tse-hou), The Path of Beauty, (Beijing: Morning Glory, 1987), 128.

11Li Zehou, Path of Beauty, 125.

12Ibid.
philosophical texts, the Book of Changes, Laozi and Zhuangzi. The spirit, "to transcend the limited and to search for the unlimited" of "profound learning" has formed the very core of the Six Dynasties aesthetics.

Aside from the "profound learning" but associated with it were other factors which played a crucial role in the development of literary criticism and art connoisseurship of the Six Dynasties. These have to do with techniques for judging talent and character in people and the lively debate concerning literature and writing.

**Personality Appraisal**

"Personality appraisal" (renwu pinzao) of Late Han and the Wei-Jin period was a result of the system of ranking officials adopted in 220A.D. during Cao Pi's regime. Renwu pinzao took the virtue, talent and manner of a person as its focus, and

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"See John Timothy Wixted, "The Nature of Evaluation in the Shih-pin" (Gradings of Poets) by Chung Hung (A.D. 469-518)," 228, for the Nine-grade system of ranking officials. Wixted says: "Office holders, termed 'equitable rectifiers' (zhong zheng), were selected at the provincial and prefectural levels to rate the achievements talents, conduct, and abilities of officials from ducal ministries down to the lower officials and to grade them into nine ranks."
it was central in the selection of civil servants then. It is important to note that the ranking system of the Six Dynasties had its unique characteristics. It not only demonstrated a new system of selecting political and administrative talent, but also brought distinctive changes to the principles of selection and standards of ranking. Notably, virtue, precisely the Confucian style of virtue, conduct and the command of classics were the standard of a qualified official in the Han Dynasty; but the emphasis in the Six Dynasties ranking was "human talent" and "enterprising spirit" which was an innovation of Cao Cao, the Emperor Wu of the Wei. In accordance with this, the "personality appraisal" during this time concentrated primarily on human talent as well as wisdom, and other aspects of a person. One's physical features, style, disposition and temperament were also taken as important factors for the ranking and the discussions. As social and cultural discussion, the "personality appraisal" was a substantiation of the spirit of the "profound learning" in the sense that it aimed to investigate "ideal personality" -- the very issue that the "profound learning" had chosen to bear on. And the conceptual apparatus of the appraisal was also in conformity with the ideas of

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14 For a historical development of the "personality appraisal," see Li Zehou Zhongguo meixue shi, Vol.2, 59-65.

15 See Wei Jin nan bei chao wenxue shi cankao ziliao, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962), 37.
"profound learning." Liu Shao's Treatise on Personalities (Renwu zhi) was a representative work among many discourses of this kind.

Treatise on Personalities can be seen as a summary of the practice and theory of "personality appraisal" from the late Han to the Wei period. It contains a systematic study of human personalises and abilities.

In addition to giving detailed description and analysis of various types of characters, Liu Shao dedicates his discussion on how to understand different kinds of personalities and sets up methods and principles of observing and classifying talented human beings.

In his discussion, Liu Shao places great emphasis on talents and the individuality of human beings. He believes that human personalities and dispositions are determined by the yin-yang principles and "five elements". Different combinations of these principles are used to understand and classify human personalities.
tions and proportion of these energies and elements will form distinctive human characteristics.

Gentle yet upright, and docile yet strong, these are the virtues of wood; unyielding yet having a terminal, liberal yet decisive, these are the virtues of metal; honest yet courteous, reasonable yet ritualistically correct, these are the virtues of water; forgivable yet dignified, and soft yet withstanding, these are the virtues of soil; simple yet luxuriant, illuminating [externals] yet piercing [the depths], these are the virtues of fire. Although phenomena are forever changing, these changes are in conformity with the five elements.\(^\text{25}\)\(^\text{18}\)

All personalities and human dispositions have their correspondences in the "yin and yang" principle and the "five elements." And they also are manifested in people's outer features, voice, style and gestures. Thus, Liu puts his emphasis on the diversity of individual character, on concrete and specific human beings. This approach to human beings is significantly different from that of the Han which seems to be based solely on Confucian ethics, virtue, conduct and knowledge -- some very general schemes whereas the individual and specific

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\(^\text{17}\)The five elements concept is associated with that of yin and yang. They are water, fire, metal, wood, and earth. See Liu Shao, The Study of Human Abilities: The Jen Wu Chih of Liu Shao, ed. J. K. Shryock, 95.

characteristics of human beings were never the concern. Such a shift of emphasis from the generality to individuality, and from the abstract to the concrete, not only expanded the horizon for understanding people but also opened the path for specific literary criticism and art appreciation.

Scholars in China and the West have often used the word, "individuality," to describe the trait of the Six Dynasty period. About this, Professor Wayne Schlepp points out the possible danger involved here. The danger may come in two-fold:

"The first is how a term, the meaning of which comes to us mostly out of developments in modern society, is bound to distort things when used to refer to ideas in the past, even if we take the trouble to set it in very clear context. The second danger comes from differences in attitudes toward the idea of individuality in Chinese culture and in the West. In the West it is almost always a virtue to be individualistic, and this is as true in business and government as it is in art. In China, even when it was treated in more benign fashion, the conditions adhering to it were vast and never, it seems to me, was society adumbrated, set aside, forgotten, in the pursuit of individualistic aims -- unless one was a confirmed outlaw. This is not to say that there was no individuality in China but we must admit that the threshold of tolerance in different cultures and different times must always be kept in mind as we consider the state, development and function of 'individuality' in society. So when we talk about individualistic tendencies in the thinking of critics and poets during the Six Dynasties, a Western reader will look for what he most admires in individualism."

This is a very important comment and should be applied when the term is used to refer to that period. As no suitable substitute has been found to-date, this word, individuality, is still kept in this study. Six Dynasties thinking was very different from traditional thinking since it did not consider societal issues as the beginning and end of everything; its focus was more on personal angles; and poetry of this period tended to express more personal feelings and experiences. However, Professor Schlepp's comment should be born in mind for a more precise and contextual understanding of the term. For definitions of "individual," "individuality" and "individualism" see Raymond Williams, Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 161-165.
Accordingly, Liu Shao believes that different personalities and natural traits will result in divergent abilities. Although it is the best to have all of them, only the sages could possibly reach this level. Ordinary human beings normally only have particular abilities, still such would be adequate to their needs. The most important task of a ruler is thus to be capable of finding different kinds of capable personnel and to use their expertise to support and strengthen the country. Liu Shao claims that people who have particular abilities will inevitably have some imperfections or disadvantages that are associated with their abilities and a wise ruler should be fully aware of this:

All men of partial abilities have their limitations. Therefore, the defect of the straightforward man is a tendency to make too many accusations. The defect of the unyielding man is severity. The defect of the peaceful man is timidity. The defect of the conscientious man is conventionality.

But if the straightforward man does not criticize, he cannot complete his straightforwardness. Since you like his straightforwardness, you cannot disapprove his criticism, because the tendency to criticize is the symptom of his straightforwardness.

If the unyielding man is not severe, he cannot accomplish his firmness. Since you are pleased with his firmness, you cannot disapprove his severity, because severity is the symptom of firmness.

If the peaceful man is not timid, he cannot preserve his peacefulness. Since you are pleased with his
peacefulness, you cannot disapprove his timidity, because timidity is the symptom of peacefulness.

If the conscientious man is not conventional, he cannot keep his conscientiousness. Since you are pleased with his conscientiousness, you cannot disapprove his conventionality, because conventionality is the symptom of conscientiousness.

But those who have these limitations do not always have the accompanying excellences. However, those who have these excellences are sure to have the symptoms of the corresponding limitation.

Therefore, by observing the symptoms of a man's shortcomings, that in which he excels may be known. These valuable abilities and imperfections are both opposite and complementary to each other. They come in pairs to form a rounded personality; without one, the other would certainly be lost. Therefore, a ruler should wisely realize and understand the above and not be overly critical about the shortcomings of these capable men because these are only the "symptom" of the great capacity.

This approach to categorizing human beings is extremely valuable. It looks on the uniqueness and specific character of each person and at the same time suggests a way to comprehend

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the human being as a complete whole. Although Liu Shao's work was originally out of political concern which related to ranking of officials, its influence on later literary criticism and art appreciation was enormous and cannot be overlooked. Its analysis and specific description of human characteristics provided an appropriate approach for Liu Xie and Zhong Rong to follow. Therefore, it is fair to say that Liu Shao's Treatise on Personality demonstrated a distinctive change in the ideological domain of the Six Dynasties and by understanding its aims we can comprehend Six Dynasties literary criticism.

The Nine-grade system of the official ranking did not function long in the purpose for which it was first designed, but existed in name only. The "personality-appraisal" gradually deviated from political considerations to become oriented more toward aesthetical considerations. This change was reflected in the most lively way in Liu Yiqing's (403-444) A New Account of Tales of the World (Hereafter referred to as the New Account).

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21 When Nine-grade system was first established, it aimed to select capable and knowledgable officials through rigorous evaluation. However, it soon became an empty shell, especially in Cao Fang's (240-253 A.D.) reign. The upper ranks were all filled by people from rich clan families. See "jiupin zhongzheng" in Cihai (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1980), 65.
The *New Account* is an anthology of anecdotes, noteworthy conversations, remarks and behaviour of the famous persons from the latter Han to the Eastern Jin period. Owing to Liu Yiqing’s vivid record and depictions we have some knowledge of the temperament and spirit of that time. Many aspects of the *New Account* deserve the attention of later generations, for example, its narrative skill and character delineation which helped greatly in the development of later fictional narrative. However, at the present, I shall only focus on its unique "personality-appraisal" in hope of discovering its connection with the later literary criticism, especially the kind that concentrated on literary appreciation, to which Zhong Rong’s *Shipin* belongs.

Our first concern is the *New Account*’s representation of the unique characters of those historical figures. They are "unique" because they are not the personalities people usually encounter everyday. They were famous scholars or learned men but they refused to be constrained by conventional concepts, customs, laws and rites. They were labelled as "iconoclasts" and for this, some of them were executed.²² Liu Ling of the Western Jin is described as such:

²²One such an example is Ji Kang (224-263), a distinguished thinker, scholar, and musician. For discrediting Tang and Wudi, and disparaging Zhou Gong and Confucius, he was executed by Cao Fang, emperor of the Wei of the Three Kingdoms.
On many occasions Liu Ling, under the influence of wine would be completely free and uninhibited, sometimes taking off his clothes and sitting naked in his room. Once when some persons saw him and chided him for it, Ling retorted, "I take heaven and earth for my pillars and roof, and the rooms of my house for my pants and coat. What are you gentlemen doing in my pants?" (Rendan pian²³)

Another wonderful episode is also worth noting for its vigorous description and characterization of distinctive personality:

While Wang Hui-chih was living in San-yin (Chekiang), one night there was a heavy fall of snow. Waking from sleep, he opened the panels of his room, and, ordering wine, drank to the shining whiteness all about him. Then he got up and started to pace back and forth, humming Tso Ssu's (d.306) poem, "Summons to a Retired Gentleman" (Chao yin-shih). All at once he remembered Tai K'uei, who was living at the time in Shan (south of Shan-yin). On the spur of the moment he set out by night in a small boat to visit him. The whole night had passed before he finally arrived. When he reached Tai's gate he turned back without going in.

When someone asked his reason, Wang replied, "I originally went on the strength of an impulse, and when the impulse was spent I turned back. Why was it necessary to see Tai?" (Rendan pian)²⁴


These personalities neither conform to the traditional values and norms, nor seem to care about the public disapproval of their "absurdity." They have their own standard and want to follow their own nature and sensitivity to do whatever they feel meaningful, that could bring them a richer and fuller life.

One may like or dislike the people in question, but one has to admit that they do have distinctive characteristics. Not being governed by abstract concepts, each of the above people has his special traits, emotions, wit, and actions. Their unique personalities and unconventional ways of living were vividly demonstrated. Being particular, they cannot be considered along with others. Although what Liu Yiqing described were the outer activities and behaviour, it is the inner spirit of the individual that is best observed.

This approach to the particular and unique, and the intention to pierce through the overt behaviour in order to find the inner spirit established an excellent example for later criticism to follow. In his Shipin, Zhong Rong dedicated himself to singling out the unique literary aspects of each poet which would cover the general style revealed, the feelings or emotions expressed, the spirit conveyed and the language used. Zhong Rong also provided a brief summary of his comments on each poet to focus the point. This way of commentary, which demanded
that a critic use highly iconic, precise, beautiful and suggestive language to summarize the uniqueness of poetic style and grasp the spirit of particular poet, was in line with the general approach of the "personality appraisal." It also reminds us the kind of commentary flair of the New Account.

Another feature of the New Account that one finds also in Six Dynasties criticism is the use of pertinent imagery to illustrate human features, appearances, and personalities or abilities.

Contemporaries characterized Wang Hsi-chih as follows: "Now drifting like a floating clouds; now rearing up like a startled dragon." 25

Someone praised the splendour of Wang Kung’s appearance with the words, "sleek and shining as the willow in the months of spring." 26

Pei Kai characterized Wang Jung as follows: "His eyes flash like lightening beneath a cliff." 27


27Ibid., 179. Translation from Richard B. Mather, A New Account of Tales of the World, 310.
This method of commentary and language are widely employed in the criticism of the Six Dynasties as well as in the poetry-talks of later times. It is notable that in the pre-Qin time, people already started to make associations between beautiful natural objects and human beings. However, the beautiful imagery was used mainly to symbolize Confucian style human "virtue" or "conduct." Liu Yiqing's approach was different. He used appealing images as simile to characterize elegant human beings in making them stand out as distinct personalities. This type of analogical commentary gradually developed into a distinctive style of Chinese poetics thereafter. Zhong Rong, Liu Xie and Sikong Tu of the Tang Dynasty are all well-known for their employment of natural imagery in their critical discourses. Their interests and practice can easily be traced back to the tradition which the New Account exemplifies. A detailed discussion of the role of imagery in the Shipin will be given in Chapter Four of this study.

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28 Poetry-talk is a form of literary criticism that consists of a critic's comments on various aspects of Chinese poetry. With impressionistic nature, this kind of criticism is usually brief, and intuitive. No sustained argument or development of ideas carries from one point to the next. See Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, 695. See Wai-Leung Wong, "Selections of Lines in Chinese Poetry-talk Criticism -- with a Comparison between the Selected Couplets and Matthew Arnold's Touchstones," in William Tay, China and the West: Comparative Literature Studies (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1980), 33.

A final point we have to mention is that some rhetorical techniques used in the New Account have developed into important literary concepts in the Six Dynasties and subsequent criticism. In the New Account, Liu Yiqing used many compounded words to describe human beings, their manner and their spirit such as: feng shen (personal airs or spirit), feng yun (style and tone), shen yun (spirit and tone), xing qing (personal nature and emotions), si zhi (exquisite or fine thinking), gu qi (spiritual and aesthetic force). These were subsequently used in literary criticism and art appreciation and correspondingly their connotation expanded. In their literary criticism both Zhong Rong and Liu Xie use either directly or with changes some of the expressions found in the New Account. After their use by such influential literary critics, these expressions became essential to later critical discourse.

In general, the "personality appraisal" at its first appearance was closely linked to ranking of officials but later developed as relatively independent discourse. Its appraisal of personality, personal disposition and physical appearance for aesthetic ends proved to be crucial in the evolution of the literary criticism of the Six Dynasties. The contribution of the "personality appraisal" according to Li Zehou lies in its shaping and facilitating the methodology for literary criticism and art appreciation, which distinguished aesthetic appreciation
from pure theoretical reasoning. It was also a valuable source from which aesthetic concepts could form and develop.\textsuperscript{10}

There were two other important issues which influenced the development of literary theory during the Six Dynasties. They were the famous debates on yan - yi\textsuperscript{135} (language and meaning) and on wen - bi (literature and writing). Since they had considerable impact on the development of literary theory, I shall deal with them in detail on the following discussion.

\textbf{Language and Meaning}

The awareness of the paradox of language can be traced back to the "Appended Words to the Book of Changes" (\textit{Zhouyi-Xici\textsuperscript{136}}). Wherein a most frequently quoted dictum goes: "Writing does not exhaust words; words do not exhaust meaning."\textsuperscript{11} Similarly, the ancient thinker and philosopher, Zhuang Zi, claims:

\begin{quote}
What the world values as speech are books. Books are nothing more than words; words have something that it valued. What is valued in words is meaning; meaning is derived from something. That from which meaning is derived cannot be transmitted in language. Yet the world, because it values language, transmits books.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, Vol.2, 97.

\textsuperscript{11}Liu Fengzhang, \textit{Zhouyi jizhu}. (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1982), 80.
Although the world values them, I shall still think they are not worth valuing, because what the world values is not valuable. Therefore, what can be seen when one looks are forms and colours; what can be heard when one listens are names and sounds. How lamentable that people of the world should think that forms, colours, names, and sounds are adequate to capture the natures of things! If indeed forms, colours, names, and sounds are not adequate to capture their natures, then one who knows does not speak and one who speaks does not know. Yet how could the world know this?\(^{12}\)

Zhuang Zi fully realizes the inadequacy of language, but remarks also how people give weight to the power of language. Nevertheless, his final emphasis is on its failings. Here and elsewhere Zhuang Zi repeatedly voiced his concern that meaning is poorly conveyed by language. But this emphasis on the inadequacy of language is only one side of the debate and some later literati did hold ideas to the contrary. Ouyang Jian\(^{33}\) (?-A.D.300) of the Wei (220-265) had the opinion that words do exhaust meaning. Scholars generally believe that there was insufficient evidence to support Ouyang's view. In fact, Ouyang "raises more problems than he solves,"\(^ {33}\) and his arguments do not constitute a valid refutation of the dictum "words do not exhaust meaning." Some other thinkers during this period of

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\(^{33}\)James J.Y. Liu, Language--Paradox--Poetics, 32.
time such as Xun Can and Wang Bi also became involved in this debate.

This awareness of the paradox of language inevitably affected the contemporary literary theory especially that of poetics. The renowned scholar of Chinese literature Yuan Xingpei has pointed out that since poetry is more about "impression, emotion, imagination -- the kind of imagistic thinking and psychological process, it is even harder to express it fully through language." This paradox of language constantly troubled poets and critics, whereas the awareness of the dialectic relationship between language and meaning nevertheless enlightened more critical thinking. Lu Ji wrote in the preface to his Wenfu (Rhymeprose on Literature):

Whenever I compose a literary work myself, I perceive the nature [of writing] even more keenly, constantly worried that my ideas may not match things or that my words may not capture my ideas, for the difficulty lies not in knowing how, but in being able to do it.

Lu Ji is fully aware of the problem in using language to convey his intended meaning, but he still engaged in the difficult task. In fact, the whole Wenfu is an attempt and a

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34Yuan Xingpei, Zhongguo shige yishu yanjiu (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1987), 84.

successful one, we may say, to bring to light the laws governing the art of writing. Lu Ji’s writing turned out to be most meaningful and inspiring to later scholars of literature, which subtly shows the paradoxical nature of Lu Ji’s own words in an interesting way.

Zhong Rong is the earliest critic who tries to play on the paradox of language. Putting forward his famous definition of the poetic device xing (stimulus), he wrote: "when words come to an end but meaning lingers on, it is xing." This definition typified the maturity of the Chinese poetics at this time. It showed that the critics not only were aware of the paradox of language and were perplexed by it, but were also willing to take the advantage of this paradox. Their poetics might not emerge at a purely conscious level, however, their attempt -- working on the paradoxical relation between words and meanings in writing -- turned out to be a conscious one. It is this consideration of the relation between words and meanings that developed into the most distinctive and influential style of Chinese poetics. For this I shall give a detailed account in Chapter Four of this study.

\[36\text{Shipin, I.}\]
Finally, there is the very important discussion in the Six Dynasties -- the discussion on "literature and writing." We shall see how it nurtured the literary theory of that time.

The tendency to define the term wen⁰, in the sense of "literature" was not prevalent until the Six Dynasties period. From the period of pre-Qin to the Han Dynasty, wen remained a very general and extensive concept. The empirical decrees and regulations could be called wen; the memorials and remonstrations to the throne were called wen; the classics and scholarly works and essays were called wen; even the moral attitude toward writing could be called wen. In sum, almost all the written words and writings were called wen.⁷ Some Chinese literary historians characterized this "the most generalized and miscellaneous concept of wen." This situation remained unchanged until the Six dynasties period. Scholars started a conscious effort to differentiate wen and bi⁸ (literally means "writing brush") from that time on. Two scholars played significant roles in the "wen and bi" discussion, Fan Ye⁹ and Yan Yanzhi¹⁰.

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⁸ Ibid.
Fan Ye (398-445) might be considered among the earliest scholars who tried to distinguish wen from bi. He held the opinion that the distinction of the two lay in a formal feature--rhyme. Writings that were composed with rhyme should be called wen, and those without rhyme should be considered bi. He further indicated that it was more difficult to compose rhymed wen than unrhymed bi.

Yan Yanzhi (384-456) made a more detailed distinction not only between wen and bi but among wen, bi, and yan (words). He advocated that the difference of the three depend upon the degree of the literary embellishment. Writings employing rhyme as well as embellished language were called wen; those with only embellished language were called bi; and those containing only direct exposition but no embellishment at all were called yan. This distinction based on both auditory effect and embellishing rhetoric indicated the evolution of the concept of wen. It had started to move toward what we call "literature" in the modern sense. But more interesting was the fact that Yan Yanzhi maintained the classics belonged to the category of yan, writings without embellishment. It is obvious enough that Yan

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19 Ibid., Vol.1, 207-208.
20 Ibid., 208.
41 Ibid., Vol.1, 208-209.
Yanzhi’s criterion of categorization went beyond that of the tradition according to which the classics should always be in the forefront as example for any category of writings. Indeed, the classics were taken as the very standard of writing.

In my view, the important question here is not whether the distinction of wen and bi made by Fan Ye, Yan Yanzhi and their contemporaries is precise or not. What seems most surprising is the effort itself to make such distinction. This constitutes a conscious foray into the ontology of literature and the problems associated with it. The distinction made by those ancient pioneers might have been in a primitive stage, but it yielded a meaningful expedition into the question for later theorists. Only with the conscious effort to search for distinctions between literature and non-literature, and between the unique characteristics and vocabularies of literature and criticism can we say that literary theory began developing to become a substantial and completely independent enterprise.

Taking all the above into consideration, we may conclude, it is the collective force of the "profound learning," the "personality appraisal," the various debates on "language and meaning" as well as "wen and bi" that nurtured and fostered the literary theory of the Six Dynasties. It is with a view of this general cultural and theoretical background in mind, we can have
a better understanding of Zhong Rong’s *Shipin* -- a product of the aesthetic awareness of the Six Dynasties.
### Endnotes (Introduction)

1. Zhong Rong 钟嵘
2. Shipin 诗品
3. wuyan shi 五言诗
4. Shi daxu 《诗大序》
5. Dianlun lunwen 《典论论文》
6. Lu Ji 陆机
7. Wenfu 《文赋》
8. Xiao Tong 萧统
9. Wenxuan xu 《文选序》
10. Liu Xie 刘勰
11. Wenxin diaolong 《文心雕龙》
12. Lu Xun 鲁迅
13. xuanxue 玄学
14. Wang Bi 王弼
15. He Yan 何晏
16. Tang Yongtong 汤用彤
17. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒
18. wuxing
五行

19. dao
道

20. renwu pinzao
人物品藻

21. Cao Pi
曹操

22. Cao Cao
曹操

23. Renwu zhi
《人物志》

24. yin-yang
阴阳

25. Gentle yet upright, and docile yet strong, these are the virtues of wood...
是故温直而抚毅，木之德也。
则塞而弘毅，金之德也。
愿慕而理敬，水之德也。
宽柔而柔立，土之德也。
简畅而名理，火之德也。
虽体变而无穷，犹依乎五质。

26. All men of partial abilities have their limitations...
夫偏材之人，皆有所短。故直之失也，许。刚之失也，厉。
和之失也，柔。介之失也，拘。夫直者不许，无以成其直；
既悦其直，不可非其许；许也者，直之征也。刚者不厉，无
以济其刚；既悦其刚，不可非其厉；厉也者，刚之征也。和
者不柔，无以保其和；既悦其和，不可非其柔。柔也者，和
之征也。介者不拘，无也守其介；既悦其介，不可非其拘；
拘也者，介之征也。然有短者，未必能长也；有长者，必以
短为征。是故观其征之所短，而其材之所长可知也。

27. Liu Yiqing
刘义庆

28. Rendan pian
《任诞篇》
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Chapter One

PRAGMATIC PERCEPTION OF POETRY AND ZHONG RONG’S VIEW

The Pragmatic View

The pragmatic perception of poetry flourished from the pre-Qin period through the Han Dynasty and regained its strength later in the Song Dynasty. Instead of seeing poetry as primarily an aesthetic entity, the pragmatic perception regards poetry as a vehicle to fulfil political, moral and educational goals. This viewpoint dominated Chinese literary thinking for centuries and its far-reaching influence cannot be ignored even in the modern time. As commonly accepted, Confucius and the orthodox Confucianism were the initiator and initiative force of this pragmatic perception of poetry.

Confucius

Confucius’ views on poetry are mainly reflected in his Analects (Lunyu§). Although his commentary focuses on the Classic of Poetry (Shijing), his thoughts were developed along the line by the later Confucian school to refer to all literature in general.
Here is Confucius' longest remark on the usage of the *Shi-jing*:

Young men, why do you not study poetry? It can be used to inspire, to observe, to make you fit for company, to express grievances; near at hand, [it will teach you how] to serve your father, and [looking] further, [how] to serve your sovereign; it also enables you to learn the names of many birds, beasts, plants, and trees.¹

It would be beneficial to know what Confucius means by "to inspire" (*xing*²), "to observe" (*guan*³), "to be fit for company" (*qun*⁴), and "to express grievances" (*yuan*⁵) in order to grasp the core of Confucius' view on poetry. According to Zhu Xi⁶⁶, *xing* is *gan fa yizhi*⁷, which means "to get inspiration of aspiration and ideas."² Reading a poem one may associate one's own situations with that in the poem and further get enlightenment of some sort of truth. There are many illustrations of this point in the *Analects*.

"To observe" (*guan*), was explained by Zheng Xuan⁸ as to "observe the rise and decline of moral customs." Zhu Xi inter-

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² Cited in Cai Zhongxiang et. al., *Zhongguo wenxue lilun shi*, vol.1, 18.
interpreted it as "observe the success and failures [of government]." The observer however may not necessarily be the ruler. Anyone with concern should also be able to find out the political situation and local mores in a region from the poems.

"To be fit for company" was annotated by Kong Anguo as "to discuss and deliberate in company," that is, by the use of poetry, one can get refinement in one's speech and better reasoning in discussion with others.

Kong Anguo interpreted "to express grievances" as "grievances against the government." This interpretation is consistent with Confucius' urge that the way to serve one's ruler is "not to cheat him but to point out his mistakes." (lun-yu.xianwen). As long as the proper poems were quoted while expressing grievances it would be acceptable.

These four concepts -- xing, guan, qun and yuan -- have been regarded as the most representative and important view of Confucius toward poetry. And they have been quoted repeatedly throughout the history as canonic precedent for judging poetry.

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3See James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 110.

4Cited in Cai Zhongxiang et al., Zhongguo wenxue lilun shi, vol.1, 18.

5Ibid., vol.1, 18.
A close look at these four concepts may lead one to conclude that Confucius was not concerned with poetry but rather the use to which it was put. What Confucius provided to young people was a guidance on how to read poetry and how to make proper use of it. These four concepts indicate four pragmatic functions of poetry. They seem different in appearance but are actually interlocking aspects of the ultimate function of poetry, that is to set one on his way to serve his father, and further or finally to serve his ruler.

In addition to these four functions of poetry, Confucius also made comments in the Lunyu in which he regards poetry as a fountain of knowledge and an important tool in the exchange of ideas. By learning poetry, one can more effectively communicate with others and thus accomplish his task. Confucius once said to his son Bo Yu: "If you don't study the Shijing, you are unable to speak properly." On another occasion, he questioned:

What use is it for a man to be able to recite the three hundred poems [of the Shijing] by heart if, although he has learned so many [poems], when he is entrusted with work in the government he does not know how to carry it out, or when he is sent abroad on a
mission he is unable to answer questions on his own account?'

Confucius objects to a superficial learning of the *Shijing*. He sees the importance of the *Shijing* as essential equipment for a civil servant to carry out his official duty. It is also an aid to diplomacy, as a model for proper speech on difficult occasions.

Some scholars have considered Confucius a capable literary critic⁸. Objecting to this view, Donald Holzman has correctly pointed out:

There can be no doubt as to the importance Confucius accorded to the *Shijing*; but there can be no doubt either as to the extra-literary importance he accorded it: the *Shijing* was important not as a work of literature, but as a tool of diplomacy, an extra-literary guide to morality and an aid to social living...⁹

I do not conceive the necessity here to argue whether Confucius is or is not a capable literary critic since every exposition is conditional. Confucius was living more than two

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thousand years ago and it is not appropriate to use modern standards of literary criticism to judge him. However, it is important to ask why Confucius interprets the poems in the *Shijing* in the way he does.

Confucius devoted his entire life to the effort to restore the rites of the early Zhou Dynasty (1100-722 B.C.). What constantly occupied Confucius' mind, was a benevolent ruler, good social order and a virtuous people. With this in mind we can understand better why Confucius interpreted the poems in the *Shijing* in the way he did. Donald Holzman holds the belief that Confucius deliberately misinterpreted the poems in the *Shijing* in order to use them as moral lessons.\(^{10}\) I agree with Holzman that Confucius did misinterpret some poems in the *Shijing* but doubt he did so deliberately. I would rather propose that, the immediate social, moral crisis of his times were what commanded his attention. As he himself once said: "The benevolent see benevolence, the wise see wisdom."\(^{512}\) These "extra meanings" might be what he saw from his standpoint.

The Confucian viewpoint on literature came to be regarded as orthodoxy in Chinese literary criticism. Its influence on later criticism was profound. Although there are many schools

of literary theories from late Han Dynasty onward, the orthodox Confucian literary view remained dominant.

**Great Preface**

Another major critical text on poetry in the earlier period is the "Great Preface to the Shijing." It is generally believed to have been written by Wei Hong of the first century A.D. and is regarded as a summary of the pre-Qin Confucianist view on poetry. It has generated enormous debates and discussions among the scholars throughout each historical period and as well exerted tremendous influence on the subsequent literary criticism.

Modern scholars have been troubled constantly by the text of the "Great Preface." They have found it "a difficult and sometimes confusing text," its argument "allusive," moving abruptly "from one subject to another" and "the connections between points are somewhat weak," and it has presented "the most glaring non-sequiturs." These complaints may be legiti-

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12Ibid., 97.

imate to a certain extent. However, despite this allusiveness, the central theme of the "Great Preface" is actually quite obvious. The thematic thread that runs through the whole text is, according to the Chinese literary theorist Guo Shaoyu that "poetry must serve the political purpose of the ruling class." With this thematic direction, it spelt out the political and social functions of poetry and placed emphasis on the close tie between poetry and politics. Thus it further carried out Confucius's proposal that poetry should "serve one's father and the ruler." Let us give a closer look at how the "Great Preface" puts forward its main theme.

The "Great Preface" at the very beginning provided an elaboration of an influential passage in the Book of Documents, which is commonly regarded as the earliest commentary on poetry in China. The original passage explains the relationship between poetry and "intent of the heart" or mind. The harmony between songs and words, and between tones and intervals is also considered. the "Great Preface" says:

"Poetry is where the intent of the heart [or mind] goes. Lying in the heart [or mind], it is "intent;" when uttered in words, it is "poetry." When an emotion stirs inside, one expresses it in words; finding this inadequate, one sighs over it; not

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1Guo Shaoyu, ed. Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), vol.1, 68.
content with this, one sings it in poetry; still not satisfied, one unconsciously dances with one's hands and feet.\textsuperscript{15}

This touched upon the expressive aspect of poetry by linking the intent (or emotions) of the poet with the poem. Unfortunately, the "Great Preface" did not further develop this idea. On the contrary, its emphasis shifted to the didactic and political functions of poetry soon after the above frequently quoted and celebrated statement.

The emphasis on the moralistic use of poetry is not a pure invention of the "Great Preface" but a continuation from earlier times when "the former kings used it to make permanent [the tie between] husband and wife, to perfect filial reverence, to deepen human relationships, to beautify moral instruction, and to improve social customs."\textsuperscript{16} We are not informed on how the former kings used poetry to inspire their people and thus establish the perfect social order. However, Guo Shaoyu's annotation on this point may provide us with an answer. Guo indicated that music and poetry were from a same origin in the beginning in China. During their development, they have been

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 63. Translation from James J.Y. Liu, in \textit{Chinese Theories of Literature}, 69.

always connected to each other. For illustration, Guo quoted us a relevant paragraph in the Book of Rites:

Music is what sages loved. It can be used to purify common people's hearts, it deeply moves them and transforms their mores and custom. Because of this, our former kings endeavour to promote musical education. (*Li jí yué jí* [814])

Obviously, this specifies the didactic usage of music. This passage and that in the "Great Preface" have some parallel meaning. They can mutually explicate each other. 16

The "Great Preface" did not stop here, it further pointed out an effective way with which the political and ethical order in society can be better established.

The one above uses *fēng* [air/moral influence] to transform those below, and those below use *fēng* [airs/admonition] to criticize the one above; when the main intent is set to music and the admonition is indirect, then the one who speaks does not commit any offense, while it is enough for the one who listens to take warning. Therefore, it is called *fēng* [airs/moral influence/admonition]. 19


This suggests the kind of communication and interaction between a ruler and his subjects. Not only must a ruler use poetry as a device to influence and morally transform his subjects, the subjects in turn were also bearing responsibilities to remind and assist the ruler to keep the social order with the aid of poetry. Of course, the remonstrance provided from below should be indirect and subtle because the whole purpose is to help the ruler to maintain the "kingly way" (wangdao), "the rites and righteousness" (liyi), "political/moral education" (zhengjiao), "the good politics" (zhengzhi) and "social customs" (minsu) as the "Great Preface" proclaimed.

Reading through the "Great Preface", we see clearly that it concentrates on the conduct of two basic units of society, "the family" and "the government;" and it is concerned with the relationship of the two parts of the state, the ruler and the subject. The central theme thus remains that poetry as a means and device can be used to fulfil the greater political and ethical purposes since like music, poetry has the power to move the readers and effects their moral attitudes. Therefore however elusive the arguments in the "Great Preface" seem to be, it is consistent in its central theme.

Zhu Ziqing observes a connection between the "Great Preface" and Confucian concepts of poetry. He believes the func-
tions of poetry the "Great Preface" emphasized were: "To make permanent [the tie between] husband and wife, to perfect filial reverence, to deepen human relationships, to beautify moral instruction, and to improve social customs" have been developed from Confucius' concepts "to inspire, to observe, to make you fit for company, to express grievances." Confucius' famous conclusion that poetry should be used to serve one's father and one's ruler is too a source for the "Great Preface" to draw its ideas.  

With the increasing influence of Confucius, the pragmatic concept of poetry or literature in general reached its full development in the Han Dynasty. Particularly noticeable during the reign of Emperor Wu (141-87 BC), Confucianism was recognized as the orthodox ideology -- an effort of Dong Zhongshu, (ca.175-ca.105 BC), a Confucian theorist.

At a time when Confucianism achieved its status of supremacy, its didactic and transforming theory was also highly esteemed, which probably explains why the "Great Preface" came to the fore with its pragmatic perception of poetry.

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The "Great Preface" has stimulated much discussion. Almost all the renowned scholars in Chinese history have given their account of it. This indicates the important position that the "Great Preface" holds in the history of Chinese literary theory.

Yang Xiong

Yang Xiong, an influential Han adherent to the pragmatic perception of literature, was a Confucian scholar, literary theorist and rhymeprose (fu) writer. As a court literary man, he was engaged in elevating the classics as the supreme model for all writing:

Books, which do not conform to the style of the classics are non-books and words which do not conform to the style of the classics are non-words, for these are useless.\(^{21}\)

In this way, Yang Xiong set up a simple arbitrary factor to evaluate a work -- its faithfulness to Confucianism; he rejected the qualities of individual writings.

In his own practice of rhymeprose, Yang Xiong claimed in the prefaces of four of his major fu that his purpose in writing

was to "provide admonition." Originally, Yang Xiong admired Sima Xiangru's fu. He praised Sima's talents and imitated his style. However, Yang Xiong later criticized Sima's fu because he felt that, though they were "written in beautiful style, lengthy and descriptive, they had little use." (Fayan junzi\textsuperscript{622}) He held a similar view towards his own fu. He was very fond of writing fu when he was young. His "Fu of the Sweet Spring" was written as an indirect criticism of Emperor Xiao Cheng's\textsuperscript{623} extravagance. However, Yang Xiong found out the fu did not make the Emperor realize his mistakes at all -- he continued with his palace construction. The fu form could not fulfil the utmost purpose of admonition because, as Yang Xiong believed, its exuberant style simply distracted the reader. For this reason Yang Xiong decided to give up writing them. He later described the fu form as an unworthy "petty skill like the carving of insects," and claimed "a mature man would not do it again" (Fayan wuzi).\textsuperscript{624} 22

It is obvious that the pragmatic motif in writing indeed affected Yang Xiong's attitude towards literature. His remark that writing fu was a "petty skill like the carving of insects" has been taken up repeatedly, especially by Confucian moral-

\textsuperscript{22}Yangzi Fanyan, 4. Yang Xiong's different attitudes towards fu was also mentioned by Guo Shaoyu, Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan, vol.1, 96.
istic critics whenever they disapproved of a particular work. For example, the Tang Dynasty poet Wang Bo (648-675), one of the "four masters of the Early Tang," used Yang Xiong's words to attack Lu Ji's poetic view that "poetry traces (or originates from) emotions and is ornate," and "rhymeprose (fu) describes objects and is limpid." Wang Bo says:

Where a superior man exerts his mind and labours his spirit, he should aim at the great and far-reaching and not merely at "tracing emotions" and "describing objects;" petty skills comparable to the carving of insects."

What is the "great and far-reaching" then? As Wang Bo proclaims: It is "to promote righteousness, to correct immorality." If one cannot fulfil this in one's writing, he should just stop writing, as Yang Xiong did with the fu."

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24 Cited in Luo Genze, Zhongguo wenxue pipingshi (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), vol.2, 118). Translation from James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 28; Slightly revised by this writer. Here and elsewhere I have used existing translations of both the Shipin and of secondary sources. In many cases, I have altered them by changing no more than a word or two to match my translations of technical terms or occasionally a phrase to fit the point being made at the time. By so doing I also try to call attention to other studies and sometimes to emphasize differences of interpretation.

For Yang Xiong as well as Wang Bo, writing is not an end in itself. Its importance lies mostly in its function to give admonition or to foster morality. Violating this basic principle, a writer’s works should be regarded as worthless. What we are hearing here is an echo of the "Great Preface."

Zhi Yu

Another noteworthy person in the history of Chinese literary criticism is Zhi Yu26 (?-311), a Jin Dynasty scholar. Zhi Yu is a figure between past and future for he adhered mainly to the Confucian tradition and held the pragmatic view towards literature yet his remarks on modes of writing have inspired later scholars, especially Zhong Rong.26

Zhi Yu holds the belief that literature of different kinds were created primarily to meet practical needs. In the very beginning of his famous essay, "Discourse on the Different Traditions in Literature," he states:

Literature [wenzhang] is that by which we manifest the signs above and below [i.e., in heaven and on earth], clarify the order of human relationships, exhaust

principles, and fully understand human nature, in order to investigate the suitability of all things.\textsuperscript{27}

He continues:

When the goodness of kings flowed, then the poetry was composed. When accomplishments reached their utmost, then hymns began.\textsuperscript{28}

Not only was literature obliged from the very beginning to meet practical ends, its functions by and large were political and ethical. Above all, it was a response to the ethics and accomplishments of the kings.

Zhi Yu too had his standards for good literature. First of all, good literature must follow the examples of the classics. He praised Ban Gu’s\textsuperscript{27} and Shi Cen’s\textsuperscript{28} hymns for they are similar in both style and idea to the Hymn of Lu (Lu song)\textsuperscript{29} in the Shijing. He praised Yang Xiong’s Hymn of Zhao Chongguo\textsuperscript{30}, because it had the style of a hymn but contained elements of the ya\textsuperscript{31} style of the Shijing. Zhi Yu criticized the five-word poetry which began to flourished during his time. He admitted

\textsuperscript{27}Zhi Yu, in Quan shanggu sandai quinhan sanguo liuchao wen (Taipei: Shijie shuju, n.d.) Vol. 4. Translation is from James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 20.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid. Translation from Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery, 63.
that the form was more intricate but was not "orthodox in the sound." He considered that the four-word style alone could be called orthodox, it belonged to "the sound of elegance" (yayin zhi yun, siyan wei zheng).  

Secondly, a good work should not "violate the great principle and be harmful for the political /moral education" (bei dati er hai zhengjiao). He commented on Mei Cheng's "Qifa" fu with approval for though it was written with elegant words, the element of admonition was not overshadowed. On the other hand, he condemned some fu of his day because they violated the proper course of literature and damaged the political and the didactic elements.

Zhi Yu appreciated the "Fu of the Ancient" for they were "based on emotions and reason while allusion played only a secondary role." Just as our hope for a less didactic view of literature is raised, Zhi Yu concludes that the great beauty of the "Fu of the Ancient" lies in its starting "from the emotion and stopping at propriety and rightness." The principle of the "Great Preface" is firmly emphasized once again.

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25Ibid.
26Ibid.
27Ibid.
28Ibid.
There was in the literary criticism of earlier Six Dynasties, a change of tone to stress the aesthetic merit of literature and its specificity, which can be found in essays of Cao Pi and Lu Ji. Zhi Yu, on the contrary, still insisted on the conventional moral, didactic emphasis of literature and objected to any style that did not conform to that of the classics. This, I believe, nevertheless reflected the complexity in the sphere of literary thinking of that age. But when we understand that Zhi Yu was an official of Rites and dedicated his life to restoring ancient ritual, we can see why he held the view of poetry and literature that he did.32

What we have reviewed above represents a critical tradition that dominated Chinese literary thinking for ages. The critics under this tradition were not able to perceive poetry as an autonomous entity but believed instead the value and beauty of poetry resided primarily in its uses as a powerful tool to fulfil political and didactic goals. Confucius, as is commonly accepted, bears the responsibility for this tradition. Donald Holzmann suggests an explanation of Confucius' attitude toward poetry:

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Confucius was, after all, a man of his times and his interests were inevitably moulded by the extraordinarily urgent moral, social, and political crises that beset his contemporary China.  

As a philosopher, thinker and educator, Confucius was probably accustomed to see only the significant role poetry played in the political and didactic program he designed to save the state (I have discussed this issue a little earlier in this chapter). However, when we recognize Confucius as the initiator of the pragmatic theory we should not overlook other possibilities that contributed to such a powerful tradition. For example, from the very beginning, the broad, general concept wen and its use created obstacles for specific literary theories to take shape (see "Literature and Writing" in Introduction).

In this regard, there is another matter worth our attention. It is the subject of man. What was the ancient concept towards man and man's life and how did this concept develop? This has everything to do with critical views of literature. Donald Holzman has put it this way:

As long as man's life was regarded as something exclusively state-centred, as long as man remained

almost exclusively a political animal in China, literary criticism stayed pretty much as Confucius left it.\textsuperscript{14}

I would also add: as long as man's thought was exclusively dominated by a single school of thought, orthodox Confucianism, for example, literary criticism could hardly be a thing in itself. That probably explains why the collapse of the Han Empire and the diversity in modes of thought brought about the new atmosphere in literature and literary criticism, which has always been remembered as the "literary awareness."\textsuperscript{15}

Zhong Rong's View of Poetry

as an Autonomous and Aesthetic Entity

The Awareness of the Difference

Zhong Rong's conception of poetry is in line with the general Six Dynasties awareness of the aesthetics of literature. It has best been illustrated on his comments of Cao Zhi's\textsuperscript{16} poetry.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, 39.

\textsuperscript{15}The expression is drown from Li Zehou. In his work, \textit{The Path of Beauty}, Li writes: Literary awareness" is an aesthetic concept that refers not to literature alone. In other arts, especially painting and calligraphy, such an awareness also began in the Wei and Jin and manifested itself in much the same way, that is in the tendency to stress, study and discuss creative laws and aesthetic form." See his \textit{The Path of Beauty} (Beijing: Morning Glory, 1987), 131.
After acknowledging Cao Zhi’s excellence in his poetic temperament, diction, sentiment and style, Zhong Rong states:

Verily, in poetry [wenzhang\textsuperscript{37}] prince Ssu of Chen (Ts‘ao Chih) is like the Duke of Chou and Confucius in the human ethics; [renlur\textsuperscript{38}] dragon and phoenix among those with scales and feathers, the zithers and pan-pipes among musical instruments, the embroidered sacrificial garments among the products of women’s handicraft.\textsuperscript{39}  

Zhong Rong praises Cao Zhi’s poetry very highly and considers it to be comparable to all the excellent achievements of the world, be they significant human ethics, beautiful inhabitants of the animated world or the refined articles of human artistic effort.

There is another aspect of this comment that deserves our attention. We see that Zhong Rong is most clearly aware of the difference between poetry and human ethics as two separate entities. Sounding rather like a non-problem for the modern reader, this was still a somewhat perplexing issue in Zhong Rong’s time which lacked a clear distinction between pure literature (as we understand it today) and writings, or useful literature which included treatises essentially on human ethics

that were cultivated by Confucius. At a time, when Confucius was still regarded by many as the source of inspiration and wisdom, as the standard of the all-embracing wen or wenzhang, it is remarkable for Zhong Rong to differentiate between wenzhang and renlun, and to compare the poet Cao Zhi to the human saint, Confucius.

We may recall at this point what has been mentioned earlier in the Introduction of this study, wen in Pre-Qin time is a very general and all-embracing term. It denoted at once the meaning of culture, scholarship, civilization, writing or sometimes cultural refinement or outward embellishment. During Han times, literature was still perceived largely as an inherent part of learning and it did not designate the meaning of belles lettres but, instead, learning, scholarship, erudition and education. However, starting from this time, the word, wen, sometimes compounded as wenzhang, took on a "narrower" and "purer" conception of "literature," and a meaning distinct from culture and learning was gradually emerging.

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The Six Dynasties period is an important transitional period in regard to the concept of wen or wenzhang. On the one hand, there already occurred the famous debate of wen and bi (Literature and writing) in the attempt to distinguish literature from non-literature and even prior to this there were collective efforts of the Cao brothers and Lu Ji to promote the status of literature and give it more specific definition. However, on the other hand, the term wen or wenzhang had not yet acquired the exclusive meaning of literature in the sense of belles lettres. This can be witnessed from the elaboration of the prominent literary critic Liu Xie on wenzhang:

The writings of the Sages and worthy men are called in general by the name wenzhang (or, embellished pattern). What is this, if it is not embellishment? (qing cai)

Wenzhang thus is a name for the important writings of the sages and worthy men. By going through Liu Xie's work, we can see that the wenzhang of the sages and worthy men he refers to are mainly the "five classics," namely, the Book of Change, the Book of History, the Book of Poetry, the Book of Rites, and the Spring and Autumn.

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39 Wenxin diaolong zhu (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1960), 537. Hereafter referred to as Wenxin diaolong.

40 See Liu Xie's "Zongjing" in Wenxin diaolong.
The Jin scholar Zhi Yu gave his opinion of wenzhang in his "Discourse on the Different Writings:"

Wenzhang is that by which one makes known images above and below, clarifies the principles of human relationships, probes meaning thoroughly, and exhausts all of human nature, so as to examine the proper order of the myriad phenomena. When the goodness of kings flowed, then the poetry was composed. When accomplishments reached their utmost, then hymns began. When virtue and merit were established, then they were made known in inscriptions (ming⁴⁴). When admirable men died, then dirges (lei⁴³) were collected. Sacrificial priests presented words, and officials criticized the over-sights of kings⁴¹.

A concept with such generality and endowed with ethical functions, wenzhang seems to refer to all the writings that come to serve specific pragmatic purposes. Although Zhi Yu's work was recognized by scholars of ancient and modern times as an admirable effort for its differentiation of diverse literary genres, we could hardly sense here that poetry is a separate entity of its own, probably, at most a moral response to the virtuous conduct of kings. This can be seen more clearly in his definitions of the three poetic modes, fu, bi and xing, which shall be dealt with a bit later.

⁴¹Zhi Yu, in Quan shanggu sandai, Vol. 4. Translation from Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, 163; revised by this writer.
We have seen that, traditionally, poetry was never treated as an independent realm, rather a useful tool that could be used to meet pragmatic ends. It was therefore assumed to function accordingly. Poetry, the *Shijing*, was indeed held high in Han times and was assigned to the category of the Confucian *jing xue* -- the "scriptural scholarship." In that extreme circumstance, "every sentence in the *Shijing* was entrusted the duty and function of justifying all *fengsu* (custom) and *zhengjiao." With this background in mind, we appreciate Zhong Rong's awareness of the difference between poetry and human ethics better.

Zhong Rong's awareness of the intrinsic qualities and functions of poetry is revealed in his objection to the over application of allusions and references in poetry. There was a tendency during the Qi and Liang periods (479-558) of the Southern Dynasties to use excessive historical allusions in poetry, thus poetic writings virtually became "book copying." Zhong Rong describes the situation this way:

[The poets of that age] did not value originality in diction but competed in employing curious allusions.

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42 Luo Genze, *Zhongguo wenxue pipingshi*, 71. See Endnote 17 for *zhengjiao*.

Since then this practice has gradually become a habit among poets, so that there are no lines in a poem without allusive phrase and no phrases without allusive words. Being cramped to the point of confinement and patched up, the verses have become extremely impaired. It is generally very rare that one comes across the poets who are able to convey spontaneous yet refined sentiments in their poems. Since their poems fail to be elegant in their own right, it may be feasible that historical allusions are added. Thus, although one is no genius, it may be possible to exhibit one’s knowledge of books.\(^{44}\)

Zhong Rong remarks on the confusion between poetic composition and the display of knowledge and learning, between creative talent and making allusion. As a result of this practice, one hardly finds any "elegant" poems but only those overburdened with allusions.

As we have seen and shall see further in the subsequent parts of this study, Zhong Rong is greatly concerned with the artistic effects of poetry, and with its spontaneous expressions as well as the elegance or "true beauty" of it. In this regard, any violation of this would be considered an "extreme impairment." To correct this and other damage done to poetry is the very reason that Zhong Rong wrote his Shipin. Zhong Rong argues:

\(^{44}\)Shipin, 23. Translation from Chu Whan Cha, "On Enquiries for Ideal Poetry -- An Instance of Chung Hung," 49; revised by this writer.
It is true that documents dealing with the ordering of the state draw upon extensive erudition about ancient matters; and in making known virtuous conduct and in writing point-counterpoint arguments and memorials to the throne, one should explore past accomplishments thoroughly. But when it comes to expressing human feeling and emotion in verse (yinyong qingxìng)\textsuperscript{[47]}, what is praiseworthy about the use of allusion (yongshi)\textsuperscript{[48]}? [The line by Hsù Kan (170-217)] "Thinking of you is like flowing water" merely relates what struck the eye. [Ts‘ao Chih’s line] "The high terrace—much sad wind" simply states what was seen. [The line by Chang Hua] "In the clear morning I climb Lung Peak" made no use of allusion. And as for [Hsieh Ling-yún’s line] "The bright moon shines on the piled snow," could this have been derived from a canonical or historical text? Examine the best expressions past and present; the majority of them are not patched or borrowed. They all derive from the direct pursuit of the subject.\textsuperscript{[49, 45]}

There are some noteworthy points in this passage. First, Zhong Rong has made an important distinction between the composition of state documents and that of poetry in terms of their different natures and functions. He maintains that it is necessary for the former to borrow more from the classics to strengthen their arguments, whereas the latter is nothing more than a natural outpouring of inner feelings, so the excessive use of allusions can only be harmful to poetry. From Zhong Rong’s practice of ranking and evaluation, one can see that he focuses mainly on the creative uniqueness of each poet's talent, skill, style and so on—but not on the thoughts and ideas carried

\textsuperscript{45}Shihipin, 21. Translation from John Timothy Wixted, "The Nature of Evaluation in the Shihipin," 240; Revised by this writer.
in the poems. This makes Zhong Rong's *Shipin* a specialized work of literary criticism rather than a collection of socio-political comments mixed with certain literary insights.

Second, through examining the outstanding poetry of the past and of his own time, Zhong Rong finds in them all a special quality (*zhi xun*) - the "direct pursuit of the subject." By promoting *zhi xun*, Zhong Rong, in fact, sets up his own aesthetic standards for poetry.

**Zhi Xun**

What is *zhi xun* or the direct pursuit of the subject then? Zhong Rong did not provide a direct answer on this point, but we may deduce his meaning from his general remarks. *Zhi xun* is obviously the antithesis of *yong shi* (excessive use of allusion) and *bu jia* (borrowing from or imitating canonical or historical texts). It has something to do with the "creative talent" of the individual poet, not his erudition in the classics.

The literal meaning of *zhi xun* is to "seek directly." Doubtless, it is the poet who must "seek directly" in his poetic creation. But what to seek? There are also indications in the above lines of Zhong Rong. The poet must seek after his emotion
and nature since those are what poetry is supposed to sing of
(yinyong qingxing)\textsuperscript{46}, something to do with Zhong Rong's understanding of the nature and function of poetry (see Chapter Two). The poet must seek what "strikes the eye" (\textit{ji mu}\textsuperscript{55}), and "what is seen" (\textit{suo jian}\textsuperscript{54}), to describe natural scenery rather than rely on "book copying." Ultimately, it is the fusion of the subjective emotion of the poet and the objective scenery that the poet ought to follow. The modern scholar Xu Wenyu\textsuperscript{55} suggested in his work on the \textit{Shipin} that \textit{zhi xun} can be explained by the Ming critic Wang Fuzhi's\textsuperscript{56} (1619-1692) famous dictum: "If it comes out of the scene and comes out of the emotion, the line will naturally be superior" (\textit{yin qing yin jing, ziran lingmiao}\textsuperscript{57}).\textsuperscript{47} By going through Wang Fuzhi's comments we can find an affinity between his views and Zhong Rong's. Wang Fuzhi says:

"Pool and pond grow with spring-time plants"
[Hsieh Ling-yun]
"Butterflies flutter in the southern gardens"
[Chang Hsieh (d.ca.307)]
"The bright moon shines on drifts of snow"
[Hsieh Ling-yun]
In each of these, what is in the mind and what is in the eye are fused together. Once they come out in language, we get a perfect sphere of pearl and the moist sensation of jade: what is essential is that in

\textsuperscript{46}\textit{Shipin}, 21.

\textsuperscript{47}Xu Wenyu. \textit{Zhong Rong Shipin Jiangshu} (Chengdu: Chengdu guji shudian, 1983), 22.
each case the poet looks to what comes from his own heart and to what meets the scene (Ching) at hand.\textsuperscript{48}

It is easy for us to see that Wang’s style of commentary derives from that of Zhong Rong. In fact, the same lines of Xie Lingyun, "the bright moon shines on drifts of snow" also appears in Zhong Rong’s discussion of zhi xun. Wang’s is a more elaborated comment but the central idea is the fusion of the internal feelings and the external scenes, and this echoes Zhong Rong’s conception of zhi xun.

Another comment of Wang Fuzhi on creative activity will also serve to illustrate Wang’s point. The Tang poet Jia Dao\textsuperscript{55} was famous for his painstaking craftsmanship in poetry writing. He once described his own creative experience as such: "Two poetic lines were written in three years; tears ran down once I read them."\textsuperscript{55} There is a vast circulating "push/knock" (tui-qiao\textsuperscript{56}) story about Jia Dao. It says once writing a poem, Jia was troubled by the problem of which verb to use in the line: "The monk pushes/knocks at the gate beneath the moon." He paced up and down on the street for long and finally ran into Han Yu (another famous poet) who suggested that "knock" would be a

better choice. The "push/knock" was used afterwards as an expression to refer to the act of deliberation.

Wang Fuzhi comments on Jia's careful weighing of verbs in his *Xitang yongri xulun*:

If the scene meets mind, then it may be "push" or it may be "knock," but it will have to be one or the other. As long as it follows from scene and follows from emotion, the line would naturally be superior. There will be none of the bother of debating the right choice.  

This too emphasizes the meeting of the inner experience and the external world. The fusion of the two will naturally result in superb poetic lines. What Wang Fuzhi indicates is that as long as a poet has actually experienced a scene and his subjective state of mind has a meeting with that scene, the right choice is made automatically. The painful striving for the word would prove unnecessary.

The common ground in Zhong Rong's *zhi xun* and Wang Fuzhi's *yin qing yin jing* is the objection to purposeful and unnatural labour in poetic writing, that is, the borrowing and patching up of allusions and historical references criticized by Zhong Rong

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49Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 462; revised by this writer.
and the painstaking craftsmanship displayed by Jia Dao. The seamless fusion of the inner and outer is central to both Zhong and Wang’s theories of creativity.

Xing, Bi, Fu

Following the differentiation he sees between poetic composition and human ethics, Zhong Rong further exemplifies his poetic theories by posing three poetic principles the poet should follow in the creative process. They are fu, bi and xing. Though an old formula, they were endowed with some innovative insights and became the essential elements in Zhong Rong’s creative apparatus.

Ideal poetry must make a proper use of the three poetic principles -- exposition (fu), comparison (bi), stimulus (xing). This emphasis on three elements for expression in poetry is a tradition in Chinese criticism. It is only in Zhong Rong’s Shipin, however, that these three terms become fully oriented towards aesthetic considerations and are discussed systematically. Fu, bi, and xing mentioned in the Rituals of Zhou were explained by Zhi Yu as follows:

An exposition (fu) is a statement that sets something forth. A comparison (bi) is a word that compares by
categorical correspondence. A stimulus (xing) is a word in which there is response.\(^5\)

Zhi Yu called fu, bi, and xing, "song-methods," as they were not applied to poetry during the Zhou period. They were used only by the "Grand Master" of court musicians to perform songs. An implicit moral application of the fu, bi, and xing elements was also implied in both the Rituals of Zhou and Zhi Yu's treatise.

The fact that fu, bi, and xing in the "Great Preface" were used with political and moral nuances was in accordance with the work's basic concept that poetry should serve political or moral ends. It first states that the former kings used poetry to adjust the relationship between husbands and wives, to foster filial and respectful behaviour by the young towards the old, to deepen human relations, improve moral education, and eradicate bad habits. It further claims:

There are six aspects to poetry. They are 'popular' [feng\(^6\)], 'serious' [ya], 'ceremonial' [song\(^6\)], 'narrative-descriptive' [fu], 'similatic' [bi] and 'associative' [xing]. The government employs the popular song [feng] to influence the people. The

\(^5\)Zhi Yu, in Quan shangqu sandai, Vol. 4. Translation from Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, 163-64.
governed employ it for the purpose of offering barbed admonition to their princes.\textsuperscript{51}

This is seen by some modern scholars as "a glimmering notion of composition technique, as distinct from content or subject matter, in terms of fu, bi, and xing."\textsuperscript{52} Even if this assumption is valid, there is no discussion in those early times as to what fu, bi, and xing indicate. Zhong Rong is the first to use these elements as specific literary terms, and discuss them extensively in a purely literary sense:

There are three principles in poetry: one is called stimulus, the second is comparison, and the third is exposition. When the words come to an end but meaning lingers on, that is a stimulus [xing]. Relying on an object as a comparison to one's intent/will is comparison [bi]. Writing about a situation directly and lodging descriptions of objects in words is exposition [fu]. By extending these three principles and using them according to circumstances, giving them body by means of inspired vigour and adorning them with colourful embellishment, one can give endless pleasure


to those who savour them and move the hearts of those who listen: this is the utmost in poetry.\textsuperscript{53} \textsuperscript{51}

This statement illustrates Zhong Rong's view of poetry as an aesthetic form. Prior to Zhong Rong, \textit{fu}, \textit{bi}, and \textit{xing} had always been used in conjunction with \textit{feng}, \textit{ya}, and \textit{song} (air, elegance, hymn) -- terms which had political overtones when they appeared in the \textit{Rituals of Zhou} and the "Great Preface." Zhong Rong, however, omitted the notions \textit{feng}, \textit{ya}, and \textit{song} in the \textit{Shipin}, and focused only on what he called the "three principles of poetry" (sanyi\textsuperscript{64}) -- \textit{fu}, \textit{bi}, and \textit{xing}. This significant omission probably comes from Zhong Rong's belief that poetry is a specific "technique" (ji\textsuperscript{65}) and it thus has its own artistic "principles" (yi\textsuperscript{66}).\textsuperscript{54} The ultimate goal of poetry is to entertain and to move the reader.

To Zhong Rong, \textit{xing} "focuses on the emotionally suggestive openendedness of the image"\textsuperscript{55} since "from the beginning the use of \textit{xing} lays in contacting an object in order to arouse a

\textsuperscript{51}\textit{Shipin}, 11. Translation from Pauline Yu, \textit{The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition}, 164; Slightly altered and pinyin added by this writer.

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Shipin}, 17.

\textsuperscript{55}Pauline Yu, \textit{The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition}, 165.
feeling, selecting it in order to invest it with meaning,"\(^5\) what Zhong Rong called "exhausting emotions and describing objects" (qiongqing xiewu\(^6\)). Bi, brings object and subject together and makes the subjective intent clearer by the use of objects. Fu, approaches the poetic topic in a somewhat more direct way. Poetry can achieve best effect only when "these three principles are applied appropriately" (zhuo er yong zhii\(^6\)).\(^7\) The didactic tone of earlier criticism is entirely absent in Zhong Rong's work; what is left is his conscious concern for the aesthetic effect of poetry.

Traditionally, the order of the three principles was always fu, bi, and xing. Zhong Rong, without giving the reason, changes the order to xing, bi, and fu. By examining his basic views of the nature and functions of poetry, we may gain insight into the reason for this change. As discussed above, Zhong Rong's poetic theory is basically reader-oriented and he is very much concerned with the affective power of poetry (see Zhong Rong's definition and discussion of xing, bi, fu). Since the strength of xing exists in its conveyance of what concrete words cannot exhaustively express, as he defines it, it is probably the most powerful means to arouse an artistic effect. As far as

\(^5\)Huang Kan's words cited in Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, 166.

\(^7\)Shipin, 11. See also Footnote 53 and Endnote 63.
I am concerned, this might be the reason for Zhong Rong to make a change in the order of *fu*, *bi*, *xing*.

The following comments also reflect his concern with the special function of *bi* and *xing*:

If one solely uses comparison (*bi*) and stimulus (*xing*), the meaning may suffer from being overly profound; if meaning is overly profound, then the words will not flow smoothly. If one only uses the method of exposition (*fu*), the meaning may suffer from being too shallow; if meaning is too shallow, then the language will not cohere. If in sport one drifts and rambles [among these methods], then one’s writing will lack moorage and will suffer from diffuseness.\(^{55}\) \(^{58}\)

He indicates here that poetry relies on *bi* and *xing* to attain its profound and implicit meaning. The direct approach of *fu* is not sufficient in this regard. Still, the proper use of the three is called upon.

It is worth noting that Liu Xie also discusses *fu*, *bi*, and *xing* in his *Wenxin diaolong*. Like Zhong Rong, Liu Xie considers describing a situation directly and depicting objects in words to be *fu*. His notions of *bi* and *xing*, however, differ from Zhong Rong’s. Liu Xie states:

Therefore, *bi* means to match, and *xing* means to aroused. What matches a meaning uses close categorical correspondence in order to indicate a situation. What arouses emotions relies on the subtle to formulate conceptions. Arouse emotions, and forms of *xing* will be established. Match a meaning, and examples of *bi* will be produced. A comparison stores up indignation to castigate with words; a stimulus links analogies to record criticisms.⁵⁹

Liu Xie regards *bi* and *xing* as pragmatic devices to be used to fulfil political goals. He uses examples from the *Shijing* to explain *bi* and *xing* modes and stresses the importance of their critical functions. He complains that from the Han Dynasty onward, "the principle of remonstrance was forgotten, and the meaning of *hsing* (*xing*) lost."⁶⁰ Clearly Zhong Rong does not place *bi* and *xing* within a moralistic framework, but focuses on their aesthetic dimensions, and was the first to apply the three terms to non-canonical poems in the five-character form.

As one reads through the many poetic theories throughout the history of Chinese poetics, Zhong Rong’s poetic conception might not be the most impressive one at the first glance. However, after observing the influential pragmatic tradition of

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⁵⁹ *Wenxin diaolong*, 601. Translation from Pauline Yu, The reading of Imagery, 165. See also translation in Yu-chung Shih, 377. I consider Yu’s translation to be more accurate.

poetics that prevailed at the time, one has to admire Zhong Rong for his "daring and taste." 61

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Endnotes (Chapter One)

1. Lunyu 《论语》
2. xing 兴
3. guan 现
4. qun 群
5. yuan 忍
6. Zhu Xi 朱熹
7. ganfa yizhi 感发意志
8. Zheng xuan 翟玄
9. Kong Anguo 孔安国
10. Lunyu.xian wen 《论语·宪问》
11. Bo Yu 伯鱼
12. renzhe jian ren, zhizhe jian zhi 仁者见仁，智者见智
13. Wei Hong 卫宏
14. Liji.yueji 《礼记·乐记》
15. wang dao 王道
16. liyi 礼义
17. zhengjiao 政教
18. zhengzhi 政治
19. minsu 民俗
20. Yang Xiong 杨雄
21. fu 赋
22. Fayan·junzi 《法言·君子》
23. Xiao Cheng 孝成
24. Fayan·wuzi 《法言·吾子》
25. Wang Bo 王勃
26. Zhi Yu 孺庚
27. Ban Gu 班固
28. Shi Cen 史芬
29. Lu Song 《鲁颂》
30. Zhao Chongguo Song 《赵充国颂》
31. ya 雅
32. yayin zhi yun, siyan wei zheng 雅音之韵，四言为正
33. Mei Sheng 枚乘
34. qifa 《七发》
35. wen
36. Cao Zhi
37. wenzhang
38. renlun
39. Verily, in poetry prince Ssu of Chen is like the Duke of Chou and Confucius in the human ethics, dragon and phoenix among those with scales and feathers...

40. bi
41. qing cai
42. ming
43. lei
44. jing xue
45. fengsu
46. [The poets of that age] did not value originality in diction but competed in employing curious allusions.

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47. yinqong qingxing
48. yongshi
49. It is true that documents dealing with the ordering of the state draw upon extensive erudition about ancient matters...
50. zhi xun
51. yong shi
52. bu jia
53. ji mu
54. suo jian
55. Xu Wenyu
56. Wang Fuzhi
57. If it comes out of the scene and comes out of the emotions, the line will naturally be superior.
58. Jia Dao
59. Two poetic lines were written in three years
Tears run down once I read them.
两句三年得，一吟双泪流。

60. tuiqiao 推敲
61. feng 风
62. song 颂

63. There are three principles in poetry...
故诗有三义焉：一日兴，二日比，三日赋。
文已尽而意有余，兴也；因物喻志，比也；
直书其事，寓言写物，赋也。宏斯三义，
酌而用之，干之以风力，润之以丹采，使
味之者无极，闻之者动心，是诗之至也。

64. sanyi 三义
65. ji 技
66. yi 义
67. qiongqing xiewu 穷情写物
68. zhuo er yong zhi 酌而用之

69. If one solely uses comparison and stimulus,
the meaning may suffer from being overly profound...
若专用比兴，意在意深，意消则词竭。
若但用赋体，意在意浮，意浮则文散，
嘻成流移，文无止泊，有芜漫之累矣。
Chapter Two

Qing (POETIC EMOTION)

Qing has been a constant theme in Chinese poetics throughout history since it is closely linked to the nature, the purpose, and attributes of literature. Qing can be translated as "emotions," "affections," or sometimes "passions." When it is compounded, a broader meaning is produced. As the comprehension of the nature and functions of literature has changed, so also the concept and the role of qing have undergone transformations in different historical periods. These transformations in turn reflect the metamorphosis of Chinese poetics.

In the opening sentence of the Shi Zhong Rong makes it very clear that qing is the key element in poetic creation. Poetry is produced when natural emotions are stimulated to a degree of seeking expression. This view of Zhong Rong represents the critical trend of the Six Dynasties since the theme of qing was touched upon in almost all the major critical works of that age. To get an overall picture of the theoretical development of the issue in question, we may trace back to earlier times to see how the concept of qing gradually enters into the

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1See Stephen Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 585-586.

2Shi, 1.
current stage of the Six Dynasties theoretical background and especially how it is reflected in the Shipin.

The authoritative "Great Preface" to the Classic of Poetry of the Han Dynasty contains the most influential statement on the topic of qing in the history of Chinese poetics. It articulates: "When an emotion stirs inside, one expresses it in words," and describes further that the increasing intensities of qing require stronger outward manifestations. That is when finding this inadequate, one sighs over it; not content with this, one sings it in poetry; still not satisfied, one unconsciously dances with one's hands and feet.\textsuperscript{3}

Thus the "Great Preface" articulates the link between emotions and poetry. This is the earliest clearly-stated pronouncement about the production of poetry, which suggests that poetry comes from the provocation of emotions. However, it does not show us how poetry is produced as a result of stirring emotions nor does it specify what kind of emotions they cue.\textsuperscript{4} What we have learned is that poetry is produced in a movement, something

\textsuperscript{3}Maoshi zhengyi, 4. Translation from James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 69.

\textsuperscript{4}However, with the continuation of the sentences we shall have a sense where the emotions are directed. They are after all responses to the social circumstance. See my discussion, "Qing as response to nature," in this chapter.
moves from latency to manifestation and poetry is produced involuntarily. Stephen Owen calls this a specialization of the poetic process in conformity to the fully established paradigm of 'inner' (nei⁴) and 'outer' (wai⁸). This becomes the ground of the psychology of poetic theory and links the movement in the production of the poem to the "extensive aspect of communication in shi (shi is said to "go far")".

This statement in the "Great Preface" has affected to a great extent later perception of qing.

The "Great Preface" also quoted from the Record of Music to reveal the correlation between the emotions revealed in poetry and the social order of the country:

The music of a well-governed world is peaceful and happy, its government being harmonious; the music of a disorderly world is plaintive and angry, its government being perverse; the music of a vanquished country is sad and nostalgic, its people being distressed.

Although this is the same statement that appears in the Record of Music, the influence it exerted on later literary thoughts was far more extensive. Had the "Great Preface"

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⁵Stephen Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 41.

⁶Maoshi zhengyi, 5. Translation from James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 63.
continued to elaborate further on the subject, it could have led to a more aesthetic-oriented discussion. Instead, it seems to have moved to a habitual practice common in the Han Dynasty to elevate a standard to regulate emotions expressed in poetry. It claims that poetry "emerges from the affections, but it goes no further than rites and moral principles."  

This criterion is very much in line with the famous dictum that Confucius pronounced about the essence of the *Classic of Poetry*: "there is no evil thought in it [the *Shijing*]." Both of them emphasize qing as subjected to Confucian li (propriety). This comment as well as the above phrases in the "Great Preface" opened the door for the Han Confucian critics to develop their particular exegesis on the emotions and thoughts presented in poetry.

About two hundred years later, Lu Ji (261-303) was the first person to reassert explicitly the aesthetic aspect of qing suggested in the "Great Preface." While differentiating the traits of various styles of writings, he states in his famous essay, *Wenfu* (Rhymeprose on Literature), that "Poetry traces (or

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8*Lunyu*, 2:2.
originates from) emotions and is ornate." Lu Ji's essay voices a dissimilar tone from the Han critical sensitivity and his words have been regarded as a touchstone and were cited for centuries. He later goes back to mention the pragmatic and moral functions of literature, saying that literature "saves [the ways of] kings Wen and Wu from falling. And it propagates moral teaching so that it will not vanish." We may assume he was here paying lip service to tradition, otherwise he expounded a two-fold theory. Albeit a rather brief comment, it simply provides one crucial account of the nature of poetry, which had been absent for decades. This is also a statement that caused much dispute and discussion afterwards.

Recognizing the role of emotion in poetic writing, the "Great Preface" had already made an association between emotions and poetry. However, it did not concentrate on the subject of qing and relegated it to a position subordinate to Confucian li. Explicitly putting emphasis on tracing qing, Lu Ji claims qing is the initiator of poetry, yet, he does not specify how it functions.

\[^a\] Wenfu, 71. Translation from James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 72.

\[^b\] See James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 113.
Further deliberations upon qing appear later in Zhong Rong’s Shipin. Zhong’s probe of qing was a continuation of the pioneering effort of the "Great Preface" and particularly of Lu Ji’s wenfu. It is, as well, a response to the call of the desire to express one’s feelings and emotions in the poetic practice of the Six Dynasties.

Compared to the poetry of previous times the Six Dynasties poetry is distinguished for its establishment of emotion and ornate style as features of primary importance. The famous poets Cao Zhi (192-232), Ruan Ji (210-263), Zuo Si (ca.250-305), and Xie Lingyun (385-433) all composed poetry with an ample outflow of emotion, a phenomenon thus has been characterised by The History of the Southern Qi as:

Singing personal nature, which is not a negligible skill [at that time]; embracing the adorned style, [the poetry] traced emotions and was ornate.11

During this period of history, poetic composition became a favoured practice among literati. The keen interest in composition as Zhong Rong described: "has been prevalent in learned

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People, especially those from the noble families were: "afraid lest their poems be inferior to those of others, spend the whole morning in altering and touching them up, and keep on groaning them until midnight." The reason for this zeal for poetic writing might be attributed to the social consideration of literary talents of the age, in which one's literary skill was essential to official and social advancement. The History of the Liang has recorded this typical situation: "in recent years, people get promoted chiefly because of their knowledge of literature and history." And we could also regard this creative yearning as a resonance of the quest for spiritual awakening and individuality in the age (see discussion in the Introduction). This was the period when five-character lyric poetry became prevalent and was undergoing great change. Many spontaneous and embellished poetic works that were highly regarded then are still appreciated and memorized even today.

The poetic tendency of the Six Dynasties in which personal feelings and emotions were the centre can be observed in another essay "On Insect Carving" (Diaochong lun) written by the

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13 Shipin, 3. Translation, ibid.

famous historian of the Liang, Pei Ziyé\textsuperscript{10} (469-530). In his essay he attacks with great anger the contemporary poetic style of "yinyong qingxing"\textsuperscript{11} (giving expression in song to one's emotions and sensibilities) and claimed it violated the principle of the Classics.\textsuperscript{15} He was in total support of the idea of the "Great Preface" that poetry should "emerge from the affections, but it goes no further than rites and moral principles." He admired the Han concept of the political function of poetry asserted in the "Great Preface" and insists that "literature must serve moral purposes and foster ethical effects." He condemned poetry of that time as "obscene writings and indecent collections."\textsuperscript{16}

Zhong Rong's concern with the poetic practice of his times took a standpoint that contrasts sharply with that of Pei. As mentioned before, Zhong Rong too, was dissatisfied with the "lack of standards" in contemporary poetry writing, but he embraced and promoted with enthusiasm the sincere and innovative poetic insight of "yinyong qingxing," that is, the expression of one's personal feelings and emotions.

\textsuperscript{15}See John Marney \textit{Liang Chien-wen Ti}, 80.

\textsuperscript{16}See Cai Zhongxiang et. al, \textit{Zhongguo wenxue lilun shi} (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1987), 222.
Throughout the Shipin Zhong Rong paid special attention to the theme of qing. He constantly uses terms as "yinyong qing-xing" (giving expression in song to one's emotions and sensibilities), "yaodang qingxing" (emotions and sensibilities being moved and stirred), "qiongqing xiewu" (exhausting one's emotions and describing the external) and "qingyu yuanshen" (the depth of one's emotions and metaphors). For Zhong Rong, the importance of qing is twofold. First, poetry is an expression of qing; and second, poetry of great appeal and beauty must contain genuine qing.

Poetry is essentially an expression of inward feelings (yinyong qingxing), not anything else. This reflects Zhong Rong's concern with the nature of poetry. This can also be observed from Zhong's differentiation between poetry and state documents, which has been discussed in "The Awareness of the difference," Chapter One of this study.

Verse in five-character lines is the most important mode of literary expression.... The five-character line is the best and sharpest tool for simple narrative, for the making of images, for describing the world that surrounds one, for the exhaustive presentation of one's feelings.17

17Shipin, 10. Translation from Siu-Kit Wong, Early Chinese Literary Criticism, 92.
It is clearly stipulated here that the most beautiful part of the five-character poetry lies in its capacity for accurate and vivid depiction of things and thorough display of emotions. And poetry is a vehicle for those individuals whose "hearts have been affected and stirred." Without putting them into poetry, their feelings will never be communicated and thus achieve release (cheng qing).

Poetry of great appeal and beauty must contain genuine emotion (gan kai zhi ci). They must be the products of moving hearts (gan dang xin ling), like the Nineteen Ancient Poems which Zhong comments upon as "striking the heart and moving the soul." They are also beautifully and sincerely written that "every word is worth a thousand piece of gold." But, as for poems which do not express genuine emotions, Zhong would only put them in the lower rank. He considers a poem of the Jin poet Miao Xi (186-245) as "making up mournful feelings" (zao ai). A similar comment is uttered by Liu Xie as he describes what the insincere poet will do: "making up feelings in order to write."

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18 Shipin, 33.  
19 Ibid.  
20 Wenxin diaolong, 538.
Carefully reading through his *Shipin* we may gain insights into the nature of Zhong Rong's viewpoint on emotions which are markedly different from the Han Confucian understanding of the topic. The following are the main characteristics of Zhong's notion of *qing*.

**Qing as Response to Nature**

Zhong Rong gives an account of the link between the natural world and one's *qing*. He says in the opening sentences of his preface to the *Shipin*:

> The cosmic energy (*qi*) sets in motion the processes of the natural world, and the changing world moves men. Their sensibilities and emotions once stirred, manifest themselves in dance and song. This manifestation illuminates the Three Powers (*san cai*) and brightens the myriad things. \(^{21}\)

Zhong Rong obviously gives weight to Nature as stimulus of emotion. He does not deny social influence on emotion, which shall be dealt with later, but here he emphasizes the correlation between external world (objects and phenomena) and the poetic subject. He believes that personal emotions are stirred

\(^{21}\) *Shipin*, 1. Translation from Chu Whan Cha, 43. Revised by this writer.
and stimulated by the external world, with the vital energy, \( qi \), as an initial force.\(^\text{22}\)

Poetic emotions arise, according to Zhong Rong, through the following process: the \( qi \), the primordial matter-energy, sets the natural world in motion and the changes in that world stir the hearts of human beings. Responding to the changes and stimulations of the natural world, the sensibilities and emotions arise. In this way, human emotions have their most natural origin. They are primarily the response (\( gan^{\text{22}} \)) of the poet to the changing world.

The term, "san cai" (three intelligences or three powers), used by Zhong refers to the triad Heaven--Earth--Man, which can be traced to the earliest Chinese philosophical text, *The Book of Changes*. It is the earliest book that contains the discussion of the relationship of the three elements "san cai:"

\(^\text{22}\)It should be noted that the \( qi \) Zhong Rong talks about in the original text refers to the kind of energy that exists in the outer world but not in human beings. In context elsewhere, \( qi \) can mean something inside human bodies, the kind of bioenergy which sustains stamina. According to Chinese cosmology, \( qi \) is "what the world is made of, the "vapour" out of which sensible things condense, primordial matter-energy. The \( qi \) brings objects and phenomena into physical existence. For a more detailed elaboration on the matter please see Adele Austin Rickett, ed. *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch’i-ch’ao*, 45-47.
Looking upward, we contemplate with its help the signs in the heavens; looking down, we examine the lines of the earth. Thus we come to know the circumstances of the dark and the light. Going back to the beginnings of things and pursuing them to the end, we come to know the lessons of birth and of death....

Since in this way man comes to resemble heaven and earth, he is not in conflict with them. His wisdom embraces all things, and his Tao brings order into the whole world; therefore he does not err. He is active everywhere but does not let himself be carried away. He rejoices in heaven and has knowledge of fate, therefore he is free of care. He is content with his circumstances and genuine in his kindness, therefore he can practice love.\textsuperscript{23}

The relation between Heaven, Earth and Man thus suggests the kind of "universal resonance" (\textit{gan ying}\textsuperscript{24}) which has been dominating Chinese thought ever since. Man is then from the very beginning in harmony with Heaven and Earth. He is bestowed upon to understand them, and obtains his full identity by their aid.

Zhong Rong's view of the correspondence between the natural world and human emotion can be compared to that in the "Great Preface", which attributes the emotional expressions in the \textit{Classic of Poetry} to the ethical and political decline of the States:

The historiographers of the States, understanding the indications of success and failure, pained by the changes in the observance of the relations of society, and lamenting the severity of punishments and of [the general] government, gave expression in mournful song to their feelings, to condemn their superiors;-- they were intelligent as to the changes of circumstances, and cherished [the recollection of] the ancient customs.24

This speaks of emotion as primarily and only moralistic responses to the social circumstance. No other kind of emotions, for example, emotions of a more personal nature have been mentioned in the "Great Preface."

Explaining the rise of various emotions, Zhong Rong seems more concerned with the changes of the external world:

Vernal breezes and springtime birds, the autumn moon and cicadas in the fall, summer clouds and sultry rains, the winter moon and fierce cold--these are what in the four seasons inspire poetic feeling.25

The cycle of the four seasons affects the poet in a way that causes emotional cycles and stimulates their creativity. This observation of Zhong Rong echoes a similar idea of Liu Xie presented in his Wenxin Diaolong:


Spring and Autumn roll round, succeeding one another, and the yin and yang principles alternately darken and brighten. When objects in the physical world change, our minds are also affected.\textsuperscript{26}

Both Zhong Rong and Liu Xie notice the linkage between the seasonal vicissitudes of nature and man's emotions. They share the understanding of the correspondence between the natural world and the human mind and emphasize the natural facet of emotion.

\textit{Qing as Expression of Personal Experience}

It should be born in mind the Han critics had a special critical approach. They habitually looked at a literary work for moral and political implications, and they tended to interpret any emotional articulation in a literary work, more specifically, a poem, as feelings of either "loyalty" of a subject toward his lord or a satirical "condemnation" of a minister toward his king. It is interesting to see the commonly regarded love poem "Guanju\textsuperscript{27}" in the \textit{Shijing} was interpreted by the "Great Preface" as praising "the virtue of the Consort of the King (hou fei

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Wenxin diaolong}, 693. Translation from Vincent Shih, \textit{The Literary Mind}, 245.\textsuperscript{27}}
The relation of the ospreys (described in the poem) is conceived of as analogous to and emblematic of the harmonious yet correct relation of the Consort and the King. While the proper attitude of the poets recommended in the "Great Preface" is to have their emotions regulated, that is to let them go "no further than rites and moral principles."

Moreover, the Han Confucianist Dong Zhongshu strongly urges: "[man must] reduce his desires and stop his feelings to respond to Heaven." Whereas Zhong Rong's concept of qing indicates a difference. By cheng qing, he seems to prefer poets vent forth their feelings and emotions naturally and unrestrainedly. The legitimacy of cheng qing is described by the Ming theorist Li Zhi in this way: "When the poet naturally expresses his emotions, he will then naturally stop where propriety permits in the end. There is no such 'propriety' to stop at beside one's personal emotions."

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27 Maoshi zhengyi, 3.
28 Steven Van Zoeren, Poetry and Personality, 89.
31 Li Zhi, "dulu fushuo," in his Fenshu, Xufenshu (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 1990), 132.
We can see from the Shipin that Zhong Rong's qing is a more personalized term. The word, "personalized," does not take the sense, that feelings and emotions revealed in a poem must not be responses to social life or one's concerns toward political incidents at all. The focal point is the purpose of poetic writing. The poet may describe either his inner subjective world or the social circumstances he is in but he is concerned with using the poetic form to express his emotions of joy or anguish, to release himself from psychological sufferings, but not using the form as an means of voicing his concerns in order to admonish the ruler and help with governing and education as encouraged in the "Great Preface." If poetry can functions as an aid at all, it is more a personal than a political aid. Zhong Rong writes in this way: "At an agreeable banquet, through poetry one express his sentiment of intimacy. When parting, one can vent his grief in verse."\(^{32}\) He continues in another paragraph:

For giving solace to those in extreme circumstances, and for relieving the distress of those living retired from affairs, there is nothing better than poetry.\(^{33}\)


The sacred function of poetry as indicated in the "Great Preface" cannot be found here and the power of poetry rests in its release of emotional turmoil. This statement of Zhong Rong is remarkably consonant with the idea of the Nineteenth Century Romantic critic John Keble who was famous for his theory about "poetry as catharsis." Keble claims that

Poetry is the indirect expression in words, most appropriately in metrical words of some overpowering emotion, or ruling taste, or feeling, the direct indulgence whereof is somehow repressed.\textsuperscript{14}

Keble believes that poetry can provide "healing relief" to emotionally depressed people and regards poets "who spontaneously moved by impulse, resort to composition for relief and solace of a burdened or over-wrought mind," as the first class of poets.\textsuperscript{35}

Although Zhong Rong uttered his viewpoint more than a millennium prior to Keble, the difference in the tone of the two critics, however, is not that great. In a similar vein, Zhong considers as first rank poets those who involuntarily voice their emotional disturbances. (\textit{Gan kai zhi ci} or \textit{qiao chuang zhi}


\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid}.  

ci). He particularly singles out poetry in which qing stimulated by personal or social experiences prevail. And it is obvious that all the poets placed in the upper rank in the Shipin expressed profound feelings personally experienced in their poems.

When a Ch' u official [Ch' ü Yüan (343-277 B.C.)]
is banished–
When a Han consort [Pan Chieh-yü or Wang Chao-chūn
(f1.33 B.C.)] has to leave the palace–
When white bones are strewn across the northern plain,
And souls go chasing tumbleweed–[as in poems by Ts'ao
Ts'ao (155-220), Wang Ts'an, and
Hsieh Chan (387-421)]
When arms are borne in frontier camps,
And a savage spirit overflows the border–[as in a poem
by Chiang Yen (444-505)]
When the frontier traveller has but thin clothing,
And all tears are spent in the widow's chambers–[as in the
Old Poems and in Ho Yen's (190-249) verse]
When the ornaments of office are divested and one
leaves the court,
Gone, no thought of returning [as in poems by
Chang Hsieh, Yüan Shu (408-453), and Shen Yüeh]
When by raising an eyebrow a woman [Lady Li
in Li Yen-nien's (140-87 B.C.) poem] wins imperial favor,
And with a second glance topples the state–

These various situations all stir the heart and move
the soul. If not put into poetry, how can such
sentiments be expressed? If not put into song, how
can these emotions be vented?

Zhong Rong regards poetry as an expression of the emotional
journey that the poet has personally experienced. All the
instances Zhong Rong mentions above are well-known in Chinese history. According to Zhong Rong, superb poetry come to light hand in hand with sincere emotions, and with the help of poetry the poets were able to express sufficiently their feelings, especially that of grief.

One may have noticed that in the above mentioned poetic expressions, social occasions still function as stimuli and inspiration. However, this does not prove the total analogy between the poetic perceptions of Zhong Rong and the Confucian critics. As explained earlier, the central issue is not whether or not poetic feelings can be directed towards socio-political issues. What makes the difference is the final purpose of this description, to express one’s deeply-felt emotions or to fulfil the function of ethical, and political critique, as the "Great Preface" indicates to "beautify moral instruction, and to improve social customs." 3

For Zhong Rong social occasions are but one of the stimuli for poetry. The seasonal phenomena, the vernal breezes, Autumn moon, Summer clouds, and the fierce cold as well as a moment of reunion or parting are also what evoke poetic feelings.

3 Maoshi zhengyi, 6.
This awareness of poetry as an expression of personal emotions, rather than as a vehicle for didacticism and politics illustrates Zhong Rong's advanced understanding of the form with regard to both its nature and its function. Although Zhong Rong at some point quoted from the Analects: "Poetry can be used to make you fit for company, to express grievances," we can see from the context what he is mostly concerned "a giving solace to those in extreme circumstances, and for relieving the distress of those living retired from affairs, there is nothing better than poetry." This is to say that Zhong Rong only focuses on the associative power and expressive function of poetry. The old concepts have been used in his new conceptual context (see the discussion of Confucian concept of xing, guan, qun, yuan, in Chapter One of this study).

This alternative use of an old concept can also be observed at the very beginning of the preface to the Shipin, where Zhong Rong, after giving an account of how poetry is produced, proclaims its power:

Heavenly and earthly spirits depend on it to receive oblations, and ghosts of darkness draw upon it for secular reports. **In moving heaven and earth, and in**

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38 *Lunyu*, 17:9.

appealing to spirits and gods, there is nothing better than poetry."

Here he quotes from the "Great Preface", but omits, "in maintaining correct standards for success or failure [in government]," a phrase which in the original precedes the above quote. To facilitate the discussion, I shall list the paragraph of the "Great Preface" below:

In maintaining correct standards for success or failure [in government], in moving heaven and earth, and in appealing to spirits and gods, there is nothing better than poetry."

It seems, however, very unlikely that Zhong Rong omitted the first sentence by accident; rather, it would be more appropriate to consider that he deliberately omitted the passage in order to distance himself from the Confucianist interpretation of poetry. What really interested him was the "Great Preface"'s reference to the moving power and expressive aspect of poetry.

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40Ibid., 1. Translation from John Timothy Wixted, "The Nature of Evaluation in the Shih-pin," 230. I have lightly altered the translation and added the emphasis.

41Wao-shih zhengyi, 5. The translation is a combination of James J.Y. Liu's and John Timothy Wixted's.
The concept of qing in the Shipin is primarily aesthetic-oriented, and intimately associated with poetic beauty. Zhong inclines to use certain expressions to combine poetic feeling and beauty, such as "the plaintive feeling is deep and then the poem is beautiful (yuan shen wen qi)," or "the poem is elegant and plaintive (wen dian yi yuan)." These agree with Lu ji's and Liu Xie's views about the link between qing and poetic beauty. Lu Ji states: "Poetry traces emotions and is ornate (shi yuan qing er qi mi)," which views poetic feeling and poetic beauty as a complementary unity. And Liu Xie, more explicitly, names one chapter of his Wenxin diaolong "Emotion and Ornamentation," (qingcai). He uses examples of the colourful outward forms of the external world, e.g., trees, flowers and animals to illustrate the idea that human emotion needs beautiful ornamentation as its outer form. And further, he tries to prove that the original meaning of "literary work" is "ornamental patterning." Therefore, literary works should be considered in terms of "literary ornamentation." He insists that "Likewise the literary decorativeness is a means to adorn words, but the beauty of a lavishness of words is based on emotion and personal nature." Because of this, Liu concludes:

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42 Wenxin diaolong, 537.

43 Ibid.
"emotion is the warp of literature, and diction is the woof of reason." 44

Zhong Rong's discussion of qing at times touches on a few other poetic elements, such as objects and words, an indication that qing alone does not guarantee a good poetic work. Instead, the appropriate fusion of qing with other indispensable poetic elements will produce poetry of superiority.

Qing and Wu (Emotion and Object)

Although, as commonly accepted, the full-fledged discussion in traditional Chinese poetics about the binary concepts qing and jing³ (scene) did not appear in Chinese poetics until the Song Dynasty, Zhong Rong did use the binary term "qing and wu" (emotion and object) and treats these two as complementary elements in the Shi-pin. And the wu Zhong uses here refers mainly to natural phenomena. This conscious use of the combination of internal state and external object has no doubt led to later discussion of "qing and jing" (poetic emotion and scene) and affected the approaches of subsequent poetics. It should be noted that Chinese poetic practice witnessed a distinctive change in the Six Dynasties in terms of the depiction of the

44Ibid., 538.
external reality. The critical term *xingsi* (formal likeness) or sometimes *qiaosi* (artistic likeness) were commonly used in literary criticism of that time. Liu Xie provides his observation of this change in his *Wenxin diaolong*:

- In recent years, literature has been prized for verisimilitude [hsing-ssu]. Poets perceive [k‘uei-ch’ing] the true form of landscapes, and pierce through [tsuan-mao] the appearance of grass and plants.... Thus, this technique of skilled expression and precise description may be compared to the use of ink for imprinting seals, for the copy so made reproduces the seal in its finest detail without the need for further cutting and shaping.  

This speaks of a newly-developed tendency in poetry writing in which there is a decided interest in observing the natural scene intimately and giving a detailed description of it. This style of viewing nature can be seen in many famous poets of the period. In his *Shipin*, Zhong Rong praises Zhang Xie as "good at vivid descriptions of detailed scenery" and Xie Lingyun as: "good at artistic likenesses." Historically, this new taste in landscapes developed after the decline of the *xuanyan* style poetry, in which the thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi occupied a significant place. This *xingsi* mode started and

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46 *Shipin*, 59.

became mature throughout the course of the Six Dynasties. Its evolution paved the way for the successful fusion of poetic emotion and scene of later poetry. Zhong Rong notices and praises the skilful and detailed depiction of external reality by some poets. However, he seems to have given the highest esteem the poets who succeed in bringing their poetic qing and external wu or jing into a harmony. Commenting on Xie Lingyun's poetry, Zhong writes:

I myself consider this man to have such abundant poetic inspiration and lofty talent as being able to write down whatever strikes his eye. Internally he never lacks thoughts and poetic affection; and externally, there is nothing that fails to have vivid description. It is appropriate to regard his style as "lavishness."

This consideration by Zhong Rong of the dichotomy of poet and object, the inner state and external world is the earliest on the subject. As I mentioned earlier, Zhong Rong especially favours five-character poetry because he believes that "the

\[\text{Shipin, 64. Some translator has rendered si as "thought," this, in my view, conveys only partial meaning of the word. According to Ciuyuan (The Origin of Chinese Words) "si" when use as a noun means both thinking and emotion (see Ciuyuan, Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1980, Vol.4, 1111). Taking Zhong's view as a whole and recalling his constant and recurrent pronouncement that poetry is vehicle to express one's emotion (yinyong qingxing), we can assure that the "si" he uses here refers mainly to the poet's feelings or emotions. In its loosest sense, it might be translated as "thought and affection" as some scholars have done. (see Xu Da's translation in his Shipin quanyi, 65.)} \]
five-character line is the best in terms of its details and precision for simple narrative, for the making of images, for describing the world that surrounds one, for exhaustively expressing one's feelings, and for describing the 'external world.' To sum up, the power of five-character poetry resides in its effectiveness in depicting the poetic duad "emotion and object" (qiongqing xiewu).

Qing and Ci (Emotion and Words)

The nineteenth century English critic Alexander Smith's definition of poetry has been famous for ages:

Behold now the whole character of poetry. It is essentially the expression of emotion; but the expression of emotion takes place by measured language (it may be verse, or it may not)--harmonious tones--and figurative phraseology.

This definition resembles the poetic view of Zhong Rong in certain points. Although Zhong did not explicitly speak about poetic language as a vehicle for expressing emotion, he did

\[\text{\textsuperscript{49}}\text{Shipin, 10. Translation from Siu-kit Wong, 92. Altered by this writer.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{50}}\text{See the discussion of five-character poetry in Chapter Three of this study.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{51}}\text{M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 150.}\]
touch upon the question of the interaction between emotion and language in terms of how they affect a particular poetic work. Zhong Rong carried on his discussion about emotion and language mainly on three levels, namely, the level of the work itself; the creative process; and the reader.

Zhong Rong warmly praises the Nineteen Ancient Poems of the Han. He writes: "Their language is genial and beautiful, and their implications sorrowful and far-reaching" (wen wen yi li, yi bei er yuan⁵⁴). Among the poems Zhong Rong commented on, the Nineteen Ancient Poems won his highest esteem. This is to a great extent due to the refined poetic language and spontaneous emotions displayed in these poems. According to Zhong Rong, when the two elements, feelings and words, nicely and coherently interweave in a particular poetic work, ideal poems are produced.

Sometimes the poetic language used by the poets seemingly makes no exceptional impression, however, the emotive effect would turn out to be even greater. For example, in the case of Ruan Ji, Zhong Rong maintains that "his words are of everyday sights and sounds, yet the feelings he expresses go above and beyond the universe."⁵² This tells us the kind of dialectical

relationship between language and emotion embodied in poetry, especially in lyric poetry. Zhong Rong believes that the poets rely on language to express their sentiments, and lack of genuine feelings will definitely result in a work that is not different from "the plain and bookish essay on Daode. How-
however, this is by no means to say that meaning and sentiment will simply halt when the words come to an end. From Zhong's rendering of the poetic mode xing (stimulus), we can see that he believes the ideal poetic piece will make such an effect that "when words come to an end, meaning lingers on. This thought echoes the insightful ideas occurring in the famous "language and thought" debate we have mentioned in the Introduction.

The integration of emotion and poetic language in the creative act also attracted Zhong Rong's attention. Zhong praises those poets who are capable of striking a balance between their sentiments and poetic language. For example, he praises the female poet Ban Ji of the Han Dynasty, since her poems "possesses both deep-seated grievance and linguistic elegance."

53 Shipin, 7. Here Zhong Rong is talking about the philosopher He Yen's work, The Dao and Its Power (Daode lun).

54 Ibid., 11.

55 Ban Ji, also called Ban Jieyu, was the consort of the Cheng Emperor of the Han. She was later out of favour with the Emperor so that she wrote the poem "Silk Fan" to express her grief.

56 Shipin, 39.
Passing judgement on Xie Lingyun, he maintains that Xie: "has enormous poetic sentiments, inspirations, as well as artistic talents, skills."\(^57\) However, when his sentiments, inspirations and poetic language are not presented in a poem in a balanced way, for instance, when there are too many luxuriant descriptions, the work would prove defective. Tang Huixiu of the Southern Dynasty has been commented on as representing the opposite case. In his poems, "emotions surpassed his poetic talents."\(^58\) And another is Xie Tiao\(^44\) (464-499), who is said that his "emotion and thought are keen but his talent is weak."\(^59\)

We can now turn to Zhong Rong's observation on the handling of emotion and language in terms of how it affects the reader. For Zhong Rong, Language is never a mere vehicle for the author to express emotion -- it evokes sympathetic feelings in the readers as well. Zhong Rong maintains that when reading good poems, such as those of Ruan Ji, "one’s nature and sensibility are nourished and refined, and one’s thoughts and feelings enlightened."\(^60\) Zhong Rong highly recommends Ruan Ji's "Poems

\(^{57}\)Ibid., 63.

\(^{58}\)Ibid., 157.

\(^{59}\)Ibid., 113.

\(^{60}\)Ibid., 50.
Singing my Thoughts" (yonghuai⁸⁴⁸) which have always moved readers. One of them goes:

Midnight and I cannot sleep:
I sit up and pluck my singing zither.
Through the thin curtain the bright moon shines,
And a cool wind blows my lapels.
A lone wild goose cries beyond the wilds,
soaring birds sing in northern woods.
I pace to and fro: what shall I see?
Mournful thoughts alone wound my heart.⁶¹

Zhong Rong considers Ruan's poems comparable to the fine poems of the "Xiaoya⁸⁴⁹ and the Guofeng⁸⁵⁰ of the Classic of Poetry" and warmly praises Ruan's powerful presentation of his spontaneous emotions and profound thoughts. He believes that this kind of poetry "makes one forget the base and narrow-minded self and look to the far-away and the grand."⁶²

According to Zhong Rong's critique, qing is not only the initial force for poetic creation, it comprises the actual substance of poetry as well. Working coherently with the other poetic elements, e.g., the scene and the words, it moves the readers, and arouses profound feelings.

⁶¹See Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, 133.

⁶²Shipin, 50.
Yet, we still remember Confucius' claim mentioned before, that poetry "can be used to express grievances [yuan]." However, the grievances Confucius refers to must not be identified with Zhong Rong’s "relieving distress [yuan]." The grievances with which Confucius was concerned were those associated with "serving [one's] sovereign," as outlined in the Analects. Kong Anguo, a Han Confucian, once explained these "grievances" as a way of "criticizing politics" (Lunyu jiejie). The term "grievance" in this context has mainly political connotations, and its aim is to criticize in order to help the government correct its imperfections so as to fulfil the goal of "serving the sovereign." In contrast, Zhong Rong emphasizes personal feelings towards life and one's surroundings. By expressing these personal feelings, one can bring comfort to one's soul and consolation to the heart. In this regard, Zhong Rong added new meaning to traditional critical terms.

Liu Xie, the well-known critic also maintained that outstanding literary works emanate from the natural flow of emotions; he believed that emotions are naturally aroused when affected by external circumstances. If one makes up feelings in
order to write, or writes to depict false feelings, such works will tend to prolixity and be diffuse.  

There are some differences, however, between Liu Xie and Zhong Rong's views about emotions expressed in literature. Although Liu Xie recurrently talks about genuine emotions, he insists that they should be controlled by the Confucian norm. Liu says: "Poetry means to 'hold.'" He continues:

Poetry is what holds one's emotion and nature [within the bounds of propriety]. In summing up the Three Hundred poems, [Confucius] described their general principle with the phrase, "No evil thoughts." The interpretation of "poetry " as "hold" finds here its corroboration.  

The statement "poetry is what hold one's emotion and nature" is not an invention of Liu Xie. It has appeared in the Han Confucianist work, Shiwei as well as in the Jin scholar Zhiyu's essay, Wenzhang liubie lun. In both places, the word "hold" denotes the meaning "to direct one's emotion and nature towards appropriateness. Liu Xie is adopting an old concept and from the context of his whole passage, one can also find that he is using the concept in line with that in the Shiwei and

\[\text{Wenxin diaolong}, 538.\]

\[\text{Wenxin diaolong}, 65. \text{ Translation from James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 126.}\]
Wenzhang liubie lun. (I believe this is what makes James Liu add the words in the square brackets of his translation.) In contrast, Zhong Rong seems to insist on the natural flow of one’s emotions; he does not praise anything that restrains them.
Endnotes (Chapter Two)

1. qing

2. zai xin wei zhi, fa yan wei shi 在心为志，发言为诗

3. finding this inadequate, one sighs over it: not content with this, one sings it in poetry, still not satisfied, one unconsciously dances with one's hands and feet.

言之不足，故咏叹之；咏叹之不足，故咏歌之；咏歌之不足，不知手之舞之，足之蹈之也。

4. nei 内

5. wai 外

6. li 理

7. Ruan Ji 阮籍

8. Zuo si 左思

9. Diaochong lun 《雕虫论》

10. Pei Ziye 颖上野

11. yinyong qingxing 含咏情性

12. yaodang qingxing 描藻情性

13. qiongqing xiewu 穷情写物

14. qingyu yuanshen 情喻渊深
15. cheng qing  聘情
16. gan kai zhi ci  感慨之辞
17. gan dang xin ling  感动心灵
18. Miao Xi  蝴蝶
19. zao ai  造哀
20. qi  气
21. san cai  三才
22. The cosmic energy sets in motion the processes of the natural world, and the changing world moves men. Their sensibilities and emotions once stirred, manifest themselves in dance and song. This manifestation illuminates the Three Powers and brightens the myriad things.
气之动物，物之感人，故摇荡性情，形诸舞咏，
照烛三才，辉丽万有。
23. gan  感
24. gan ying  感应
25. Vernal breezes and springtime birds, the autumn moon and fall cindadas, summer clouds and sultry rains, the winter moon and fierce cold--these are what in the four seasons inspire poetic feeling.
春风春鸟，秋月秋蝉，夏云暑雨，冬月折寒，
斯四候之感逝者也。
26. Spring and Autumn roll round, succeeding one another, and the yin and yang principles alternatingly darken
and brighten. When objects in the physical world change, our minds are also affected.

春秋代序，阴阳惨舒，物色之动，心亦摇焉。

27. guanju 关躍

28. hou fei zhi de 后妃之德

29. Li Zhi 李賀

30. At an agreeable banquet, through poetry one express his sentiment of intimacy. When parting, one can vent his grief onto verse.

嘉令宰诗以亲，离群托诗以怨。

31. For giving solace to those in extreme circumstances, and for relieving the distress of those living retired from affairs, there is nothing better than poetry.

使穷贱易安，幽居靡所得，莫尚于诗。

32. Gan kai zhi ci qiao chuang zhi ci 感慨之词，慨怆之词

33. When a ch'u official is banished...

至于楚臣去境，汉妾辞宫，
或骨横朔野，或魂逐飞蓬；
或负戈外戍，杀气薰边；
故客衣单，慷慨泪尽；
或士有解佩出朝，一去忘返；
女有扬蛾入宠，再盼倾国。
凡斯种种，感荡心灵，
非陈诗何以展其义？
非长歌何以骋其情？

34. yuan shen wen qi 感深文辞

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35. wen dian yi yuan 文典以怨
36. shi yuan qing er qi mi 诗源情而奇靡
37. qing cai 情采
38. jing 景
39. xing si 形似
40. qiao si 巧似
41. xuanyan 玄言
42. I myself consider this man to have such abundant poetic inspiration and lofty talent as being able to write down whatever strikes his eye...
43. qing and ci 情，辞
44. wen wen yi li, yi bei er yuan 文温以丽，意思而远
45. Ping dian si dao de lun 《平典似道德论》
46. xing 性
47. Xie Tiao 谢眺
48. yonghuai 永怀
49. xiaoya 《小雅》
50. guofeng 《国风》
53. Poetry is what holds one’s emotion and nature [within the bounds of propriety]. In summing up the Three Hundred poems, [Confucius] described their general principle with the phrase...

诗者，持也，三百之蔽，又归元邪。
Wei, taste or flavour, sometimes also appearing as a compound word, ziwei, is an important although very briefly elaborated aesthetic concept in Zhong Rong's Shiwen. Based on this concept, Zhong Rong builds up his aesthetic theory of poetic composition and appraisal. Wei is used in the Shiwen both as noun and verb. As noun, it signifies the aesthetic merit of a poetic work which is used as you ziwei (literally, having flavour) or guawei (literally, lack of flavour). As a verb, it speaks of experiencing, judging and appraising a particular work, i.e., weizhi (to taste it). Stephen Owen calls wei or flavour "an important master metaphor in describing the aesthetic experience of the text," which is correct; however it reveals only one side of the truth. Besides the aesthetic experience of the text, wei is also concerned with the aesthetic merit of the text as reflected in many masterpieces of Chinese poetics including Zhong Rong's Shiwen. For a better understanding of Zhong Rong's concept of wei, we may first start by giving a historic review of this "master metaphor."

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1Stephen Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 593.
The Concept of Wei before Zhong Rong

The word of Wei made its appearance in pre-Qin historical and philosophical works. In those texts it designated the following meanings:

1) The sensation of taste. Laozi in his description of Dao says: "When Dao is uttered, it is plain and no taste at all" (Laozi²). This wei points to the sense of taste and it is similar to the wei in the Lunyu which describes Confucius' fascination towards the music shao²: "When the master was in the state of chi he happened to hear the shao, and for three months, he could not even recognize the taste of meat" (Lunyu. Shuex²). There is another example in the Zuo zhuan² which goes: "There are six kinds of qi² in heaven. They descend to become five flavours, five colours and five sounds.³.

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³Lunyu, 7:1.

These are wei's usages as noun. When wei is used as verb, it could mean:

2) To taste, to savour, to distinguish the flavour of. It is recorded: "There is somebody who tastes food" (you wei weizhe⁸¹⁰) in the Liezi: tianrui pian⁸¹¹. As a verb wei can be found in the Laozi where it indicates that to understand Dao is to: "Act without action; Do without doing; Taste without tasting" (wei wu wei, shi wu shi, wei wu wei⁸¹²)⁵. And the true power of Dao exists in this state of non-action and non-flavour. But it will eventually achieve the utmost action and inexhaustible flavour.

On some occasions, the ancient Chinese seemed to have realized the similarities between music and taste in the sense that they both bring sensual comfort to people and make them spiritually happy. For instance, it is said in the Zuo Zhuan that "sound is like taste" (sheng yi ru wei⁸¹³). There is a further description of how different sounds might be put together (likewise that of tastes) to make a pleasant and coherent whole (Zhaogong ershi nian⁸¹⁴):

... being pure or murky, loud or low, lasting or fleeting, fast or slow, sad or joyful, powerful or

⁵Laozi, 38.
soft ... they all complement each other. When a gentleman listens to the music, he would attain peacefulness in his mind, when the mind is peaceful, his virtues will be harmonious.\textsuperscript{6}

In the above comparison, \textit{wei} was still not used as an aesthetic concept but it was indeed used in connection with the artistic form -- music. And the ancient Chinese were using the joyful sensory perception of taste as a simile for the kind of aesthetic experience that music has. Therefore we may consider that at that time, the concept \textit{wei} was evolving into a literary concept. It was not until the Han Dynasty (206 BC - 221 AD), that \textit{wei} gradually acquired its literary-orientation. Evidence can be found in Wang Chong’s \textit{Lunheng.zi}\textit{lu}\textsuperscript{815}:

An essay must be written beautifully, then it can be considered good. Language must be uttered eloquently, then it can be considered skilful. When language rings to the ears, the meaning will be savoured (\textit{wei}) in the heart; when things strike the eyes, they will be kept at hand.\textsuperscript{816}

\textit{Wei} in the above paragraph already implies the meaning of tasting and pondering over a writing. Although it did not


\textsuperscript{7}Guo Shaoyu, ed., \textit{Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan}, vol.1, 126.
exactly point to what we called "the aesthetic evaluation," something similar was clearly suggested. 

In this regard, we shall mention another two scholars in the Wei-Jin era for their insights on wei. They are Ge Hong (283-363) and Zong Bing (375-443). In their works, the term, wei, was used specifically in literary evaluation. In his Bao pu zi, Ge Hong comments on the inappropriate attitude people hold toward literary works: "People who solely prefer the taste of sour and salty would not get its (the work’s) flavour (wei); people who have limits in their thinking cannot get its spirit." What he emphasizes here is that the reader's reading competence should match the level of the text. If a reader is biased in his own preference and lacks comprehension, he will not get a text right. He further warns the readers that if they "rely on their ordinary understanding to observe the great uniqueness; and on their biased scale to measure the

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1I am adopting René Wellek’s term here. Talking about "judging" a literary work, Wellek maintains: "There is a judgement of sensibility, and there is a reasoned, a ratiocinative, judgement. They exist in no necessary contradiction: a sensibility can scarcely attain much critical force without being susceptible of considerable generalized, theoretical statement; and a reasoned judgement, in matters of literature, cannot be formulated save on the basis of some sensibilities, immediate or derivative." In his Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), 241.

unlimited; with the coarsest to seek the finest, with the shallowest to speculate the deepest, they will never understand a work even if they started young and ended up old."^{821}^{10}

Ge Hong holds the belief that to evaluate a literary work is more difficult than to appraise the virtue and conduct of a person, since:

there are some standard criteria for virtue and conduct, thus it is easy to judge the good and the bad; whereas there are some subtle elements in writings, therefore it is hard to tell among them... because of the essence within, it is indeed hard to have a standard criterion for their appraisal.^{822}^{11}

Here, Ge Hong actually uses the word pinzao^{823} (which has been used in the famous "Personality appraisal") in the sense of "tasting" and "experiencing" particular texts. And this "appraisal" shows that Ge Hong has creatively applied the concept of personality evaluation to literary works.

Zong Bing writes in his highly celebrated artistic critique, Preface to Shanshui Painting (Hua shanshui xu^{824}): "The sage embraces the Dao when he responds to things, the worthy man purifies his mind to savour (wei) the myriad phenomena."^{825} Li

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^{11}Cited in Li Zehou, Zhongguo meixue shi, vol.2, 316.
Zehou explains this wei as "wanwei" and "in search of," which I think is appropriate. The compound wanwei literally means "to play with and savour." It has the sense of "rolls in the mind," "turning it over in the mind" and "to reflect on something thoroughly." Zong Bing indicates here a difference between the sage and the worthy man in terms of their interactions with the myriad world. The sage can meet that world directly since there is no blockage. The spiritual freedom of the sages makes the meeting immediate, while the worthy man has not yet attained this free spirit as the sage has. Therefore, he needs first to remove the worldly concerns of his mind and then to savour the truth embodied in the myriad world. This explains how the sage and the worthy man, each with his special way, can grasp and reflect on the true beauty of nature. Although wei is a noun in Ge Hong and a verb in Zong Bing, they are both associated with literary evaluation or artistic creation. We can say that wei began to develop as an aesthetic concept in the Wei-Jin period.

From this preliminary review of the use of wei we can see that ancient Chinese thinkers had noticed the analogy between the pleasant sensuous experience of taste and the lasting

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 511.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{13}Steven Van Zoeren, \textit{Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China}, 211.}\]
impression of an artistic work, for example, music. And some of them had gone even further to apply the term wei to the artistic process. Nevertheless it was not until Zhong Rong that wei become a full-fledged aesthetic concept.14

Zhong Rong on Ziwei

In the Shipin, Zhong Rong warmly praises poems that are saturated with ziwei; with equal emphasis he criticizes poems that lack it. Needless to say, that wei or ziwei had become an indispensable criterion for ideal poetry to Zhong Rong. And after him, ziwei became a constant theme in Chinese poetics, not only restricted to the poetry criticism or the general literary criticism but to that of other arts as well. Although we find no rigorous account of the concept ziwei in the Shi pin, it is useful to examine what Zhong Rong had in mind when he spoke of ziwei considering its tremendous influence on the later development of Chinese poetics.

Wei and Qiongqing Xiewu\textsuperscript{15} (Exhaustively expressing one's feelings and describing the external world)

Zhong Rong gave the most credit to five-character poetry for its richness in ziwei and its great achievement during the Six Dynasties period\textsuperscript{15}. Yet it was impossible for Zhong Rong to predict the brilliant development of the regulated verse and the subsequent establishment of seven-character poetry of later time when he wrote the \textit{Shipin}. However, one might still feel it inappropriate to evaluate any poetry solely by the number of characters in its line, for example, to say five-character poetry is arbitrarily better than four-character. Nevertheless, since Zhong Rong has attached so much importance to five-character poetry, we should first look into his comments in the \textit{Shipin} in an attempt to understand his preference for that form of poetry and his sense of ziwei. Zhong Rong states in the Preface to the \textit{Shipin} that

Four-character poetry has the disadvantage of requiring the poet to say much in a few words. It is true enough that good poems can be written by studying the \textit{Guofeng}\textsuperscript{18} and the \textit{Lisao}\textsuperscript{19}. But poets have often to wrestle with the problem of having written many lines while having expressed only limited meanings: This is why the four-character poetry is rarely preferred by the modern poets. Five-character poetry is on the other hand, the most important mode of literary expression. It is also the mode that promises the

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Shipin}, 10.
most of flavour. That is why it has been widely accepted. Thus the five-character poetry is the best in terms of its details and precision for simple narrative, for the making of images, for exhaustively expressing one's feelings, and for describing the external world.\textsuperscript{16}

Here Zhong Rong concedes that the Guofeng and the Lisao are models that any four-character poetry should follow but he says five-character poetry is better because it is the best form a poet can use to express his feelings and to describe the external world. The disadvantage of the four-character lies, according to Zhong Rong, is its insufficient length of line which impairs the poetic expression. Five-character poetry is capable of retaining the most artistic flavour because it allows "details" and "precision" in poetic expression.

Chinese poetic form went through a decisive change when developed from the four-character line to the five-character line, even though this was only one more character. (Examples can be drawn from the Shijing, four-character poetry, and the "Nineteen Ancient Poems", five-character poetry.) The features of the new form have been clearly summarized by scholars, the four metrical rules for five-character poetry being:

\textsuperscript{16}Shipin, 10. Translation from Siu-kit Wong, Early Chinese Literary Criticism, 92. Adjusted by this writer.
1) each line has five characters, namely a pentasyllabic line;
2) each line has a caesura after the second character, with a secondary caesura occurring either after the third or fourth character, according to the semantic division;
3) a couplet forms an independent two-part metrical unit; and
4) the rhyme falls at the end of the second line of the couplet.17

It is important to note that "in Chinese, each character counts invariably as one syllable (and the words themselves, in ancient Chinese, are often made up of only one character)."18
With this basic feature in mind, we might better understand the implication of any numbering change in a poetic line. In classical Chinese poetry, where the syllable is the basic unit, the additional word affords semantic and syntactic flexibility in the poetic from.

The five-character line consists of an initial dissyllabic unit and a final trisyllabic unit, while


18 François Cheng, Chinese Poetic Writing. Translation from French by Donald A. Riggs and Jerome P. Seaton, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 46.
the final part can be further divided into a monosyllabic unit and a dissyllabic one.  

The syllabic division thus can be either two-two-one or two-one-two depending on the semantic divisions of the line.

Normally, in the four-character poetry, one needs to use a couplet to express the meaning in full. In the five-character poetry, however, we only need to make the third or the fifth word a verb or predicator, and the meaning shall be clearly expressed in one single line. Taking Xie Lingyun’s (385-433) famous poetic lines as example:

(1) White clouds embrace [bao] the shaded rocks;
    Green bamboos charm [mei] the clear ripples.\(^{531}\)

(2) In the curving of the stream,
    the flow keeps straying out of sight;
    By the distant forest,
    the cliffs cluster together.\(^{532, 20}\)


\(^{20}\)Cited in and translated by Kang-i Sun Chang, "Description of Landscape in Early Six Dynasties Poetry." In Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen, eds., Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T’ang, 126.
In case (1), the verbs bao and mei each bring two natural images together and thus outline a "vital and arresting" scene with an "animated effect." While in the case (2), there are two subject-predicate syntactic structures in each line and the complications of the scenes gets more detailed description.

We may observe that in this way the extra word could lead to its expansion of the artistic capacity by changing the syntactic structure of a poetic line. It grants more freedom for the poets to "qiongqing xiewu," a poetic vogue of the Six Dynasties. It is this flexibility of the five-character poetry that makes Zhong Rong consider it to be the most important mode of poetic expression.22

Zhong Rong points out that the preference among his contemporaries for five-character poetry is owing to its potential to make poetic expression "detailed" and "precise" (xiang and qie). Because the four-word poetry could only express "limited meanings" (yi shao), people of his time rarely preferred the latter form.23

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21 Ibid., 127.
22 Shipin, 10.
23 Ibid.
But, one may ask: Had the four-character poetry stopped functioning at all after Zhong Rong's time? Not really. Though less frequently, this form endured and being used for over another thousand years. Different from the five-character form which was regarded by Zhong Rong as a better form for expressing feelings and describing the external world, the four-character form was used for special purposes, moods and themes, especially for creating weighty and solemn atmospheres.24

Zhong Rong emphasizes that the purpose of writing poetry is to express feelings and emotions (yinyong qingxing), or "exhaustively express feelings and describe the external world" (qiongqing xiewu), and he clearly prefers five-character poetry for its distinctive poetic capacity which he feels serves this purpose well.

To Zhong Rong, if poetry is to have ziwei, artistic flavour, it must first project the poet's most immediate and sincere feelings. Xiewu, or describing the external world, is not an end in itself, it is to serve the purpose of qiongqing, to express one's feelings. Second, the poetry which has been said to have ziwei must be affective to a degree that is, to

24I would thank professor Wayne Schlepp for reminding me of this fact of the four-character form.
"give endless pleasure to those who savour them and move the hearts of those who listen."\textsuperscript{25}

To illustrate Zhong Rong's view of \textit{ziwei}, we may glance through a poem from the "Nineteen Ancient Poems" which won Zhong Rong's highest esteem and occupied the first rank in the \textit{Shipin}.

Far, far, the Herdboy star [\textit{Niulang xing}],
Shimmering white, the Han River maid.
Slender, slender, she lifts a pale hand,
Click, clack, she plies the loom's shuttle.
In one whole day not finishing a piece,
Tears flowing down like rain.
The River Han is clear and shallow --
How far apart can they be?
Only the span of a single brimming stream;
Looking, looking, but finding no words.\textsuperscript{26}


This poem was based on a well-known legend which describes star-crossed lovers being separated by the Milky Way. As the Herdboy star (Niulang) and Weaving-Lady star (Zhinù), they are kept apart except on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month each year. The description of "clear[ness]" and "shallow[ness]" of the River Han well arose a sense of hope. However, when realizing that it is the Milky Way that separates the lovers, one knows the impossibility of reunion. No words have been used to tell how much the Herdboy star and the Wearing-Lady star loved each other and how sorrowful they were, the rain-like "tears" tells all. The rhetorical question by the poet presents the reader with the paradoxical situation and no more words are needed yet the meaning is clear and the impact strong.

Zhong Rong considers poems of this kind "startling to one's heart and stirring to one's soul," and "every word is worth a thousand pieces of gold." The artistic effect of this kind of poem allows the reader to experience unbounded feelings within, to be deeply moved and so get the utmost ziwei savour.

We can see from the above that wei or ziwei in Zhong Rong's poetic framework points to both creative and evaluative processes. As for the former, it has to do with the poet's

27Shipin, 33.
genuine, unreserved feelings. Poems that are saturated with this kind of spontaneous qing are said to have ziwei, flavour. As for the latter, which is closely related, it concerns more the moving power of poetry. The description of the external world or situation must result in inner experience.

Wei and hua mei*(Flavour and Floridness)

It is not difficult to find in the Shi~in that Zhong Rong favours poems with floridness and considers this indispensable for generating poetic flavour.

Chinese poetics from the pre-Qin period through the Han Dynasty and to the Six Dynasties has experienced various stages in which the political, socio-ethical meanings of the text were emphasized in the early periods and self-expression gradually became more important. These changes reflect the gradual awakening of critical thinking to the fact that poetry was an independent realm that has its own generic features, unique operating rules, as well as specific functions. More specifically, since Cao Pi urged in his influential Treatise on Literature that "poetry and rhymeprose should be ornate"** in

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**Guo Shaoyu, ed. Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan, vol.1, 158.
distinguishing them from other forms of writing, this "ornateness" and the emphasis on the formal aesthetics became the vogue of the day. The tendency in literary compositions was characterized by Liu Xie as follows:

Writers vied in ornately weaving couplets which might extend to hundreds of words, or in attempting to achieve the wondrous by a single line. In expressing feelings, they always made them in complete harmony with the things they described and in literary phraseology they tried their best to achieve freshness.39

Zhong Rong’s appreciation of ornately written poems in the Shi-pin was in accordance with this general literary tendency of the Six Dynasties, shangmei,41 literally, favouring beauty. His comments on ornately written poems were concerned with three kinds of beauty: (1) floridness in its entirety or jutì huamei42; (2) ornate language or cicai huamao43, huami44; (3) pleasant and melodious phonetics or yinyun kengqiang45. The fulfilment of these three aspects contributes to make poetic flavour, ziwei.

Categorizing Lu Ji’s poems into the first rank, Zhong Rong says they are "of talent outstanding and phrasing rich, his

entire corpus is splendidly beautiful."\(^{30}\) Lu Ji, as we have mentioned in Chapter Two of this study, was the first person to insist that "poetry traces (or originates from) emotions and is thus ornate." In his essay, \textit{Wenfu}\(^{31}\), Lu Ji maintains that in literary writing it "is desirable to employ words of true beauty" (\textit{qi qianyan ye guiyan}\(^{32}\)).\(^{31}\) His poems were written in ornate style which at the same time reflected his theoretical views and influenced his contemporary poetics.

Zhong Rong believes that Lu Ji's achievement is owing to the fact that he "thoroughly masticated the quintessence of writing (\textit{jujue yinghua}\(^{33}\)) and filled himself completely (\textit{yanyu gaoze}\(^{34}\)) on its rich sustenance."\(^{32}\) For this, his writings were designated by Zhong Rong as the "great source of the art of letters." Here, whatever \textit{zuyue yinghua} or \textit{yanyu gaoze}, they both refer to the act of tasting and savouring beautiful rhetoric and diction. This implies that Lu Ji thoroughly studied and absorbed the essence of the beautiful words or expressions of other splendid writings and creatively incorpor-

\(^{30}\)

\(^{31}\) Translation from Siu-Kit Wong, \textit{Early Chinese Literary Criticism}, 44.

ate them into his own so as to make his poetry full of ziwei and should be taken as a good example for emulation.

For Zhong Rong, poetic rhetoric is indispensable for creating poetic flavour. Almost all the poets in the first rank have been designated by Zhong Rong as having mastered to some degree ornate language. He regards Cao Zhi's style as "beautiful and luxuriant" (cica huamao)\(^{33}\); the "Nineteen Ancient Poems" as "genial and beautiful" (wen wen yi li)\(^{32}\). He notes that Xie Lingyun's poetic language is "rich and luxuriant" (fan fu), "rich and florid" (fu yan)\(^{34}\) and he calls Zhang Xie's poetic phrasing "fresh and abundant" (congqian)\(^{35}\).

We can see from the following comments Zhong Rong made on poems by Cao Pi, Ying Ju and Guo Pu that for him ziwei is intimately bound up with mei (beauty, floridness):

These are distinctly beautiful and luxuriant and worthwhile for appreciating and tasting...\(^{36}\)

Florid and luscious, it deserves to be recited and the poetic flavour sipped.\(^{37}\)

\(^{31}\)See Chapter One, Endnote 36.

\(^{34}\)Shipin, 81.

\(^{35}\)Ibid., 70.

\(^{36}\)Ibid., 81.
His style echoes that of Pan Yue and is shiningly graceful. His poems deserves to be savoured.\textsuperscript{37}

The word, wan, or wanwei, as we have explained a while ago, suggests letting meaning roll in one's mind, especially the nuances and subtleties. According to Zhong Rong, only those beautifully written poems can be said to have poetic flavour and their meanings deserve to be savoured and reflected on repeatedly.

On the other hand, Zhong Rong denounces those plainly composed poems and considers them to be lacking of ziwei. For example, he thinks Eastern Han (25-220 AD) an extremely infertile period in terms of poetic composition. Ban Gu's "Singing my Thought of History" is the only poem which is worth mentioning during the entire two hundred years, because there are true feelings in the poem (gantan zhici\textsuperscript{36}). However, it is indeed "wooden in style and there is no adornment at all" (zhi mu wu wen\textsuperscript{56}).\textsuperscript{38} Zhong Rong obviously cherished "true feelings" in poetry, but he also weighted the beauty of language highly. For him, "feelings" alone are not sufficient for creating good poems. This view of Zhong Rong's was revealed in his comments

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 4.
on Tang Huixiu. He criticizes Tang because his "emotions exceeded his verbal talent" and thus he places Tang in the lowest rank. He believes the coherent integration of the two aspects of qing and ci will nourish superior poems with zíwei.

Zhong Rong's concept of wei is also reflected in his comment on Cao Pi, Emperor Wen of Wei (Wei Wendi). His general impression of the one hundred poems of Cao Pi is that they are "on the whole, unpolished and direct as ordinary dialogue" (bizhi ru ouyu). But Zhong Rong does show his unbiased appreciation of a group "Miscellaneous Poems" (za-shi) of Cao Pi because "they are indeed distinctively beautiful and luxuriant worthwhile for appreciating and tasting" (shu mei zhan ke wan). Zhong Rong feels that only by reading through those poems, can he discover Cao's "literary skill" (gong). Otherwise, he would have wondered "how Cao Pi could have managed to comment on and evaluate other literary talents and face his distinguished brother."

Zhong Rong's comment is justifiable here. In his well-known essay, Treatise on Literature, Cao Pi rigorously commented

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39Ibid., 70.
40Ibid., 70.
41Ibid., 71.
upon and evaluated the styles of some outstanding writers: "Ying Yang" has harmony, but no force. Liu Zhen's style has force but suffers from looseness. Kong Rong is by nature noble and sublime, and in that he surpasses his contemporaries; but he is incapable of sustained argument, his logic being weaker than his rhetoric..." And Cao did in the same essay make the marvellous differentiation of kinds of writings:

Wen is all one thing in essence but a range of things in its accidental manifestations. Official memorials and discourses on state matters should be formally elegant; letter and essays should be orderly; elegiac and other inscriptions should be reliably factual; poetry and rhyme prose should be ornate.

This has been called a manifestation in the history of Chinese literary theory that marks the new orientation toward the autonomy of literature.

Zhong Rong must have been familiar with Cao Pi's comments and was quite dissatisfied with the "unpolished and direct" style of Cao's own poetic practice. Zhong Rong shows no sympathy at all toward what he calls the "ordinary dialogues" of

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43Ibid., 158. Translation from Siu-kit Wong, Early Chinese Literary Criticism, 20. The first word of the translation, "literature," has been changed to wen to avoid confusion.
Cao and shows interest only in his few ornately written poems since these have poetic flavour and deserve to be savoured.

In the development of five-character poetry, according to Zhong Rong, there is a period in which poetic composition is insipid. That was the time of Yongjia⁷⁷ (307-313) of Jin. Zhong Rong characterizes the general atmosphere of that period as follows:

In the Yongjia period of the Chin (Jin) Dynasty the thoughts of Huang-ti [the Yellow Emperor] and Lao-tzu were held in great esteem and abstruse talk prevailed. The poetical works of the time were absolutely tasteless, for reasoning in them surpassed their artistic value. Even after the Chin Court had moved its capital to the South of the Yangtze, the influence was still mildly felt. The poems of such dignitaries as Sun Ch’o Hsu Hsun, the Huans (Wen and Hsuan) and the Yus (Liang and Chien) are without exception plain and bookish and very similar to the Dao Te Lun (A Discussion of the Way and Its Power). The distinctive vigour of Chien-an poetry was thus exhausted.⁴⁴

Nobody could deny the positive influence of the "profound learning" on the Chinese poetics of the Six Dynasties, especially its contribution in providing methodology and vocabulary for the literary theories. However, pure theory and philosophy should not usurp the position of literature. Zhong Rong’s dissatisfaction arises when poetic writings under the influence

of the xuanxue thinking became unbearably dull and insipid. There must be a proper balance between theoretical reasoning and literary expression and Zhong Rong considered it undesirable when poetry was made to resemble philosophical discourse. By contrast, Zhong Rong highly esteemed the poetry of the Jian-An period (196-219). He believed the success of the Jian-An poets lay in their ability to strike a poetic balance between substance and artistry (Binbin zhi sheng),\(^{45}\) and that is the very reason their poetry was filled with vigour and taste.

Apart from the beauty and ornate language of a poetic work, Zhong Rong does give thought to tonal euphony since it is a part of creating poetic flavour. Commenting on Zhang Xie's poetic style, Zhong Rong says:

\[\text{[Zhang's style] is full of free spirit and yet coherent, he is definitely an unprecedented talent. His poetic language is fresh and rich, his tonal patterns melodious, which make us never tire of savouring them.}\] \(^{46}\)

According to Zhong Rong, Zhang Xie integrated the poetic strength, embellished language as well as melodious euphony into a cohesive whole. This is sufficient to make him a first-rank

\(^{45}\textit{Shipin,}\) 5.

\(^{46}\textit{Ibid.,}\) 60.
poet. However, Zhong Rong objects when people overly emphasize and set up too many restrictions on euphony:

Poetical works, it seems to me, should be fundamentally written for recitation without causing speech difficulties, and it would be quite enough if we could make surdus and sonorous flow smoothly together so that a poem can be recited harmoniously as well as fluently. 47

Zhong Rong thinks it necessary to allow a smooth reading of poetry and malqualities that might interfere with the flow should be avoided. But, he does believe that too many prohibitions will "impair the true beauty of the poetry" (shang qi zhen mei). 48

Wei and Yuan (Flavour and Far-reaching)

Much has been said about the importance of the beauty of language in generating poetic flavour. There is another indispensable quality seen by Zhong Rong, namely the far-reach (yuan) of poetic implications. The "Nineteen Ancient Poems", which have been considered among the best of five-character poetry with "flavour", were considered by Zhong Rong to possess this


48 Ibid., 29.
quality. As we saw above, his praise for this group of poems was enthusiastic:

Their language is genial and beautiful, and their meaning is sorrowful and far-reaching (yi bei er yuan⁶⁷⁹).

One may note here that Zhong Rong attached special importance to the far-reaching quality of the "Nineteen Ancient Poems." Because they are "far-reaching," their penetrating overtones could affect "those who savour them" (wei zhi zhe⁶⁸⁵); when "far-reaching," the inexhaustible flavour of each word can be felt by "those who listen" (wen zhi zhe⁶⁸⁶).⁴⁹

Zhong Rong further used the word jing jue⁶⁸² (startlingly excellent) to describe the far-reaching impact those poems exerted on the reader.⁵² "Even their historical era is lost in oblivion; only their pure tones have lasted the distance. How sad!"⁵³ ⁵¹

Talking about affective power of a literary work, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren maintain:

⁴⁹Shipin, 11.
⁵⁰Ibid., 34.
⁵¹Ibid., 34.
Its aesthetic value must be so rich and comprehensive as to include among its structures one or more which gives high satisfaction to each later period. 52

A few centuries may have passed by the time Zhong Rong expressed his admiration for the "Nineteen Ancient Poems." It was the aesthetic value, the far-reaching implications of those poems that diminished the time and made Zhong Rong return to them, to feel and experience their ziwei.

Zhong Rong's emphasis on ziwei both as the aesthetic merit and the aesthetic experience of the poetic work was only a beginning. The discussion continued after him and wei eventually became a concept that proved to be crucial in the development of the Chinese poetics and in the Chinese poetics per se.

52 Rene Welleck and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 233.
Endnotes (Chapter Three)

1. wei 味
2. ziwei 挥味
3. you ziwei 有滋味
4. guawei 苦味
5. Laozi 《老子．三十五》
6. shao 韶
7. Lunyu.shuer 《论语．述而》
8. Zuo Zhuan 《左传》
9. qi 气
10. You wei wei zhe 有味味者
11. Liezi.Tian rui pian 《列子．天瑞篇》
12. wei wu wei, shi wu shi, wei wu wei 为无为，事无事，味无味
13. sheng yi ru wei 声亦如味
14. Shaogong ershi nian 昭公二十年
15. Lunheng 《论衡》
16. An essay must be written beautifully, then it can be considered good...
17. Ge Hong

18. Zong Bing

19. Bao pu zi

20. People who solely prefer the taste of sour and saulty would not get its flavor;
People who have limits in their thinking cannot get its spirit.

21. Based on their ordinary understanding to observe the great uniqueness....

22. There are some standard criteria for virtue and conduct....

23. pinzao

24. Hua shanshui xu

25. The sage embraces the Dao when he responds to things...

26. wanwei

27. qiong qing xie wu

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28. Guофeng 《国风》

29. Lisao 《离骚》

30. Four-character verse has the disadvantage of requiring the poet to say much in a few words.
夫四言，文约意广，取效风骚，便可多得。每苦文繁而意少，
故世罕习焉。五言居文词之要，是众作之有滋味者也，故
云会于流俗。岂不以事造形，穷情写物，最为详切者乎！

31. White clous embrace [bao] the shaded rocks;
Green bamboo charm [mei] the clear ripples.
白云抱幽石，
绿筱媚清涟。

32. In the curving of the stream,
the flow keeps straying out of sight;
By the distant forest,
the cliffs cluster together.
涧委水屡迷，
林迥岩愈密。

33. xiang, qie 详，切

34. yi shao 意少

35. Give endless pleasure to those who savour them
and move the hearts of those who listen.
味之者无极，闻之者动心

36. Niulang 牛郎

37. Far, far, the Herdboy star,
Shimmering white, the Han River maid
....
Only the span of a single brimming stream,
Looking, looking, but finding no words.

38. Zhinu

39. Strartling to one's heart and stirring to one's soul, it can be said that one word of it is worth a thousand pieces of gold.

40. hua mei

41. shangmei

42. juti huamei

43. cicai huamao

44. hua mi

45. yinyun kengqiang

46. Talent outstanding and phrasing rich, his entire corpus is splendidly beautiful.

47. Wenfu

48. qi qianyan ye guiyuon 其言也斐然
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<td>jujue yinghua</td>
<td>咀嚼英华</td>
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<td>50.</td>
<td>yanyu gaoze</td>
<td>厌讴膏泽</td>
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<td>51.</td>
<td>cicai huamao</td>
<td>词采华茂</td>
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<td>wen wen yi li</td>
<td>文温以丽</td>
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<td>fan fu</td>
<td>繁富</td>
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<td>fu yan</td>
<td>富艳</td>
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<td>55.</td>
<td>Zhang Xie</td>
<td>张协</td>
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<td>congqian</td>
<td>礼情</td>
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<td>Ying Ju</td>
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<td>Guo Pu</td>
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<td>59.</td>
<td>shu mei zhan ke wan</td>
<td>珠美殢可玩</td>
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<td>60.</td>
<td>hua mi ke feng wei</td>
<td>华靡可风味</td>
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<td>61.</td>
<td>xianzhang panyue, wenti xianghui, biaobing ke wan</td>
<td>宪章潘岳，文体相辉，彪炳可玩</td>
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<td>62.</td>
<td>gantan zhici</td>
<td>感叹之词</td>
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<td>63.</td>
<td>zhi mu wu wen</td>
<td>质木无文</td>
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<td>64.</td>
<td>Tang Huixiu</td>
<td>汤惠休</td>
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<td>65.</td>
<td>Weiwen Di</td>
<td>魏文帝</td>
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66. bizhi ru ouyu 部直如偶语
67. Za Shi 《杂诗》
68. shu mei zhan ke wan 殊美醰可玩
69. gong 工
70. Ying Yang 应玚
71. Liu Zhen 刘桢
72. Kong Rong 孔融
73. Yongjia 永嘉
74. Jian-An 建安
75. binbin zhi sheng 彬彬之盛
76. [Zhang's style] is full of free spirit and coherent...
文流调达，实旷代之高手，词采葱茜，音韵铿锵，
使人味之娓娓不倦。
77. shang qi zhen mei 伤其真美
78. weiyuan 味远
79. yi bei er yuan 意悲而远
80. wei zhi zhe 味之者
81. wen zhi zhe 闻之者
82. jing jue 惊绝

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83. Even their historical era is lost in oblivion, only their pure tones have lasted the distance. How sad!

人代冥灭，清音独远，悲乎！
Chapter Four

THE ROLE OF IMAGERY IN THE Shi~ia

The traditional Chinese critical device of using concrete and lively imagery to comment on poetry or poetic styles is clearly illustrated in Zhong Rong’s Shi~ia. As commonly regarded, Zhong Rong is the first or among the first critics to use this device extensively in poetry criticism. This approach to literary works later became a basic model in literary and art criticism.

The imagery Zhong Rong employed to conduct his criticism was drawn mainly from the natural world. It can be either seasonal phenomena such as wind, rain, snow, and cloud, or the inhabitants of the animal kingdom. Natural vegetation was at times also used. It can be as big as the river and sea, or as small as grass and sand. Sometimes Zhong Rong uses human images, but only in very rare cases would he resort to man-made artifacts as his sources of imagery.

After summarizing the strong and weak points of the poetry of one of his most favourite poets, Xie Lingyun (385-433), Zhong Rong goes on to give an overall impression of Xie’s poetry which he expresses in the following images:
To be sure, wonderful strophes and superb couplets do appear here and there and beautiful allusions and new sounds do incessantly converge. It is like green pines towering out from thick bushes or white jade shining amid dirt and sand, yet they cannot detract from his loftiness and purity.82.1

Zhong Rong indicates the advantages and disadvantages in Xie's poetry by setting the images of green pines and white jade against the contrasting images of thick bushes, dirt, and sand. As we saw before, Zhong Rong makes the following comment on Cao Zhi's poetry:

the Duke of Zhou and Confucius in the human ethics (renlun), the dragon and phoenix among those with scales and feathers, the zithers and pan-pipes among musical instruments, the embroidered sacrificial garments among the products of women's handicraft.2

The images Zhong Rong employed here come from the realm of the most celebrated and universally revered objects of his age, whether they belong to human, musical or the animal world. All this imagery describes the brilliance of Cao Zhi's poetry and signifies its supreme quality. In a more literal style Zhong


2Chu Whan Cha, "On Enquiries for Ideal Poetry--An Instance of Chung Hung," 53, revised by this writer. See Chapter One, endnote 39.
Rong says: "The poetic temperament is unusual yet elevated. The diction is ornate and luxuriant. The sentiment is urbane as well as sorrowful. The style has both artistry and substance." This is the kind of ideal poetry that could "prompt the literati, eagerly practising versification, to admire them wholeheartedly, cherish them, and enlighten themselves by sharing the distant glow of their light."\footnote{Ibid., 53.}

Sometimes the works of two equally talented poets are compared to different images. Zhong Rong considered that "Lu Ji's talent is like the sea and Pan Yue's is like the Yangtze River."\footnote{Ibid., 54. Translation from Chu Whan Cha, "On Enquiries for Ideal Poetry--An Instance of Chung Hung," 54.} In this comparison, Zhong Rong did not necessarily indicate that one poet is better than the other, but that each poet has his merits, which are extraordinary like the sea and the Yangtze River. On other occasions, Zhong Rong imposed his value judgements. To compare the poetic quality of Xie Lingyun and Yan Yanzhi, he quoted Tang Huixiu's (fl. 464) comments:

\begin{quote}
Xie's poetry is like lotus flowers coming out of the water; 
Yan's is like a mix of colour
\end{quote}

\footnote{Shipin, 57.}
This is to appreciate the beauty and yet spontaneity of Xie Lingyun's poetry, but criticize implicitly the overly-embellished style with the too obvious human element of Yan Yanzhi's poetry. According to Zhong Rong, Tang Huixiu's remark made Yan "feel regret all his lifetime."

Zhong Rong uses imagery in his criticism in several ways. First, as in most cases, he provides a summary of a particular poetic style and draws upon relevant images to illustrate his point. For example, commenting on Fan Yun's poetry he says: "Fan's poems are bracingly nimble and smooth-turning, like a flowing breeze swirling snow."

Secondly, Zhong Rong would sometimes quote other people's commentary which contains pertinent imagery as support to his own poetic judgements. Tang Huixiu's remarks on Xie Lingyun and Yan Yanzhi are of this kind. Occasionally, the poets' statements on their own poetry are also used to describe the charac-

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"Shipin, 100.

teristic of their work. The poet Yuan Gu is placed by Zhong Rong in the lower rank, however, Yuan's high esteem of and his use of imagery to describe his own poetry caught Zhong Rong's attention. Yuan said: "My poems contain such lively vigour that people must hold them tightly, otherwise they will simply fly away."  

The Interest in Imagery and Nature

This use of concrete imagery in literary criticism, which, borrowing Chia-Ying Yeh's term, I call "imagistic criticism," was very much in vogue in the Six Dynasties. However, it was not fully reflected in the sphere of literary criticism. The earliest application of images to art criticism could be found in commentary on calligraphy of the Wei-Jin period. Some calligraphers of that time tended to express themselves through various newly-invented styles of handwriting, whether the "running," "cursive" or "regular" scripts. A style of commentary on calligraphy developed and the following are some examples from the Wei-Jin period:

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9Shipin, 174.

10Chia-Ying Yeh and Jan W. Walls, "Chung Hung's Shih-Pin," 70.

11The Chinese calligraphy is considered a special form of art due to its unique picturesque nature. Li Zehou describes it as "the art of line in a highly concentrated and purified form." See his The Path of Beauty, 101.
When you look up at it, it is like the luxuriant mist rising in the morning, a floating fog joining the cloud; when you examine it closely, it flows like pure wind and clear water which ripples, forming patterns.  

The composition is beautiful like the iridescence of a shining pearl; the flourish of the brush is like an uplifted branch of spring flowers; the launch of the stroke is unrestrained as the long eyebrows of a beautiful girl.  

Natural images like clouds, dawn mist, ripples, flowers, wind, ice, or even lighting and storm were constantly and widely used in calligraphy commentary. This represented, on the one hand, the common practice in the Six Dynasties of perceiving nature as a rich source for styles and strength; on the other hand, it demonstrated the conscientious pursuit of beauty, that is, using imagery to express the understanding of beauty and to show how the beauty was specifically embodied in the forms of characters, structure and composition. At an earlier stage, calligraphy commentary of this kind would only describe ideals of style in general. It was used later to describe and discuss the characteristics of individual calligraphers. For example, Yuan Ang in his Gujin Shuping (Past and Present Calligraphy) provided commentary to twenty-eight calligraphers of the

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past and in his time. His critical commentary included remarks such as: "This person's handwriting was regarded by viewers as 'a beauty wearing flowers, dancing and smiling on a mirroring stage;' yet it means there is too much nimble grace, and not enough strength and energy" (Xuanhe shupu\textsuperscript{14}).\textsuperscript{14} Or, "The viewers consider this handwriting to be like 'the start of the floating wind,' 'a fierce bird's taking off,' which describes the power and vigour of the writing."\textsuperscript{15} These comments would immediately remind us of Zhong Rong's critical style although Zhong Rong always provided a general characterization of each poet in question.

It is notable that the calligraphy commentary during this period had clearly made the association between "beauty" and calligraphy, owing to the general trend towards aesthetic awareness in the Six Dynasties as I have indicated in the Introduction of this study. Suo Jing\textsuperscript{15} in his The Cursive Script (Caoshu Zhuang\textsuperscript{16}) uses "ornate" (qimi\textsuperscript{17}) to describe the beauty of grass-like cursive scripts embodying a kind of free spirit. Wang Min's The Running Script (Xingshu Zhuang\textsuperscript{18}) associates qimi with the dynamics of the running style. And Liu Yanzu's The Flying-white Script (Feibai shushi ming\textsuperscript{19}) uses


\textsuperscript{15}Zhang Bowei, "Zhong Rong Shipin de piping fangfa lun," 164.
word, *qimi*, to convey the notion of the fine and graceful organization of the flying-white style.\textsuperscript{16}

It is this very word, *qimi*, that was later used in Lu Ji's well-known critical work, *Wenfu*, and became a catch-word to modify the typical characteristics of the Six Dynasties' literary tendency. It was also used as a specific critical term to describe the Six Dynasties understanding of the aspect of poetry as distinguished from some non-literary forms, as we have seen in the discussion of Lu Ji's *Wenfu* in Chapter Two of this study.

The imagistic criticism was in conformity with the general attitude of the Six Dynasties towards the natural world. This was a time, that mountains, water, wind, trees, plants, and clouds became the constant focus of not only poets but also the painters as well as calligraphers. Correspondingly the techniques for describing nature also attained a distinctive development. Liu Xie in his *Wenxin diaolong*\textsuperscript{15} characterizes the interest in scenic beauty with the following words: Literary men "pierce through to the inner structure of a landscape and

penetrate the appearances of plants,"^{17} which we have discussed in Chapter Two. Also:

Mountains rise one behind another, and waters meander and circle; Trees interlace and clouds mingle. Such sights before the eyes Stir the mind to express itself. "Spring days pass slowly," And autumn wind "soughs mournfully." The access of feeling for something is described as the giving of a gift. And the coming of inspiration as a response.^{21}^{18}

As if identifying himself with the spirit of the poets of the Six Dynasties, Liu Xie in six beautiful images set in parallel phrases describes the affinity between poets and the natural world and how feelings and poetic inspiration arise involuntarily.

Of the many epigrammatic lines (jing ju^{22}) of poetry produced during this period which have been admired, memorized and recited by later generations, two of the best examples are Xie Lingyun's famous couplets: "White clouds embrace the shaded

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^{17}Wenxin diaolong, 694. Translation from Vincent Yu-Chung Shih, The Literary Mind, 481.

^{18}Ibid., 695. Translation from Vincent Yu-Chung Shih, The Literary Mind, 483 and 485.
rocks; Green bamboos charm the clear ripples”¹⁹ and: “By the pond spring grass is growing; In the garden willows cause singing birds to change.”²⁰ Zhong Rong characterizes them as “wonderful strophes and superb couplets” and believes only such talented poets as Xie Lingyun who “internally never lacks thoughts and poetic affection” is capable to portray things like this.²¹

Zhang Xie’s²² (?-307) poems portrayed the beautiful images of the natural world. One of his “miscellaneous poems” (Za Shi²³) goes as:

The autumn wind fans the white season;
Rosy clouds usher in the gloomy period,
Soaring clouds resemble a rising mist;
The dense rain is like loosened silk threads.
Cold flowers bloom in yellow hues,
The autumn grass bears emerald dew.

Kang-i Sun Chang believes that this poem “culminates in a transcendence of time where the sky, the elements, and the earth

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²⁰Ibid., 127.

²¹Shipin, 64.

exist in harmony." Each line contains a vivid image and their
effect was enhanced by the poet's arranging them in parallel
form. Zhong Rong praised Zhang's poetry in the Shipin by
saying:

His literary style was flowery yet lucid, with very
little blemish and verbosity. In addition, he was
skilful at creating descriptive similitude [qiao gou
xingsi zhi yan].

The descriptive similitude points to Zhang Xie's literary
skill of describing the natural world according to the rule of
verisimilitude or xiang qie (detail and precision).

Whatever those scenic sights appear to be, such as "peace
and calm" or "activity and exploration," they are inevitable
results of the sensitive poets' response to the natural world.
Zhang Xie describes his aroused poetic feelings this way: "Moved
by things, my feelings fill my heart." Zhong Rong makes a

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23 Ibid., 113.

24 Shipin, 60. Translation from Kang-i Sun Chang, Ibid., 108. I have replaced the Wade-Giles with Pinyin in the square bracket.

25 Shipin, 10.

26 This is Kang-i Sun chang's description of the difference between poetry of Zhang Xie and Xie Lingyun. See Kang-i Sun Chang, "Description of Landscape in Early Six Dynasties Poetry," 120.

similar observation, as we saw earlier in his preface of the *Shipin*:

Vernal breezes and springtime birds, the autumn moon and cicadas in the fall, summer clouds and sultry rains, the winter moon and fierce cold -- these are what in the four seasons inspire poetic feeling.\(^{28}\)

This is not only a general statement about the arousal of poetic feeling but also a reflection of the Six Dynasties burgeoning interest in portraying nature. Zhong Rong must have been inspired by many such beautiful epigrammatic lines and so he incorporated them into his *Shipin* as imagistic criticism.

One may notice that there is extensive use of images in Liu Yiqing's *New Account*. One judgement recorded in the *New Account* of the poetic merits of Pan Yue and Lu Ji goes: "Pan Yue's writings are shallow, but limpid; Lu Ji's are deep, but weed-choked."\(^{11}\) It is interesting to see that Zhong Rong also passed similar judgement on Pan's poetry which he considered shallower than Lu's.\(^ {10}\) However, he did not indicate that Lu's was "weed-choked." He quoted instead a comparison of the two poets and


\(^{10}\) *Shipin*, 56.
attributed it to Xie Hun: "Pan Yue's verse is resplendent, like embroidery being spread out; it is everywhere beautiful. Reading Lu Ji's writing is like sifting sand to find gold; here and there a gem appears." Actually the same phrase was recorded in the New Account but it was attributed to Sun Chuo. It is not difficult to find various graceful natural images such as green pine, flowers, spring grass, white jade, dragon, and phoenix used in both the New Account and the Shipin. In the former they are used mostly to describe the characteristics of human beings, their manners, personalities and in the latter to comment on certain poetic styles and qualities. Therefore, we can observe fascination of the Six Dynasties towards the use of imagery.

Images and Their Culture-bound Aesthetic Content

Much has been said so far about Zhong Rong's use of imagery in the Shipin and its association with the aesthetic temperament and style of commentary of the times. It is now time to examine two out of many culture-bound aesthetic contents of these images in order for us to understand better Zhong Rong's choice of them for his critical language. The questions that should be borne in mind are: What are the cultural commonality of these images?

Do they contain comprehensible aesthetic connotations to induce desired response? And why should it be that this imagistic criticism later become a critical tradition that concentrated itself in the poetry-talk style of commentary. The images I choose to analyze are among those most heavily used and frequently referred to in the later commentary or criticism.

Lotus flower coming out of the water (*Furong chushui*)

As we have mentioned earlier in this chapter, Zhong Rong borrowed Tang Huixiu's comments which compared Xie Lingyun's poetry to the "lotus flowers coming out of the water" whereas he ascribed the trait of "a mix of colours with inlays of gold" to Yan Yanzhi's poetry. This is the first time that the lotus/water image was incorporated into poetry criticism. The response towards this comparison was overwhelming in critical circles. After Zhong Rong's application of this image, it appeared constantly in the literary and art commentary. Many naturally and beautifully written poems attracted comments using the lotus/water image as comparison, though there might be variations of use in each.

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The lotus/water image had enjoyed favour from earliest
times in the history of Chinese poetry. Prior to its use in
poetry criticism, it makes its appearance several times in the
*Shijing*, as the setting of a beautiful scene or as an object by
which to compare a beautiful person.

Qu Yuan\(^{29}\) (ca 343-278 B.C.), the great poet of the Warring States, in his *Encountering Sorrow* (*Li Sao*) made
symbolic use of the lotus:

I made a coat of lotus and water-chestnut leaves,
And gathered lotus petals to make myself a skirt.\(^{33}\)

This is to signify that the poet would do everything to maintain
his virtue, which is pure and fragrant like the lotus flower,
rather than fall in the mire with the evil around him.

During the course of the Six Dynasties more poets, for
example, Cao Zhi and Xie Lingyun, used this lotus/water image in
their poems and created spectacular poetic effects with it.

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\(^{29}\) *Xiangin wenxue shi cankao ziliao*. Ed: Beijing daxue zhongguo
wenxue shi jiaoyan shi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 510.
Translation from Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese
Poetic Tradition*, 93.
The lotus/water image was from the very beginning endowed with meanings as 1) beautiful, natural, fresh, and 2) lofty, pure, and virtuous, because of its lovely and delicate appearance. The ancient Chinese always adored lotus flowers, the poets sang of them with great emotion and the painters drew them with great passion. The aesthetic experience towards the flowers becomes a shared property passing on from one generation to another. And with the constant artistic attention, the lotus/water image was even more appreciated, admired, and loved as time went on and came to be a part of the collective aesthetic taste. Therefore when properly used, it could call up the desired response.

As far as we can trace, Zhong Rong is the first person to introduce the lotus/water image as a medium for critical judgement to the Chinese poetry criticism. The judgement he adopted to compare Xie Lingyun's poetry to the "lotus flowers coming out of water," and to compare Yan Yanzhi's to the "mix of colour with inlays of gold" was used in the language of later critics.\textsuperscript{14} We see a similar comparison between Xie Lingyun and Yan Yanzhi recorded in the \textit{Nanshi}\textsuperscript{832} (The History of Southern Dynasties). We see also a later critic, Jiao Ran,\textsuperscript{833} of the Tang Dynasty had a sympathetic response to this imagistic

\textsuperscript{34}Shipin, 100.
comment (lotus flowers coming out of the water) upon Xie Lingyun in his *Shishi*.

It is evident that as soon as the lotus/water image was introduced into poetry criticism, it was everywhere well received. The transformation in the imagistic content of the lotus from description of natural beauty to the designation of poetic qualities was smooth and complete.

As an aesthetic judgement, the lotus/water comparison gained much more ground after Tang Dynasty, owing probably to Li Bo’s (701-762) effort. Li Bo showed tremendous enthusiasm towards the aesthetic quality the lotus/water stood for. His famous line in the poem, "Present to Taishou Wei" (Zeng Jiangxia weitaishou liang zai), enjoyed extreme favour throughout centuries. Even today it is still being cited as a critical remark of accuracy and beauty. Li Bo wrote:

To read your poem of Jin-mountain, 
even Jiang (Jiang Yan) and Bao (Bao Zhao) 
would be surprised. 
Like the lotus coming out of 
limpid water 
It is natural, eschewing 
all that is ornate.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{37}\) Su Zhongxiang, ed. *Li Du shi xuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1957), 63.
Li Bo, in his fondness for the lotus wrote frequently of it in his poetry, where he speaks both of it and his attachment to it. In this poem to Taishou Wei he uses the lotus/water image in the same sense as Zhong Rong does in commenting on Xie Lingyun's poetry.

After Li Bo, more critics started using lotus/water image in their criticism. Jiao Ran in the *Shishi* makes the lotus/water quality the highest among his poetic standards. Gao Zhongwu and Quan Deyu both used it to characterize their favourite poetic style. As an aesthetic term, the lotus image eventually entered the universe of the famous Tang critic, Sikong Tu, in his *Ershisi Shipin* (Twenty-four Types of Poetry). In the fifth of his twenty-four poetic categories, "Lofty and Ancient" (Gao Gu), Sikong writes:

The man of wonder rides the pure,  
In his hand he holds a lotus;  
He drifts on through unfathommed aeons,  
In murky expanses, bare of his trace.

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36 Sikong Tu’s work shares a similar title with Zhong Rong’s book.

Here Sikong Tu describes the kind of poetic quality which is aloof from the ordinary world. It can only be comprehended within a specific realm, which is at the same time tranquil and peacefully remote, as well as deep and lonely. The "lotus" herein serves to substantiate the characteristics of this poetic quality because of its naturalness, beauty and its symbolic meaning that related to the Daoist and Buddhist viewpoints. By this time, the "lotus/water" (qingshui furong) was already taken as a fixed expression in the poetry criticism and the essence it stood for had become an aesthetic standard for ideal poetry.

The White Jade

At times in the Shipin, Zhong Rong would use the image of jade to describe a poetic style or language he admired:

It is like green pines emerging
from thick bushes or
White jade shining amid dirt and sand.38

Zhong Rong makes this comment about Xie Lingyun to indicate the excellence of his poetry. The image was useful as well when discussing Xie Tiao, the middle-ranking poet, attempting to

38 Shipin, 64.
point out that in Xie Tiao's poetry there are good aspects and not so good:

Within every one of his poems, there is always jade and stones to be found.39

Thus jade is used as a contrast to dirt, sand and stone to illustrate the better qualities of Tiao's poetry.

Jade, the smooth and beautiful stone, has constantly been favoured and cherished by Chinese. This adoration of jade can be traced back as early as 3000 BC.40 A jade decoration could signify a person's wealth or a prestigious social status in ancient times. The well-known mythical ruler, Huang Di, was said to have created with it clothes for human beings and from his time onward, the emperors would wear jade pendants without exception.41 In the Shiijing, there are many depictions of beautiful persons wearing jade ornaments; in some instances, jade is used to symbolize beautiful looks.

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39Ibid., 113.
40Xu Jinxiong, Gushi zatan (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1991), 84.
41Ibid., 146.
The description, "Lovely as jade," also appears from time to time in the *Shijing*. This must have encouraged comparing jade or relating it to the sort of lovely and precious qualities whether it is a human being or object.

Jade was not only loved by passionate poets, it was also admired by serious scholars, because of its quality. In the *Book of Rites*, jade was used to illustrate the virtues of refined gentleman (*jun zi*): "It (the jade) is gently smooth and illuminating, that is benevolence (*ren*)... It is clear and pure and never to harm, that is the righteousness." This shows that the ancient Chinese valued and cherished jade in the extreme. This cultural tradition had been carried on for centuries, even to the modern times to a great extent. Different from the *Book of Rites*, the *New account* resumed the tradition of the *Shijing* to compare jade to beautiful human beings. In describing Pei Linggong, it says that Pei has such good appearance and manner, whether he dressed up or not, it is just fine. His contemporaries regarded him as *yuren* (a man of jade). Seeing him people would remark that it is "like walking on top of a jade mountain (*yushan*), with the light reflected back at you." There are many other descriptions of human

42Quoted in Xu Jinxiong, *Gushi zatan*, 85.

features as *yaolin* (jade forest) and two equally handsome friends as *lianbi* (linked-jade disks). From the above survey, we can see that the love and admiration of jade were caused primarily by its exquisite and beautiful appearance. In the historical process however, more refined qualities of the jade were discovered by those who would in turn attach broader significance to it. This begins to suggest how jade was taken in the Chinese mind and in the material culture.

From the above survey we learn that Zhong Rong’s preference for using the jade image to compare and define the superior literary quality of poetry thus has its basis in the Chinese jade culture and aesthetics. It is in the jade, its exquisite quality and beautiful outer took, its smoothness, illuminative-ness, clarity and purity, Zhong Rong found the necessary characteristics that ideal poetry should have.

Some other images Zhong Rong uses in his work are also suggestive. For example, "green pine" is taken by the Chinese to symbolize something lofty, outstanding and sometimes uncompetitive; the "dragon" and "phoenix" stand for power, vigour and beauty; the sea and the Yangzi River denote richness (in talent) and profundity. In sum, they are all culture- and value-laden images and function as specific critical terms in Zhong Rong’s poetic discourse. After the *Shipin*, this kind of
imagistic criticism gained more ground. Some imagistic comparisons used by Zhong Rong were repeatedly quoted or alternatively used in subsequent literary commentary. In actuality, with Zhong Rong this imagistic practice began to be a distinctive mode in traditional Chinese literary criticism.

The Role of Imagery

In his book, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, James J.Y. Liu devoted some space to the analysis of the use of imagery in Chinese poetry. Although Liu's analytic perspective is different from the present study which focuses on the use of imagery in poetry criticism, his insights can be of benefit. Liu pointed out that by its very familiarity, a conventional image can "call forth the desired response and the relevant associations," just as long as

the poet uses images which have similar associations to build up a coherent picture, or if he uses a conventional image but gives it a twist or a fresh significance in a new context, or if he further develops such an image or modifies it to suit his present purpose..."\(^4\)

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\(^4\)*Ibid.*, 115.
This accurately describes Zhong Rong’s use of imagery in the *Shi~in*. The images he uses have some shared cultural and aesthetic resonances in the history of Chinese culture and aesthetics and this is drawn into the context of his commentaries where the meaning is given another dimension, or even gains its multi-valence.

For example, the lotus/water image, we may say, is beautiful to all eyes, whether to Chinese or non-Chinese. However, this image or the kind of beauty it brings is distinctive and not replaceable by other flower images. During their long cultural history, the Chinese have endowed it with more symbolic significance. It takes on, besides representing "beauty" and "freshness" in the *Shijing*, the meanings of "purity," "loftyness" and "virtue" (the use of Qu Yuan), "naturalness," "clarity" (the use of some Six Dynasties poets like Cao Zhi, Xie Lingyun, etc.) and some implications rooted in religious contexts. Thus, when Zhong Rong uses this image to describe Xie Lingyun’s poetic style in contrast to Yan Yanzhi’s "mix of colour with inlays of gold," the reader’s cultural knowledge and imagination would be evoked and he is able to sketch quickly a picture of the merits of Xie’s poetry. Especially, when one combines his reading of the imagistic criticism with the rationalized comments on the two poets (Zhong Rong characterizes Xie as rich in "poetic inspirations and talent and comments on
Yan as "enjoying allusions, thus his poems looked constrained") he could have a fuller sense and better understanding of the general poetic style of Xie and Yan. Not to mention the marked difference between the two, the talented and yet spontaneous presentation of Xie and the demonstrated constraint and overly obvious artistry of Yan, as Zhong Rong described it, will also be meaningful to him, indeed perhaps offering a basis for his conclusions and construct his summaries.

Discussing the successful use of images in a poetic work, Professor Wayne Schlepp gives special emphasis to the issue of balance. He believes that there is a:

balance that must be struck between how tight or lax is syntax structure and how natural or forced, within literary conventions, is the association between the things related. This balance, assuring on the one hand comprehensibility, and on the other, freshness and lively imagery, is basic to the success of all figures of speech."

Although the statement does not directly point to the use of imagery in poetry criticism, it will certainly benefit our present discussion. Zhong Rong's imagistic comments on the

Liang poet Fan Yun could serve as a good illustration for us how the images work. I shall repeat his comments for the convenience of discussion:

Fan's poems are bracingly nimble (qingbian) and smooth-turning (wanzhuan), like a flowing breeze swirling snow.⁴⁷

Zhong Rong's summary as qingbian⁵⁶ describes the freshness, grace and syntactical compactness of Fan's poems whereas the subtle, clever turns are what wanzhuan⁵⁷ connotes. Reading Fan's "Poem of Departure" (Bieshi⁵⁸), we may have a sense of his poetic style:

East and west of Luoyang City,
You parted long without return;
Then [xi] when you left, snow fell as flowers,
Now [jin] as you return, flowers blow like snow.⁵⁹ ⁴⁸

The temporal change is displayed by the contrast between the past (xi) and the present (jin), as well as in the substitution of seasonal phenomena such as snow and flowers. The two nouns of locality, qu⁶² (rendered in English as "leave") and lai⁶¹ (coming back) signify the spacial change. Reading this

⁴⁷See Note 8 in this Chapter. Pinyin added.
⁴⁸Jiang Shuge and Jiang Yibo, ed. Han Wei Liuchao shi sanbai show (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1992), 353.
poem, one's mind is bound to move back and forth between the past and the present (xi/jin; qu/lai; xue/hua) and experience the poetic feeling and meaning revealed through the change of seasonal images. Therefore, we may say the style demonstrated in this poem is, generally speaking, agreeable to Zhong Rong's summary -- qingbian wanzhuan, while Zhong Rong's further imagistic comparison of Fan's style to "a flowing breeze swirling snow" would bring special effect to a critical understanding. Associating Fan's style with the images of "breeze" and "snow" would reinforce the impression of the freshness and the gracefulness; and the interesting use of adjectives "flowing" (liù) and "swirling" (huì) could make the "breeze" and "snow" images more lively, so as to "put actual things into unusual and illuminating perspectives." Eventually the apprehension of the characteristic of "smooth-turning," reflected both in the poetic structure and in its effect could be strengthened.

Images, therefore, when properly used in poetry criticism, can "serve as a device for explaining, clarifying, and making vivid what the speaker is talking about," since at this point


"the reader would not only know but feel what the speaker is responding to." Imagery is able to evoke responses that no other form of expression might, so this helps to explain why imagistic criticism enjoyed such long-lasting favour in Chinese literary criticism.

Imagistic criticism has drawn both praise and criticism from scholars of Chinese literature. Three reasons for favouring it are:

Firstly, imagistic criticism gives the critic's general aesthetic impression and experience of the poetry, which in turn helps the reader to grasp the overall style of the poetry.⑤

Secondly, using juxtaposed phrases and beautiful imagery the imagistic criticism itself demonstrates a sort of inspiring poetic beauty and artistry. It stimulates the reader to "a more sensitive and critical appreciation of the subject."⑥

Thirdly, with their rich symbolic connotations, the images are inconclusive and open-ended and allow room for a wider range

⑤Ibid.


of interpretations. Being merely suggestive, they stimulate the imagination and evoke more from the reader.\(^{54}\)

It may be added, on the other hand, that a sort of rationalist thinking, or a too rigid analysis might deceive the reader as well as the writer into thinking that what is said is conclusive, henceforth distorting facts. Cases like this can be easily drawn from both ancient and modern criticism.

Some scholars believe the shortcomings of imagistic criticism lie in its lack of a rational and theoretical basis and objectively defined standards. It is even worse in the cases where the imagery was inappropriately used and can mislead the reader.\(^{55}\)

So far, we have spoken about imagistic criticism, its historical context and the possible advantages and disadvantages which I believe accrue to it. We turn now to questions of its underlying causes both as literary criticism and in the arts in general.

\(^{54}\)Han Jingtai, *Zhongguo shixue yu chuantong wenhua jingshen* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1989), 159.

\(^{55}\)Yeh Chia-Ying and Jan W. Walls. "Theory, Standards, and Practice of Criticizing Poetry in Chung Hung’s Shih-Pin," 70.
Modern critics tend to attribute the cause of this critical style to the "underdevelopment" of the Chinese language for expressing abstract thought, or further, the "underdevelopment of abstract thinking." This, in my view, only partially touches the truth. As I mentioned in the Introduction the ancient Chinese were aware of the limit of language from the earliest times on:

Writing does not exhaust words;
words do not exhaust meaning.

Even so, the sage in an effort to solve this problem:

Set up the images in order to exhaust meaning;
Instituted the hexagrams in order to exhaust
the true nature or the factitious in things;
Appended words to them (the hexagrams) in order
to exhaust what they had to say.

Hence we know that "setting up images to exhaust meaning" is not a foreign topic for the cultivated Chinese especially not for Zhong Rong who was said to have a good knowledge of the Book

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56See Han Jingtao, Zhongguo shixue yu chuantong wenhua jingshen, 153.
57Xie Dahuang, Yijing baihua zhuyi, 33.
58Ibid., 33.
of Change\textsuperscript{59}. Imagery was considered essential to convey what words cannot fully express. Although the images mentioned in the Book of Change were not in reference to poetics, it is safe to assume that this awareness of the necessity of images would inevitably lead to the awareness of the need for poetic images. The attitude toward the images would eventually have an effect upon the imagistic thinking in poetics. Chinese poetics has been nourished by Chinese philosophical thinking and has developed in active interaction with it. It is in this sense that imagistic criticism in art and literature reflects the Chinese consciousness towards imagery.

Chinese thinkers believed that the totality of the world can be kept intact only when it is not hampered by language. Lao Zi has this famous utterance:

The Dao that can be dao-ed [spoken of]
Is not the constant dao;
The name that can be named
Is not the constant name.\textsuperscript{60}

The indication is that the dao is most ineffable and as soon as language enters in (i.e., to speak about it), its

\textsuperscript{59}Nanshi, Zhong Rong zhuan. See Wei Jin Nan Bei Chao wenxue shi cankao ziliao, 617.

\textsuperscript{60}Laozi, 1. Translation from Zhang Longxi, The Tao and the Logos (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 27.
essence will have been undermined. This demonstrates the Daoist concern about the totality and true meaning of the world. This explains as well why the sage prefers to rely upon images since language would fail to express what it aims to and thus actually distort the reality.

Therefore, instead of being a sign of the underdevelopment of Chinese abstract language and thinking, this employment of concrete imagery is an effort to circumvent the inadequacies which are inherent in all languages. This imagistic criticism keeps the critic from too much abstraction, which actually draws him away from the matter at hand, and allows the images to bear upon a particular meaning by interacting with each other and the object of their description according to their inner logic. By using imagistic language, a culture-bound convention of significance will be invoked in the reader whose imagination and associations will be stimulated and the meaning will be concretized automatically.

After Zhong Rong, some critics of subsequent periods used imagistic criticism as their mode of discourse. Among those, I shall here mention the Tang critic Sikong Tu and the Song critic Yan Yu. In his own Shihpin, Sikong Tu used various kinds of imagery, from cosmology to nature, from the animal world to sage, in pursuing his interpretation of poetry. Yan Yu,
however, selected the most subtle and intangible imagery, suffused with Zen Buddhist ideas, as his critical language. There are such expressions as "sound in the air, colour in appearances, the moon in the water, or an image in the mirror." Yan claimed that there are "limited words but unlimited meaning" in these images, that is the very reason for using them. This poetic understanding of Yan agrees with Zhong Rong's poetic ideal -- "when words come to the end, meaning lingers on," that is where the power of imagistic criticism resides.

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62 Ibid.

63 Shipin, 11.
Endnotes (Chapter Four)

1. Xie Lingyun  谢灵运

2. To be sure, wonderful strophes and superb couplets do appear here and there...green pines towering out from thick bushes or white jade shining amid dirt and sand...
   然名章遗句，处处间起，词典新声，络绎并会。
   譬犹青松之拔灌木，白玉之映尘沙，未足显其高洁也。

3. Prompt the literati, eagerly practising versification...
   俾尔怀铅，吮墨者，拖篇章而景慕，
   耀余辉以自炫。

4. Pan Yue  潘岳

5. Lu Ji’s talent is likened to the sea and Pan Yue’s to the Yangtze River
   陆才如海，潘才如江

6. Tang Huixiu  汤惠休

7 Lotus flowers coming out of the water  A mix of colors with inlays of gold
   出水芙蓉，错采镂金

8 Fan Yun  范云

9 Yuan Gu  袁㝛

10. Look up at it, it is like the luxuriant mist rising in the morning...
   仰而望之，都若霄雾朝升，游烟连云；
   俯而察之，漂若清风厉水，涟漪成文。
11. Yang Quan

The composition is beautiful like the iridescence of a shining pearl.

12. Yuan Ang

13. Gujin Shuping

14. Xuanhe shupu

15. Suo Jing

16. Caoshu zhuang

17. qimi

18. Xingshu Zhuang

19. Feibai shushi ming

20. Wenxin diaolong

21. Mountains rise one behind another, and waters meander and circle...

22. jing ju
23. Zhang Xie 张协

24. Za shi 《杂诗》

25. qiao gou xingsi zhi yan
文体华净，少病累，巧构形似之言

26. Xie Hun 谢混

27. Sun Chuo 孙绰

28. furong chushui 芙蓉出水

29. Qu Yuan 屈原

30. Li sao 《离骚》

31. I made a coat of lotus and water-chestnut leaves, and
    gathered lotus petals to make myself a skirt.
制芰荷以为衣兮，
集芙蓉以为裳。

32. Nanshi 《南史》

33. Jiao Ran 皎然

34. Shi shi — wenzhang zongzhi 《诗式：文章宗旨》

35. Li Bo 李白

36. zeng jiang xiawei taishou liang zai 《赠江夏韦太守良宰》

37. To read your poetry of Jing—mountain,
    even Jiang and Bao would be moved and frightened.

As if the lotus flower coming out of
the limpid water,
they are so natural without any ornate decoration.

览君荆山作，
江鲍塔动色。
清水出芙蓉，
天然去雕饰。

38. Gao Zhongwu                 高仲武

39. Quan Deyu                    权德舆

40. Sikong Tu                    司空图

41. Ershishi shipin               《二十四诗品》

42. Gao Gu                       高古

43. The man of wonder rides the pure,
   In his hand he holds a lotus;
   He drifts on through unfathomed aeons,
   In murky expanses, bare of his trace.

44. qingshui furong              清水芙蓉

45. It is like green pines towering out
   from thick bushes, or
   white jade shining amid dirt and sand.

46. Xie Tiao                     谢眺

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47. Within every one of his poems, there is always jade and stones to be found.

一章之中自有玉石。

48. junzi

君子

49. ren

仁

50. Pei Linggong

裴令公

51. yuren

玉人

52. yushan

玉山

53. jade forest

瑶林

54. lianbi

莲璧

55. Fan's poems are bracingly nimble and smooth-turning, like a flowing breeze swirling snow.

范诗清便，婉转，如流风回雪

56. qingbian

清便

57. wanzhuan

婉转

58. bieshi

别诗

59. East and west of Luoyang city....

洛阳城东西，
长作经时别。
昔去雪如花，
今来花似雪。

60. qu

去

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61. lai 未
62. liu 留
63. hui 回

64. Writing would never exhaust words;
Words would never exhaust meaning
文不尽言，言不尽意

65. Set up the images in order to exhaust meaning;
Institute the hexagrams in order to exhaust
the true nature or the factitious in things;
Appended words to them in order to exhaust
what they had to say.
圣人立象以尽意，设卦以尽变，系辞焉以尽其言。

66. Yan Yu 严羽
CONCLUSION

When the Qing scholar He Wenhuans
ing compiled the _Lidai shihua_ (Talks on Poetry Chronologically Arranged), the _Shipin_ was placed in his first entries.\(^1\) Because of He's practice, many later scholars mistakenly regarded the _Shipin_ as one of the _shihua_ (poetry-talk).

Is the _Shipin_ truly a _shihua_? The answer is no. To be fair, the _Shipin_ does share some traits with _shihua_, but it is not itself a _shihua_. As commonly perceived, _shihua_ are not works of serious concern but rather, using the Song dynasty _shihua_ writer Ouyang Xiu's words, "an aid to light conversation."\(^2\) Zhong Rong's _Shipin_ is different in this respect. It was consciously motivated, purposefully designed and carefully written. The Chinese literary historian Guo Shaoyu has pointed out that "the _Shipin_ is a serious work among literary criticism."\(^3\) As we know, _shihua_ are usually collections of random jottings of poets and their works (see Introduction, note 25).

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\(^1\) He Wenhuans, ed., _Lidai shihua_, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982). The other two in the first entries were Jiao Ran's _Shishi_ and Sikong Tu's _Ershisi shipin_.

\(^2\) Quoted in "Shih-hua," _The Indiana Companion_, 695.

\(^3\) See "Preface" of Wang Fuzhi, _Qing shihua_, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1963), 1.
but the *Shipin* is not. It is systematic in its categorization and evaluation and has its own logic and written order.

The *Shipin* is the first attempt at a systematic evaluation of individual poets and their works. For Zhong Rong, poetry was not treated as merely a medium to mirror the temperament of the age, or to aid politics and moral education. It is primarily an entity in itself, an independent field of study and deserved to be studied for its own sake. Zhong Rong's consciousness and seriousness in writing the *Shipin* is reflected in the following areas:

1) The *Shipin* is a conscious critical effort;  
2) The *Shipin* has its specific format and principles for making classifications;  
3) The *Shipin* has a clear set of objectives and proved to be faithful to them.

I shall discuss each of these characteristic in the following pages.

**The Shipin Is a Conscious Critical Effort**

Reviewing the poetic practice of his times, Zhong Rong was extremely dissatisfied, but not because there was a lack of enthusiasm in poetry writing or any shortage of attempts at
production. It was the meagreness of good poetry and, more vital, the lack of criteria in poetic evaluation that caused Zhong Rong's concern:

As for officials who serve in the courts of noblemen, whenever time is left over from state discussions, they invariably turn to the topic of poetry. As each follows his individual predilections, the critique of one is at variance with that of another. The Zi and Sheng flow indiscriminately; vermilion and purple, the pure and impure, each vies with the other. Discussions turn into disputations, and there is no reliable standard.⁵

Confusion occurred since there was no dependable standard and poetic rules to follow. Men of letters of that time strove to make their poems exceptional by the use of historical allusion or imitation of celebrated writing. Some of them even flippantly mocked the outstanding poets Cao Zhi and Liu Zhen⁶ "regarding them as old fashioned and unsophisticated and considering their own works master pieces." Unfortunately, in others' opinions they were but something clumsy and unbearable to read.⁴ This situation made Zhong Rong realize that serious

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⁴Zi and Sheng are two rivers in the Shandong province of China. As the legend goes the water in the two rivers tastes very different; but when the two merged into one, people could not distinguish one from the other.


⁶Shipin, 14.