Liu Hsieh (c. A.D. 465-522), in his Wen-hsin tiao-lung, or The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, gives a comprehensive treatment of literary theories and critical opinions from the earliest period to his own time. As a critic, his genius is demonstrated by the exhaustive and penetrating manner in which he deals with literary and rhetorical problems. For a better understanding of his insight, a brief survey of the development of literary criticism in ancient China will be of great help, for here we shall find the main sources of his inspiration.

Literary opinions in ancient China developed and expanded as literary writing advanced. The first traces of such opinions are found in the Book of History. "Poetry is the expression of sentiments, and songs are these expressions set to music. Tones are prolonged according to rules of prosody and intervals chosen according to rules of harmony." This theory of poetry as the expression of sentiments was to exert a tremendous influence upon subsequent critics. The idea was first elaborated in the "Great Preface" to the Book of Poetry, believed to be the work of Wei Hung of the Later Han (flourishing about A.D. 25). Since then it has appeared in one form or another in the works of the most important critics, including Lu Chi of the Chin (261-303), and Liu Hsieh and Chung Hung of the Liang (flourishing during the latter part of the fifth and the first part of the sixth centuries). Poetry was conceived to be predominantly lyrical in nature, and intimately linked to music. The songs and odes in the Book of Poetry conform very well to this pattern—a pattern which may be considered purely literary.

The philosophical period in ancient China was in many ways analogous to the golden era of classical Greece. Many incidental remarks on literature were made by philosophers, whose primary interest was not in literature as such, but rather in philosophical truth. Thus their

1 Shang-shu t'ung-chien (Peking, 1936), 02/0681-0692.
critical judgment was basically ethical rather than esthetic. In China, Confucius and others after him valued art chiefly for its moral effect on the conduct of the people, frequently mixing moral with literary and poetic issues. In Greece Plato, alarmed by the unhealthy effect of poetry, banished poets from his city state. Of the two, Confucius was perhaps the more enlightened. He not only included poetry as one of his main texts for instruction but also told his son and disciples to study and imitate its disciplined artistry in order to improve their ability to express themselves. He also reminded his students of the importance of literary ornament, without which truth will not travel far.

This apparent love of beauty of form on the part of Confucius, however, is completely overbalanced by his underlying utilitarian motive. This utilitarian attitude is most clearly indicated by his remarks on the Book of Poetry. He said:

The odes can stimulate the mind, train the observation, encourage social intercourse, and enable one to give vent to his complaint. From them one may learn how to fulfil the immediate duty to one's father, and the remote duty to one's ruler. And in them one may become widely acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, plants, and trees.

Once he characterized the whole Book of Poetry by one single line: "It has no undisciplined thought." The virtues of the Poetry being such, no Aristotelian defense of the poetic art is necessary.

However, it would be unjust to say that Confucius lacked esthetic appreciation and sensitivity. We are told that at one time he was so enthralled by the beauty of the Shao that for three months he did not know the taste of meat. This subjective experience, however, did not influence his attitude toward art. Because of his authority elsewhere, his didacticism was also firmly established as one of the chief traditions in the field of literary criticism.

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2 Li-ch'i yin-te, 32/26.
3 Ch'un-ch'iu ching-chuan yin-te, 307/Hsiang 25, fu 2.
5 Ibid., 2/2/2.
6 A musical score attributed to Shun, one of the legendary rulers.
7 Lun-yü yin-te, 12/7/14.
After Confucius came Mencius and Hsüntzu, who continued to perpetuate and develop this tradition. Both Mencius and Hsüntzu were classical scholars, quoting the Six Classics extensively in their works. In their discourse on the Poetry, both emphasized the ethical and cultural values as did the Master. Mencius, however, with his idealism and mystical leanings, was able to adopt a freer approach to literary problems. Maintaining that the Poetry should be elucidated in an enlightened manner, he said:

Therefore, those who comment upon the Book of Poetry should not because of one term misconstrue the meaning of a sentence, and should not because of a sentence misconstrue the original idea. They must try with their thoughts to meet that idea, and then they will apprehend it.\(^8\)

This plan for a freer interpretation of creative literature displays an insight unique in antiquity.

It is true that a purely intuitive or subjective judgment is extremely hazardous and in many instances nothing more than a wild guess, too farfetched to be valid. Very often it is the personal impression of the critic, expressive of his emotional approval or disapproval. However, a subjective judgment is not entirely without merit. At a time when criticism was still in its infancy, sincere opinion was a contribution in itself.\(^9\)

The evil of Mencius' subjective approach is mitigated somewhat by another theory of his that a work should not be considered in isolation, but in the total context of the life and time of the author.\(^10\) Unfortunately, not many critics who believe in subjective criticism and intuitive evaluation are able to balance their view by a historical consideration as Mencius advocated.\(^11\)

An even more important contribution is contained in the famous theory of yang-ch'i, the fostering of the vital spirit or breath. The nature

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\(^8\) Meng-tzu yin-te, 36/5A/4.
\(^9\) The evil effect of this subjective criticism will be clearly seen when we come to deal with the "Prefaces" to the Book of Poetry.
\(^10\) Meng-tzu yin-te, 42/5B/8.
\(^11\) Cheng Hsüan of the Later Han wrote his Shih-p'\u on the basis of historical criticism.
of this breath or spirit (*ch'i*), as conceived by Mencius, is clearly ethical. Mencius said,

Such is the breath (*ch'i*): it is most great and most strong. Being fostered by uprightness and sustaining no injury, it fills up all between heaven and earth.

Such is the breath: it is the correlate of righteousness (*i*) and moral principle (*tao*). Without it man is starved. It is produced by the accumulation of righteous deeds, and not to be obtained by incidental acts of righteousness. It is clear that the term *ch'i* (breath, or vital life or spirit) stands for that moral quality which is attained through a moral life. Yet in a later development, it seems to have undergone a shift in meaning, a shift from the moralistic pure and simple to a sense which is at once moral and esthetic. It is in this latter sense that the term *ch'i* achieved prominence in literary and critical nomenclature, for it became a criterion by which both the talent of a writer and the quality of his work were judged and appraised.

Hsüntzu held a more practical view of literature than did Mencius. To him, the only validity of literature lies in its usefulness, an opinion originally found in Confucius and further strengthened by the utilitarian Mohists. However, being concerned with the principle of social conduct and the ways and means of producing social harmony, Hsüntzu was able to see some value in *wen-hsiêh*, i.e., literature, in its beautifying effect upon man's character. The problem here is the sense in which he used the term *wen-hsiêh*, generally translated "literature." From the context it seems clear that Hsüntzu meant by it learning in general. The concept of literature as we understand it today was not clearly delineated until the Han period. Prior to the Han, the concept of pure literature did not seem to have emerged except when poetry was specifically referred to. This lack of a clear distinction between literature and learning may have been one of the reasons why poetry, which had a glorious start as pure literature, gradually came to assume

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the function of moral didacticism. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the case of Hsüntzu who, more than anybody else, quoted the *Book of Poetry* at every turn to demonstrate his moral points.

As a philosopher, Hsüntzu was naturalistic. Despite this tendency, he seems to have probed deep into the origin and nature of creative activities, and to have emerged in the end with a reasonable explanation of the psychology of creative processes. Observe his penetrating insight in his discussion of the principle of music:

Music is the expression of joy. This is something which human feelings made unavoidable. For man cannot be without joy. And when there is joy, it must be expressed in sound and given embodiment through movement and repose. This is the way with man. In sounds, movements, and pauses are expressed all the changes in his mood. Hence man cannot be without joy, and when there is joy, it must have a physical embodiment. When this embodiment does not conform to right principles, there will be disorder. The early kings hated disorder, and so they established the music of the *Ya* and *Sung* to guide it. They caused its music to be joyful and not to degenerate, and its beauty to be distinct and not limited. They caused it in its indirect and direct appeals, its completeness and simplicity, its frugality and richness, its rests and notes to stir up the goodness in men's minds and to prevent evil feelings from gaining any foothold. This is the manner in which the early kings established music.14

The function of music, accordingly, is to regulate and harmonize human emotions, and this inner harmony serves as the basis for the achievement of social harmony through *li*, the principle of social conduct which is the outer counterpart of the inner principle of *yüeh*, or music. In view of the intimate relation between music and poetry, Hsüntzu's theory could not but exercise great influence on subsequent poetics.

Not all philosophers shared this didactic view of poetry with the Confucians. Taoism, with its principle of *Tao* in the realm of meta-

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14 *Ibid.*, chüan 14, Chapter 20, p. 252. Bodde's translation of Fung Yu-lan's *History of Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 1952), I, 342. The first four lines are also found in the *Li-chi* with minor modification, suggesting a different reading, which seems to make better sense. On this basis I have taken the liberty of making some changes in the translation.
physics and the principle of nonaction on the plane of experience, would have nothing to do with either institution or words. Therefore, in the Taoist system of thought, there is no room for literature, because for the Taoists language oftener obstructs than assists the communication of ideas; it is to be tolerated only as a suggestive aid to the attainment of truth, and to be discarded the moment truth is obtained. The inability of language to convey truth is imbedded in the very nature of language itself. Language is a system of symbols designed for the communication of ideas born of common experience. But truth, according to the Taoists, is a mystical state which, being unique, cannot be expressed in language devised for the conveyance of experience common to all who use the same language. But paradoxically, it was Chuangtzu, the most noted Taoist, who wrote some of the most imaginative literature of his time, and provided the literary world with vivid descriptions of his mystical insight into the inner process of creation. His philosophical writings, essentially mystical in nature and allegorical in form, are characterized with distinct originality and unique spontaneity. They are further marked by a keen poetic sensitivity and an acute esthetic awareness, qualities extremely rare in an age suffering from stifling dogmatism and paucity of imagination.

The transcendental mysticism which permeates all of Chuangtzu’s works finally crystallizes in the concept of *shen* (the spiritual or divine), which has since become the most important word in our critical terminology. The supreme state of *shen* is sometimes described as the “realm of pure experience.” It is true that both Mencius and Chuangtzu held mystical experience as the highest aim of self-cultivation, but their means of reaching this ultimate goal are different. In the case of Mencius, it was through “an accumulation of righteous deeds,” or to be more specific, through acting “with a vigorous effort at altruism.” But Chuangtzu, instead of following the conventional ethical approach, which he openly condemned, took an intuitive and mystical approach. The life of “pure experience” is a state which transcends both the human senses and the intellect, a state in which one forgets the entire world, including his own existence. In such a state, one
attains that sudden enlightenment in which one experiences union with the universe. Such is Chuangtzu's mysticism, and such is his vision of the Supreme State.

His concept of shen, when applied to the process of creation, led him to another vision which is equally mystical and equally transcendent, that is, the vision of an effortless creativity born of perfect understanding and comprehension. This creativity is illustrated in parables of the Master Butcher, the Wheelwright, and many others. It is a process which the artist intuits but is unable either to describe or to impart.

Chuangtzu, in his outspoken condemnation of all established institutions, including language itself, challenged the very standards which provided the primary tests of literary values of his time. In so doing, he foreshadowed a fresh outlook in art and a new esthetic interest in later generations. If Confucius contributed the essential ethical basis for traditional criticism in China, Chuangtzu awakened an esthetic sensitivity which is even more essential to literary criticism. Moreover, the term shen is responsible for a highly mystical and impressionistic interpretation of literature which has assumed an equally important role in the history of Chinese literary criticism.

The Former Han period is relatively barren as far as literary theory is concerned. The supremacy of Han Confucianism, which was brought about during the reign of Emperor Wu (141-87 B.C.) through the influence of Tung Chung-shu (flourishing 179-93 B.C.), may be considered the crowning stage of an effort at the unification of thought initiated during the time of the first emperor of the preceding Ch'in dynasty. Such a unification may have stifled individual initiative during that time, for Confucius, from being honored simply as a great teacher, was finally canonized as a deity, and his words became sacred utterances to be reverentially followed with unquestioning faith.

However, the dearth of critical speculations does not imply paucity of literary creation. There were writers in plenty who, under the influence of the Ch'u poets, wrote a type of melodic and highly adorned

\[15\] Chuangtzu yin-te, 7-8/3/2-12; 36/13/68-74.
prose known as the *fu*. This outburst of literary activity brought about a clear conception of literature as distinct from learning in general. From now on we can speak of literature without a feeling of uncertainty as to what is meant by the term.

Rich experience in writing is often a *sine qua non* to a profound understanding of the nature of literature. The conception of "the mind of *fu*" held by Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (c. 179-117 B.C.) seems to confirm this. When people questioned Ssu-ma as to the nature of *fu*, he is reported to have said:

The form which we create by means of weaving and the substance which we cause to body forth in brocade are the results of the interlacing of the warp and the woof and the organizing of *kung* and *shang* [i.e., musical tones]. These are the external traces of the *fu*. But the mind of a *fu* writer encompasses the whole universe, and holds in its view everything from human beings to the inanimate world. This encompassing vision is born within, and is not to be transmitted.\(^1^6\)

Later, Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.-A.D. 18) spoke of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju’s *fu* as "not from the human world." For to Yang, it was divine: "It is the product of one who has attained the state of spiritual transformation."\(^1^7\) Here we see a community of spirit between Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Chuangtzu in the conception of *shen*, which was later expressed by Wei-wen (Ts’ao P’ei, 187-226) in his conception of *ch'i*.

The years between the Former and the Later Han are important years in the annals of Chinese literary criticism. We have mentioned Wei Hung’s elaboration of the classical definition of poetry, and Cheng Hsüan’s application of Mencius’s historical method to his own consideration and arrangement of poems in the *Book of Poetry*. Let us dwell a little more fully on Wei Hung.

Wei Hung’s elaboration of the classical definition of poetry as the expression of the sentiments led to another important theory of literary development, which Wei treated in his "Great Preface,"\(^1^8\) a most

\(^{1^6}\) *Hsi-ch’ing cha-chi* (Han-wei ts’ung-shu ed.), chüan 2, pp. 4b-5a.

\(^{1^7}\) *Ibid.*, chüan 3, p. 6a.

\(^{1^8}\) Shen Chung of the Northern Chou (500-583) attributed the "Great Preface" to Tzu-hsia, a disciple of Confucius; Fan Yeh of Liu Sung (398-445), in his *Hou-han-shu*, 
important document in the annals of literary criticism. He believed that the nature of poetry was determined by the nature of government. The intimate relationship between poetry and government was thought to be derived from the fact that, since the function of poetry is to express the sentiments, and since we must assume the sentiments to be genuine and the expression spontaneous, poetry becomes the most concrete and articulate manifestation of the people's attitude toward the government. If the government is good, poetry will reflect joy and satisfaction; and if the government is bad, poetry will reflect the people's resentment and complaint. We must give the ancient rulers credit for being shrewd enough to go to poetry for information about the quality of local government and the feelings of the people, if the tradition concerning the collection of poetry for political purposes can be trusted.

As a descriptive principle, there is nothing wrong with this theory. It is just a special application of the general theory that art, however fortuitously, reflects life—a meaningful statement even in modern times. In ancient China, this theory had a wider application. When Prince Chi-cha of Wu visited the state of Lu, he is reported to have been able to pass perfect judgment on the government of different states by listening to their music. But when a critic follows this theory in his interpretation or a poet attempts to conform to it, the theory exerts a harmful influence. Since the writing of the "Great and Lesser Prefaces," beautiful poems in the *Book of Poetry* have been so burdened with allegorical and moral lessons that the genuine feelings expressed in them are completely overlooked.

As a corollary, poetry was assigned a new function utterly extraneous to itself: it was made to remonstrate with and admonish the superior. For it was believed that to admonish by means of poetic devices, such as metaphors, allegories, and parables, was both effective and safe. As late as the T'ang dynasty, we still find Po Chü-i (772-846) obsessed

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"Ju-lin chuan," and Cheng Ch'iao of Sung (1104-1162), in his *Shih-hsü pien*, both attributed it to Wei Hung, and their opinion has been accepted by scholars.

19 *Ch'üan-ch'iu ching-chuan yin-te*, 326-327/Hsiang 29/8 Tso.
with the desire to be remembered as a poet who has given the world moral insight to serve as a guide to life.

The theory that art reflects the conditions of the time presupposes extreme sensitivity on the part of the artist or poet to the ever-changing situations and needs of the time. Faced with such a fluid world, he naturally varies his moods in response to it, producing quite spontaneously different literary and artistic forms. All this is either well described or implied in Wei Hung's "Preface." This principle has been known as the principle of flexible adaptability. But strangely enough, he failed to take the one step more which would have awakened him to the truth that any effort on the part of the artist or poet, in the face of the changing need, to hold on to the ancient truths will inevitably result in failure.

It was also in these years that classicism was reaffirmed and new paths were indicated. Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.-A.D. 18) may be said to be responsible for the former and Wang Ch’ung for the latter.

A Confucian scholar, a poet, and an academician turned "critic," Yang Hsiung seemed promising as a critic in his earlier career when he enthusiastically applauded the beautiful fu composed by Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, the supreme architect of fu of an earlier generation. We have seen how once he was so moved by Ssu-ma’s creative talent that he believed Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju’s fu not to have come from this human world of ours. He was not only an admirer of Hsiang-ju’s fu, but also an ardent imitator of his style. At this time he seemed capable of enjoying what is of sheer beauty and pure delight, revealing thus his unmistakable awareness of that undefinable act of intuition or vision out of which all art originates. His description of the works of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju as shen-hua (spiritual or divine transformation) marks him as a believer in the theory that a genius is born and not taught. But with this pronouncement came the end of the early phase of his critical position.

In his biography, Yang Hsiung was described as a "lover of antiquity," a phrase which reveals his final allegiance and also his final critical standpoint. In the chapter "Wu-tzu" in his Fa-yen, he expressed
deep regret for having wasted his youth in the writing of fu, and represented Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's fu, which once elicited from him so great an admiration, as beautiful but useless.\textsuperscript{20} He wrote the \textit{T'ai-hsiian} (The great mystery) in imitation of the \textit{Book of Changes} and the \textit{Tao-te ching}, and the \textit{Fa-yen} (Model sayings) in imitation of the \textit{Analects}, indulging in the use of archaic expressions and obsolete words. This love of pedantic display invoked the ire both of his contemporaries and of later writers. Liu Hsin (c. 53 B.C.-A.D. 23), a contemporary and friend, described his works as fit only to cover pickle jars, and Su Shih of the Sung (1036-1101) believed that Yang Hsiung was trying to conceal his shallow scholarship behind the façade of pedantry.

The influence of Yang Hsiung's classicism on his criticism is clear. First of all, Yang Hsiung returned to Confucius as the source of all inspiration. He said,

Books, however excellent, are just bookstores if they are not based on the principle advocated by Confucius; and talks, however eloquent, are just the sound of petty bells when not based on the principle advocated by Confucius.\textsuperscript{21}

And again,

Mountain paths are too numerous all to be walked over, and doors in walls are too numerous all to be entered. So it may be asked, “By what is one to walk or enter?” I reply, “By Confucius. Confucius is the door.”\textsuperscript{22}

Secondly, he returned to the Classics as the source of all wisdom. He said,

For discussing heaven, there is nothing more discerning than the \textit{BooJ of Changes}. For discussing human affairs, there is nothing more discerning than the \textit{Book of History}. For discussing the essential, there is nothing more discerning than the \textit{Book of Rites}. For discussing sentiments, there is nothing more discerning than the \textit{Book of Poetry}. For discussing principles, there is nothing more discerning than the \textit{Annals of Spring and Autumn}.\textsuperscript{23}

As a result, Yang Hsiung adopted the simple and unadorned style of

\textsuperscript{20} Yang Hsiung, \textit{Fa-yen} (Chu-tzu chi-ch'eng ed.), chüan 2, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., chüan 7, p. 19.
Introduction

the Classics, the style advocated first in the Book of History: “In the choice of language one should emphasize the essential and should not indulge in the extraordinary.” In pronouncing that books which did not follow the style of the Classics were no books and words which did not conform to the style of the Classics were no words, for these were useless, he had definitely reduced criticism to a set of dogmas which were to become infallible rules among writers and critics for a long time to come. He may be compared to the Scaligers, the Johnsons, and the Popes of the West. But like them, Yang Hsiung also succeeded in imparting to later generations a sense of perspective, a consciousness of traditions and a literary taste strengthened through an assimilation of the Classics.

Slightly later than Yang Hsiung, another Confucian scholar was also occupied with the ethical content and utilitarian function of literature. Wang Ch’ung (A.D. 27-c. 100) was, however, more concerned with history and philosophy. This preoccupation caused him to blur the distinction between pure literature and other forms of scholarly writings, reverting thus to the pre-Han conception of “literature.” Hence it was philosophy and history that he had in mind when he asserted that all literature should be good and true, and should aim to instruct. This, however, did not blind him to the beauty of literature. To him all that is good and true was beautiful, requiring no additional labor to perfect it. And yet he would not go the whole way with Keats and chant that truth is beauty and beauty is truth. Wang’s concern with historical truth committed him to a type of realism which condemned all kinds of literary exaggeration and embellishment that did not correspond to truth. It is apparent that, despite his esthetic interest, he still considered truth the essence of literature, and this essence determined for him both the quality and the form of literature.

By nature and interest, Wang Ch’ung was an excellent historian. His daring theory of history displays a liberalism unique in an age of

24 Shang-shu s’ung-chien, 44/0218-0225.
26 For his criticism of exaggeration, see the following three chapters in his Lun-heng: “Yü-tseng,” “I-tseng,” and Ju-tseng.”
dogmatism. When most of the writers were idealizing antiquity and slavishly imitating the Classics, he alone set out to attack that attitude. He said,

Those who in ancient times gave good government were sages, and those who in later times have given good government are likewise sages.27

Again,

Narrators of events like to exalt antiquity and disparage the present; they esteem what they know through hearsay and slight what they themselves see. Debaters discourse on what is long ago, and men of letters write on what is far away. The wonderful things near at hand the debaters do not mention, and the extraordinary events of our own time the writers do not record.28

In these words he broke away from the orthodox view of history that had hitherto dominated and still continued to dominate the minds of the writers in ancient China. Not only did he single out this traditional attitude for attack, but he even went so far as to assert that the present is better than the past. He said,

As far as the actual transformation effected by virtues are concerned, the Chou dynasty (1100 B.C.-256 B.C.) cannot exceed the Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), whereas if we speak about auspicious omens and prognostications, the Han excels the Chou. And if we measure their extent of territory, that of Chou was more limited than that of Han. How then is the Han not equal to the Chou? It may only be claimed that the Chou had many sages, whose government brought about universal peace. But the literati, in acclaiming the sages, go too far, placing them on such pedestals that their actual traces are lost. In acclaiming their government they are also too fulsome, treating of universal peace as something that has been cut off and has had no continuation.29

In short, history is progressive. To be realistic, literature has to be progressive too. Here we have an inkling of the principle of flexible adaptability to the varying needs of a changing world. We shall see this tendency to change reappear in Ke Hung of the Chin (c. 250-330).

Introduction

During the subsequent four centuries—the Three Kingdoms, the Wei and Chin, the Southern and Northern dynasties after the collapse of the Han Empire (220-589)—China was divided into many small states and dynasties, each in power for a short period and then giving way to others equally ephemeral. The land was constantly engulfed in warfare and political chaos; social upheaval and economic disruption were the order of the day. Yet, paradoxically, out of these chaotic conditions and destructive forces a most constructive phase of critical and creative vitality emerged. Among the various stages in the history of Chinese criticism, this period of disunity may be considered the most creative period.

At a time when all standards seemed to have collapsed, Confucianism likewise lost the prominent position which it enjoyed during the Han times. It is true that people still paid lip service to it, but many scholars and creative artists, disillusioned and embittered, turned more and more to Taoism and Buddhism. Literature, with a new emphasis on linguistic, tonal and formal structures, seemed to have come into its own, and its function became more esthetic in nature than morally didactic. An increasing interest in esthetic experience is shown in the writers' attempt to penetrate further into the nature of the creative process.

This esthetic awareness brought about the distinction between pure literature (wen) and useful literature (pi). And this distinction, once achieved, deepened the awareness which gave birth to it. The vivified consciousness was then able to lead creative literature and critical analysis to a new height of productivity. Many poets now found their primary occupation in verse writing; others, more scholarly, gave their attention to literary anthologies. Due to this sudden expansion of literary output, an increasing demand for critical judgment was felt. With the growing complexities of literature, which brought with them new problems, a re-examination of the basic principle of criticism became urgent, and it is not at all surprising that a movement of intensified critical analysis arose.

In both the West and in China, emperors and princes often played
a prominent role as patrons of art. It was under the patronage of the
great Medicis that Renaissance art flourished in Europe. And in China,
there emerged during the dark age of political disunity a number of
emperors and princes who were not only great patrons of art and
literature but accomplished writers themselves. The real founder of
the Wei dynasty, Ts'ao Ts'ao (155-220) was a competent poet; his
younger son Ts'ao Chih (192-232) a poet of the highest calibre. Another
son, Ts'ao P'ei (187-226), who usurped the throne from the Han and
founded the Wei, also proved himself a talented poet and an astute
critic, as well as a great patron of literature. He wrote the famous
critical essay, the *Tien-lun lun-wen*.

The ruling house of the Liang dynasty was equally known for its
artistic ability and interest in literature. Hsiao T'ung (501-531), who
died an heir apparent and the patron of our author Liu Hsieh, com-
piled the famous *Wen-hsüan* (An anthology of literature), in the
preface of which he accounted for excluding the Classics and historical
works from his anthology, the reason being that they were not pure
literature. Although the ethical considerations still prevailed, they
were linked to esthetic considerations. Hsiao T'ung's younger brother,
Hsiao Kang (503-551), who succeeded to the throne in 550 and met
a tragic death at the hands of a traitor in the following year, displayed
a pronounced antitraditional attitude when he commissioned Hsu
Ling (507-583) to compile a collection of contemporary poems under
the title *Yü-lai hsin-yung* (Jade terrace new songs). These exceedingly
ornate lyrical poems, marked with sensual imagery, are anything but
proper and instructive.

What has been said may be insufficient to explain why the period of
disunity became an important period in literary criticism, but it serves
to show the atmosphere in which the critical spirit was fostered.

The first important critic who is to engage our attention has already
been mentioned. Ts'ao P'ei, in his *Tien-lun lun-wen* (Essay on litera-
ture), made the first attempt to define the specific nature of some
dominant literary genres. He says:

Introduction

Literary compositions are all derived from a common source, but they develop into different forms. The tsou and i [memorial and discussion] should be graceful; the shu and lun [epistle and essay] should be logical; the ming and lei [inscription and elegy] should be factual; and shih and fu [poetry and poetic prose] should be beautiful.

While strictly classical in his definition of poetry, he had gone beyond the scope of any previous work.

The essay also marks the beginning of a systematic evaluation of the works of seven distinguished poets of his time, known collectively in the history of Chinese literature as “Chien-an ch’i-tzu” (the Seven Masters of the chien-an period, 196-220). Ts’ao’s chief contribution to literary theory is his concept of ch’i (breath or spirit), a term he borrowed from Mencius. Elevating the term to a new level of meaning, signifying individual talent, he further classified it into two categories, the clear and the muddy. Then he asserted that a man is born with his talent, which cannot be handed down through instruction. The influence of Chuangtzu is evident, for the nontransferable quality of talent reminds us of the master wheelwright’s grief at having to keep at making wheels at the age of seventy because he was unable to impart his knowledge to anyone else, not even his own son and younger brother. In Ts’ai P’ei’s words, “Even a father or an elder brother cannot teach his son or younger brother.”

With the application of the term ch’i to literary work itself, its meaning seems to have shifted, for it now denotes a literary style. Here Ts’ao P’ei perceived that talent for one style need not imply talent for any other style, and that few men have an all-round talent for all the styles. Therefore, he concluded, every poet should seek the style which best suits his special talent. And then, in a passage as incongruous as a dog’s tail at the end of a fox fur, he spoke of literary composition as a means of acquiring eternal fame. It is unfortunate that this became for many a writer, including Liu Hsieh, a dominant motive for writing at all.

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
In the Chin dynasty, the most important work on criticism and rhetoric is Lu Chi's (261-303) Wen-fu (Essay on literature in the form of a *fu*). Scintillating with poetic beauty and critical insight, the Wen-fu is a landmark in the history of Chinese literary criticism. A poet of great talent himself, Lu Chi revealed the subtle and mysterious nature of aesthetic experience and the creative process with a clarity and beauty of expression that are seldom excelled. Convinced that the Wen-fu must be read to be appreciated, I shall quote a few passages from the remarkable translation by Ch'en Shih-hsiang\textsuperscript{33} to show the poet's penetrating insight into the state of creativity.

In regard to creative impulse he says,

\begin{quote}
In the beginning,
All external vision and sound are suspended,
Perpetual thought itself gropes in time and space;
Then, the spirit at full gallop reaches the eight limits of the cosmos,
And the mind, self-buoyant, will ever soar to new unsurmountable heights.
\end{quote}

When the search succeeds,
Feeling, at first but a glimmer, will gradually gather into full luminosity,
Whence all objects thus lit up glow as if each the other's light reflects.

On the arduous process of preparation, when words, expressions, images and metaphors are wrung out of the subconsciousness, he says:

\begin{quote}
Hence,
Arduously sought expressions, hitherto evasive, hidden,
Will be like stray fishes out of the ocean bottom to emerge on the angler's hook;
And quick-winged metaphors, fleeting, far-fetched
Feathered tribes, while sky-faring are brought down from the curl-clouds by the fowler's bow.
\end{quote}

On composition he says:

A composition comes into being as the incarnation of many living gestures.
It is (like the act of Tao) the embodiment of endless change.
To attain Meaning, it depends on a grasp of the subtle, While such words are employed as best serve beauty's sake.

One of the most penetrating passages in the *fu* is the one on inspiration:

Such moments when Mind and Matter hold perfect communion,
And wide vistas open to regions hitherto entirely barred,
Will come with irresistible force,
And go, their departure none can hinder.
Hiding, they vanish like a flash of light;
Manifest, they are like sounds arising in mid-air.
So acute is the mind in such instants of divine comprehension,
What chaos is there that it cannot marshal in miraculous order?
While winged thoughts, like quick breezes, soar from depths of the heart,
Eloquent words, like a gushing spring, flow between lips and teeth.
No flower, or plant, or animal is too prodigal of splendour To recreate under the writer's pen,
Hence the most wondrous spectacle that ever whelmed the eye,
And notes of the loftiest music that rejoiced the ear.

But of all the lines I must choose the following as a superb expression of the mysterious source of an artistic impulse:

For it is Being, created by tasking the Great Void.34
And 'tis sound rung out of Profound Silence.

34 The Chinese character here rendered as “tasking” literally means “to try” or “to tax.” A more literal translation of the line would be: “Tax the Void or nonbeing to yield Being” (a Taoist conception).
Lu Chi was evidently deeply influenced by Chuangtzu’s concept of nonbeing, the Great Void, the supreme state which is not only the source of an artistic impulse, but also the ultimate state of pure experience which transcends all logic and words. Lu Chi spoke of this state as “a force which even the Master Wheelwright Pien could not express in words.”

Another contribution to literary history made by Lu Chi is his definitions of a number of literary genres, definitions which are much more adequate than those attempted by Ts’ao P’ei in his *Tien-lun lun-wen*. He says:

The Lyric (*Shih*), born of pure emotion, is gossamer fibre woven into the finest fabric;
The exhibitory Essay (*Fu*), being true to the objects, is vividness incarnate;
In Monumental Inscriptions (*Pei*) rhetoric must be a foil to facts;
The Elegy (*Lai, lei*) tenderly spins out ceaseless heartfelt grief.
The Mnemonic (*Ming*) is a smooth flow of genial phrases, succinct but pregnant;
The staccato cadences of the Epigram (*Chen*) are all transparent force.
While Eulogy (*Sung*) enjoys the full abandon of grand style,
The Expository (*Lun*) must in exactitude and clarity excel.
The Memorial (*Tsou*), balanced and lucid, must be worthy of the dignity of its royal audience,
The Argument (*Shuo*) with glowing words and cunning parables persuades.
Meticulous as these classifications are,
Lest passion and thought, given free rein, may wantonly go astray,
The maxim holds: Let Truth in terms most felicitous be spoken,
While of verbiage beware.

At the same time we find Tso Ssu (?-c. 306) developing the Classical
definition of poetry into a kind of realism. In the preface to his *Three Capital Fu* he said that in poetry we express our sentiments and in *fu* we describe what we see. If we deviate from these fundamental facts, that is, our feelings and the objective world, to indulge in ornate expressions and fabrications, such as the *fu* of Ssu-ma Hsiangju, Yang Hsiung, Pan Ku, Chang Heng, and their group, in which are mentioned many things contrary to known facts, we commit a crime against truth. This attitude explains why it took him ten years to complete his *Three Capital Fu*, for he needed that long to collect and verify his facts. It would seem that he did not countenance the use of imagination, the very soul of any work of art, including literary art. Fortunately, he did not follow his own advice, for how else could his *fu* have caused the price of paper in Lo-Yang to go up?35

Chih Yü (?-312), following the lead of Ts’ao P’ei and Lu Chi, made another attempt to classify literary works but, like Prince Hsiao T’ung later, he did it by compiling anthologies. From the fragments of his work, we find him advocating the function of literature as the depicting of natural scenes, the clarifying of human relations, the extensive study of reason and human nature, and ultimately, the determining of the proper station of all things.36 It is clear that his view of literature is not a pure one. It includes in its province all that is written, in much the same spirit as that in which literature was later conceived by Liu Hsieh, the author of *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*. It is also clear that his view is a utilitarian one, as may be seen from his conception of literary development as a concomitant to the changing process of historical needs.37

At approximately the same time, Ke Hung (250-330) applied Wang
Ch'ung's progressive theory of history to literary criticism. But he displayed a liberalism seldom found in the other critics of the time. He did not attack literary embellishment as superfluous and useless, nor did he prize the Classics above contemporary literature. On the contrary, he asserted unequivocally that current compositions were more beautiful than the ancient, unadorned or simple Classics, and that to evolve from simplicity to beauty of form was a natural tendency.

On the question of which is more important, talent or discipline, he entertained a balanced view. He believed that natural talent and literary discipline complement each other. The importance of talent was recognized by Ts'ao P'ei, and that of discipline by Lu Chi. To Ke Hung, one was as indispensable as the other. To separate them was to rob each of its vital complement.

Due to certain characteristics of the Chinese language, tonal pattern has always occupied the attention of great literary writers. Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju considered it an element in the embellishment of the fu, and Lu Chi spoke of it in the following lines:

\[
\text{The interactions of sounds and tones are like}
\]
\[
\text{The five colours that each the others enhances.}
\]

Even Chung Hung, who wrote scathingly against Shen Yüeh's arbitrary rules for the sound pattern, acknowledged the natural musical quality of the language, which he felt should be spontaneously applied by the poet. But it was Shen Yüeh (441-513) and his group who, dissatisfied with the looseness with which tones and sounds had hitherto been employed in the field of versification, succeeded in formulating rules governing poetic language. These rules formed a body of intricately technical prosodic laws. Nevertheless they were accepted by many men of the period, including Liu Hsieh, who devoted a chapter in his Wen-hsin (Chapter XXXIII) to their discussion.

Since Shen Yüeh and his group flourished during the Yung-ming period (483-493), the style, in accordance with their tonal laws, is
known as *Yung-ming ti*, or the style of the Yung-ming period. In spite of some opposition from writers like Chung Hung, these tonal laws, while never followed to the letter, not even by Shen Yüeh himself, were destined to exercise tremendous influence upon the prosody of subsequent ages, particularly the T'ang period.

Chung Hung (c. 500) and Liu Hsieh were contemporaries but, since they apparently did not know each other, Chung had no direct influence on Liu Hsieh. However, since his *Shih-p'ing* is one of the most important critical works of the time, it deserves a short account here.

The main purpose of the work was to evaluate the poets of the five-word-line pattern. Adopting the political system of selecting officials by classifying all nominees into three groups and nine categories, Chung likewise classified the poets into three groups, arranging them in order of excellence from the highest through the middle to the lowest. "The lowest" does not mean poor, since it is a relative term, and to be included at all in any of the groups, a poet had to possess unusual talent. Although later generations have not agreed with all of his judgments—the one concerning T'ao Ch'ien of the Chin having been the most hotly contested—they are generally sound. The classification is prefaced by a short historical introduction, tracing the development of the five-word-line pattern poetry from earliest times to the time of the Chin. But in the classification Chung included poets of his own day. In judging each poet, he usually began by linking him to an earlier source; then he gave the poet's specific quality.

This practice of classification, the sterility of which is quite obvious to us today, was nevertheless a popular and legitimate method in Chung Hung's time, and it was also used in much ancient Greek and Latin criticism. Aristophanes, perhaps the first serious critic in the West, made exactly such an attempt to classify poets into various ranks of excellence. Chung Hung's judgment may have been subjective and impressionistic, but he seems to have raised some of the basic critical problems which we still encounter today. Like Aristophanes, he asked implicitly: In what order of merit should poets be ranked and on what ground should they be judged? If he did not give us clear answers
Introduction xxxiii
to these questions, he at least offered his contemporaries and students of later ages some suggestive guides for their evaluation of literature.

To sum up: Throughout the early periods, the classical definition of poetry as the expression of the sentiments ruled supreme. However, the conception of the sentiments as moral ideas as well as emotion prevented poetry and, for that matter, literature in general, from developing into pure lyricism, but destined it to be a vehicle of moral principles, and its function to be primarily didactic. Such being the case, it is easy to see why the Classics were always held as the criteria of literary excellence, in spite of the recognized need of the principle of flexible adaptability to historical changes. One refreshing view is the conception of the creative process, a view which grew, in nearly every case, out of the personal esthetic experience of the creative artist. In accounting for this creativity, it is interesting to note that nearly all writers, or poet-critics, emphasized both natural gifts and hard-earned erudition. This sense of balance is particularly marked in Liu Hsieh.

Liu Hsieh,41 alias Yen-ho (c. A.D. 465-522) was a native of Tungkuan, the present Lü-hsien in Shangtung province. His father died when he was a child and he was reared in poverty by his mother. When he was about twenty years of age, his mother died. He never married, partly because of his poverty, and partly, no doubt, because of his interest in Buddhism. He is said to have assisted Seng-yu in editing Buddhist sutras in Ting-lin Monastery, and to have taken part in the preparation of the Hung-ming chi. His own contribution to this collection is “Mich-huo lun,” which is found in chüan 8. We are told that both Hsiao T’ung, the author of the famous anthology entitled Wen hsüan, and Shen Yüeh, the great exponent of musical patterns in literature, spoke well of his literary talents. But no mention of Liu occurs in the biography of either writer. Liu wrote Wen-hsin tiao-tung (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) in the Southern Chi’i period; but as he lived into the Liang dynasty, he is generally regarded as belonging to the Liang period, and his biography is

41 The section on Liu Hsieh first appeared as an article in the Asiatische Studien/Etudes Asiatiques, 3/4 (1953), 123-34.
included in the *History of Liang*. Late in life, he was commissioned by Emperor Wu of Liang to re-edit Buddhist sutras in Ting-lin Monastery, this time in cooperation with a monk by the name of Hui-chen. With the completion of this task, he petitioned the emperor for permission to take Buddhist vows. The permission was granted, and he became a monk in the same monastery where he twice had edited Buddhist sutras. There he received the Buddhist name of Hui-ti. Shortly afterwards he died.

Some modern writers believe that Liu Hsieh's classicism was motivated by a desire to lend authority to his own views, a version of "reform in the name of antiquity." But many others think that Liu was sincere in preferring classicism to the growing tendency in current literary circles to deviate from the classical pattern. Here I shall first give a brief account of Liu's classicism, then turn to a study of his literary criticism and, finally, try to ascertain what role classicism does play in his system and to what degree he may be considered a classicist.

Liu's classicism is revealed in his "Preface," where he tells us that he, ceremonial vessels in his hands, followed Confucius in a dream. He also indicates that had there been no Ma Yung and Cheng Hsüan before him, he would have used his talent to make commentaries on the Classics. Even his decision to devote himself to literary criticism was influenced by the fact that for him the functions of literature have their source in the Classics. In view of the prevalent indulgence in an exceedingly florid style in literature, he considered it his duty to try, by writing critically on literature, to check this divergent tendency. Thus he says, "The writing of *Wen-hsin* has its source in the *Tao*, its model in the Sage, and its pattern in the Classics." His book opens with the chapter "On Tao, the Source," followed by "On the Evidence from the Sages" and "On the Classics as Literary Sources."

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 21b.
Introduction

In the first chapter, while tracing the origin of literature to nature, he seems to envisage an orthodox principle taken from nature, a principle which was handed down from one sage to another until Confucius completed it by writing the "wings." The other Classics were developed in the hands of sages and it was again Confucius who, excelling all others before him, brought the six Classics to their final form.

In the second chapter, Liu seeks to establish Confucius as the authority for the various functions of literary forms by reference to his utterances, as recorded in the Classics and their commentaries. The functions of these literary forms are political and moral in nature.

As for the literary styles exemplified in the Classics, they are: simplicity in conveying thought, linguistic richness in embodying emotions, logical clarity in establishing fundamental principles, and allegorical and figurative speech as a means of suggestive remonstration.

In Chapter Three, "On the Classics as Literary Sources," Liu defines the Classics as the essence of literature, embodying eternal principles. According to him, the general characteristics of the Classics are that they contain ideas which are completely adequate for expressing one's emotions, and that their language is of such a quality that it follows perfectly the literary principles. If one is versed in them, one's utterance would naturally be profound, for, he says, "a bell of ten thousand weights will not ring out petty sounds." Liu traces all literary genres back to the Classics. If one always took the Classics as his sources, there would be no danger of his becoming withered up and fading away. If a writer relied on the Classics, his work would be distinguished by one of the following characteristics: deep emotions untainted by artificiality, unmixed purity of form, empirical truth untarnished by falsehood, moral ideas uninvolved in perversity, simple style free from verbosity, and literary beauty unmarred by excess.

47 Commentaries in the Book of Changes. Liu Hsieh apparently adopted the belief that these were written by Confucius, a belief which has been generally discredited.
48 Ibid., chüan 1, pp. 12a-1b.
49 Ibid., p. 9b.
50 Ibid., p. 10a.
51 Ibid., p. 13a.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., pp. 13a-13b.
54 Ibid., p. 14a.
Apart from these first three chapters, there are many other references to the Classics. In the chapter entitled “An Analysis of Sao or Ch’u-tz’u,” Liu considers the rise of Sao as a consequence of the decline of feng and ya. In considering different views concerning the conformity of Li-sao to the Classics, Liu recognizes two divergent tendencies in Li-sao, one of which is in harmony with the Classics and the other contrary to them. In Li-sao Liu finds four ways in which Li-sao is in harmony with feng and ya. These are: The Li-sao contains a style of tien and kao, it employs the style of satirical suggestion, it adopts the use of metaphor and allegory, and it expresses the sentiments of loyalty and lament. There are also four things which mark Li-sao as unclassical. These are: the inclusion of strange tales, and of fantastic stories, and evidence of an eccentric and narrow mind, and of an indecent desire for a loose life.

In the chapter on “An Exegesis of Poetry,” a province in which classical and literary elements coincide, Liu quotes the description of poetry from the Shu-ching: “Poetry is the expression of sentiments, and songs are these expressions set to music.” He also repeats Confucius’ statement that in the Shih-ching there is no undisciplined thought. He cites with approval Confucius’ utilitarian view of poetry, and endorses the general theory enunciated in Mao’s “Preface” that poetry reflects the political conditions of the times, and that poetry declines as time passes and departs from the age of the Sage. In line with this view, he condemns the poetry of the Cheng-shih period (240-248) and of the Eastern Chin for being adulterated by Taoism and having a metaphysical flavor.

He believes that musical poetry (yüeh-fu) rose after the decline of the ya odes, and refers to the fu as one of the six elements of the

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55 Ibid., p. 28b.  
56 Ibid., pp. 29a-29b.  
58 Lun-yü yin-te (Harvard Yenching Institute, Peiping, 1940), 2/2/2.  
60 Wen-hsin, chūan 3, p. 2a.  
61 Ibid., p. 24b.
Shih-ching. Liu claims that the fu receives its life from the poets of the Odes, and therefore may be traced back to them.

Liu makes many allusions to the Classics, particularly the Shih-ching. The chapter entitled "Metaphor and Allegory" is completely dominated by the spirit of traditional interpretation. But what has been said is enough to indicate Liu's classical tendency. We shall pass on to the discussion of his literary criticism.

The term "literary criticism" is used here in its broadest possible sense. It includes literary history, literary theory, and literary appreciation and evaluation. In the case of Liu Hsieh, these three are closely interwoven and give his work an underlying unity in the midst of apparent chaos.

Liu's desire to write the Wen-hsin tiao-lung arises from his dissatisfaction with the general state of literary production of the times, and with the fragmentary manner in which literary criticism has been dealt with. As a prelude to his work, he reviews existing critical works and gives to each an epigrammatic verdict which implies some general criteria of his own. Of Wei-wen, Lu Chi, Chih Yü, and others, he says, "Each reflects a particular corner, and few have envisioned the open vista." And he further comments, "They are all unable to trace back from the leaves to the roots, or back from the tide to its source."

These verdicts indicate a discerning mind equipped with a penetrating critical spirit. He is truly a critic of critics. In the chapter called "A General Consideration of the Art of Writing," he says of Lu Chi, "His Wen-fu has been known for its penetrating and exhaustive discussion of the art of writing, but, in its superficial attention to details, it has not adequately dealt with the substance." Thus Liu apparently feels that it is up to him to offer a comprehensive account of the principles of literary criticism.

Liu has an interesting idea of a competent critic. In his opinion a competent critic is one who, to begin with, is widely acquainted with literature and highly sensitive to its intrinsic values. Then there are
other prerequisites to the understanding of a piece of literature: the ability to recognize the genre and style, the ability to determine if the work complies with the principle of adaptability to change, and the ability to distinguish between the extraordinary and the orthodox in subject matter and to pass judgment on the appropriateness of historical allusions and musical patterns. Above all, the critic should be able to trace back from the words to the feeling of the author, a criterion that vaguely indicates a belief in the oneness of the creative genius and appreciative taste. Through these abilities, a critic is enabled to grasp the meaning or the esthetic beauty of a literary work. But an understanding critic is rare, because most people depreciate their contemporaries and worship only the Ancients. However, an appreciative critic is essential to the realization of the value of a literary work. For a literary work loses much of its richness if it is not appreciated.

Liu traces the origin of literature to nature. For him, just as it was for Horace, literature is both sweet and useful. His verbal emphasis is on the useful and his real interest in the sweet. In his "Preface" he says, "Time is fleeting and life itself is transitory. If a man really wants to achieve fame, his only chance is to devote himself to writing." This utilitarian view is more than balanced by his deep interest in aspects which are purely literary. This interest is revealed in the title of his book: The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons. His own explanation is: "The literary mind is that mind which strives after literary forms." And the term "the carving of dragons" stands specifically for literary embellishment. For, he says, "since from time immemorial literature has always been characterized by certain embellishments." His view of the scope of literature is broad. From the types of writing he includes in his discussion of literature, it is apparent that he holds nothing in writing to be beyond the province of literature.

Development of general trends, Liu believes, follows the principle of
the flexible adaptability to change. He says, “As time has passed and as dynasties have risen and fallen, literature has developed from the simple to the more ornate in form as well as in content.” And again he says, “It is the law of literature both to move along and to come to full circle; the merit of literature renews itself from day to day. If it changes, it will endure; if it adapts itself to the changing tide, it will lack nothing.” Thus, the literary forms of each generation conform to the spirit of that generation and, when changes take place in the spirit of the age, literary forms modify themselves accordingly. This explains the rise of different genres in different ages. Occasionally Liu emphasizes the moral and political influence of an age on the character of literature.

When Liu moves from the discussion of general trends in literature to a discussion of literary genres, he holds that the form of each genre is characterized by certain norms, and his classification of literary genres is based on these norms. His distinctions between literary genres are, at times, very strict. This indicates that he does not seem to see the possibility that changes might have taken place across the ages in the conception of these genres. But, on the other hand, the arbitrariness of his classification cannot escape the attention of even the most casual reader when it is noted that his genres are not mutually exclusive but are overlapping.

Liu’s book abounds in critical evaluation of individual authors and their works. All that can be attempted here is to ferret out the criteria he seems to have used in making these evaluations. These criteria seem to fall into the following categories: (1) natural talents, (2) fullness of feelings and emotions, (3) style as expressed in terms of artistic quality of language, (4) moral convictions and philosophy of life, (5) scholarship and learning, (6) the nature of the subject matter treated, and (7) the musical patterns. Liu himself, on two occasions, reduces these categories to neat formulas. On one occasion he offers three main patterns: the pattern of colors, the pattern of sounds, and the pattern of emotions. On another occasion he gives four categories: emotions

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74 Ibid., chūan 9, p. 22. 75 Ibid., chūan 6, p. 18a. 76 Ibid., chūan 7, p. 1a.
and sentiments, which are the spirit of literature; facts and principles, which are the bone and marrow; linguistic patterns, which are the flesh; and musical patterns, which are the voice and the breath. He devotes most of the second portion of his work to the elaboration of these elements, and the discussion of the relationship between them. In view of the fact that Liu never discusses any element in isolation, it may be wise to begin our analysis with the relationship between the elements.

In considering the relative importance of these literary elements, Liu shows a remarkable sense of balance. He is a critic in whom emotion and intellect, beauty of linguistic form and fullness of emotional content are balanced. He says,

Literary beauty means adorning the language; but language's appropriateness and beauty is conditioned by inner feelings. Therefore, feelings are the warp of literary patterns and linguistic forms are the woof of ideas. Only when the warp is straight, can the woof be formed; and only when ideas are definite, can linguistic forms be expressive.

His respect for the ancient poets lies in the fact that they built their literary forms on emotions, while later poets fabricated emotions to fit literary forms. But literary forms are not fallacious in themselves; the fallacy lies in having the forms alone without emotions. Emotions are tuned to changes of external scene. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter—each affects us in a specific way and arouses in us certain specific emotions. Since stock phrases are inadequate for the depicting of varying emotions, Liu demands freshness in linguistic pattern as a condition of good literature. Thus the importance of emotion is matched by that of literary expression. In defense of linguistic beauty he says, "What is written by the sages and worthy men is summed up under the phrase wen-chang. What is it, if not beauty of form?"

Liu is apparently expressing a new appreciation of the literary qualities of the Classics. For him, substance depends on literary pattern for expression, just as expressions depend on emotions for their content.

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77 Ibid., chüan 9, p. 9b.  78 Ibid., chüan 7, p. 1b.  79 Ibid.  80 Ibid., chüan 10, p. 1a.  81 Ibid.  82 Ibid., chüan 7, p. 1a.
Liu not only defends rhetoric; he also endorses literary exaggeration and embellishment. For his justification, he paraphrases Mencius, "Though the language be exaggerated, it harms not the ideas." Here Liu sees the real function of literature as consisting in the creation of beautiful linguistic forms for the purpose of moving the heart of the reader.

In his discussion of musical poetry he discloses the intimate relationship between music and poetry. He says, "Poetry is the heart of music, and sound is the body of music. Since the body of music lies in sound, musicians must tune their instruments; since the heart of music lies in poetry, superior men should make right their literary forms." From this it is only a short step to the view that music is the reflection of the age, and that by listening to the music of any age one is able to discern the character of that age. Poetry and music are thus intimately bound together by their identical function.

The ability to weave these literary elements into beautiful rhythmic and musical expressions of real emotion and feeling, incorporating into the texture true moral convictions and principles, is, of course, a gift of nature. But effort and learning contribute much to the richness in materials and the resourcefulness and ease with which one adapts his style to the nature of the subject under treatment. As natural talents vary with individuals, Liu conceives of eight different styles: first, elegant and graceful, or in the style of tien and ya; second, far-ranging and profound; third, polished and concise; fourth, lucid and logical; fifth, profuse and flowery; sixth, vigorous and beautiful; seventh, fresh and extraordinary; and eighth, light and trivial. Few have the genius to command all these styles, but many can adapt some style to fit their talents.

In the discussion of talents, there is a chapter on "The Wind and the Bone," "wind" meaning lyrical, or in the manner of feng, and "bone" meaning vigor and strength. Liu says, "He who would express mournful emotions must begin with the wind, and to organize his

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83 Ibid., chüan 8, p. 5b.  
84 Ibid., chüan 2, p. 25a.  
85 Ibid., chüan 6. p. ib.  
86 Ibid., pp. 8a-8b.
linguistic elements, he must above all emphasize the bone." The wind gives wings to words and the bone gives them vigor and strength. By the wind and the bone, Liu is talking about what Wei-wen had called the breath. His quotation from Wei-wen convinces us that he shares with Wei-wen the feeling that genius is born and not made. But important as genius is, it is only half the story; the other half depends on experience and scholarship. It is by means of wide acquaintance with literary works and extensive experience that one can hope to avoid poverty of expression.

Genius operates through imagination, the power of association of ideas, and the ability to forge metaphors. The manner in which genius operates is such that it cannot be transmitted by instruction. Like I Chih who could not inform people how he cooked, and the wheelwright Pien who could not tell people how he wielded his ax, so a writer is unable to transmit his manner of operation to others.

Liu, in his treatment of metaphor and of the couplet, displays remarkable analytical power. His analysis of metaphor includes what is now described as onomatopoeia, and his analytical categorization of the couplet seems to be the first attempt of its kind.

With his insistence on the importance of real emotions and feelings as the foundation of literature, Liu inclines toward spontaneity and naturalness. It is not accidental that in the first chapter he traces literature to natural patterns and forms. By nature we have seven emotions, and these emotions are naturally aroused when affected by

87 Ibid., pp. 13a-13b.  
88 Ibid., pp. 13b-14a.  
90 Wen-hsin, chüan 6, p. 1b.  
91 Wen-hsin, chüan 6, p. 2a. "I Chih" is another name for I Yin. The reference is to a passage in Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu where I Yin, in answer to T'ang's question, says: "... The changes which take place in a cauldron are subtle and delicate, neither expressible in words by the mouth nor conceivable by the mind." Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu (Chu-tzu chi-ch'eng ed., Shanghai, 1935), chapter on "Pen-wei," chüan 14, pp. 140-1. (Cf. Frühling und Herbst der Lü Bu We, translated by R. Wilhelm [Jena, 1928], p. 182.) For the Wheelwright Pien, see Chuangtzu, Book XIII, Chapter 10.  
92 Wen-hsin, chüan 8, pp. 1a-1b; chüan 10, p. 1a.  
93 Ibid., chüan 7, p. 33b.  
94 Ibid., chüan 1, p. 1a; chüan 7, 1a-10b.
external circumstances. When thus affected, it is only natural for us to try to express our sentiments in winged words. If we follow our spontaneous tendency, it will be internal emotions which determine the literary forms and styles, and not the external forms which force themselves upon our inner feelings. In this spontaneity we shall find the unlimited resourcefulness of our spirit. Liu holds that if we should in any way work against our nature, in the end we would be exhausted and withered up. His chapter on “The Nourishing of Vitality” is a lesson in spontaneity, which is apparently based on Chuangtzu. Liu shares Chuangtzu’s view that to keep one’s mind empty and quiet is the only way to keep one’s vigor forever fresh and sharp as a newly honed blade.

Now, in evaluating Liu’s position as a classicist, let us see what his attitude really is when he talks about the Classics. He eulogizes the Classics as the source of all literary genres and maintains a properly reverent attitude for the orthodox ideas in them. It is in his evaluation of the Classics as literature, however, that he discards all platitudes, and waxes warm in true praise. Moreover, in pronouncing Li-sao to be a “hero” of poetry, but only a “ruffian” in the realm of ya and sung, he definitely conceives of poetry as independent of the Shih-ching. In reiterating the traditional theory of poetic function and development, Liu seems to have done so as a matter of habit rather than as a result of conviction. His belief that literature develops in accordance with the needs of the times, and that each new age gives literature a new emphasis and a fresh point of view is in violent contradiction to traditionalism. Poetry must change according to the principle of flexible adaptability to new needs of new ages. This principle of adaptability to change is enunciated in the same breath with which he advises people to go back to the Classics. At the very moment when he exhorts men to worship the Classics, he condemns the popular view of depreci-
ating the contemporaries and worshipping the Ancients.99 From the general tenor of his writing, we must conclude that his conservatism is a matter of habit, while his progressive ideas rise from convictions. He pays lip service to the Classics, but gives his heart to the study of elements which are purely literary. And even in treating the Classics, he gives them more of a literary appreciation than a moralistic interpretation. For him, it seems, the Classics are important because they possess literary value; he does not believe that literary value depends upon conformity to the Classics.

When he discusses literary elements in the second portion of his book, his freedom from classicism is even more surprising. He occupies himself almost exclusively with what is purely literary. In the eight styles he formulates, only the first style, *tien ya*, refers to the *Shu-ching* and the *Shih-ching*. But as used in his critical judgments on individual authors and their works, these terms mean merely “elegant” and “graceful.” It is, therefore, abundantly clear that whatever he conceives to be the value of a classical element, this value is only one among many other literary values. He brings the Classics down to earth for us to admire as works of literature. Such being Liu’s literary outlook, it would not be far wrong to conclude that in his system classicism plays the same role as any other literary element, and thus it is not possible to call Liu Hsieh a classicist without doing him a grave injustice.

Liu Hsieh seems to have gathered up in his *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* all the strands of literary and critical thought which we have discussed in the preceding pages. He has apparently read widely, weighing the ideas of earlier authors and then formulating his own. Being a great writer himself, a past master of the beautiful style of the Six Dynasties period, which is characterized by balance in structure, parallelism of expressions, and consonance of language, he inspires the reader not only by the content of his work, but also by his incomparable style.

In the chapter on “An Understanding Critic,” Liu Hsieh made the

99 *Ibid.*, chüan 6; compare text on p. 17b and “Eulogy” at the end of the essay on p. 18a; see also chüan 9, “Shih-hsū,” and chüan 10, “chih-ying.”
statement that literary works had to be appreciated to reveal their beauty. If we apply this statement to his Wen-hsin tiao-lung, there is no doubt about its being one of the most beautiful, because it is one of the most admired, of works. During his own day Shen Yüeh, the literary lion of his age, kept it within reach on his desk. Liu Chih-chi (661-721), the great historiographer of the T'ang dynasty, spoke of him in his Shih-t'ung as the arbiter of taste during the Six Dynasties period. Huang T'ing-chien (1045-1105), one of the great poets of the Sung, considered Liu Chih-chi's Shih-t'ung and Liu Hsieh's Wen-hsin tiao-lung two works which all scholars aspiring to be literary writers must read. And Hu Ying-lin of the Ming, who flourished in 1590, ranked Wen-hsin tiao-lung above Shih-t'ung.

In the Ch'ing dynasty, the compilers of the Ssu-k'u chüan-shu chien-ming mu-lu spoke of Wen-hsin as the first literary critical work which contains the essence of literary and rhetorical principles. Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng (1738-1801), another great historiographer, expressed his enthusiasm and unbounded admiration for Liu Hsieh's Wen-hsin in his Wen-shih t'ung-i, a work which ranks with Liu Chih-chi's Shih-t'ung in importance. And Juan Yüan (1764-1849) who, because of his important official position, was able to make such an important contribution by fostering scholarship, considered Liu Hsieh the creator of literary laws.

As late as 1941, Fu Tseng-hsiang, a famous bibliographer, said, "Wen-hsin tiao-lung deals with the development of literature. It is the compass in the literary world, a handbook to all writers and scholars."100 Then, in 1946, Fu Keng-sheng in his Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing t'ung-lun said of the Wen-hsin, "Its scope is comprehensive, the ideas it contains are subtle and penetrating, and its emphasis is balanced, without deviating from the norm. Clear in its definitions and logical and systematic in its categorization, it is the greatest literary critical work ever produced in the whole history of China."101 Occasionally

101 Fu Keng-sheng, Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh p'i-p'ing t'ung-lun (Chungking, 1946, and Shanghai, 1947).
we hear some dissenting note. Ch’ao Kung-wu (flourishing in 1144) criticized the factual accuracy of certain statements made by Liu Hsieh. But most writers have stood by Liu Hsieh with unswerving faith.

Before I bring this introduction to a close, I would like to dwell briefly on the difficulty involved in a study of Chinese literary criticism and how this difficulty may, to a certain extent, be eliminated. One of the difficulties is to grasp firmly the meaning of the terms used by Chinese writers and critics. In general, all Chinese terms are subject to a change of meaning in different contexts; but this is especially true in literary criticism. Unless we know exactly what certain terms mean in certain contexts, we are at a loss how to interpret them. This difficulty is increased by the fact that many writers who have not formed their thought with any degree of precision take advantage of the confusion and use the terms with abandon in an effort to deck themselves with borrowed elegance. It is true that language is a fluid thing, subject to change of meaning in different periods; but for any specific period, there must be some kind of agreement as to the several possible meanings one term may have—in order to avoid utter chaos. One way to get out of this difficult situation is to find a way to define the terms by referring to the contexts in which they actually occur—a procedure similar to the one I. A. Richards has followed in his studies of Mencius. It is my hope that some day I may have an opportunity to devote myself to this task.