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Empty Dreams and Other Omissions: Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong* Preface

The last several decades have brought unprecedented recognition to Liu Xie 劉勰 (b. ca. 470, d. after 519) for his major discussion of literature titled *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍. Although both the book and the man had received a fair share of scholarly attention before, publications have soared, adding to even earlier works. A recent bibliography collects more than six thousand books and articles published between 1907 and 2005 – among them, by the way, a meager twenty-six in Western languages.[1] Today, *Wenxin diaolong* is unanimously regarded to be the most important work of theory and criticism in Chinese literary history; it is widely quoted as an authoritative voice in studies of literature of all periods and genres. Although research on *Wenxin diaolong* is chiefly concerned with the literary questions raised by Liu Xie, a considerable portion of scholarly interest has always been dedicated to the author himself. This is not surprising, since the few biographical sources available are tantalizingly vague as to crucial circumstances of Liu Xie's life and the formation of his main work.

The study at hand is a close look at Liu Xie's "Statement of Intent" ("Xu zhi" 序志), usually called the preface to *Wenxin diaolong*, although it is the last of the fifty chapters that constitute this work. Exploring possible reasons for the absence of autobiographical information in the preface, I will argue that Liu Xie not only failed to shed light on his own life and to honor his family, but that he deliberately drew attention to these omissions. According to the reading that I give here,

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[1] Qi Liangde 戚良德, *Wenxin diaolong xue fenlei suoyin: 1907–2005* 文心雕龍學分類索引：1907–2005 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005).

the lacunae turn out to be carrying a message of their own. In the following translation and analysis of the "Statement of Intent" I will introduce my reasons for assuming this rhetorical strategy on Liu Xie's part, along with an interpretation.

LIU XIE'S BIOGRAPHY IN STANDARD HISTORIES

Neither of the brief biographical notices in two standard histories, *Liang shu* 梁書 and *Nan shi* 南史, mentions Liu Xie's years of birth and death, his family status, his reasons for entering a Buddhist monastery first as a layman and later as a monk, his motives for remaining unmarried, or the date of *Wenxin diaolong*'s completion, all of which has given rise to a multitude of hypotheses.[2]

It is generally assumed that Liu Xie (*z.* Yanhe 彥和) was born between 460 and 480 in Jingkou 京口 near Jiankang (modern Nanjing) into a distinguished but impoverished family who formerly had supplied high-ranking officials and may have been distantly related to the reigning house of the Han dynasty of long past.[3] Of his youth, the *Liang shu* biography tells us that

> Liu Xie was orphaned at an early age. He was earnestly devoted to learning. His family was so poor that he did not marry. He came to depend on the monk Sengyou with whom he stayed for more than ten years. 勰早孤，篤志好學，家貧不婚娶，依沙門僧祐，與之居處，積十餘年。[4]

With these unobtrusive lines, a lot depends on interpretation, especially concerning the causality and the time frame of the statements. We know that Liu Xie stayed with the eminent Buddhist monk Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), the famous editor of works such as *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三

[2] *Liang shu* 梁書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1973; hereafter cited as *LS*), 50, pp. 710–12; *Nan shi* 南史 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1973; hereafter cited as *NS*), 72, pp. 1781–82. Biographical studies include Donald A. Gibbs, "Liu Hsieh: Author of the *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*," *MS* 29 (1970/71), pp. 117–41, which in turn is based on Yang Mingzhao's 楊明照 study and commentary of Liu Xie's *Liang shu* biography. See Yang Mingzhao, *Wenxin diaolong jiaozhu* 文心雕龍校注 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue, 1958), pp. 1–10. A revision of Yang's study dating from 1978 is included in Wang Gengsheng's 王更生 *Wenxin diaolong duben* 文心雕龍讀本 (Taibei: Wenshizhe, 1985), pp. 409–30. Other scholars have published their glosses on Yang Mingzhao's commentary, among them Li Yuegang 李曰剛, *Wenxin diaolong jiaoquan* 文心雕龍斠詮 (Taibei: Guoli bianyiguan Zhonghua congshu bianshen weiyuanhui, 1982), pp. 2343–56.

[3] Gibbs, "Liu Hsieh," pp. 118–19. An alternative interpretation of Liu Xie's background holds that he did not come from an aristocratic family but was a commoner who managed to rise to imperial recognition through his collaboration with Sengyou and through Shen Yue's recommendation (see below). Wang Yuanhua 王元化, *Wenxin diaolong jiangshu* 文心雕龍講疏 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe), pp. 1–27.

[4] *LS* 50, p. 710. See Gibbs, "Liu Hsieh," pp. 120–23.

藏記集 and *Hongming ji* 弘明集,[5] at Dinglin Temple 定林寺 near Jiankang for more than a decade, assisting him, as the *Liang shu* biography continues to tell us, in the collation of Buddhist scriptures. But there is no consensus as to Liu Xie's actual age upon entry into the temple – still an impressionable boy or already a marriageable young man who had received a solid, formal non-Buddhist education? Nor is there consensus on the reasons for his move – was it a chiefly pragmatic decision for the purpose of escaping poverty or motivated by religious inclinations? In much of modern scholarship, these questions are discussed in order to claim Liu Xie for Confucianism and to deny that he may have had any genuine Buddhist beliefs.[6] However, it is beyond any doubt that Liu Xie must have become thoroughly familiar with Buddhist scriptures, teachings, and practice during this decade at Dinglin Temple – if not earlier – and that he, like many of his educated contemporaries, obviously did not assume the incompatibility of Confucianism and Buddhism – or Daoism, for that matter. Equally beyond doubt is that Liu Xie, as Victor Mair has put it, "would have been exposed to Buddhist texts and ideas before he started to write *WXDL*,"[7] a fact that has been pointed out by other scholars as well.[8]

There is also no conclusive evidence as to the date of composition or completion of *Wenxin diaolong*, which may have been written over a long period of time. According to one theory, the work was completed towards the end of Liu Xie's temple stay, that is during the last years of the Qi dynasty, either just before or just after the turn of the sixth century. The *Liang shu* biography relates the anecdote that Liu Xie had approached the influential literatus Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) in the way of a hawker presenting him with his book, and that Shen Yue thereupon had taken notice of *Wenxin diaolong* and appreciated it highly.[9] The story is often regarded to be dubious, not the least because there is no indication of the book's wide circulation before the Tang. According to the claim that the completion of the work occurred around 500, it was Liu Xie's newly gained literary reputation that led to various minor offices at court and beyond after the founding of the Liang

[5] Arthur E. Link, "Shih Seng-yu and His Writings," *JAOS* 80.1 (1960), pp. 17–43.

[6] For a discussion of this contentious topic see Victor H. Mair, "Buddhism in *The Literary Mind and Ornate Rhetoric*," in *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity, and Rhetoric in* Wenxin diaolong, ed. Cai Zong-qi (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2001), pp. 63–81.

[7] Mair, "Buddhism," p. 72.

[8] For a broad overview of opinions and secondary literature see the recent M.A. thesis "*Wenxin diaolong* Folun ciyuan yanjiu" 文心雕龍佛論辭源研究 by Chen Jianlang 陳建郎 (Fo Guang University, Taiwan, 2009).

[9] *LS* 50, p. 712; Gibbs, "Liu Hsieh," pp. 127–30.

dynasty (502). The most noteworthy of these was a secretarial position at the residence of Crown Prince Xiao Tong 蕭統 (Zhaoming taizi 昭明太子, 501–31) who, according to the *Liang shu*, profoundly enjoyed Liu Xie's company[10] and – though this remains purely speculative – may thus have been influenced by him in the compilation of his *Wenxuan* 文選. The second major theory about the date of composition of *Wenxin diaolong* presumes that the book was completed during Liu Xie's term at the Crown Prince's residence, which featured an extensive library and intellectually stimulating atmosphere of literary pursuits. This theory of the later date of completion seems more plausible, since it would not only explain the enormous breadth of reading displayed by its author, but also his mature judgment in literary and other matters.

On imperial command, Liu Xie later took up editorial work at Dinglin Temple again. This move is commonly assumed to have taken place either in the wake of Sengyou's death in 518 or following Xiao Tong's demise in 531. Having completed his assignment at Dinglin Temple, Liu Xie asked for and was granted permission to become a monk. He took the vows, adopting the religious name Huidi 惠地, and died within a year. Depending on two assumptions – the date when he moved to Dinglin Temple for the second time and for how long he was involved in his editorial tasks there – Liu Xie's death is dated either sometime after 519 or sometime after 532. This little is all we know about Liu Xie's life.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION, AND LACK THEREOF, IN LIU XIE'S PREFACE

We might expect to find a remedy for this regrettable lack of biographical information in Liu Xie's preface to *Wenxin diaolong*, especially in the light of the autobiographical current that runs through a number of prefaces of early and early medieval Chinese literature.[11] Starting with the preface to Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (?145–?86 BC) *Shi ji* 史記 and continuing in Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283–343) *Baopuzi* 抱樸子, and Xiao Yi's 蕭繹 (508–54; Liang Yuandi 梁元帝, r. 553–54) *Jinlouzi* 金樓子, to mention just three prominent works, we see a tradition wavering between autobiographical disclosure and restraint whose complex

10 深愛接之, *LS* 50, p. 710; Gibbs, "Liu Hsieh," pp. 124–26.

11 Comprehensive studies of autobiographical literature include Wu Peiyi, *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographcal Writings in Traditional China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1990), and Wolfgang Bauer, *Das Antlitz Chinas: Autobiographische Selbstdarstellungen in der chinesischen Literatur von ihren Anfängen bis heute* (München: Hanser, 1990).

authorial strategies and motivations have received thorough scholarly attention.[12] Pointing out the "overall self-communicating reticence of prose writers," Christoph Harbsmeier held that it "is best illustrated from the history of autobiographical writing in China."[13]

Liu Xie's "Xu zhi" is utterly disappointing as regards autobiograpy. We learn neither about Liu Xie's family nor the basic data of his own vita, let alone his religious inclinations. The preface expresses the author's "lasting concerns" and "governs the whole book," as Liu Xie himself declared,[14] and is thus just what its title announces: a "Statement of Intent," but hardly anything else.

This is, by the way, a perfectly well-established prefatorial mode in early China and later in early medieval China, as demonstrated by the lack of autobiographical information in many authorial prefaces.[15] What is perplexing about Liu Xie's preface, however, is that it is not completely devoid of autobiographical elements, but contains two dream narratives that are presented as personal memories. In the first dream, Liu Xie, just six years old, dreamed of ascending to colorful clouds that he eventually plucked. In the second dream, which occurred after he had turned thirty, he saw himself handling ritual vessels and following Confucius on a journey south. Waking up on the morning after this second dream, Liu Xie was filled with joy, because he felt he had been favored with an exceptional chance to meet the Sage. The reader cannot help the impression that these dreams of Liu Xie do not ring true – and not only because we know that nothing is easier to fab-

[12] Stephen W. Durrant, "Self as the Intersection of Traditions: The Autobiographical Writings of Ssu-ma Ch'ien," *JAOS* 106.1 (1986), pp. 33–40; Matthew Wells, "Self as Historical Artifact: Ge Hong and Early Chinese Autobiographical Writing," *EMC* 9 (2003), and idem, *To Die and Not Decay: Autobiography and the Pursuit of Immortality in Early China* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2009); Tian Xiaofei, "The Twilight of the Masters: Masters Literature (*zishu*) in Early Medieval China," *JAOS* 126.4 (2006), pp. 478–85.

[13] Christoph Harbsmeier, "The Rhetoric of Premodern Prose Style," in *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia U.P., 2002), p. 901.

[14] 長懷序志，以馭群篇 (ll. 125–26, see below). Fan Wenlan 范文瀾, *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍註 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1958; hereafter cited as *WXDLZ*), 50, p. 727. Unless otherwise specified, I will be quoting *Wenxin diaolong* after Fan Wenlan's edition, providing chapter and page numbers. The line numbers are my own. English translations of Liu Xie's preface include: Vincent Yu-chung Shih, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons: A Study of Thought and Pattern in Chinese Literature* (Hong Kong: Chinese U.P., 1983), pp. 2–11, Wong Siu-kit, *Early Chinese Literary Criticism* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1983), pp. 125–36, and Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1992), pp. 292–98. For a recent study of the preface see Huang Jingjin 黃景進, "Du 'Xu zhi'" 讀〈序志〉, in *Lun Liu Xie ji qi* Wenxin diaolong 論劉勰及其文心雕龍, ed. Zhongguo Wenxin diaolong xuehui 中國文心雕龍學會 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2000), pp. 556–73.

[15] Two prominent examples are the prefaces to Yang Xiong's 揚雄 (53 BC–18 AD) *Fayan* 法言 and to Wang Fu's 王符 (ca. 90–165) *Qianfu lun* 潛夫論.

ricate than a dream. Above all, the symbolism of these dreams seems to be suspiciously simple. As we must assume from the magisterial *Wenxin diaolong* itself that Liu Xie was superbly aware of how literary texts work, I propose to read his narration of these blandly generic and peculiarly empty dreams not as an accidental lapse in judgment, but as an artfully produced rhetorical anticlimax. This reading assumes that Liu Xie's dream reports were not meant to provide autobiographical information at all. By only just hinting at the personal, intimate, revelatory or even confessional potential of the preface without eventually realizing it, Liu Xie effectively highlighted the omissions in his preface and thus his autobiographical reticence.

THE PREFACE AS A PARATEXT

In order to better understand why Liu Xie so blatantly omits the opportunity to present himself and his family, I would like to address the nature of the preface, a very common and versatile literary type both in China and the West. One of the most inspiring studies of this literary genre is found in Gérard Genette's book *Seuils* ("Thresholds," originally published in 1987), which is dedicated to the various paratexts that enclose a literary work and in many ways affect its reception and interpretation. For almost a third of his book, Genette deals with the preface, which he understands "to designate every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text, authorial or allographic, consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that follows or precedes it."[16] Genette then goes on to explain his decision to consider the postface as a variety of the preface, arguing that their common features are more important than what sets them apart. This attitude seems to have been tacitly assumed by many scholars of Chinese literature writing in English as well, since they generally speak of "prefaces" when referring to "*xu* 序," even if this type of text is positioned at the end of a Chinese book. According to the typology of prefaces developed by Genette, which is based on the author and relative time of writing of a preface, we find that the preface of *Wenxin diaolong* is both "authorial, or autographic" as well as "original," since it was written by the author of the book himself, most probably as part of the book and not as a later addition.[17] Genette describes the "original" preface as basically persuasive, since it seeks to ensure that the text it introduces is read

[16] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1997), p. 161.

[17] Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 178 and 196.

properly. He also directs our attention to the dilemma of all authors of an original preface, because the latter needs to "put a high value on the text without antagonizing the reader by too immodestly, or simply too obviously, putting a high value on the text's author." Genette sees the solution to this dilemma in the deflection of attention away from the author and instead placing "a high value on the subject."[18]

LIU XIE'S CHOICE OF TITLE

Although Genette was exclusively reasoning from the perspective of the Western tradition, many of the rhetorical strategies he pointed out may be discovered in Chinese prefaces as well, and *Wenxin diaolong* is no exception. Liu Xie begins his preface with a commentary on the title of his book, one of the moves described by Genette:[19]

1	夫文心者，	Now, as to "literary mind,"
2	言爲文之用心也。	this means to apply one's mind towards creating literature.[20]
3	昔涓子琴心，	In the past, there were Juanzi's *Zither Mind*
4	王孫巧心。	and Wang Sun's *Artful Mind*.[21]
5	心哉美矣，	The mind is fine indeed,
6	故用之焉。	therefore I apply it here.
7	古來文章，	Since antiquity, literary works
8	以雕縟成體，	were perfected in form by carving and embellishing,
9	豈取騶奭之群言雕龍也。	how could I only mean what Zou Shi and his followers called "dragon carving"?[22]

[18] Ibid., p. 198.

[19] Ibid., pp. 213–14. Since titles are prominent instances of paratext, Genette dedicated a chapter to titles as well, see pp. 55–103 and 294–318 on intertitles.

[20] On the exceptionality of the compound *wenxin* 文心 see Mair, "Buddhism," pp. 74–76. The use of the phrase *yong xin* 用心 in this prominent position is certainly intended to evoke Lu Ji's 陸機 (261–303, z. Shiheng 士衡,:) Pingyuan 平原) preface to his *Wen fu* 文賦 (*Rhapsody on Literature*), see *Wenxuan* 文選 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977; hereafter cited as *WX*), 17, p. 761. Since every line of Liu Xie's texts contains allusions to previous literature and these are scrupulously traced and recorded in the standard commentaries, I will in my notes only refer to allusions that are relevant for the understanding of the text and for my arguments.

[21] Not much is known about these two texts and their authors Juanzi and Wang Sun, who are usually associated with early Daoism and Confucianism, respectively (*WXDLZ* 50, p. 728).

[22] In the *Shi ji*, Zou Shi is associated with the Jixia 稷下 academy, but one can only speculate about the way he and his followers may have been engaged in "dragon carving." In Pei Yin's 裴駰 (fl. 438) commentary *Shi ji jijie* 史記集解 the term occurs in a quote from Liu Xiang's 劉向 (78–8 BC) *Bielu* 別錄, where it is used to describe texts as overly adorned or decorated (飾若雕鏤龍文); *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959; hereafter cited as *SJ*), 74, pp. 2346–48.

Judging from received prefaces, it is a relatively late phenomenon in Chinese literature to comment on one's choice of title, not the least because programmatic titles themselves were a late phenomenon, starting only in the Eastern Han dynasty. Han dynasty or early medieval prefaces rarely explain their titles. The prefaces in Xu Shen's 許慎 (ca. 55–ca. 149) *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 and Ying Shao's 應劭 (ca. 140–ca. 204) *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 elaborate on the words that make up titles, although these discussions are not presented as an authorial decision on a title. Wang Chong 王充 (27–ca. 100) comes close to Liu Xie in his attempts to explain the title of his *Lunheng* 論衡 in the two autobiographical chapters contained in the collection, namely, "Record about Myself" ("Zi ji" 自紀) and "Written in Reply" ("Dui zuo" 對作), the first of which is usually regarded as a preface.[23]

It is probably no coincidence that the only other prominent example of a preface explaining the title of a book is the "Afterword" ("Hou xu" 後序) in Sengyou's *Hongming ji*.[24] If we assume that *Hongming ji* was compiled between 515 and 518, as suggested by Erik Zürcher,[25] and that Liu Xie followed the example of his mentor by addressing the title of his book in its preface, this small but remarkable rhetorical correspondence could be interpreted as additional evidence for a later date of *Wenxin diaolong* – or at least its preface – supporting the second theory mentioned above that the book was completed during the later years of Liu Xie's term at the Crown Prince's residence.[26]

While Sengyou's explanations for his choice of title are quite straightforward, Liu Xie's commentary on his choice of words for a title is as vague and subtle as the title *Wenxin diaolong* itself – and undoubtedly intentionally ambiguous.[27] Another perfect example of Liu Xie's subtly employed ambivalence is to be found in lines 5–6 that

[23] *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋, ed. Huang Hui 黃暉 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 84, p. 1179 and 85, p. 1196.

[24] *Hongming ji*, in *Taishō shinshû daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, eds. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 (Tōkyō: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–29, rpt., Taibei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1974), 52,2102: 95.

[25] Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), p. 13.

[26] Another, although less likely, scenario would of course be that Liu Xie inspired the *Hongming ji*'s preface or even wrote it himself.

[27] While the title of *Wenxin diaolong* is commonly understood to express the complementary relationship between the spirit and the craft of literature, the meaning of each of its two components as well as their syntactic relation have been interpreted in different ways, resulting in translations such as "the literary mind and the carving of dragons," "the literary mind carves dragons," "carving a dragon at the core of literature," "carving the dragon of the literary mind," "literary creativity and ornate rhetoric," etc. See Valérie Lavoix, "Un dragon pour emblème: Variations sur le titre du *Wenxin diaolong*," *Études chinoises* 19.1–2 (2000), pp. 197–247.

may be read both as referring to how he decided on a title for *Wenxin diaolong* ("'Mind' is a fine word indeed, therefore I apply it in the title of my book"), or alternatively as a statement about his efforts in writing this book ("The mind is a fine thing indeed, therefore I apply it towards writing this book"). Later in the preface (line 100), Liu Xie uses the first two title words *wenxin* as an abbreviation for the whole title, which could be an indication that they were of greater import for him than the latter two words of the title.

WRITER'S MOTIVES I: ACHIEVING IMMORTALITY

After the introductory lines dedicated to the title of *Wenxin diaolong*, Liu Xie sets forth his motives for writing the book (lines 10–72). At the outset, he makes the conventional point for literary creation in general (*jian yan* 建言, "establishing words"), which he discusses in the context of transcending both his contemporaries and his age while evoking a cosmological perspective on these human endeavors:

	夫	Now,
10	宇宙綿邈，	the universe is boundless
11	黎獻紛雜。	and mankind is diverse.[28]
12	拔萃出類，	To stand out from the crowd,[29]
13	智術而已。	there is only wisdom and skill.
14	歲月飄忽，	Time is fleeting and
15	性靈不居。	personalities do not endure.[30]
16	騰聲飛實，	To raise one's fame and let one's achievements soar,
17	制作而已。	there is only literary creation.
18	夫 (有) [人]肖貌天地，	Now, humans in their appearance resemble heaven and earth,[31]
19	稟性五才。	their disposition embodies the Five Phases.[32]

[28] The phrase *li xian* 黎獻 goes back to the *Shangshu* 尙書 chap. "Yi Ji" 益稷 and has come to be conventionally used for "mankind".

[29] An allusion to *Mengzi* 孟子 2A2 (出於其類，拔乎其萃).

[30] The sentiment expressed in l. 14 is a conventional topos, but a phrase similar to ll. 14–15 is used in Kong Rong's 孔融 (153–208, z. Wenju 文舉) "Letter Discussing Sheng Xiaozhang" ("Shu lun Sheng Xiaozhang" 書論盛孝章), addressed to Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220, z. Mengde 孟德); *WX* 41, p. 1873 (歲月不居，時節如流).

[31] Most modern commentators suggest the emendation of 有, either deleting the character or substituting 其 or 人. For editions following the latter suggestion, see Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, *Wenxin diaolong zhushi* 文心雕龍註釋 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), p. 534, and Wang, *Wenxin diaolong duben*, 50, p. 381.

[32] The interpretation of *wu cai* 五才/材 as the Five Phases (*wu xing* 五行) seems appropriate since Liu Xie is evoking a cosmological context here. See also *WXDLZ* 49, p. 719 (蓋人稟五材).

20	擬耳目於日月，	Their ears and eyes are modeled on the sun and moon,
21	方聲氣乎風雷。	their voice and breath match wind and thunder.[33]
22	其超出萬物，	Wherein they surpass all other creatures is
23	亦已靈矣。	that they also [participate] in the divine.[34]
24	形同草木之脆，	While bodies are fragile as grass or trees,[35]
25	名踰金石之堅。	a name can be firmer than metal or stone.
26	是以君子處世，	A gentleman's conduct in society will hence
27	樹德建言。	[consist in] planting virtue and establishing words.[36]
28	豈好辯哉，	"How could I just be fond of arguments?"
29	不得已也！	"It is that I cannot help but [to engage in them]".[37]

When he wishes that his name may live on after his death, Liu Xie echoes an idea he has expressed elsewhere in *Wenxin diaolong*[38] and that had been articulated many times before. The most famous proponent is certainly Confucius, who according to a maxim transmitted in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) declared that the gentleman is disturbed by the idea of passing away without having made a name for himself.[39] But equally well-known is Sima Qian's wish to "found a school" that is alluded to later in Liu's preface (line 48).[40]

[33] Among the early Chinese texts that spell out the correspondences between the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the universe are *Lingshu* 靈樞, chap. 71 ("Xie ke" 邪客), and *Huainanzi* 淮南子, chap. 7 ("Jing shen" 精神). See also Nathan Sivin, "State, Cosmos, and Body in the Last Three Centuries B.C.," *HJAS* 55.1 (1995), pp. 5–37.

[34] The association of humans with the divine (*ling* 靈) is a conventional idea to be found in many early or early medieval texts, for instance, in the *Liezi's* 列子 "Yang Zhu" 楊朱 chap. (人肖天地之類，懷五常之性，有生之最靈者也).

[35] An allusion to *Laozi* 老子 64 (萬物草木生之柔脆).

[36] "Establishing words" (*li yan* 立言) is one of the three strategies to counter perishability (*san bu xiu* 三不朽) mentioned in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Xiang 24).

[37] An allusion to *Mengzi* 3B9.

[38] 君子之處世，疾名德之不章, *WXDLZ* 17, p. 622.

[39] 君子疾沒世而名不稱焉, *Lunyu* 15.20.

[40] 成一家之言, see *SJ* 130, p. 3319, or Sima Qian's "Letter in Reply to Ren An 任安 (?–91 BC, z. Shaoqing 少卿)" ("Bao Ren Shaoqing" 報任少卿書), *WX* 41, p. 1865. On the connection between literary production and fame in other early prefaces, see Wells, "Self as Historical Artifact," p. 84.

WRITER'S MOTIVES II – FOLLOWING DESTINATION

The last two lines quoted above with their evocation of Mengzi's famous stance open a quite massive wedge of text dedicated to the praise of Confucius and the Confucian canon – which, of course, infuses the whole of *Wenxin diaolong*. At the beginning of this passage, Liu Xie sets out the dream narratives that I mentioned above. He introduces the figure of Confucius, and goes on to explain his motives for writing, and more specifically for writing a book of literary thought such as *Wenxin diaolong*:

30	予生七齡，	When I was six years old,
31	乃夢彩雲若錦，	I dreamed of clouds, colorful like brocade,
32	則攀而採之。	whereupon I ascended and plucked them.[41]
33	齒在踰立，	When I had passed the age of thirty,[42]
34	則嘗夜夢	one night I dreamed
35	執丹漆之禮器，	that I was holding cinnabar lacquered ritual vessels,
36	隨仲尼而南行。	following Zhongni [i.e. Confucius] on a journey south.[43]
37	旦而寤，	When I awoke in the morning,
38	迺怡然而喜。	I was full of happiness.
39	大哉聖人之難見哉，	It is a thing of great rarity indeed to behold the Sage,
40	乃小子之垂夢歟！	and a lad like me was granted this dream!
41	自生人以來，	Ever since humans have been born,
42	未有如夫子者也。	there has not been anyone like the Master [i.e. Confucius].[44]
43	敷讚聖旨，	To spread and praise the Sage's purport,
44	莫若注經。	there is nothing like annotating the canon.
	而	But
45	馬鄭諸儒，	scholars such as Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan[45]
46	弘之已精，	have augmented [the canon] perfectly already,

[41] In the preface as it is included in Liu Xie's *Liang shu* biography, this first dream is missing; *LS* 50, p. 711.

[42] See Confucius' alleged autobiographical sketch in *Lunyu* 2.4.

[43] We know of various reports of Confucius traveling south, among them *Han shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, chap. 1.3.

[44] An allusion to *Mengzi* 2A2, where Confucius' disciple Zigong is quoted with a similar statement (自生民以來，未有夫子也).

[45] A reference to the two eminent late Han scholars Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166, z. Jizhang 季長) and his even more renowned student Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200, z. Kangcheng 康成).

47	就有深解，	[so that even if someone] had a profound understanding,
48	未足立家。	this would not be sufficient to found a school.[46]
49	唯文章之用，	The sole use of literary works
50	實經典枝條。	[consists in] forming branches to the canon.
51	五禮資之以成，	Supported by [literary works], the Five Rites are realized,
52	六典因之致用，	relying on them, the Six Codices are implemented,[47]
53	君臣所以炳煥，	lords and ministers achieve radiance through them,
54	軍國所以昭明。	military and state [affairs] achieve brilliance through them.
55	詳其本源，	If we look into the origin [of literary works],
56	莫非經典。	[we find that] not one of them is not derived from the canonical works.

Most readers have interpreted the first dream as proof of the boy's early aesthetic inclinations and literary aspiration,[48] which seems perfectly appropriate, since brocade is a common metaphor for the literary text in *Wenxin diaolong* and beyond.[49] This first dream can also be read as declaration of self-confidence and destination, since dreams of ascending to heaven were clearly associated with rulership and even sagehood. A dream interpretation recorded in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 cites a dream of the sage king Yao ascending to heaven, characterizing it as "ineffably auspicious."[50] The second dream is still more forthright, telling of the young man's veneration of Confucius and his wish to follow him.[51] This dream amounts to an emulation of the Sage and implies

46 *Li jia* 立家 alludes to the famous phrase "成一家之言" associated with Sima Qian (see note 40 above), but referred to by other writers as well, such as the *Baopuzi*'s "Zi xu" 自叙 chap. (未若立一家之言).

47 The Five Rites and the Six Codices – both are variously mentioned in *Zhouli* 周禮 – stand for government affairs in general.

48 See, among others, Toda Kōgyō 戸田浩曉, *Wenxin diaolong yanjiu* 文心雕龍研究, trans. Cao Kui 曹旭 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1992), p. 7.

49 See Huang, "Du 'Xu zhi'," p. 567, or Zhou Xunchu 周勛初, "Liu Xie de liang ge meng" 劉勰的兩個夢, in *Wen shi tanwei* 文史探微 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1987), pp. 116–22. The metaphor occurs several times in *Wenxin diaolong* itself: *WXDLZ* 30, p. 530 (譬五色之錦); 44, p. 656 (視之則錦繪); 47, p. 702 (千年凝錦), etc. Earlier examples for this usage are to be found in Lu Ji's *Wen fu* (*WX* 17, p. 767) and Liu Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403–44) *Shishuo xinyu* (著文章爲錦繡); see *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian* 世說新語校箋, comm. Xu Zhen'e 徐震堮 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984), 8.20.

50 堯夢攀天而上 [...] 斯皆聖王之前占，吉不可言; *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965; hereafter cited as *HHS*), 10B, pp. 418–19.

51 Toda, *Wenxin diaolong yanjiu*, p. 7, seems to go one step too far when he concludes from

different ways of identifying with him. One of these is a local association, because Liu Xie's family hailed from Confucius' home state Lu but had, more than a century before Liu Xie's birth, moved south.[52] More importantly, there is the pattern of dreaming of one's ideal and role model that links Liu Xie to Confucius who, famously, used to dream of the Duke of Zhou, "the source of his dream of the good society."[53] Lie Xie is absolutely right when he then adds that "it is a thing of great rarity indeed to behold the Sage." Dreams about Confucius – or at least reports thereof in early and early medieval transmitted literature – are not at all as frequent as one might think. There is in fact only one prominent case, and that is Zheng Xuan's dream of Confucius, in which the Sage foretold Zheng's impending death.[54] Since a few lines later Zheng Xuan is actually mentioned in Liu Xie's preface, this earlier allusion is certainly no coincidence but one of the many subtle cross-references and reverberations we find throughout *Wenxin diaolong*.

Other aspects come to mind in the interpretation of Liu Xie's dream narratives. The most obvious one is that – unlike many other early medieval texts[55] – *Wenxin diaolong* as a whole places astonishingly little emphasis on dreams, which paradoxically highlights the preface's dream reports even more. There is only one reference outside of the "Statement of Intent," and that is when Liu Xie quotes the nightmare Yang Xiong supposedly suffered as an example of an overly cumbersome writing process.[56] Surprisingly, a much shorter text written by Liu

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the second dream that Liu Xie regarded himself to be the only one among his contemporaries who consciously carried on and propagated the way of the Sage.

52 *LS* 50, p. 710; Gibbs, "Liu Hsieh," pp. 118–19.

53 John B. Henderson, *Scripture, Canon, and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1991), p. 66. See *Lunyu* 7.5 and Wang Fu's 王符 (ca. 90–165) interpretation in chap. 28 of his *Qianfu lun* 潛夫論.

54 *HHS* 25, p. 1211. Another interesting case is that of Zheng Xuan's approximate contemporary Bian Shao 邊韶 (fl. 2nd c. AD, z. Xiaoxian 孝先) who, replying to a doggerel made up by his pupils, claimed an oneiric relationship with both the Duke of Zhou 周公旦 (fl. 1042–1036 BC) and Confucius (*HHS* 80, p. 2623).

55 Early medieval Chinese literature is full of dream narratives and metaphors. To give just a couple of examples: Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) finds an elusive line of poetry through dreaming of his cousin Xie Huilian 謝惠連 (407–33); *NS* 19, p. 537. Zhong Rong 鐘嶸 (469–518) in his *Shipin* 詩品 tells how Jiang Yan 江淹 (444–505), after dreaming that he returned a brush that Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) had lent him many years ago, found his literary talents greatly diminished; Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, ed. *Shipin yishu* 詩品譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), p. 72. See also *NS* 59, p. 1451. Despite the prominence and potential of the topic, sinology is still far from studies like Steven F. Kruger's *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), a book that also includes a chapter on autobiographical dreams.

56 *WXDLZ* 26, p. 494 (揚雄輟翰而驚夢). In chap. 8 of Huan Tan's 桓譚 (ca. 43 BC–28 AD, z. Junshan 君山) *Xinlun* 新論 we find a description of Yang Xiong's nightmare – he saw his five viscera spilled on the ground and shoved them back in again with his own hands – and how this dream left him ill for a year.

Xie, his inscription "Epitaph on the Stone Statue [of Maitreya Buddha] Erected by the Prince of Jian'an of the Liang Dynasty (i.e., Xiao Wei 蕭偉, 476–533, z. Wenda 文達) in Shicheng Temple on Mount Shan" ("Liang Jian'an wang zao Shanshan Shicheng si shixiang bei" 梁建安王造剡山石城寺石像碑, 616), is on a par with *Wenxin diaolong* as far as references to dreams are concerned.[57]

Another observation to be made on the structural level – now that of the chapter rather than that of the book – is that the dreams establish a sequence of intentions that is at odds with the following part of the text, where Liu Xie presents his decision to "discuss literature" (*lun wen* 論文, line 72), namely to write *Wenxin diaolong* as a secondary choice made only after he had dismissed the supreme scholarly endeavor, that is, "to comment on the canon" (*zhu jing* 注經). On the formal level it stands out that the dreams are not presented in parallel style, with the possible exception of lines 35–36, which could have been intended to make the dream narrative sound natural and authentic. On the other hand, what is narrated is remarkably bland and conventional. The odd disparity between the form and the contents of the narrative leaves the reader with the impression of a feigned naturalness.

WRITER'S MOTIVES III – FULFILLING A NECESSITY

When Liu Xie extends the praise of Confucius and his teachings to the scholars whose commentaries on the canon achieved perfection already by the late Eastern Han dynasty, the apologetic undercurrent of his reasoning becomes evident. Declaring that it has become impossible to "found a school" in the field of canonical learning, he promptly points to the literary works that "form branches to the canon" and are indispensable to all civil and military affairs. He not only presents us with a good reason not to comment on the canon himself and to roam the fields of literary theory and criticism instead, but also asserts the magnitude and incompleteness of this latter field that will allow him to "found a school." In the following passage Liu Xie continues to specify his motives for writing *Wenxin diaolong*, now focusing on the need for a book such as this one during times of literary decline:

[57] For the text of the inscription see Yang, *Wenxin diaolong jiaozhu*, pp. 327–31. The inscription reports how a certain Lu Xian 陸咸 dreamed of three Buddhist monks who told him that the Prince of Jian'an would recover from an illness if he commissioned a statue of Maitreya Buddha, but how Lu disregarded this dream until a mysterious monk reminded him of the dream's message a year (or years, *jingnian* 經年) later. A second and equally conventional dream, this time by a monk of Shicheng Temple, is also interpreted as a divine message; Yang, *Wenxin diaolong jiaozhu*, pp. 328–29.

	而	But
57	去聖久遠，	[since] we are far removed from the Sage
58	文體解散。	the literary style has dissolved.
59	辭人愛奇，	Authors love the strange,
60	言貴浮詭，	in language they cherish the superficial and the insincere,
61	飾羽尚畫，	[this is like] adorning feathers with painting or
62	文繡鞶帨。	bedecking belts and handkerchiefs with embroidery.[58]
63	離本彌甚，	Departing farther and farther from the roots,
64	將遂訛濫。	they pursue the erroneous and excessive.
	蓋	Indeed,
65	周書論辭，	in the *Book of Zhou*'s discussions of literature
66	貴乎體要，	it is highly valued to embody the essential [and not to love the peculiar];[59]
67	尼父陳訓，	and Zhongni (i.e., Confucius) in his teachings
68	惡乎異端。	denounced peculiar aspects.[60]
69	辭訓之異，	Because [the *Book of Zhou*'s] discussions and [Confucius's] teachings [both denounce] the peculiar,
70	宜體於要。	it is appropriate to embody the essential.[61]
71	於是搦筆和墨，	Thereupon I grasped the brush and mixed the ink
72	乃始論文。	and began to discuss literature.

After he has established the significance of working in the field of literary theory and criticism, a move that Genette has described as attributing "high value to a subject by demonstrating its importance and – inseparable from that – the usefulness of examining it"[62] – Liu Xie sets out to sketch the state of the art of literary criticism through the ages (lines 73–99). We are not surprised that he finds it unsatisfac-

[58] Although these two metaphors appear quite fitting here, they carry connotations that seem to subvert the explicit message of these lines. The first metaphor alludes to the "Lie Yukou" 列禦寇 chap. of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, where the idea of painting feathers is used to ridicule Confucius (殆哉圾乎仲尼，方且飾羽而畫，從事華辭), a criticism which Liu Xie explicitly repudiates in his "Zheng sheng" 徵聖 chap. ("Evidence from the Sages," *WXDLZ* 2, 16). The second metaphor is taken from the "Gua jian" 寡見 chap. of the *Fayan*, where Yang Xiong criticizes the overblown style of contemporary canonical studies as "embroidering belts and handkerchiefs" (今之學也，非獨爲之華藻也，又從而繡其鞶帨).

[59] Liu Xie discussed the idea of *tiyao* 體要 in more detail in his second chap. "Evidence from the Sages" (*WXDLZ* 2, p. 16). The discussion is derived from *Shangshu* chap. 24 (政貴有恆，辭尚體要，不惟好異)

[60] *Lunyu* 2.16 (子曰：攻乎異端，斯害也已).

[61] On the ambiguity of ll. 65–70, which mainly rests in the interpretation of *yi* 異, see Owen, *Readings*, p. 620, n. 259.

[62] Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 199.

tory, since this serves to further explicate his own motives for writing about literature, as if to say, "If it has never been done well, I simply have to step in."

73	詳觀近代之論文者多矣，至於	Looking closely, there are many who have discussed literature in recent times, such as
74	魏文述典，	Emperor Wen of Wei who wrote the *Authoritative [Discussions]*,[63]
75	陳思序書，	Si, Prince of Chen, who drafted a "Letter [to Yang Dezu],"[64]
76	應瑒文論，	Ying Yang's *Discussion on Literature [and Substance]*,[65]
77	陸機文賦，	Lu Ji's *Rhapsody on Literature*,
78	仲洽流別，	Zhongqia's *[Discussion on the] Development [of Literary Genres]*[66] and
79	宏範翰林。	Hongfan's *[Discussions on the] Forest of Brushes*.[67]
80	各照隅隙，	They all illuminated nooks and gaps,[68]
81	鮮觀衢路，	but rarely kept an eye on the main avenues,
82	或臧否當時之才，	whether they assessed contemporary talents,
83	或銓品前修之文，	ranked the works of former authors,
84	或汎舉雅俗之旨，	generally addressed the taste of elegance and vulgarity
85	或撮題篇章之意。	or extracted the meaning of individual works.
86	魏典密而不周，	[The Emperor of] Wei's *Authoritative [Discussions]* are dense but not comprehensive,

63 Of the *Dianlun* 典論 ("Authoritative Discussions") by Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226, z. Zihuan 子桓, Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty, 魏文帝, r. 220–26), only fragments have survived, notably "Lun wen" 論文 ("A Discussion on Literature"), see *WX* 52, pp. 2270–73.

64 For Cao Zhi's 曹植 (192–232, z. Zijian 子建, Prince of Chen 陳王, *shi* Si 思) letter to Yang Xiu 楊修 (175–219, z. Dezu 德祖), see "Letter to Yang Dezu" ("Yu Yang Dezu shu" 與楊德祖書), *WX* 42, pp. 1901–3.

65 Probably a reference to Ying Yang's 應瑒 (?–217, z. Delian 德璉) *Wenzhi lun* 文質論 ("Discussion on Refinement [Literature] and Substance"), transmitted in *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚, j. 22.

66 For a collection of fragments of Zhi Yu's 摯虞 (?–311, z. Zhongqia 仲洽 [or Zhongzhi 仲治]) *Wenzhang liubie lun* 文章流別論 ("Discussion on the Development of Literary Genres"), see *Quan Jin wen* 全晉文, 77, in *Quan shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (1836), comp. Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1951).

67 See *Quan Jin wen*, 53, for a collection of fragments of Li Chong's 李充 (4th c., z. Hongdu 弘度 or Hongfan 宏範) *Hanlin lun* 翰林論 ("Discussion on the Forest of Brushes").

68 An allusion to the phrase "受光於隙照一隅" in the *Huainanzi*'s "Shuo shan" 說山 chap.

87	陳書辯而無當，	[the Prince of] Chen's "Letter" is discerning but not pertinent,
88	應論華而疏略，	Ying's *Discussion* is ornate and sketchy,
89	陸賦巧而碎亂，	Lu's *Rhapsody* is artful but fragmentary and disorganized,
90	流別精而少（巧）〔功〕，	the *Development* is refined but accomplishes little,[69]
91	翰林淺而寡要。	the *Forest of Brushes* is shallow and lacking in what is essential.
92	又君山公幹之徒，	Then there are the followers of Junshan (i.e. Huan Tan) and Gonggan (i.e. Liu Zhen)[70] or
93	吉甫士龍之輩，	the likes of Jifu (i.e. Ying Zhen)[71] and Shilong (i.e. Lu Yun).
94	汎議文意，	They generally discussed the meaning of literature and
95	往往間出。	occasionally came up with remarkable observations.[72]
96	並未能振葉以尋根，	But none of them was able to trace the root by shaking the leaves or
97	觀瀾而索源。	to seek out the source by observing the waves.[73]
98	不述先哲之誥，	Not describing the mandates of past thinkers
99	無益後生之慮。	they are of no benefit for the thoughts of later generations.

As far as we can know from the fragmentary state of transmitted literature, Liu Xie's overview of the field mentions the most important texts about literary theory and criticism. He admits that they all successfully addressed individual problems, but at the same time trivializes their achievements when he depicts them as merely "illuminating nooks and gaps" instead of being able to "keep an eye on the main avenues." This strategy of exposing his predecessors' faults is, of course, perfectly in keeping with Liu Xie's prefatorial intentions, since it provides an urgent motive for writing his book (it is high time to counteract the faults of earlier literary theory and criticism) and enhances the value of his own endeavor (which must be tremendous indeed, since so many ex-

[69] The emendation is based on *LS* 50, p. 711 and on the fact that Liu Xie obviously alluded to the phrase "博而寡要，勞而少功" in Sima Qian's preface to *Shi ji* (*SJ* 130, p. 3289).

[70] Liu Zhen 劉楨 (d. 217, z. Gonggan 公幹), one of the Seven Masters of the Jian'an period.

[71] Ying Zhen 應貞 (d. 269, z. Jifu 吉甫), son of Ying Qu 應璩 (190–252, z. Xiulian 休璉).

[72] A direct quote from Sima Qian's *Shi ji* preface (*SJ* 130, p. 3319).

[73] *Mengzi* 7A24 (觀水有術，必觀其瀾).

cellent men before him failed). If we read Liu Xie's catalog of defects as a list of desiderata, we notice that he most of all valued comprehensiveness and pertinence. To be comprehensive (*zhou* 周) means not to be sketchy (*shulüe* 疏略) or fragmentary and disorganized (*sui luan* 碎亂), but to be able to trace the root (*xun gen* 尋根) and to seek out the source (*suo yuan* 索源). Pertinence includes qualities such as being to the point (*dang* 當), embodying the essential (*yao* 要), and accomplishing something (*gong* 功).

EXPLAINING THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

At this point Liu Xie sets out to elucidate the tripartite structure of his book in some detail (lines 100–133) – a structure that is certainly supposed to be a reflection of his ideals. Each of the three parts is characterized in its own way: part one by specifying every chapter, part two by describing the common structure of the respective chapters, and part three by mentioning select chapters.

100	蓋文心之作也，	The composition of *Wenxin [diaolong]* is therefore
101	本乎道，	rooted in the Way (chap. 1),
102	師乎聖，	modeled on the sages (chap. 2),
103	體乎經，	formed like the canon (chap. 3),
104	酌乎緯，	reconsidered through the apocrypha (chap. 4) and
105	變乎騷。	transformed by the elegies (chap. 5).
106	文之樞紐，	[In this first part,] the pivot of literature
107	亦云極矣。	has already been fully discussed.

Liu Xie singles out the first five chapters of his book by referring to them individually and by declaring that they fully discuss what he calls the "pivot of literature" (文之樞紐). He opens with a treatise on the origin of civilization, language, writing and literature in the metaphysical, absolute *dao* 道 ("Yuan dao" 原道, "The Way as the Source"). He turns directly to the core of the Confucian tradition in chapters two and three, which are concerned with the literary impact of the sages, particularly Confucius ("Zheng sheng" 徵聖, "Evidence from the Sages"), and with the overarching importance of the Confucian canonical writings as models for all later literature ("Zong jing" 宗經, "The Canon as the Ancestor"), the *Book of Changes* (*Zhou yi* 周易) being of key importance among them. While chapter four discusses the apocrypha ("Zheng wei" 正緯, "Rectifying the Apocrypha"), chapter five ("Bian sao" 辨騷, "Distinguishing the Elegies") is dedicated to the *Chu ci* 楚辭

("Elegies of the South"), assuming the quasi-canonical significance of this collection for later literary production.

The same number of lines is then dedicated to the twenty genre chapters that are following, resulting in a much more general, but still concise, characterization of this part of *Wenxin diaolong*:

108	若乃論文敘筆，	Regarding the discussion of patterned and the description of unpatterned literature (chaps. 6–25),
109	則囿別區分，	I have delineated and differentiated [each genre],
110	原始以表末，	tracing its origin to demonstrate its development,
111	釋名以章義，	explaining its designations to reveal its meaning,
112	選文以定篇，	selecting examples to determine its scope and
113	敷理以舉統。	expatiating on its principles to advocate their unity.
114	上篇以上，	In the first half of the book,
115	綱領明矣。	I have elucidated the guiding principles.

The second, typological part of *Wenxin diaolong* consists of twenty chapters that "discuss patterned and describe unpatterned texts" (論文敘筆).[74] These chapters introduce an apparently all-embracing range of literary genres and subgenres, by far superseding any former attempts at genre classification in China and thus truly fulfilling Liu Xie's own requirement of comprehensiveness. Due to terminological and typological problems the actual number of genres that are either introduced in detail or mentioned in passing is controversial, but it is much larger than suggested by the titles of the chapters themselves, as some chapters cover more than a dozen genres. The approach to the major genres follows the common pattern Liu Xie detailed above. First, he traces the genre back to its origin, in most cases back to the Confucian canon, and explains the genre designation. Then he outlines the development of the genre from antiquity to his own day, mainly through critical references to exemplary works, thus presenting or even establishing bodies of quasi-canonical texts for many genres.

Part three of *Wenxin diaolong* is dedicated to a great variety of basic questions concerning the creative process, rhetoric, prosody, reception theory, and more; some of its twenty-five chapters belong to the most

[74] The concepts of *wen* 文 and *bi* 筆 (sometimes also understood as rhymed and unrhymed, or refined and functional literature) as well as the attribution of certain genres in *Wenxin diaolong* to these two categories are controversial, not the least since Liu Xie himself is so vague in his characterization (*WXDLZ* 44, p. 655). See Antje Richter, "Notions of Epistolarity in Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong*," *JAOS* 127.2 (2007), pp. 146–47.

profound and fascinating texts that have ever been written about literature. When he comes to the introduction of this part of *Wenxin diaolong* in his preface, Liu Xie's characterization is least satisfying, since the apparently random selection of about half of its chapters and the vague way he alludes to them does not really convey anything specific. On the other hand, his vagueness is only too understandable, since it is quite impossible to do justice to the massive and complex third part of *Wenxin diaolong* in just a dozen lines.

116	至於（割）〔剖〕情析采，	As for the dissection of "Actual Inner Conditions" and the analysis of "Ornamentation" (chap. 31),[75]
117	籠圈條貫。	I have delineated them and presented their internal order.
118	摛神性，	I have laid out "Spirit" and "Personality" (chaps. 26, 27),
119	圖風勢，	charted "Wind" and "Momentum" (chaps. 28, 30),
120	苞會通，	wrapped up "Coherence" and "Continuity" (chaps. 43, 29),
121	閱聲字。	perused "Sounds" and "Characters" (chaps. 33, 39).
122	崇替於時序，	[I have treated] adoration and neglect in "Chronological Order" (chap. 45),
123	褒貶於才略，	praise and criticism in "A Survey of Talent" (chap. 47),
124	怊悵於知音，	sadness and disappointment in "The One Who Understands the Tone" (chap. 48),
125	耿介於程器。	honesty and integrity in "Weighing the Vessel" (chap. 49).[76]
126	長懷序志，	[I have expressed my] lasting concerns [in the present] "Statement of Intent" (chap. 50),
127	以馭群篇。	which governs the whole book.
128	下篇以下，	In the second half of the book,
129	毛目顯矣。	I have revealed the nuts and bolts.
130	位理定名，	The principle in the positioning [of the chapters] and the determination of their names
131	彰乎大易之數。	signals the calculations of the great *Book of Changes.*

[75] Emendation based on Yang, *Wenxin diaolong jiaozhu*, p. 380.

[76] The compounds *chaochang* 怊悵 and *gengjie* 耿介 are used repeatedly in *Chu ci* (*chaochang* in "Jiu bian" 九辯, "Qi jian" 七諫, and "Jiu tan" 九歎; *gengjie* in "Lisao" 離騷, "Jiu zhang" 九章, "Jiu bian," and "Qi jian").

132	其為文用，	Dedicated to literature
133	四十九篇而已。	are only 49 [of those 50 chapters].[77]

In the last lines quoted above Liu Xie's reveals his intention to model his *Wenxin diaolong* on the most venerated of the canonical books, the *Book of Changes*, which is traditionally ascribed to the Duke of Zhou and Confucius – a gesture underscoring Liu's desire to emulate Confucius. Alluding to the numerical speculation laid down in the "Xici zhuan" and the corresponding divination method that operates with fifty yarrow stalks, one of which remains unused, Liu Xie, by singling out the preface, effectively makes only forty-nine of his fifty chapters part of *Wenxin diaolong* proper.

THE WRITER'S CAVEAT

Having concluded the introduction and justification of the structure of *Wenxin diaolong*, Liu Xie dedicates the following passage (lines 134–63) to an elaborate caveat that is most revealing with respect to the author's general approach to literary theory and criticism:

134	夫銓序一文為易，	Now, to assess a single literary work is easy,
135	彌綸群言為難。	but to fully know everything that has ever been said is difficult.
136	雖復輕采毛髮，	Even if their lightness and hue are like that of hair,
137	深極骨髓。	their depth may be extreme like that of marrow.
138	或有曲意密源，	Some have indirect intentions and obscure sources,
139	似近而遠。	apparently nearby but actually faraway.
140	辭所不載，	What I could not put into words
141	亦不〔可〕勝數矣。	is countless indeed.[78]
142	及其品列成文，	As to my grading and ranking of literary works,
143	有同乎舊談者，	there are cases where I agree with past critics.
144	非雷同也。	This does not mean that I echoed them,
145	勢自不可異也。	but circumstances did not allow me to differ.

77 An allusion to the *Zhou yi*'s "Xici zhuan" 繫辭 (大衍之數五十，其用四十有九).
78 Emendation based on Yang, *Wenxin diaolong jiaozhu*, p. 382.

146	有異乎前論者。	There are also cases where I differ from former disputers.
147	非苟異也，	This does not mean that I carelessly differed,
148	理自不可同也。	but principles did not allow me to agree.
149	同之與異，	In my agreements and differences
150	不屑古今。	I have not ignored ancient and modern views.
151	擘肌分理，	I have split muscles and divided veins,[79]
152	唯務折衷。	only striving for the truth.
153	按轡文雅之場，	Pulling the reins in the fields of literary elegance and
154	環絡藻繪之府，	throwing the halter in the magnificent mansion [of literature],
155	亦幾乎備矣。	I was almost comprehensive.
156	但言不盡意，	But words do not fully capture meaning –
157	聖人所難，	[even] the Sage was troubled by this.[80]
158	識在缾管，	[Given my limited] knowledge in bottles and tubes,[81]
159	何能矩矱。	how could I measure up against squares and scales?
160	茫茫往代，	Endless past eras
161	既沈予聞，	have informed my knowledge.
162	眇眇來世，	Remote future generations
163	倘塵彼觀也。	may well regard this book as dust.

The passage is interspersed with different kinds of disclaimers, ranging from the acknowledgment that it is difficult to have a full understanding of all literary works (line 135), to the concession that the author's knowledge is limited (lines 158–159). At the same time, however, Liu Xie balances these admissions of limitation in various ways. For example, he points out the inevitability of such limitation. He thus not only emphasizes the complexity and depth of the literary text itself that so easily eludes full understanding (lines 136–41), but also invokes Confucius, who famously declared that writing cannot fully capture the spoken word, nor can words fully capture the meaning one has in mind (lines 155–159).[82] As a complementary strategy Liu Xie emphasizes the

79 This phrase is a direct quote from Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139, z. Pingzi 平子) *Xijing fu* 西京賦. *WX* 2, p. 63.

80 An allusion to the statement of Confucius, quoted in the "Xici zhuan," that "writing does not fully capture words, nor words fully capture meaning" (書不盡言，言不盡意).

81 "Bottles" (see *Zuozhuan*, Zhao 7, 挈缾之知) and "tubes" (see *Zhuangzi*, "Qiu shui" 秋水 chapt., 用錐指地) associate limited vision and knowledge.

82 This important topic in Six Dynasties philosophy and literary thought has been comprehensively discussed by James J. Y. Liu in his article "The Paradox of Poetics and the Poetics

intensity of his efforts (lines 151–54) and the absolute sincerity of his approach, which is independent of former or contemporary judgments and only bound by apparently objective criteria residing in the literary texts themselves, such as circumstances (*shi* 勢) and principles (*li* 理) (lines 142–50). What Liu Xie achieves through this rhetorical strategy – to demonstrate exertion in the face of overwhelming difficulty – is a declaration of the power of his subjectivity and an enhancement of his personal authorial capability, which is again in keeping with the prefatorial strategies described by Genette.[83]

THE ENCOMIUM

The caveat passes into the encomium (lines 164–172), a short passage in four-word verse of the type that concludes every chapter in *Wenxin diaolong*. The encomia provide a condensed synopsis of the chapters' main points – a feature of the text that could easily be discussed in terms of paratext as well.[84] In the case of the preface, the encomium has a special significance, since it concludes not just a chapter but also the whole book. We find that Liu Xie has prepared his final conclusion very well, since it proves to be a poetical reiteration and summary of the preceding caveat passage, both on the level of contents and on the level of rhetorical strategy:

164	贊曰：	Encomium:
165	生也有涯，	Life, it has an end,
166	無涯惟智。[tje^{c}][85]	unending is only wisdom.[86]
167	逐物實難，	The pursuit of [external] things may be really hard,
168	憑性良易。[jie^{c}]	but to rely on one's [internal] nature is quite easy.
169	傲岸泉石，	From aloft [surveying the literary] landscape,

of Paradox," in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, eds. Lin Shuen-fu and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1986), pp. 49–70. See also Richter, "Notions of Epistolarity," pp. 150–51.

83 Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 198.

84 Although Genette does not mention textual elements resembling the encomium, he has chapters on dedications, inscriptions, and epigraphs (ibid., pp. 117–60). For Liu Xie's characterization of the genre *zan* 贊/讚 see *WXDLZ* 9, p. 158–59.

85 Reconstructed Middle Chinese pronunciations are given according to Axel Schuessler, *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A Companion to Grammata Serica Recensa* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Pr., 2009). Superscript "c" indicates departing tone (*qusheng* 去聲).

86 An allusion to the beginning of the "Yangsheng zhu" 養生主 chap. of the *Zhuangzi* (吾生也有涯，而知也无涯).

170	咀嚼文義。[ŋje^{C}]	I ruminated on the meaning of literature.
171	文果載心，	If literature indeed carries the mind,
172	余心有寄！[kje^{C}]	my mind has found a conveyance.[87]

Liu Xie continues the motif of the inevitability of limitations, now alluding to the famous *Zhuangzi* 莊子 dictum about the limitedness of a human life and the infinity of knowledge, thus reiterating the main points of the caveat passage above. Also just as in the caveat passage, he continues by counterbalancing this admission directly, now by invoking the reliance on his nature (*xing* 性) that in the next line is described as towering over the landscape of literature. This is an impressive move, followed by a forceful poetical image, that reinforces Liu Xie's insistence on the power of his subjective judgment.

Overall, Liu Xie's preface appears to be a perfect "instrument of authorial control," to the point of having a title that expresses, again in the words of Genette, "the most important function of the original preface, [...] [that is] to provide the author's [...] statement of intent."[88] The latter phrase is an accurate translation of the preface title "Xu zhi" 序志. As many other of Liu Xie's titles, it is cleverly chosen, probably as a pun on the different meanings of *xu*, which not only include "preface" but also "to arrange" or "to narrate." The compound *xu zhi* is peculiar to *Wenxin diaolong* and absent from all other early medieval Chinese texts. When used elsewhere in *Wenxin diaolong*, the phrase *xu zhi* ("to narrate one's intent") describes what genres such as the rhapsody (*fu* 賦), the memorial (*biao* 表) or the song (*ge* 歌) can accomplish.[89]

FILIAL PIETY VERSUS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RETICENCE?

So far, we have focused on the Western approach to the function of the preface, analyzing how Liu Xie's text performs if we apply these criteria and have found the "Xu zhi" chapter to be quite exemplary. If we turn to the question of what Chinese literary thought has to say about the preface (*xu* 序) as a genre, we discover first of all that in *Wenxin diaolong* itself, the preface is not among the genres introduced in detail in a separate chapter, but only mentioned in passing in connection with other subjects. Checking these references yields some valuable information. First of all, Liu Xie traces the preface back to

87 The idea that literature may provide a conveyance for the mind (文以寄其心) is expressed in Huangfu Mi's 皇甫謐 (z. Shi'an 士安, 215–282) "Preface to the Three Capitals Rhapsody" (*San du fu xu* 三都賦序, *WX* 45, p. 2038).

88 Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 221–22.

89 *WXDLZ* 8, p. 135; 22, p. 407; 29, p. 520.

the *Book of Changes*.[90] He also lists it among the manifestations or subgenres of the discussion or treatise (*lun* 論) mentioning it in connection with textual annotations (*quan wen* 銓文) and its potential to arrange or order (*ci shi* 次事).[91] Two further references regard issues of contents and form, respectively: in one case he sets the standard for the preface as an "investigation of the essentials,"[92] and in another he calls Wang Lang's 王朗 (?–228, z. Jingxing 景興) prefaces – none of which are now extant – "beautiful."[93] This is all *Wenxin diaolong* has to say about the preface; other contemporary sources are similarly inexplicit. *Wenxuan*, for instance, does anthologize nine prefaces in its two-part chapter on *xu* 序,[94] and contains many more as parts of other texts such as rhapsodies or poems. The preface of *Wenxuan* itself, however, remains rather taciturn on this genre.[95] Apart from including the preface in his list of genres,[96] Xiao Tong only mentions it once more, when he explains his criteria for the compilation of *Wenxuan* and remarks that he included the preface, along with a number of other minor prose genres, because "their matter is the product of profound thought, and their principles belong to the realm of literary elegance."[97]

The first substantial characterization of the genre would appear two-hundred years later, when the early Tang historian Liu Zhiji's 劉知幾 (661–721) historiographical work *Shitong* 史通 dedicates a whole chapter, called "Xuzhuan" 序傳, to the autobiographical preface.[98] Liu Zhiji traces the pre-Tang history of the genre, starting with the elegy *Lisao* 離騷, ascribed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–ca. 278 BC), and extending into the early medieval period. Liu Zhiji's key criterion for evaluating an author's preface was based on its having a description of the author's ancestry, obviously a criterion derived from the Confucian virtue of filial piety and resonating as well with many other texts that

90 故論說辭序，則易統其首, *WXDLZ* 3, p. 22.

91 詳觀論體，條流多品 [...] 銓文，則與（敘）〔序〕引共紀 [...] 序者次事, *WXDLZ* 18, p. 326.

92 史論序注，則師範於覈要, *WXDLZ* 30, p. 530.

93 王朗發憤以託志，亦致美於序銘, *WXDLZ* 47, p. 699.

94 *WX* 45–46, pp. 2029–88. As an example of a later anthology see chaps. 6–10 in Yao Nai's 姚鼐 (1732–1815) *Guwenci leizuan* 古文辭類纂. Later typological works also treat the preface in some detail, for example Wu Na's 吳訥 (1372–1457) *Wenzhang bianti xushuo* 文章辨體序說 (1464) and Xu Shizeng's 徐師曾 (1517–80) *Wenti mingbian xushuo* 文體明辨序說 (1570).

95 *Wenxuan xu* 文選序, *WX*, pp. 1–3, translated in David R. Knechtges, *Wen Xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1982), pp. 73–91.

96 *WX*, p. 2.

97 事出於沈思，義歸乎翰藻, *WX*, p. 3, trans. Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, p. 89. It should be noted that David Knechtges in this instance translates *xu* as "postface."

98 *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋, ed. Pu Qilong 浦起龍 (1679–ca. 1762) (SBBY edn.; hereafter cited as *ST*), 39, pp. 5b–10b, trans. Bauer, *Antlitz*, pp. 239–42 .

promoted Confucian ideals.[99] Although the term *xiao* 孝 is never mentioned explicitly, Liu Zhiji's text contains a number of almost verbatim references to the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (*Canon of Filial Piety*). He states that in writing about oneself, "it is important to illuminate the reputation of one's family and parents. If there is no one to praise in one's family, then one may omit this part."[100] To abuse one's family by exposing their faults in an autobiographical report is accordingly to be avoided by all means – which, of course, amounts to accepting concealment or even contortion of facts as a valid prefatorial strategy.[101]

Liu Zhiji's negative example in this respect is Wang Chong's "Record about Myself" ("Zi ji" 自紀), the last chapter of his *Lunheng*. Wang Chong not only mentions misdeeds of family members, but also proudly declines the importance of lineage for exceptional people like himself. He holds that he may be compared only to "the bird without a pedigree – the phoenix – or the animal without a species – the unicorn – or the man without an ancestry – the Sage – or the object without a counterpart – treasure."[102] It has been suggested that Wang Chong's attempts to dissociate himself from his family could have been a means to suppress speculation about possible kinship with Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9–23 AD), who in 9 AD overturned the Western Han dynasty and established the short-lived Xin dynasty.[103] However pressing Wang Chong's reason for defaming his ancestors might have been, Liu Zhiji judges his behavior harshly as one of the "three-thousand crimes,"[104] again alluding to the *Xiaojing* that identifies lack of filiality (*bu xiao* 不孝) as the most severe form of misconduct.[105]

Although Liu Zhiji wrote two centuries later than Liu Xie, during an age whose cultural and literary sensibilities were vastly different from those of the Qi and Liang dynasties, it is nevertheless worth asking if Liu Xie has anything particular to say about filial piety and if this could be related to the fact that he conspicuously missed the opportunity to honor his ancestors in his preface. But apart from *xiao* 孝 being part of proper names and titles, filial piety is mentioned only a

99 See Sima Qian's preface to *Shi ji* (且夫孝始於事親，中於事君，終於立身，揚名於後世，以顯父母，此孝之大者, *SJ* 130, p. 3295).

100 夫自敘而言家世，固當以揚名顯親爲主，苟無其人，闕之可也, *ST* 39, pp. 6b.

101 See Confucius' defense of concealment within the family in *Lunyu* 13.18 (父爲子隱，子爲父隱，直在其中矣).

102 鳥無世鳳皇，獸無種麒麟，人無祖聖賢，物無常嘉珍, *Lunheng jiaoshi*, 85, p. 1206.

103 "Wang Chong nianpu" 王充年譜 in *Lunheng jiaoshi*, pp. 1217–18.

104 實三千之罪人也, *ST* 39, p. 6b.

105 五刑之屬三千，而罪莫大於不孝, *Xiaojing*, chap. "Wu xing" 五刑.

couple of times throughout *Wenxin diaolong* in an utterly conventional and inconclusive manner, e.g. in connection with other principal values, such as benevolence (*ren* 仁) and loyalty (*zhong* 忠), and referring to a famous filial son.[106] Taking up one of Liu Zhiji's ideas, we might speculate, especially given the obscurity of Liu Xie's ancestry, that he was trying to spare family members disgrace by not mentioning them or attempting to dissociate himself from a family that in the past had played a disgraceful role – perhaps in the demise of the Liu-Song dynasty (420–79) that probably still ruled when Liu Xie was born between ca. 460 and 80. Following this line of reasoning, Liu Xie might have had reasons similar to Wang Chong's for dissociating himself from his family and wanted his readers to know that.

CONCLUSION

While there is no remedy for the tenuity of the assumption that Liu Xie wanted to spare his ancestors, we do have ample evidence that Liu Xie was a devout Buddhist, which neither interfered with his promotion of Confucian values nor detained him from extensively quoting Daoist texts in his *Wenxin diaolong* – and in highly prominent places, too, as in the case of the allusion to *Zhuangzi* in the preface's encomium. Ultimately, it is Liu Xie's Buddhist faith that may provide the most plausible explanation for his two-fold failure to comply with the principal Confucian virtue of filial piety. For the first of these failures – that he remained unmarried for his whole life and died as a Buddhist monk without a son – I believe poverty, as was suggested by the Standard Histories, is an unconvincing reason. As Donald A. Gibbs remarked, "monastic life, dedication, Buddhist doctrinal influences or even personal inclinations are far more plausible causes than poverty, in view of the fact that Liu's father before him, and Liu Xie himself as well, enjoyed official careers."[107] We should keep in mind, however, that the Buddhist who never married or had a son still strived to "establish words" and to "found a school," which is in full accordance with the demands of filial piety and may thus be regarded as a compensation for his first failure. Liu Xie's second failure – neglecting to honor his ancestors and family in the preface to *Wenxin diaolong* – can be interpreted as an expression of his Buddhist faith as well. While it would have been

106 *WXDLZ* 1, p. 3 (仁孝); 10, p. 178 (忠孝); 17, p. 309 (棄孝廢仁); 49, p. 719 (黃香之淳孝).
107 Gibbs, "Liu Hsieh," p. 120.

perfectly possible to compose a preface without any autobiographical elements, as many before or after him have done, Liu Xie choose to include two dream narratives. The peculiarly empty dreams he tells draw the reader's attention to the absence of any other information about himself or his family in the preface and are thus not so empty after all. Highlighting this significant omission in a subtle but unmistakable way, Liu Xie apparently makes a statement about his decision to live a Buddhist live with little or no connection to his ancestry.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HHS	*Hou Han shu* 後漢書
LS	*Liang shu* 梁書
NS	*Nan shi* 南史
SJ	*Shi ji* 史記
ST	*Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋
WX	*Wenxuan* 文選
WXDLZ	*Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍註