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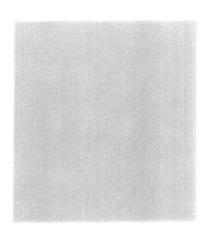
Chinese-English

## 文心雕龙

# Dragon-Carving and the Literary Mind II









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Translated into English by Yang Guobin
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#### Chapter 26

#### Shensi, or Imagination

26.1 An ancient said, "My physical form is on the sea; my heart lingers in the court." This is *shensi*, or imagination, at work.<sup>2</sup> A writer's imagination travels far. When he is absorbed in silent thought, his mind ranges across a thousand years; without opening his eyes, his vision penetrates a distance of ten thousand *li*. He produces pearl-like sounds in recitation and conjures up whirling winds and rolling clouds before his eyes. Is this not due to the magical power of imagination! The mystery of imagination lies in the merging of the spirit with the physical world. Vital energy holds the key to the spirit, which resides in the heart. Words and speech control the hub of the physical world, which greets the ears and the eyes. When the hub works smoothly, no forms of the world can be hidden. When the key is clogged, the spirit wants to flee.

26.2 是以陶钧文思,贵在虚静,疏瀹五藏,澡雪精神。积学以储宝,酌理以富才,研阅以穷照,驯致以怿辞,然后使元解之宰,寻声律而定墨;独照之匠,窥意象而运斤;此盖驭文之首术,谋篇之大端。

#### 【今译】

因此酝酿文思,着重在虚心和宁静,清除心里的成见,使精神纯净。积累学识来储藏珍宝,明辨事理来丰富才学,研究阅历来进行彻底的观察,顺着文思去引出美好的文辞;然后使深通妙道的心灵,按照声律来安排文辞,正像有独特见解的工匠,凭着意象来进行创作。这是驾驭文思的首要方法,安排篇章的重要开端。

26.2 Therefore, mental void and emotional tranquility are essential for cultivating literary thought. Dredge the heart, purify the spirit. Use diligence to accumulate knowledge, judgment to enrich talent, experience to achieve thorough understanding, taste to select language. Then with a heart of thorough understanding, one can start writing in accordance with the rules of prosody; with a mind of unique perception, one can wield the writing-brush to capture the images in one's vision. This is the foremost art of writing and a main feature of composition.

26.3 夫神思方运,万涂竞萌,规矩虚位,刻镂无形。登山则情满于山,观海则意溢于海,我才之多少,将与风云而并驱矣。方其搦翰,气倍辞前,暨乎篇成,半折心始。何则?意翻空而易奇,言徵实而难巧也。是以意授于思,言授于意,密则无际,疏则千里。或理在方寸而求之域表,或义在咫尺而思隔山河。是以秉心养术,无务苦虑;含章司契,不必劳情也。

#### 【今译】

想象开始活动,各种各样的念头纷纷涌现,要在没有形成的文思中孕育内容,要在没有定形的文思中刻镂形象。一到登山,情思里充满了山上的景色;一到观海,意想中便腾涌起海上的风光。要问我的才力有多少,好像将要同风云一起奔驰而无法计算了。刚拿起笔,比起措辞时气势要旺盛一倍,等到写成了,同开始想的已经打了个对折。为什么呢?文思凭空想象,容易设想得奇特;语言却比较实在,难以运用得巧妙。这是因为思想化为文思,文思化为语言,贴切时像天衣无缝,疏漏时便相差千里。有的道理就在自己心里,却到国外去搜寻;有的意思就在眼前,却又像远隔山河。因此用心训练思想的方法,不在于凭空苦想,要求体会外物的美好,不必要劳苦自己的心情。

26.3 When imagination is bestirred, ten thousand avenues compete to open up. The shapeless is given shape; the unformed begins to take form. If at this moment the writer ascends a mountain, his feeling will permeate the mountain. If he surveys the sea, his emotion will overflow the sea. Thus the capacity of his talent will sweep along with winds and clouds. Holding up his brush, he feels too overwhelmed by his vital energy to concentrate on the choice of words. When he finishes writing, he finds himself only half expressed. Why? Because ideas, being intangible, rush in like a miracle; words, being concrete, cannot be easily made ingenious. Ideas come from the mind; the choice of words is guided by ideas. Ideas and words can be so closely knit as to be in perfect harmony; they can fit so badly as to fall totally apart. Sometimes a thought is close to the heart, but the writer's mind will wander to the end of the world in search of it. Sometimes an idea is right at hand, yet he cannot step over to get it, as if blocked by mountains and rivers. Therefore instead of racking his brains, a writer should nourish his heart and cultivate his art. To master the rules of writing and produce fine works, there is need to labor the mind.

26.4 人之禀才,迟速异分,文之制体,大小殊功。相如含笔而腐毫,扬雄辍翰而惊梦,桓谭疾感于苦思,王充气竭于思虑,张衡研京以十年,左思练都以一纪:虽有巨文,亦思之缓也。淮南崇朝而赋《骚》,枚皋应诏而成赋,子建援牍如口诵,仲宣举笔似宿构,阮瑀据案而制书,祢衡当食而草奏:虽有短篇,亦思之速也。

#### 【今译】

就各人具有的创作才能说,下笔有快慢,天分不同;就作品的规划体制说,规模有大小,功力各异。司马相如口吮着笔直到笔毛腐烂文章才写成,扬雄用心过度放下笔做着恶梦,桓谭由于苦苦思索因此害病,王充因用心过度气力衰耗,张衡用十年工夫研讨《两京赋》,左思用十二年时间著作《三都赋》:虽说是篇幅巨大,也由于文思的迟缓。淮南王刘安在一个早上就写成《离骚传》,枚皋一接到诏书就写成了赋,曹植铺开纸创作像写背诵的文章,王粲拿起笔来创作像写早已做好的文章,阮瑀靠着马鞍上作文书,称衡对着酒席起草奏章:虽说都是短篇,也由于文思的敏捷。



26.4 The talents of men are divided into the slow and the quick. Literary writings vary in length and weight. Sima Xiangru spoiled a brush in his mouth while thinking.3 Yang Xiong had nightmares after finishing a composition.4 Huan Tan was taken ill because of painful thinking. Wang Chong exhausted his vitality in rumination. Zhang Heng spent a decade on his rhyme-prose about the capitals. Zuo Si expended twelve years on his rhyme-prose about the capitals. These are grand compositions, but the products of slow thinking. Some shorter pieces are completed with wondrous speed. The Prince of Huainan wrote a work of rhyme-prose in one morning; Mei Gao penned one right in front of the emperor. Cao Zhi wrote as easily as if reciting a piece from memory, Wang Can as quickly as if he had been prepared in advance. Ruan Yu dispatched a letter on horseback; Mi Heng drafted a report to the throne over a meal. Although they are short pieces, they showed the authors' nimble mind.

26.5 若夫骏发之士,心总要术,敏在虑前,应机立断;覃思之人,情饶歧路,鉴在疑后,研虑方定。机敏故造次而成功,虑疑故愈久而致绩。难易虽殊,并资博练。若学浅而空迟,才疏而徒速,以斯成器,未之前闻。是以临篇级虑,必有二患:理郁者苦贫,辞溺者伤乱,然则博见为馈贫之粮,贯一为拯乱之药,博而能一,亦有助乎心力矣。

#### 【今译】

至于文思敏捷的人,心里熟悉创作的方法,感觉敏锐,并无疑虑,当机立断;文思迟缓的人,情思纷乱,徘徊歧路,要弄明白心里的怀疑,经过研究考虑才能决定。文思快所以能在匆促中写成功,疑虑多所以要很久才能完篇。慢和快、难和易虽然不同,都靠学识广博,技巧熟练。要是学识浅陋写得慢也是白费,才学荒疏写得快也是徒然,像这样能写出成功的作品,以前还没有听说过。因此创作时酝酿文思,一定有两种困难:思路阻塞的人,苦于内容贫乏,辞藻泛滥的人,苦于文辞杂乱。那么见识广博就成为补救贫乏的粮食,中心一贯就成为拯救杂乱的药方,识见广博,中心一贯,对创作构思也有帮助了。

26.5 A quick-witted scholar has a clear grasp of the rules of composition. His mind works so fast that he can write without deliberation. A deliberate person tends to work his mind along winding paths. He weighs over all possibilities and uncertainties before starting to write. The quick writer achieves instant success; the careful writer makes accomplishments with longer delay. Quick or slow, they must rely on both learning and experience. I have never heard of anybody accomplishing anything who, lacking learning, works slowly, or having no talent, writes quickly. Hence the two worries in writing: A slow mind languishes in penury of ideas; a verbose man jumbles. Experience and learning are food for overcoming poor ideas; a sense of unity is medicine for disorder. Experience, learning and a sense of unity together can assist the working of the mind.



26.6 若情数诡杂,体变迁贸,拙辞或孕于巧义,庸事或萌于新意,视布于麻,虽云未〔费〕贵,杼轴献功,焕然乃珍。至于思表纤旨,文外曲致,言所不追,笔固知止。至精而后阐其妙,至变而后通其数,伊挚不能言鼎,轮扁不能语斤,其微矣乎!

#### 【今译】

要是情思不一致而是非混杂,体制不当而变易多端,抽劣的文辞中有时含有巧妙的意义,平庸的事例中有时透露出新颖的意思,好比原料的麻质量虽并不比布贵重,但经过加工制作,便显得有光泽而可宝贵。至于文思以外的细微意旨,文辞以外的曲折情趣,语言所难以说明,笔墨所不能表达。那要达到最精微的境界而后才能够阐发它的妙处,懂得了最微妙的变化然后才能理解它的技巧,这好比伊尹不能说明烹调的巧妙,轮扁不能说明砍轮的甘苦一样,真是太微妙吧!



26.6 Human feelings are subtle and complex; literary styles are diverse and changeable. Ingenious meaning may be extracted from coarse words; fresh ideas may come out of commonplace discussions. This is like weaving hemp into cloth: Although the hemp is worthless in itself, the shuttle and the loom can turn it into valuable fabric. As for the subtleties of thought and intricacies of meaning between the lines, words cannot capture them fully and a writer's brush knows when to halt. The subtleties can only be illuminated by the most insightful; the laws of change can only be grasped by the most versatile. If Yi Yin cannot explain his art of cooking, if Wheelwright Bian cannot talk about his art of using the axe,5 there is some mystery indeed!