Hon has produced a clear and informative study of Northern Song literati interpretations of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes). Reading this compact yet thoroughly researched book whets one’s appetite to become more familiar with these innovative Northern Song thinkers, and to reread the *Yijing* itself in a new light.

Hon’s book is concerned not with abstract philosophy, but with how Northern Song literati used commentaries on ancient Confucian texts to justify new approaches to government within a transforming society. What is original is that Hon shows how quickly interpretations of the *Yijing* could change as new generations of literati faced differing political environments. The sheer number of Northern Song commentaries demonstrates the importance of the *Yijing* during this dynasty. Hon is surely correct that the concept of change struck a chord with literati, initially given great power but quickly losing that power due to changes of ruler or factional infighting (p. 5).

Hon sets the scene by introducing the Tang commentator Kong Yingda’s (574–648) *Yijing* text, the *Zhouyi zhengyi*. Kong’s main purpose was to help shore up the new Tang rulers. He borrowed Wang Bi’s (226–249) technique of relating the *Yijing* hexagrams to practical human affairs, yet he went much further in forcing out political ramifications from the *Yijing*’s abstruse poetry. He emphasized that as the natural order had a perfect state (*wu*) beyond the incessant changes of phenomena (*you*), human beings should likewise strive to maintain the perfect imperial order of rulers in charge and officials serving with utmost obedience (p. 38).

In subsequent chapters, Hon describes three main ways that Northern Song literati reinterpreted Kong Yingda’s *Yijing* text, roughly corresponding to the three periods of early, middle, and late Northern Song. In chapter 3, he discusses Hu Yuan’s (993–1059) commentary, with brief comparisons to Li Gou (1009–59) and Ouyang Xiu (1007–72). These scholars represented the early Song period, and they reinterpreted the *Yijing* to show that government officials should corule with the emperor rather than submissively follow him. Moreover, Hu Yuan refused to follow Kong’s dualistic distinction between a world of changing phenomena (*you*) and a perfect state beyond (*wu*). He argued that just as the final hexagram of the *Yijing* is not *Jiji* (Completion) but rather *Weiji* (Incompletion), so perfection is merely a phase within constant transformation. For early Song literati, this was the canonical justification to set about reforming the government, in terms of both changing policies, such as the Qingli Reforms of the 1040s, and redefining their role as initiators of change rather than serving as passive tools of a so-called perfect emperor.

Early Song scholars assumed that their readers would naturally serve in government after passing the civil service examinations. Unfortunately, because of a surfeit of qualified officials, later generations of scholars were often left without official positions. In chapter 4, Hon shows how Zhang Zai (1020–77) used the *Yijing* to provide a “moral metaphysical” justification for such scholars to remain unemployed. Observing and harmonizing oneself with the manifold changes encountered in everyday life, including even basic rhythms of breathing, eating, and family relationships, one learns to spread goodness throughout society even when not favored with an official position. Hon’s discussion of Zhang Zai is, for me, the most interesting section of the book precisely because Zhang overcomes the narrow tendency to view the *Yijing* in primarily political terms.
Chapter 5 deals with the late Northern Song, a period of vicious factionalism. Hon focuses mainly on Cheng Yi’s (1033–1107) commentary, with attention to the contrasting views of Su Shi (1037–1101). As with Zhang Zai, Cheng Yi saw the Yijing as encapsulating constant changing phenomena in the universe, but in the charged political environment of his time, these changes included the inevitable vicissitudes of an official career. More moralistic and less mystical than Zhang, Cheng emphasized that self-cultivation was the key to life, whether in or out of office, and that one could benefit (change) society in many ways—establishing schools, refining moral codes, creating effective social rituals—even without becoming an official. As Hon puts it, in the past literati depended on an “enlightened emperor” to guarantee their success, but now, even under an “unenlightened emperor,” they could still find ways of helping to corule the empire (p. 148).

Some aspects of Hon’s study are slightly perplexing. While the central chapters certainly deal with three very different interpretations of the Yijing, I am not totally convinced that these neatly represent early, middle, and late Northern Song views. For example, Hon dates the early Northern Song to 960–1022, yet none of the three commentators chosen to represent this period completed their Yijing commentaries before the 1040s. Two of them, Ouyang Xiu and Li Gou, were still in their mid-teens in 1022. Can these scholars really represent the early Northern Song approach to the Yijing? Isn’t it rather that diverse views of the text existed even among scholars of the same generation?

Hon’s decision to compare and contrast two or three commentaries within each chapter also suggests that diversity was the rule. Yet it is difficult to be sure, as Hon spends most of each central chapter dealing with a single commentary, then gives only a couple of pages to the other commentators selected for comparison. One feels either that these extra commentaries deserve more space, or that they should be dealt with in the main body of the chapter, not isolated as also-rans at the end.

Overall, however, this is an excellent study combining textual rigor and detailed understanding of historical context. It adds to the growing body of scholarship that proves what an exciting and innovative society thrived in the Northern Song period.

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Existing studies of China’s post-Mao/post-Deng media enterprises generally focus on the “hot media.” Shuyu Kong seeks to remind us that book culture and publishing remain an important vector for observing China’s media scene. To that end, Kong observes that in the 1990s, as a result of literary commoditization manifested in the best-seller phenomenon (changxiaoshu), China experienced its most diverse literary scene since 1949. Drawing on fascinating case studies, Kong organizes her discussion around this measure of literary productivity. Her first three chapters cover various best sellers and their authors, publishers, and distributors; the second three engage the topical fields of women’s literature, foreign translations, and literary journals. Throughout, Kong argues that the positive results of literary marketization have outweighed the negative ones, in terms of both diversity and quality. Her evidence