

The Narrative Model of *Yijing*

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Abstract: This paper explores the narrative structure of *Yijing*, or the *Book of Changes*. As the most successful and influential book in China telling stories of change, its narrative structure must not only open itself to all possible stories of change, but also be capable of creating these stories. However, this open structure is subject to certain limitations. A course of change can be perceived as a meaningful change only when it is placed and unfolded within a certain logical or dialectical framework. How does *Yijing* deal with this narrative dilemma? The answer lies in understanding how its *yin-yang* dichotomy, its six-line arrangement, and the arrangement of the sixty-four hexagrams, which are the basic features of its narrative structure, open an infinitely wide range of possibilities for telling a story about change, while regulating the form of the story and the way of its telling. [China Media Research. 2009; 5(3):102-109]

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Yijing came into being as a divination manual. That it is called “the book of *Yi* [changes]” is understandable—fate is ever-changing. As an old Chinese saying goes, sudden storms spring up in nature and men’s fortunes may change overnight. Fortune-telling is in fact telling the changing of fate.

Further investigation reveals that the capacity of *Yijing* to predict changes of fate is due mainly to its ability to talk about these changes in a reasonable fashion. In fact, whether *Yijing* can predict changes accurately is less important than whether it can explain and talk about them reasonably. Indeed, the reader usually has difficulty in judging the accuracy of its predictions. Some of the predictions in *Yijing* are based on a fable about the coming of a situation or an event that does not appear real in itself. For instance, the hexagram *Qian* (Hexagram 1) speaks of “dragon” as doing so-and-so, but “dragon” is probably used here as a symbol. The reader may not actually care whether there is such a thing. Even if the situation concerned is described in tangible detail, it is often a rare occurrence. For example, the hexagram statement of *Lü* (Treading, Hexagram 10) is “one treads on the tiger’s tail . . . it [does] not bite” (Trans. Lynn, p. 200), a situation that would probably not occur twice. The success of *Yijing* as a divination manual can thus be explained by the reasonability or reliability of its narrative of a changing situation that gives rise to the predicted change of fate, rather than by the accuracy of its predictions, which must be verified with factual evidence.

Examination of *Yijing* thus requires a narrative perspective, which has been regrettably overlooked in past studies of the book. The book is a fertile area for narrative analysis. A recent study of the moral narratives in *Yijing* (Xiao, 2006), for instance, suggests that *Yijing* has constructed a meta-narrative to show how human beings can achieve their own destiny through active and ethical acts.

This paper focuses on the narrative structure of *Yijing*, and assumes that the uniqueness of this structure has contributed to making *Yijing* the most successful and influential book in China that tells great stories about the changing of fate. On the one hand, the narrative structure of *Yijing* must not only open itself to all possible stories of change, but must also be capable of creating these stories. Such a structure must be able to produce both predictable and unpredictable outcomes. Changes, accidents, ambiguity, and uncertainty cannot be viewed as failures of the narrative in *Yijing*. On the contrary, they are the main features of fate-narrative, and often constitute the most suspenseful, mysterious, and charming parts of a story about fate. On the other hand, the open structure is subject to certain limitations. The narrator cannot simply talk through his or her hat. A course of change, to be perceived as meaningful and significant, must proceed and unfold within a certain logical or dialectical framework.

How does *Yijing* deal with this narrative dilemma? The answer to this question lies in understanding the dual functioning of three important structural devices, namely, the *yin-yang* dichotomy, the six-line arrangement called a hexagram (*gua*), and the sixty-four-hexagram arrangement, which are the basic features of the narrative structure of *Yijing*. The following sections examine how these three devices open up an infinitely wide range of possibilities for *Yijing* to tell a story of change, while regulating the form of the story and the way of its telling.

The *Yin-Yang* Dichotomy and its Implication for Narrative

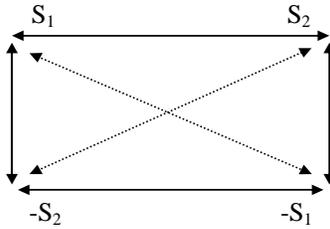
This discussion of the narrative structure of *Yijing* begins with an examination of the binary concepts of *yin* and *yang*, which are generally referred to as the complementarily opposing forces of life. In *Yijing*, *yin* and *yang* are represented by divided and undivided lines: *yin* is “- -” (also called “*yin yao*”) and *yang* is “—

” (also called “*yang yao*”). *Yijing* uses these two lines to form the fabric of a complex symbolic system that consists of sixty-four line arrangements called hexagrams (*gua*). Specifically, it combines any three *yin* and *yang* symbols to compose the famous Eight Trigrams (*Ba gua*), and then puts together any two of the eight to form sixty-four hexagrams. The use of *yin* and *yang* to build an entire symbolic system has far-reaching implications for the narrative, and defines the elementary structure of narration in *Yijing*.

For a better understanding of this elementary structure, it is helpful to compare it with Greimas’ notion of the elementary structure of signification. The Lithuanian structuralist Algirdas Julien Greimas (1977) has a unique conception of narrative. For him, the goal of narrative is to set the audience watching a series of transformations. Hence, narrative is the making of the perception or illusion of transformation. To create this perception or illusion, the narrator must change the status of what is going on from time to time, but the changes cannot go on forever or in

whatever way the narrator wants. A transformation can only take place within the confines of a narrative structure and in a direction toward either the opposite or the contrary. Suppose that we were to construct a story about the exchange of the binary conditions of equilibrium and disequilibrium (S_1 and S_2 , for instance, stay home and visit someone). The protagonist in the story makes his or her first move from S_1 to S_2 —he or she is now visiting someone. What will be the next move? The protagonist can go back to S_1 , but there are two additional alternatives: the protagonist continues to $-S_1$, which is a new point of equilibrium (e.g., finding a new home), or to $-S_2$, which is a new point of disequilibrium (e.g., visiting someone else). After the second move, there are, similarly, three possibilities for further transformation and development.

The following diagram by Greimas, which is known as a “semiotic square” (also “semiotic rectangle”), illustrates all of the possible transformations for the binary conditions of S_1 and S_2 .

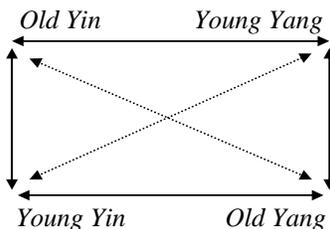


This “semiotic square,” which originally referred to the elementary structure of signification, can also serve to depict the deep structure of narratives. It shows how the narrator is restricted by a finite series of alternatives provided by semiotic and logical opposition. At the same time, it also illustrates the complexity and dynamics of a simple opposition. As revealed in the foregoing semiotic square, any move from one status (e.g., S_1) to its opposite (S_2) or contrary ($-S_1$) is complex, given the alternatives involved in such a move and the series of possible subsequent moves that it invites.

For two thousand years, *Yijing* has been examining the changes of things with a unique dynamic model of narrative in the form of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction. From the perspective of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, there are two stages of *yin*. In the early stage *yin* takes its turn from *yang*, which *Yijing* calls

“young *yin*” (“*shao yin*”). In the later stage, *yin* is giving way to *yang*, which is called “old *yin*” (*lao yin*). *Yang* is similarly divided into “young *yang*” (*shao yang*) and “old *yang*” (*lao yang*). The ancient sages must have taken into account these two stages when they designed their divinatory methods to construct a hexagram composed of six lines, each being either *yin* or *yang*. The most popular method used to determine the nature of each of the six lines is called the “*yaowu* stalk method,” which produces a value of 6, 7, 8, or 9. The two odd numbers, 7 and 9, represent young *yang* and old *yang*; the two even numbers, 6 and 8, represent old *yin* and young *yin*. The Chinese sages had no resort to the logical notion of positivity and negativity; rather, they separated the two statuses of a being by identifying the stages of its development.

We can thus draw another square that can be called “the narrative square of *yin-yang* alternation”:



Comparatively speaking, this square is not a semiotic or logical structure that spreads out horizontally. Rather, it is a dynamic model of constant change that flows into the stream of time. Like Greimas' semiotic model, this narrative model also provides three possibilities for each transition, including one natural and reasonable transition and two less natural and less reasonable transitions. In the case of old *yin*, as the diagram clearly shows, it can withdraw to young *yin*, but it can also stride over young *yang* and go directly to old *yang*. In the view of the editors of *Yijing*, such "overreaching" and "retrogression" are sources of ominous misfortune. For instance, in the *Guai* hexagram (Resolution, Hexagram 43, ☱☱☱), a *yin* line lies above all *yang* lines, and the transition from the fifth line to the sixth can be viewed as an overreaching from old *yang* to old *yin*. *Yang* rises to the fifth position, indicating that it is old *yang*. The remnant *yin* in the last position will be replaced by *yang*, and in this case belongs to old *yin*. As young *yin* is missing here, the move from the fifth to the sixth appears odd and ominous. According to *Yijing*, the sixth line looks like a petty man occupying a ruling position, and "it will end in misfortune" (Trans, Lynn, 409).

The editors of *Yijing* did not have to resort to the concepts of illusion, fiction, hypocrisy, and evil—for instance, a wolf pretending to be a grandma—to account for the tragic change in a human situation or a course of action. For them, misfortune and disaster result from a lack of balance between *yin* and *yang*. Taking the example of *Little Red Riding Hood* further, the wolf-grandma, within the terms of Greimas' semiotic square, is plying the role of negative grandma or non-grandma. But from the point of view of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, the emergence of "a wolf" is an ill omen of a danger ahead that the little girl will have to encounter when she goes beyond the limits of the *yin-yang* balance. The little girl walking alone in the woods far from home can be seen as a sign of disequilibrium. This model of narrative yields little illusion, confusion, and suspension, yet adds a great deal of tension through the interaction of the *yin and yang* forces.

The foregoing discussion outlines a basic model of narrative that can be called the "*yin-yang* model." This model is open to a variety of changes, as it is set up to narrate the transformation of things that are in a state of constant change into something different. It is also open to all aspects and forms of *yin-yang* interaction, such as the interactions between hard and soft, between dynamic and static, between stretching and bending, between anxiety and ease, between inside and outside, between warm and cold, between big and small, between increase and decrease, between abundance and shortage, between quick and slow, and so on.

At the same time, the *yin-yang* model serves to define what constitutes a meaningful and reliable

narrative of change, and consequently shapes our understanding of the concept of change. Once a change is cast as the transition from *yin* to *yang* or vice versa, a sense of circulation is connoted. It is within this framework of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction that *Yijing* is able to claim to hold the truth about the destiny of things. Everything changes, but the change is not random or accidental: it follows a pre-ordained pattern or cycle.

The Six-line Arrangement and its Implication for Narrative

The numbers most often used by *Yijing* are two (for *yin* and *yang*), three (Heaven, earth, and human beings), six (six lines), eight (eight trigrams), and sixty-four (sixty-four hexagrams). Of these, two, three, and six are fundamental. They are associated with the most important decisions and arrangements that the Chinese sages had to make in the very beginning when they set up the mechanism for *Yijing*. Once the decision had been made to use *yin* and *yang* as the two primary symbolic forms, to combine three lines into a trigram, and to compose six lines (or two trigrams) to construct a hexagram, the other numbers were well on their way to being elucidated. Numbers have their own logic of development and operation. As the sages made a trigram out of any three *yin* and *yang*, there are eight possible trigrams. Similarly, as they made a hexagram out of any six *yin* and *yang* (or any two of eight trigrams), there are sixty-four possible hexagrams.

This section is particularly concerned with the implications of the six-line arrangement for the narratives in *Yijing*. The *yin-yang* model is a theoretical one. To put it into practice, the model must be described in terms of a series of changing events. According to Rimmon-Kenan's definition (1983, p. 15), narrative is "a series of events arranged in chronological order." The events that constitute a narrative model, however, are better understood as that which Seymour Chatman (1978, p. 53) calls "kernels or kernel events," or "narrative moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events. They are nodes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force a movement into one of two (or more) possible paths." The question now arises as to how many kernel events are needed to complete a cycle of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction. Obviously, one event cannot manifest a change, but two together can. For instance, *yin* → *yang*, but this is not an interaction. A series of three events can be used to track a cycle of change, for instance, *yin* → *yang* → *yin* (supposing that the second "*yin*" is not exactly the same as the first), but again this is not a full cycle of interaction. In theory, a series of four events can form a cycle of interaction, *yin* → *yang* → *yin* → *yang*, but a more sophisticated change, such as the change from young *yin* to old *yin*, from old *yin* to young *yang*, from

young *yang* to old *yang*, or from old *yang* to young *yin*, would be regrettably absent from the cycle. It would seem that to accomplish a more sophisticated cycle of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, at least six “kernels” are required.

Constructing the basic structure of yin-yang narratives

The basic structure of *yin-yang* narratives must thus have the capacity to carry six kernel events. After putting together six lines in a hexagram, *Yijing* must regulate the position of each line so as to turn the six-line composition into a structure of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction. *Yijing* has set two general rules for this purpose. First, it gives a sense of time to each of the six lines by ordering them from the bottom upward, the first line being placed at the bottom of the hexagram and the last line at the top. The resulting six-line composition thus becomes a narrative structure that unfolds over time.

Second, despite the actual combination of *yin* and *yang* in a particular hexagram, *Yijing* divides the six positions into *yin* positions (*yin wei*) and *yang* positions (*yang wei*) by the odd and even numbers of these positions. The three odd positions (the first, third, and fifth) are *yang* positions, whereas the three even positions (the second, fourth, and sixth) are *yin* positions. Thus, the *yin* position alternates with the *yang* in the structure. “Explaining the trigrams,” the eighth of the Ten Commentaries included in *Yijing*, explains the significance of this arrangement: “They [the sages] provided *yin* allotments and *yang* allotments, so their functions alternate between soft and hard; this is why the Changes forms its patterns out of six positions” (Trans. p. 120). This structure or pattern not only carries out the narrative principles of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, but also outlines periodic changes of fate.

The narrative model of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction can be brought into operation only after this six-line structure has been formed, and only then is it possible to discuss the integrality and complexity of the narrative model. The six-line arrangement can be seen as an abstract form of a narrative model of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, with its six lines representing a series of kernel events. In this series, each line points not only to a certain state and status of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, but also to the states and statuses that may follow. Hence, in *Yijing*, each of the sixty-four hexagrams is a unique six-line arrangement that functions to outline the skeleton of a type of story about changes of fate.

Constructing a specific narrative about fate

For the *Yijing* to be able to offer specific guidance and suggestions on choice of action, the editors had to fill in each six-line structure with concrete contents, that is, a series of events. To examine these, we must turn to

the statements of the hexagrams and lines in *Yijing*. As statements of the narrative model of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, they might be expected to recount an event that is most typical of a certain state and status of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, and that is most applicable to things in that state and status. In fact, they do not do this. The hexagram statements (*gua ci*) and line statements (*yao ci*) in *Yijing* were originally notes used for divination. The sages, when compiling the *Yijing*, selected and revised these traditional notes and attached them to the hexagrams and lines, thus making them part of the text. The hexagram and line statements usually contain two elements. The first is a description of an event, an act, or a status. Examples of these descriptions are: “there appears a dragon in the fields” (*Qian*, Hexagram 1, Line 2), “the noble man makes earnest efforts throughout the day, and with evening he still takes care” (*Qian*, Hexagram 1, Line 3), and “a submerged dragon does not act” (*Qian*, Hexagram 1, Line 1). The second element is a judgment on the good or bad fortune of the event, act, or status described. For example, “it is fitting to see the great man,” “in danger, he will suffer no blame,” and “does not act” (Trans. pp. 132-134).

It is worth noting that not every line statement has a descriptive element. Some contain only a judgment on good or bad fortune, for example, “Here there is danger, so it is fitting to desist” (*Daxu*, Hexagram 26, Line 1) and “There is no blame” (*Xie*, Hexagram 40, Line 1). Despite the missing descriptive element, these line statements hold a certain position in the time sequence of the six-line arrangement, and thus suggest the unfolding of a certain event and its changing status in that position.

According to Bokun Zhu, a well-established *Yi*-ologist, “hexagram and line statements are mostly records of past experiences” (Zhu, 1996, p. 140). The statement of the *Lü* hexagram (Hexagram 10), for instance, may have come about from an accident. Zhu tries to make out what happened: perhaps someone divined using the hexagrams before he proceeded to do something, and obtained the hexagram *Lü*. Later on, he crossed a thick sward of grass and accidentally stepped on the tail of a tiger. Fortunately, he was not hurt by the beast. After the event, the accident was recorded under the *Lü* hexagram. If this were the case, then the statement of *Lü* is indeed the record of an event. Some statements cover more than one event. For example, the third line of *Kun* (Hexagram 47) records: “This one suffers an impasse on rocks, so he tries to hold on to the puncture vice for support, and then he enters his home but does not see his wife” (Trans. p. 431). However, in most cases, the hexagram and line statements are simple notes on who is doing what. These notes were added randomly in the development of the *Yijing*, and there should thus be no close connections among them.

The editors of *Yijing* then had to integrate the scattered notes or statements into a six-line structure and have each statement perform an appropriate function in the entire narrative. Two concerns seem to have had a marked effect on the selection and revision of the hexagram and line statements. The first is concern that each narrative should have a theme, which is important for telling the audience what the narrative is about. Although the *Yijing* already has a general theme, that of “change” or “the change of fate,” every specific model or pattern of narrative needs a theme of its own. The *Yijing* editors appear to have had a theme in mind when selecting, revising, and compiling the statements of a particular hexagram. My study shows that in most cases, the statement of a hexagram and its line statements are interconnected. They describe similar events and express similar ideas, and even their language is similar. For instance, the metaphor of “dragon” appears in five of the six line statements of *Qian* (Hexagram 1). The third line statement is about “the noble man,” rather than a “dragon,” but these elements are actually the same, as “dragon” is a metaphorical expression for the noble man in all five cases. The metaphor (dragon) and the concept (the noble man) seem to work well in highlighting the theme of the hexagram, which is productivity and masculinity, as suggested by the name “*Qian*” (“Pure *yang*”).

Indeed, the theme of a hexagram is often associated with its name, whether the name was assigned before or after the hexagram was constructed. For example, the first hexagram *Qian* (“Pure *Yang*”) concerns the ultimate source of life; the second hexagram, “*Kun*” (“Pure *yin*”), concerns the birth of the myriad things on earth; the third, “*Zhun*” (“Birth Throes”), concerns the difficulty of early life; the fourth, “*Meng*” (“Juvenile Ignorance”), concerns education; the fifth, “*Xu*” (“Waiting”), concerns nurturance; and the sixth, “*Song*” (“Contention”), concerns litigation.

The second concern of the editors was the principle of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction. It is significant to investigate what the editors did with a hexagram like *Qian* (☰☰☰), in which all six lines are *yang*. This is the hexagram that represents the accumulating power of *yang*. How then can it illustrate the alternation and interaction of *yin* and *yang*? The key is to change the direction of the narrative whenever a new line of *yang* is added to the hexagram. From Line 1 (“A submerged dragon does not act”) to Line 2 (“[T]here appears a dragon in the fields”), there is a change from “concealment” to “exposure,” or from “underground” to “aboveground.” In terms of the hexagram structure, this is only a change of number from one *yang* to two *yangs*, but in terms of the line statements, it is a change of direction from “concealment” (or “under”) to its opposite, “exposure” (or “above”), which is a kind of “*yin-yang* alternation without an actual exchange of *yin*

and *yang*.” Line 3 (“The noble man makes earnest efforts throughout the day, and with evening he still takes care”), seems to have nothing to do with Line 2 (“a dragon appears in the fields”), yet it implies a qualitative change from a relatively inactive status to an active status. Line 4 (“Hesitating to leap, it still stays in the depths”) leads to another status of activity. More dramatic changes take place in Line 5 (“[A] flying dragon is in the sky”) and Line 6 (“A dragon that overreaches should have cause for regret”). In the last line in particular, the “regret” of the dragon presents a striking contrast with the determination of the flying dragon to march forward courageously in the fifth line. The “regret” indicates a downfall, which brings out another profound contrast with the bright prospects of the submerged dragon in the first line. The story finally returns to a larger cycle of changes of fate.

It is in this way that *Yijing* completes a narrative of periodic changes of *Qian*, or pure *yang*, within a six-line frame. This is what the “Explaining the trigrams” means when it states that “the Changes forms its patterns out of six positions” (Trans. p. 120). We are not, of course, dealing with a well-rounded story full of vivid details. The six line statements merely outline the kernels of a story, yet ultimately they provide sufficient room for periodic changes of fate to occur.

The endings of the narratives in *Yijing* differ significantly from the normal endings of most narratives. The narratives do not seek to restore an equilibrium lost in the beginning, but instead usually end up in a new state of disequilibrium. The last line statement of *Qian* (“a dragon that overreaches should have cause to regret”), for instance, indicates that something unhappy and regretful may happen at the end. However, there are reasons for such an unhappy and regretful ending, given the general theme of this book of changes.

The Sixty-four-Hexagram Arrangement and its Implication for Narrative

An imperfect ending always anticipates the beginning of a new narrative cycle, and all six-line narratives in *Yijing* ultimately lead to a larger cycle of fate. The arrangement of the sixty-four hexagrams makes it possible for us to explore what may be called “the grand narratives of *Yijing*” in a broader context.

Only when the six-four hexagrams are arranged in chronological order are their relationships narratable, and only then is *Yijing* able to narrate the changes and developments of fate from a higher vantage point. Yet the arrangement is by no means easy. The sixty-four hexagrams have all kinds of connections with each other. As a change in any line of a hexagram can bring about a new hexagram, there is no natural sequence of hexagrams, nor is there any need for *Yijing* to arrange them from one to sixty-four for the purpose of

divination. The arrangement is for nothing more than the convenience of narration.

This begs the question of which arrangements are most reasonable and convenient for the narratives in *Yijing*. As every hexagram has a certain relation with each one of the others, there are various ways to string the hexagrams together. There have been several formal arrangements of the hexagrams in the past. The earliest is probably the Fu Xi arrangement recorded in the Neo-Confucian Master Zhu Xi's *Zhouyi zhengyi* (The correct understanding of *Yijing*, 1995, p. 14). The arrangement used in most traditional and contemporary editions of *Yijing* is called the "King Wen sequence." The principle that governs this arrangement is of particular interest here.

One of the Ten Commentaries on *Yijing*, "Providing the sequence of the hexagrams," is dedicated to a systematic explanation of this King Wen sequence. Its opening lines read:

Only after there were Heaven [*Qian*, Pure Yang, Hexagram 1] and Earth [*Kun*, Pure yin, Hexagram 2] were the myriad things produced from them. What fills Heaven and Earth is nothing other than the myriad things. This is why *Qian* and *Kun* are followed by *Zhun* [Birth Throes, Hexagram 3]. *Zhun* here signifies repletion. *Zhun* is when things are first born. When things begin life, they are sure to be covered. This is why *Zhun* is followed by *Meng* [Juvenile Ignorance, Hexagram 3]. *Meng* here indicates juvenile ignorance, that is, the immature state of things. When things are in their immature state, one cannot fail to nourish them. This is why *Meng* is followed by *Xu* [Waiting, Hexagram 5]. *Xu* here indicates the dao of food and drink. Food and drink necessarily involve *Song* [Contention, Hexagram 6]. This is why *Xu* is followed by *Song*. When there is contention, there is sure to be an arising of the masses. This is why *Song* is followed by *Shi* [The Army, Hexagram 7]. An army as such is a mass of people . . . (Trans. p. 103).

Here, the sequence of hexagrams is Heaven (Pure yang) → Earth (Pure yin) → Birth Throes → Juvenile Ignorance → Waiting → Contention → The Army and so on. However, of greater significance than the sequence is the language of cosmogony that the commentator employs to account for it. Obviously, the commentator is trying to describe a "natural" process of the genesis and development of the world. The sequence is thus a series of events in an evolutionary process. Whether or not we agree with this sequence, the arrangement merits appreciation. With this living and temporal order, *Yijing* is able to narrate a greater and more intricate cycle of fate.

Regrettably, the commentary merely explains the order of the sixty-four hexagrams based on the

implications of their names and themes, and does not say anything about the line arrangements. Does the sequence reveal any pattern of change in the line arrangement? If the sequence is truly reflective of a natural course of evolution, then one might expect to see some regular and gradual change in line arrangement as from one hexagram to the next, but this is not the case. A careful study of the sequence does not suggest any pattern of connection except that the sixty-four hexagrams are arranged into thirty-two pairs and that the second member of each pair is either the inverse or the opposite of the first. Regular and gradual changes in line arrangement do not seem to be the primary concern here. If they were, then there would be only a one-line difference between any two consecutive hexagrams, which does not hold true in most cases. In fact, two-line and four-line differences are most prevalent in the King Wen sequence, with twenty each. There are even nine cases of a six-line difference, but only two one-line differences (between hexagram 52 and 53 and between 60 and 61). No pattern can be found in the sequence of the digits, and thus number appears to be similarly unimportant in the King Wen sequence. The *Qian* hexagram has to change all six yang lines to transform into *Kun*, yet the latter is placed directly next to the former.

Despite the lack of consistency and regularity in the changes in line arrangement, the King Wen sequence enables *Yijing* to carry the narrative principle of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction to a greater stage. Within the thirty-two pairs of hexagrams, the odd member of each pair is regarded as a yang hexagram, whereas the even member is a yin hexagram. Most of the yin hexagrams are an inversion of the yang, such as *Meng* (Hexagram 4, ☱☳), which is the invert of *Zhun* (Hexagram 3, ☳☱). There are eight hexagrams (Hexagram 1, ☰☷; 2, ☷☰; 27, ☱☳; 28, ☳☱; 29, ☱☳; 30, ☳☱; 61, ☱☳; 62, ☳☱) that do not have corresponding inversions, that is, that remain unchanged when inverted. The four yang and four yin hexagrams in this category are, however, perfect matches for each other, with each line of the yang hexagram being the opposite of the line in the yin hexagram.

The yin hexagram that inverts the lines of the yang within a pair is like a "flashback" that begins with the end of the yang and ends up with the beginning of the same yang hexagram. However, this "flashback" is not what actually happens within the pair. The idea of the arrangement of the thirty-two pairs is to ensure that each pair, although completing its own cycle of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, can move on to another phase of development in a larger cycle of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction.

The editors achieve this goal by working with the "image" of a hexagram, an important concept that

provides a specific context for understanding the statements and the narrative of a hexagram. As has been noted, a hexagram is made up of two of the eight trigrams, which symbolize heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain, and lake. It is thus from the two trigram images that the “image” of a hexagram comes. For instance, the *Zhun* hexagram (䷮) consists of a lower trigram *Zhen* (䷲) and an upper trigram *Kan* (䷜), which represent thunder and water, respectively. “Thunder below and water above” is thus the image of the *Zhun* hexagram.

The editors could have taken the relatively easy approach of pairing two hexagrams by having the second member as simply an inversion of the upper and lower trigrams of the first. Instead, they choose to invert the lines of the first member rather than its trigrams. This inversion of the lines brings about more sophisticated changes. Using the second pair as an example, the image of *Zhun* (Hexagram 3, ䷮) is “thunder below and water above.” After reversing the line order, it becomes the *Meng* (Hexagram 4, ䷃), the image of which means “water below and mountain above.” The original “thunder” component disappears in the new image to be replaced by “mountain.” The inversion thus leads to a new composition, which indicates a new beginning and a new narrative direction.

The sequence of the sixty-four hexagrams is a continuation and extension of the six-line narrative on a cosmic level. Like the six-line narrative, the narrative on this level also ends with some misfortune, which is why the editors placed the hexagram of *Weiji* (Ferrying Incomplete, Hexagram 64) at the end of the sequence. It is worth noting that the sixty-third hexagram (*Jiji*, Ferrying Complete) tells the simple story of successful ferrying, and it is only at the end of the story (Line 6), when the protagonist becomes dizzy with success and acts carelessly, that he encounters trouble and danger (Trans. p. 542). The hexagram of *Weiji* (Ferrying Incomplete) is then introduced to convey the advice that the mission of life has not yet been accomplished, and that one still needs to make great effort to attain it.

The Far-Reaching Influence of the *Yijing* Narrative

If, according to Greimas’ concept of the semiotic square, narratives create the perception or illusion of a series of changes, then any narrative is narrative of changes or changing events. Nevertheless, different models of narrative display different modes of change, and these modes yield different effects. Within the narrative frame of *yin-yang* alternation and interaction, change is presented as a transition from *yin* to *yang* or vice versa, but the concept of change also takes on other significant meanings.

First, the concept of change, or *yi* in Chinese, is a

ceaseless process of generation and regeneration: “In its capacity to produce and reproduce we call it ‘change’” (Trans. p. 54). *Yijing* is a book of narratives of this process, and, as lives go on without end, there is no real and perfect ending for a narrative of change. In *Yijing*, change is also a process of self-realization. That is, it does not require external forces. In Greimas’ semiotic square, S_1 and S_2 usually represent different things or activities, such as staying home and visiting someone. In *Yijing*, however, *yin* and *yang* are two parts of a greater whole. A change from *yin* to *yang* or vice versa can thus be considered as internal, as it is due to the alternation and interaction of the two internal forces of *yin* and *yang*.

The concept of change, in the sense of *Yijing*, is also an interlinked process. Every change is a response to a changing situation and in itself induces a series of new changes. Thus, all things are interconnected. As illustrated by the hexagram system, any single change in one line of a hexagram gives rise not only to a new hexagram, but also to a new cycle of life.

Narrators not only describe changes of events, but also suggest, directly or indirectly, the causes of these changes. Similarly, narratives produce not only stories, but also the conditions for these stories to be accepted, because narrators always embed ontological assumptions and value judgments in the stories that they narrate. The “change” discussed can only occur in a cosmic model that is holistic and ever-changing. In this sense, the narratives of *Yijing* help to build and enforce the cosmic model of Chinese culture.

Yijing provides a very dynamic and open model of narrative. Its survival for more than two millennia of change testifies to its dynamism and openness. The periodic dynastic changes and alternations in the course of imperial history in China have been discussed within the terms of this narrative model, but the earthshaking reforms and revolutions of modern and contemporary China have also sought support from it. In fact, one of *Yijing*’s central ideas and narrative principles—that when a situation reaches its limit a change from one state to another occurs and leads to success (Trans. p. 78)—was frequently cited by modern Chinese reformers such as Tao Wang, Richang Ding, Guanying Zheng, and Songtao Guo (Hao & Wang, 1980, p. 140). The “self-strengtheners” of 1860-1890 were so inspired by the narrative on *Qian* (Pure *yang*) in *Yijing* that they derived the very term “self-strengthening” (*zhiqiang*) from the Commentary on the image of the *Qian* hexagram and used it as their name (Trans. p. 130). Sun Yat-Sen and his colleagues also looked to *Yijing* and found a favorable answer to their call for revolution from the Commentary on the statement of *Ge* (Radical Change, Hexagram 43): “Just as Heaven and Earth make use of Radical Change so that the four seasons come to pass, so did Tang and Wu bring about Radical Change in the

mandate to rule in compliance with the will of Heaven and in accordance with the wishes of mankind" (Trans. p. 445; cf. Chen, 2000, pp. 10-13). We must also not forget the use of *Yijing* in fortune-telling that is still pervasive in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, in which the fortune-tellers employ the narrative models of the book to describe changes in the past and predict what will come in the future. It can be said that the Chinese today still live very much according to the narratives of *Yijing*, even though we are only just beginning to understand them.

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