

Reconstruction and Dialogue Between Chinese and Western Literary Theory Systems from the Perspective of De Gay

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Abstract: *The 3rd to 6th centuries was a period of social change in China, with political and economic mechanisms in an unstable state. The social outlook of this period was also reflected in literature and literary criticism, presented in various articles, and led to the analysis of different styles. This article is based on the first chapter of De Gay's "Genre theory in China in the 3rd-6th centuries". It analyzes De Gay's views on the beginning of Chinese style theory from the proposition of Chinese style theory in the 3rd to 6th centuries, summarizes De Gay's insights on the origins of Chinese style theory and analyzes the style perspectives of typical literati within the text, and the cultural interpretation of Chinese style theory in the 3rd to 6th centuries. Furthermore, it offers a cross-cultural perspective on the fragmented and unorganized discussions surrounding the nascent stage of Chinese style theory prior to 'Wen Xin Diao Long' and explains the historical environment characteristics of this period and the style of typical literati. The chapter elucidates and interprets its primary content and viewpoints through a cross-cultural lens, encompassing psychological, sociological, cultural, and global perspectives.*

Keywords: De Gay; Chinese style; Exposition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese style theory, as is widely acknowledged, has consistently been a focal point in academic discussions, particularly in the interpretation of ancient Chinese style theory, which exhibits varying emphases depending on the diverse perspectives of scholars, indicating the absence of a definitive standard. In "Genre theory in China in the 3rd-6th centuries", De Gay discusses Chinese style theory from the 3rd to 6th centuries from the cross-cultural perspective of aesthetics and literature. Specifically, in the first chapter, he mainly summarizes the appearance of the beginning period of Chinese style theory before "Wen Xin Diao Long". From the viewpoint of natural science, he argues that Chinese style theory during this early stage was fragmented and dispersed. Despite the existence of diverse styles, they lacked systematic organization. It was not until the appearance of "Wen Xin Diao Long" that Chinese style really formed a systematic theoretical framework. There are different interpretations of De Gay's views in the academic circle. Of course, there is also consistency in some aspects. The present paper delves into the contents of the opening chapter of De Gay's 'Genre theory in China in the 3rd-6th centuries', systematically organizing the chapter's central theme from a cross-cultural lens, distilling De Gay's pivotal viewpoints, and juxtaposing them against those of fellow scholars on pertinent matters. From different perspectives, it inspires us to pay attention to the diversity and dynamics of Chinese style theory and understand the Chapter reflects the real world. Genre is deeply embedded within a specific context. By deeply understanding style, we can gain a better grasp of the context. And the context is more important for understanding style. To better interpret style, we must move beyond mere description and analysis of words, and consider the context in which word behavior takes place. On this basis, this paper outlines the complexity and diversity of Chinese style theory before "Wen Xin Diao Long" to enrich the academic thinking of Chinese style theory.

2. THE PROPOSITION OF CHINESE STYLISTIC THEORY FROM THE 3RD TO THE 6TH CENTURY

In the 3rd to 6th centuries, De Gay elaborated on the evolution of genre theory in China during this period. In the first section, the author focuses on the genre situation presented in the initial stage of Chinese genre theory before the formation of The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons. The first significant flourishing of Chinese poetry, independent from ethical literary theory since the Chuci, emerged amidst the turbulent social backdrop of the Jian'an period. Subsequently, Cao Cao founded a new dynasty in the year 204 at Yecheng [1]. De Gay believes that after the establishment of the Wei Kingdom, the efforts made by Cao Cao, Cao Pi, and Cao Zhi in genre theory are obvious to all. Among them, Cao Cao recruited talents to develop Jian'an literature; Cao Pi's 'Classic of

Classics and Essays' is widely regarded as a landmark in Chinese literary theory; Cao Zhi, owing to his unique status and life journey, posed more focused academic inquiries in literary theory and literary criticism. As for the works themselves, De Gay feels that their works have a distinct classical color [2].

In addition, Xu Shen was the founder of classical Chinese literary theory, and he incorporated Confucian principles to develop the "Doctrine of the Mean". However, his philosophical works on the "Theory of the Mean" received little attention from sinologists, yet significantly influenced Cao Pi's literary theories; Cao Zhi's later poems exhibited a profound elegiac tone, and De Gay deemed them to possess the characteristics of the elegiac style found in Qu Yuan's *Chu Ci*; the greatest contribution of philosopher Wang Bi engaged in a dialectical discussion of concepts such as 'existence and non-existence,' 'essence and phenomenon,' and 'stillness and movement,' proposing that logic and method constitute the core of thinking. Lu Ji's "Wen Fu", which defines the meaning of literature and thinks about the purpose of literature, is a summary of aesthetic theory to a certain extent, and is at the highest level in both poetry and concept. Zuo Si's 'San Du Fu' addressed an important issue in aesthetics: the concept of 'non-poetic nature'. and advocated starting from Confucianism, adhering to the principle of truth in literary works, and developed into a naturalistic theory of "authenticity". Zhi Yu's "Wen Zhang Liu Bie Ji" was considered by De Gay to be the first collection of articles in the history of Chinese literature arranged by genre, which involved articles on genre theory. In his creation, he adhered strictly to social principles and historical methodologies, meticulously attending to the diverse categories of article styles, and formed an organic system of his works. Hai Taowei believes that Zhi Yu addressed the logical-methodological issues in his article, and concurrently, Zhi Yu's views had a profound impact on subsequent literature. Among these works, Liu Xie's "Wen Xin Diao Long" clearly reflects the theoretical influences of Zhi Yu's ideas. In summary, De Gay described the overall status of Chinese style theory from different perspectives by sorting out the literati and their representative works before "Wen Xin Diao Long". De Gay believed that prior to "Wen Xin Diao Long", the Chinese style theory was scattered and lacked systematization, and Liu Xie's "Wen Xin Diao Long" could be called a systematic Chinese style theory. De Gay's viewpoints in this section possess a certain theoretical foundation, yet diverse perspectives exist within the academic community regarding the pre-"Wen Xin Diao Long" style theory. Therefore, this article summarizes the discussions of various scholars on this proposition, especially describes De Gay's important arguments in this section, and interprets it from a cross-cultural perspective, in order to find their similarities and differences and put forward new thinking.

3. DE GAY'S OVERVIEW OF THE BEGINNING OF CHINESE STYLISTIC THEORY

De Gay said: "This short period, beginning in 204, will be the starting-point of quite a novel evolution concerning not only literature and literary theory but the entire history of China: the opening of various radical economic and social 'changes' which entitle us to speak of the Chinese society's 'middle-age' from this time onward." To make these From 204 AD, not only Chinese literature and literary theory, but also the entire Chinese history was experiencing a new beginning, namely, various radical economic reforms and social evolution, which led us to conclude that Chinese society began transitioning towards a stage akin to the "Middle Ages" during this period. In other words, the development of Chinese stylistic theory began in an era of unstable social and economic development, faced with numerous unstable factors. During the same period, the nascent Chinese stylistic theory was undergoing its initial stages of development, with the early uncertainties in its evolution being vast and profound. In this regard, De Gay specifically discusses the beginning of Chinese stylistic theory in the first section of this book, and analyzes the formation of style before "Wen Xin Diao Long", examining subjective and objective factors, incorporating the contributions of representative figures across eras, and highlighting their efforts while also noting its deficiencies. It is speculated that the author's original intention is to restore the true status quo of the beginning of Chinese stylistic theory through the content of this section. Its main contents are reflected in the following points:

First, De Gay explains the literary views of Cao Cao, Cao Pi, and Cao Zhi. The literary perspectives and characteristics of these three, as well as the factors influencing their views, can be analyzed from two aspects: on the one hand, they were shaped by the social environment, which constitutes the objective factors; on the other hand, their personal affection for literature and varying emphases within it formed the subjective factors. the formation of literary views. De Gay pointed out: 'The strengthening of private land property is a fundamentally important fact of the early Middle Ages. Simultaneously, with the weakening and impoverishment of the central power in the second half of the Han Dynasty, the private land property of high-ranking officials and merchants, previously limited and incidental, constantly increased.' The strengthening of private land property is indeed an important fact of the early Middle Ages. In the late Han Dynasty, as the central government weakened and fell into

poverty, the private land ownership of high-ranking officials and merchants was restricted, leading to their becoming vassals. This situation continually worsened. "In this manner, Cao Cao created his famous system of Tun-Tian. Its gist was that his veteran campaigners should cultivate abandoned land, delivering 50-60 percent of the crops to the state, with the state providing them with land and equipment." This system was for the moment favourable for the veterans, because it addressed their livelihood issues, and given the widespread devastation, it also benefited the homeless masses." In this way the new state was finally able to overcome the feudals, just because its economic basis was created practically beside feudal private land property, competing with it without attacking it fundamentally. And the new system, characterized similarly, allowed the new regime to function in this manner. feudal-governmental nature - proved to be such a solid economic basis that taxes, carrying into effect the state proprietorship of the rest of the lands, could be much lower in the state of Wei than they had ever been during the Han era." So do almost all poets of the period, Tsao Ts'ao himself among them as well as his son and successor T's'ao P'i (187-226), from 220 on known as Wen-ti. "These two could hardly be called Taoists. This Taoist-like whiff of poetry is not yet the "black wind" of the subsequent mysticism, it is the poetic expression of a definite anti-Confucianism, and at the same time a sign of the great step of Chinese lyrics that has grown now personal. The theme of the new poetry focuses on the emotional world of individuals in the age of chaos, as well as their respective fates and dilemmas. Cao Cao and Cao Pi could not be called true Taoists, and the Taoist atmosphere in their poems was not yet the "black wind" of mysticism, but an expression that clearly violated Confucianism. At the same time, this also became a sign of the progress of Chinese poetry, that is, the reflection of personal emotions in poetry. The theme of new poetry reflects the personal emotional world, personal fate, and other issues of that turbulent era, and possesses a distinct 'classical' style. De Gui believes that 'classicism' demands social order and harmony, as well as refined and rigorous forms. This is an artistic reflection of the order of the new dynasty, and even more so a desire for orderly national development. Although Cao Cao's "Tuntian" system stabilized the regime to a certain extent, made breakthroughs in poetry creation, and advocated personal emotions and destiny, he failed to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework from the literary theory perspective. Cao Pi inherited his father's career and created the famous "Classic Theory Essay". De Gay described it thus: "The remarkable characteristic of the essay lies in its exceptionally well-considered and close construction. Its starting point is the belief that every writer possesses a unique style, which, When nurtured according to his or her natural talent, can lead to true distinction." The outstanding feature of this article lies in its careful structure. It emphasizes that each author should cultivate a personal style and, by doing so, has the potential to become a truly outstanding figure based on their individual abilities. " According to one of the views, the literary critical and genre theoretical method of the Lun-w e n originates from the classifying "mania" of the 3rd century. "According to his view, the literary criticism and stylistic theory methods of the Essays stem from what is classified as "mania" in the 3rd century. And "For the basic problem of the epoch lies in the point: how to arrange a new order out of the chaos, how to organize those who have got private property into a new state unity, how to bring together individuals in forming new communities, how to unite different ones?" And the problem lies in how to establish a new order from chaos, how to integrate those with private property into a new state system, how to direct individual groups to new areas, and how to unite these diverse groups. In fact, these problems involve the core of ancient Chinese philosophy. "In his essay, T's'ao P'i himself indicates the philosophic fore runner and the founder of his literary theoretical classicism, the philosophy of the Confucian Hsü Kan." In Cao Pi's article, he mentioned the philosophical forerunner of literary theoretical classicism, the representative figure of Confucianism, Xu Shen. "This may suffice to suggest that the philosophical foundation of Ts'ao Pi's literary theoretical classicism is none other than the philosophy of Xu Shen. De Guy discovered that the philosophical basis of Cao Pi's literary theory of classicism originated from Xu Shen's philosophical theory." A fundamental insufficiency of the Lun-wen is the statement that the main sense of literature is to embody the 'life-philosophical' principle aimed at securing immortality. Within this framework, numerous novel and profound insights are naturally formulated, such as the awareness of the 'eternal human', the universal value of poetry, and the conceptualization of the individual character in lyrical poetry, as well as the general criticism of Chinese poetry. "But the paper is insufficient in that it emphasizes that the main significance of literature lies in the eternal "philosophy of life" principle. Of course, it also forms some new cognitions, such as the understanding of "eternal humanity" and the universal value of poetry. However, De Gay believes Cao Pi's stylistic theory attempt fails, as it contradicts Confucianism and merely indulges in political venting. Despite attempting to transcend Confucian aesthetics dialectically, he overlooks its moral dimensions and historical, social contexts. As for Cao Zhi, De Gay said: "The gleam of hope at the birth of the new state and its vanishing is in our view the basic experience of the epoch's greatest poet Ts'ao Chih. His poesy rises to the level of Ch'üYüan's poesy of elegies just by singing of this great experience. His poems, some of which cannot be dated, roughly form two groups: those written before and after 220. The early poems radiate great " It is his quintessentially "Chinese" circumstances and destiny that rendered him one of the foremost poets of Chinese lyrics. But his particular situation also offered him the possibilities -- though unable to create a system similar to that of his elder brother - to raise more sharply and exactly the problems of literary criticism and literary

theory than his brother was able to." Cao Zhi's typical "Chinese" situation and fate made him one of the greatest poets of Chinese lyrics. Certainly, he deviated from Cao Pi's literary framework, yet his insights into the phenomena were more profound than Cao Pi's. In the area of literary criticism and literary theory, and was capable of posing unique and insightful problems. "So appears first of all the principle of the unison with political action running through the pattern of the letter (similarly as through the whole poetry of T's'ao Chih), as well as a stern condemnation of the fu-poetry submerged in frivolousness. Therefore, what initially emerged was the principle of harmony between the article's form and political action, along with a stern condemnation of the fu style's excesses. Poetry that was drowned in the game. It aimed to uphold the principle of political commitment, ultimately resulting in the emergence of the new "classicism" and the realist model of poetry in the realm of "street gossip" and popular melodies. Examining the three Cao Caos, one can discern their unique understanding of and contributions to the Chinese literary style, each possessing a distinct flair. Among them, Cao Cao and Cao Pi's articles were more related to politics. In the period when the old dynasty declined and the new dynasty rose, they were more like political literati. Their articles revealed their concern for the country and the people, and they also hoped to achieve peace and prosperity for the country through reasonable policies. Cao Pi was forced to stay away from politics. Although he harbored great ambitions, his fate was fraught with adversity, thus his writings became increasingly close to Qu Yuan's sorrowful and poignant lamentations. Second, description of Lu Chi's Wen-fu and Zuo Si's Sandu Fu. "Lu Chi (261-303), coming from Wu to Lo-yang, undertakes to realize a literary theoretical recapitulation: he writes his poem Wen-fu." "An essential peculiarity of the Wen-fu is its being itself a piece of poetry, a fu, the ars poetica of a poet. It contains just a great number of very subtle observations, concerning for the most part workshop secrets of poetry, for example, inspiration, versification, drafting work, etc. For all the same, the work is not an insignificant accomplishment from a literary theoretical viewpoint either." In addition, Lu Ji made his own interpretation of literature in Wenfu. He also proposed that the purpose of literature is neither to directly interfere in politics nor to be immortal, but to spread knowledge and pass it on through people of different times, so that human beings can form a universal self-cognition. Regarding Lu Ji's Wenfu, De Gay outlined the stylistic knowledge of Lu Ji's Wenfu and divided it into 10 categories. However, he found Lu Ji's portrayal of literature lacked sufficient precision, convinced that the stylistic theory of Wenfu fell short as a universal benchmark for literary critique. In contrast to Lu Ji's "Wen Fu", Zuo Si's "Sandu Fu" emphasizes the non-lyrical facet of aesthetics. De Gay believes: "Namely Tso Szü attempts to evolve the principle of the literary work's truth-contents starting out from the old Confucian idea of reflecting 'local customs', developing it into the naturalistic theory of an objective 'verity' of description. From a principled perspective, it appeared that Lu Chi's aesthetics should be integrated with the principle of social determination, thereby providing a solid foundation for his insightful observations and detailed descriptions. Now, as is often the case in the struggle between ideologies, the old Confucian principle of 'reflection' is exposed and challenged by the work of a contemporary in a completely different direction. The accordance of this with Lu Chi's aesthetics is really quite "That is to say, Zuo Si attempted to evolve the principle of authenticity in literary works from the old Confucian thought of reflecting 'local customs and human feelings' and further developed it into a naturalistic theory of objectively 'real' description." From the principled perspective, Lu Ji's aesthetics appears to have merely been 'implanted' with socially determined principles, serving as a solid foundation for his imaginative endeavors and observation of details. Currently, akin to the conflict among ideologies, the ancient Confucian concept of 'reflection' emerges in the creations of a modern thinker, exhibiting a starkly divergent path, rendering harmony with Lu Ji's aesthetic views virtually unattainable.

Third, the explanation of Zhi Yu's "Articles Collection". "Chih Yü composed the first large anthology since the Shih-ching and Ch'u-tz'ü, entitled "Collection of Literary Works According to Genres" (Wen-chang liu-pieh chi)." Chih Yü makes the principle of social determination to be his starting point (conceived in the Confucian manner of course), reaching on this basis such historical approaches to poetic genres of which there is no trace in the works of Lu Chi and Ts'ao Pi. And finally: as a result of the social and historical approach, in Chih Yü's work, there begins the formation of a non-arbitrary and non-reversible sequence of genres, constituting a well-balanced and truly organic system." Chih Yü took the principle of social determination as his starting point and, on this basis, presented the historical method in poetry, which was a new attempt in previous literary creation and literary theory. Consequently, through the application of social and historical methods, a stylistic sequence emerges that is both meaningful and coherent. Not an arbitrary one but a truly organic system was formed in Chih Yü's works. "The genre theory of Chih Yü, which no doubt was originally more fully expounded, and particularly his anthology, arranged according to genres, presumably had a major effect on his contemporaries and posterity: the stream of anthologies in the "Southern Courts" (now largely missing) started very likely in consideration of his principles." "His method and theory of genre research will appear again, expanded and evolved on a large scale in the peak achievement of Chinese literary theory, The book Wên-hsin tiao-lung, authored by Liu Hsieh (also known as Liu Xie), was written during the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, specifically between 501 and 502 AD. For a more complete comprehension of this development, however, it is essential to adhere to the historicism of

Chih Yü, necessitating a prior discussion of at least the main features of Chinese society in the subsequent two hundred years."

4. ANALYSIS OF TYPICAL LITERARY STYLE VIEWS IN THE TEXT

From a cross-cultural perspective, De Gay comprehensively delineates the existing conditions of Chinese ancient literary styles prior to Wenxin Diaolong, encompassing the period from the 3rd to the 6th centuries. During this era, society and the economy underwent significant transitions and evolutions; the country was in a state of flux, the lives of the populace were intricate, and literary creations faced a tumultuous external milieu. Judging from the framework of the entire book, the author uses this section to pave the way for the discussion of the stylistic theory of Wenxin Diaolong, and also allows readers to trace the historical continuity of the stylistic system formed by Wenxin Diaolong. However, De Gay enumerates typical figures in this chapter, including the three Cao brothers, Lu Ji, Zuo Si, and Zhi Yu, among others. While they have enriched Chinese stylistic knowledge from various perspectives and to some extent classified styles, based on the author's understanding of style, these figures merely presented fragmented views on the style, and did not form a systematic stylistic theory.

The three Caos, father and son, each possessed unique methods to enrich their literary styles. Let's talk about Cao Cao first. Cao Cao's orders, letters, memorials, and edicts are labeled as applied writing styles by some, emphasizing the depiction and reproduction of crucial historical events of the era. Just as "the depiction of turmoil under the collective of heroes, the life experience of the group of poets, the wisdom of talented people participating in society, on the whole, this is a true description of a period of history and people. The content of the article covers various themes such as talent selection, military strategy, official appointments and dismissals, as well as farming to promote agriculture. It provides a detailed description of the historical characteristics of the late Eastern Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period, and indirectly reflects the wisdom of Cao Cao. For example, "Xie Luxing" once said: "In the late era of Han, only the twenty-second generation, those in power are truly unworthy." They were monkeys wearing hats and belts, knowing little yet dreaming of becoming strong. Because they hesitated and dared not make a decision, they ended up hunting and capturing the king. The white rainbow pierced the sun, and they were the first to suffer. The treacherous ministers seized control of the country, murdering the master and laying waste to the capital. They undermined the emperor's foundation, and the ancestral temples were burned in mourning and despair. They migrated westward, crying and walking. Looking at the city walls of Luoyang, Weizi was sad." This poem describes the event in the late Han Dynasty when He Jin summoned Dong Zhuo to the capital, which eventually led to Dong Zhuo's disruption of the government. The poem begins with the appointment of bad and virtuous ministers, which is the reason for the chaos of the government; the poem narrates that He Jin summoned Dong Zhuo to the capital, and was killed because he "hesitated and dared not make a decision". Dong Zhuo is regarded as a traitor who brought disaster to the country and the people; at the end of the poem, the poem expresses emotions in ancient times and sighs with sorrow. From the perspective of style, Cao Cao's poetry, characterized by its applied style, intricately weaves together literary prowess and historical significance. It vividly captures the tumultuous era through the lens of emblematic figures and their experiences, offering a profound interpretation of history. Cao Cao's poetry holds profound significance, encapsulating the unity of literary historicity and historical literary nature. Liu Xie said in "Wen Xin Diao Long": "Things are beyond articles. They categorize events based on their significance and draw lessons from the past to reflect on the present, using history as a mirror. King Wen, in ancient times, utilized the Book of Changes to interpret the positions of the hexagrams, guiding his governance and decisions. The principles of the I Ching have been applied throughout history, as seen in the example of King Wen's son, King Wu, who used the I Ching to analyze the situation before his conquest of Shang. Similarly, during the Five Barbarians' invasion of China, the Murong clan's leader, Murong Hui adhered to the principles of the I Ching when interacting with the Eastern Jin's Eastern Yi Colonel, He Kan. As for Cui Ban and Zhang Cai, they delved into the classics and history, spreading their knowledge in various ways, and achieved success through their dedication to books. They are all role models for future generations. This statement shows that the literati's creation and description of the characters' journey in historical events serve as a medium to express the author's emotions or to stir the consciousness of the contemporary audience. This method appeared in the Book of Changes, and was followed by Ban Gu and Zhang Heng in the Eastern Han Dynasty, who selected classics and history books, and gradually became a model of writing for later generations to imitate [3]. Let us delve into the lives of Cao Pi and Cao Zhi. Following the 16th year of Jian'an, they progressively took the helm of Jian'an literary endeavors, shaping a fashion of poetry and wine-inspired verse, and singing among the literati in Ye Cheng, that is, impromptu poetry. Among them, Cao Pi played a pivotal role in fostering the creation and evaluation of poems and essays, as well as advancing the literary style of the Jian'an era. It is widely regarded that Cao Pi's "Classic Theory-On Essays" provides a comprehensive survey of Jian'an literature [4]. The article says: "Can is good at poetry and prose, and Gan has a sense of freedom, but he is not comparable to Can. For instance,

Can's "Chu Zheng", "Deng Lou", "Huai Fu", and "Zheng Si", as well as Gan's "Xuan Yuan", "Lou Zhi", "Yuan Shan", and "Ju Fu", are notable, albeit not quite on par with the works of Zhang and Cai. Nevertheless, they fall short when compared to other notable pieces. Lin Yu's memorials and records, on the other hand, are contemporary and relevant. Ying Yan's writing is harmonious yet lacks power; Liu Zhen's, while powerful, lacks depth. Kong Rong's style is elevated and admirable, surpassing that of many, yet his arguments are not always convincing, and his reasoning sometimes falls short, resulting in a blend it with ridicule; and his good works are comparable to Yang Ban." Therefore, Cao Pi's evaluation of the style of the works of Jian'an literati has influenced the literary creation of the time to a certain extent. Moreover, this evaluation criterion mirrors the Jian'an literati's aspiration towards grandeur and vigor. In addition, "Classic Theory·On Essays" analyzes articles from multiple dimensions, advocating that articles should not only focus on satire and instruction, but also reflect aesthetic tendencies and personal emotions. Concurrently, he emphasized that works constitute the quintessence of an author's genius, enduring through articles across millennia, in pursuit of life's timeless essence. This is similar to De Gay's description of Cao Pi's view on literature. Obviously, Cao Pi compared "articles" with "making achievements". He believed that articles could also be used to govern the country, and that they were not limited by time and space and would be passed down forever. This indicates that Cao Pi was seeking a path different from that of achieving great deeds and establishing a legacy, namely a path to explore the eternal philosophy of life [5]. Cao Zhi excelled at quoting classics in his poetry and deeply understood their connotations. His "Ode to the Goddess of the Luo River" to some extent continued the writing style of Qu Yuan. This is also similar to De Gay's view, who believes that Cao Zhi's writing style was deeply influenced by "Chuci" and elevated the sentiment of sorrow to a new height. Another example is the "Preface to Painting Praise" which says: "When people see the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, they all admire them. When they see the tyrants of the Three Dynasties, they all feel sad. When they see the usurpers and treacherous heirs, they all gnash their teeth. When they behold the noble and wondrous individuals, they are so captivated that they forget their meals. Upon witnessing the loyal and devoted perish in peril, they bow their heads in respect and sorrow. When they observe the loyal ministers and filial sons, they cannot help but sigh with admiration. When they see the adulterous husbands and jealous women, they cast disapproving glances. Upon encountering concubines and obedient empresses, they heap praises upon them. It is known that the painting is the mirror." This article mentions the admiration for the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors and the condemnation of the tyrants and treacherous ministers. Confucian classics advocate the concept that wise monarchs and ministers should adhere to the principles of propriety and loyalty, as well as mutual respect and responsibilities. Another example is "Xi Ji Fu," where the protagonist vows, 'pointing to the North Pole as a date, I will double my way and go at the same time', "Er Ya-Shi Tian" says "The North Pole is called Beichen." The "Beichen" here comes from "The Analects of Wei Zheng" "Governing with virtue is like the North Star staying in its place and surrounded by many stars." Cao Zhi rewrote it to express his loyalty to Cao Pi [6]. Some people also mentioned that Cao Zhi quoted painting theory in his writing. For instance, in his correspondence to Yang Dezu, it is noted: "Possessing Kong Zhang's talent, he did not remain idle in the realm of poetry and prose, yet frequently asserted his ability to emulate Sima Changqing's style, akin to an artist who intended to paint a tiger but ended up with a dog's likeness." This passage reveals that Cao Zhi incorporated the essence of painting into his writing, with his literary creations reflecting a painting concept that was deeply influenced by his appreciation of painting [7]. In summary, regarding the views of Cao Pi and his son on literature, Liu Xie said: "They both sympathized with the wind and moon, enjoyed the pond and garden, described grace and honor, and recounted feasts. They are generous and unrestrained, with open minds. When expressing opinions, they do not deliberately pursue subtlety and cleverness, but instead speak their minds directly, using sincere words to convey emotions. This means that Cao Pi and Cao Zhi's articles described the natural scenery and life journey in terms of content, and expressed their emotions through them; in terms of form, they tended to be more vivid and not necessarily objective. Regarding applied writing style, Liu Xie agreed with Cao Cao's view that "there is no need to be three times humble to show off" and "do not be extravagant." Liu Xie, in his work 'Wen Xin Diao Long', generally commended the Jian'an style, particularly evident in the works of the Three Caos. He praised Cao Zhi's memorials for their grand conception and concise expression, exemplifying the literary ethos of the era.

Lu Ji's "Wenfu" is regarded by the academic community as the first comprehensive and systematic theory of creation in the history of Chinese literary criticism. The article emphasizes observation, expression of emotions, imagination, layout, sentence formation, etc., and uses the form of fu and rhetoric to make the article lively and not boring. For example: 'At the beginning, they all closed their eyes and listened intently, indulging in deep thought and posing questions, their spirits soaring to great heights' Their spirits soared to great heights, and their eyes sparkled with newfound vitality, rendering the surrounding objects ever more radiant and refined." This paragraph is a description of artistic conception, with vivid images rather than boring reasoning [8]. Liu Xie, in his seminal work 'Wen Xin Diao Long', recognized that Lu Ji exhibited a deliberate and conscious concept of literary style in his creative endeavors., and promoted the development of ancient Chinese literary style from the following points:

First, he developed Yuefu poetry into a literati style. Yuefu poetry, originally composed to accompany music, was marked by its conciseness and elegance. Lu Ji's "Niyuefu" represented a groundbreaking departure from the traditional Yuefu style, discarding the use of music altogether. This marked a shift from the musical roots of Yuefu poetry to a more literati-oriented expression. Secondly, it emphasizes the emotional depth and expression of the fu's subject matter. Lu Ji employed vivid imagery and rich language to portray characters and their experiences, rendering his poems vividly lifelike and deeply emotive. Thirdly, it had a profound influence on the aesthetic landscape of subsequent literary works. In the form of some articles to a certain extent. For instance, according to "Song Zan", among Lu Ji's numerous works, "Gong Chen" stands out as the most notable. It receives mixed praise and criticism, reflecting the flawed style of earlier generations. Similarly, "Xie Yi" comments that Liu Xin's "Yi Tai Chang" is powerful in language and clear in meaning, ranking it among the foremost literary works. In contrast, Lu Ji's "Yi Bai Guan" is concise in wording and precise in facts, serving as the cornerstone of military works [9]. The above shows that the "Song" style broke the original "writing like Fu" style, and the "Yi" style also changed from "strong in words and clear in meaning" to concise and clear words. The time of the formation of Zuo Si's "San Du Fu" was roughly judged to be between the first and third years of Taikang according to the calculations of scholars. Some people say that "San Du Fu" implies the author's strong political inclination. Huangfu Mi of the Jin Dynasty said: "The scholars of the two countries, each bathed in what they heard, each family believed their own land to be blessed, and each individual deemed their own people to be virtuous." Zuo Si's political consciousness in cultural connotations was clearly conscious in his chapters of Dafu. Liu Xie summarized the traits of Han Dafu in "Wenxin Diaolong" as "representing both the urban and rural landscapes, and advocating the lofty principles of righteousness", which signifies that Han Dafu embodies a distinct political framework. "Embodying the country and the countryside" signifies that the fu embodies the will of the state and encompasses a diverse array of social facets; "advocating the great righteousness" means that the article praises virtue and prestige [10]. However, from the history of Chinese fu as a genre, since the Eastern Han Dynasty, Dafu has declined, while Xiaofu has flourished. Hence, it becomes evident that Zuo Si's deliberate adoption of Dafu's cultural consciousness further underscores his expression of personal political orientation through fu. His preface to "San Du Fu" says: "Those who are able to compose fu praise what they see" means that the author achieves the goal of praising the virtue and prestige of the court through genre cognition. This kind of eulogy was not started by Zuo Si, but was a tradition that existed in ancient China and was inherited by later generations. Sima Qian said: "If the ruler is wise and sage but his virtue is not known, it is the fault of the officials." Ban Gu said: "If the ruler, his subjects, men and women have merits and virtues, they should be praised. As their virtues are both credible and beautiful, the chorus of praise will resonate throughout the world, ensuring their names are known and their reputations endure forever." Therefore, the tradition of eulogizing merits and virtues has been adopted by literati since ancient times, but there are differences in the content and writing angles of the articles. Zuo Si also showed his support for the new dynasty when he wrote "Fu of Three Capitals", especially praising the geographical advantages of the current dynasty and praising the virtue and prestige of the new dynasty [11]. In addition, Zuo Si proposed that fu should seek authenticity based on its original intention and conform to the will of the saints; the selection of themes ought to prioritize authenticity, with words grounded firmly in factual evidence. Huangfu Mi agreed with Zuo Si's creative theme of "following its original intention" and "being true to its facts" in "Fu of Three Capitals", and also agreed. It imbues its subject matter with authenticity, leading some scholars to believe that the widespread popularity of "Fu of Three Capitals" is intimately tied to its unwavering pursuit of truth. Furthermore, it embodies an objective historical trend that resonates with people's desire for an unbiased understanding of events during that era, prompting numerous imitations. This trend was further imitated: "Because advocating practicality will pursue the love of knowledge, and to satisfy the love of knowledge, authenticity will be advocated. Advocating practicality as its purpose, seeking truth as the fundamental principle, and satisfying the desire for knowledge as the methodological approach [12]. In a sense, Zuo Si's "Fu of Three Capitals" broke through the existing mechanism of fu writing in the Han Dynasty and was highly appreciated by Huangfu Mi [13]. Huangfu Mi evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of rhetoricians through the teaching of beautiful words and meaning and the combination of the two [14]. As can be seen, their literary style emphasizes realism, inseparable from social factors. As Jiang Jianyun said, "The idea of literature advocating practicality meets the practical needs of Sima to seek support for Confucian political and religious literary concepts after the Jin Dynasty replaced the Wei Dynasty." This is a critical summary of the development of the previous combination of politics and literature.

Zhi Yu's "Wen Zhang Liu Bie Ji" was evaluated in "Sui Shu Jing Ji Zhi" as follows: "After this, the author followed the general collection of articles, and the scholars of rhetoric thought it was profound and took it as an example." It was placed at the beginning of the general collection, which means it has an important position and is also called "the ancestor of the general collection." Xiao Zixian said in "Nan Qi Shu": "Like Zi Huan's evaluation of talents, Zhong Zhi's distinction of literary styles, with Lu Ji's distinction in "Wen Fu", Li Chong's exploration in "Han Lin", Zhang Jing's praise and scrutiny, and Yan Yantu's portrayal of emotions: all of them possess unique perspectives

and blend them together. This shows that Xiao Zixian's list of critics particularly emphasized Zhi Yu's contribution to the distinction of literary styles. Current research has identified over twenty distinct literary genres from historical documents, encompassing styles such as 'odes', 'fu', 'poems', and more, each with its unique characteristics and historical significance. "Wen Zhang Liu Bie Ji" is a general discussion on the classification of literary styles. Of course, there will be ambiguity and confusion in the classification of literary styles, so it is very important to distinguish them reasonably. Zhi Yu's "Articles and Scripts" mainly targets articles from the Han Dynasty, such as Mei Cheng's "Seven Hairs", Sima Xiangru's "Fengshan Wen", Yang Xiong's "Jiechao", among others; Cui Xi's "Dazhi", Ban Biao's "Beizheng Fu", and Ban Gu's "Youtong Fu"; as well as "Yingbin" ("Answering the Guest") and the historical works in "Hanshu", as well as Ban Zhao's "Dongzheng Fu", Shi Cen's "This demonstrates Zhi Yu's profound interest in prominent writers of the Han and Wei dynasties, whose representative works he meticulously compiled into "Articles and Scripts". Concurrently, he categorized these works based on their artistic styles and conducted a thorough analysis of the similarities and differences among them. His "distinguishing between styles" endeavor was aimed at addressing the confusing style phenomenon of the Han Dynasty. "Articles and Scripts" said: "If Ma Rong's "Guangcheng" and "Shanglin" are purely in the style of modern fu, but they are called songs, which is far from the truth." Zhi Yu criticized the stylistic approach in Ma Rong's "Guangcheng" and "Shanglin". The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons says: "Ma Rong's Guangcheng and Shanglin are elegant and similar to fu. How could he manipulate words to such an extent while losing the essence?" Liu Xie, in his work "Wen Xin Diao Long", believed that Ma Rong was guilty of partisanship and greed, as he sided with the powerful and was involved in framing Li Gu while also engaging in corrupt practices. He confused the styles of fu and ode, noting his original intention to write in the ode style but ultimately adopting the fu style, which led to the article being overly ornate and lacking in truthfulness. It can be inferred that Ma Rong's intention in writing Shanglin Song was to express satire and admonition in the style of fu, not to express virtue and power in the style of ode. This indicates that in his actual writing, he failed to distinguish clearly between fu and ode, using the fu style where ode was intended. In summary, the main achievements of Wenxue Liubieji are as follows: First, it constitutes a compilation of essays, wherein the author adheres to contemporary trends [15]. To some extent, it promoted the work of later literati to compile collections. Zhang Taiyan said: "The rise of Wenxuan is probably based on Zhi Yu's Wenxue Liubie, which is called a collection." Second, it formed the basic norms of the style of articles. The Book of Jin describes Zhi Yu as "compiled ancient articles, classified them into thirty volumes, named Liubieji, and each volume was discussed. The words and logic are appropriate and highly valued by the world." (Book of Jin, Volume 51, Biography of Zhi Yu, Vol. 5, p. 1427). The third is to construct a theoretical system of article style. For example, Zhi Yu proposed that "the origin should be the key point, the essence should be the end", which is an important concept of "Wen Zhang Liu Bie Ji" and also paved the way for the formation of the article style theory of "Wen Xin Diao Long". This is consistent with what De Gay said that "Wen Zhang Liu Bie Ji" had a profound influence on later generations, including its subtle influence on "Wen Xin Diao Long" [16]. Zhi Yu summarized and criticized the literature of the Han and Wei dynasties from the perspective of style, and also influenced the continuation and development of some writers in the style. However, from the perspective of contemporary literary history, it also possesses shortcomings; namely, it is challenging to discern the subtle differences in the contribution of literary creators in the corresponding period. However, later scholars supplemented it. For example, in the Biography of Xie Lingyun, it is said: "Since then, the emotions and aspirations have become more extensive. Wang Bao, Liu Xiang, Yang, Ban, Cui, Cai and others have different paths but the same pursuit, and have been the teachers and ancestors of each other. Although the clear words and beautiful tunes are sometimes published in the works, there are also many messy and unclear expressions, strange sounds and solemn airs. For example, Pingzi was exceptionally talented, and his writing was deeply influenced by emotions. His masterpiece was lofty and had been unparalleled for a long time. Regarding the Jian'an period, Cao Cao and the second ancestor, Chen Zhong, both accumulated a wealth of vocabulary and language, while Fu Rong wove emotions into his writing and used it to capture the essence." This shows that Shen Yue saw the timeliness of literature in his works and realized the important role of some typical writers in literary history [17].

5. A CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF CHINESE STYLISTIC THEORY FROM THE 3RD TO 6TH CENTURY

De Gay made outstanding contributions to the study and introduction of Chinese classical philosophy and aesthetics. He translated the entire book "The Art of War" and also compiled renowned ancient Chinese works, including "Lüshi Chunqiu-Guigong" and "Guanzi-Guoxu" [18]. This chapter mentions the Chinese style theory and makes a well-founded argument for it. However, there is a key word in this statement, that is, style. Some scholars argue that the concept of style is inherently complex. From the perspective of ancient Chinese, the term 'style' mainly refers to the unique characteristics and forms of ancient Chinese literature, which have evolved over different historical periods, such as the poetry of the pre-Qin era, the fu (rhyme-prose) of the Han dynasty, the

poetry of the Tang dynasty, the ci (lyric poetry) of the Song dynasty, the drama of the Yuan dynasty, and the novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties [19]. Zhou Zhenfu also said that "the style of filling the gap" is "the function words can make the words and sentences of the article more tightly organized." [20] He holds the belief that style functions as a function word, contributing to the compactness of the words and sentences in the article. De Gay pointed out in his article that before the appearance of "Wenxin Diaolong", China's style theory was scattered and not systematic. Yao Aibin responds to this, suggesting the term 'style' in ancient China likely originated during the Han and Wei dynasties [21]. Lu Xun also proposed that the period in which Cao Pi lived was the "era of literary self-awareness." [22] During the Western Jin Dynasty, 'style' had already become a pivotal literary theory, with stylistic awareness highly developed. Fu Xuan said in "Lianzhu Preface": "Its style is elegant in words and concise in purpose. It does not directly point to things, but instead employs metaphors to convey its intended meaning." Here, "its style" refers to the style of Lianzhu, including the language style, namely "elegant in words and concise in purpose", and the way of expression, namely "using metaphors to express the purpose." Another example is Zhi Yu's "Wen Zhang Liu Bie Ji": "In the past, Ban Gu wrote the Ode to Dai Hou of Anfeng, Shi Cen wrote the Ode to the Departure of the Army, and He Xi wrote the Ode to Empress Deng. The style and meaning of the Ode to Lu were similar. The difference in the words and the style is the change from ancient times to the present." The style they mentioned includes the meaning of style, but it is not just the meaning of style. In other words, its connotation is much richer than style [23]. Mikhail Bakhtin believes that whether it is the style of poetry and lyrics proposed by the ancient Chinese, or the categories of poetry, epic, prose, etc. In the West, each style refers to a certain type of article. For example, from Aristotle's Poetics to Hegel's Aesthetics in the West, and from Liu Xie's The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons to Xu Shizeng's Preface to the Distinction of Styles in China, these are all iconic works, exploring the style of the article. Bakhtin said: "Style encompasses the entirety of creative expression and holds fundamental significance." He further elaborated that in Chinese classical article style theory, 'style' pertains to the article as a cohesive whole, encompassing poetry, lyrics, and songs, and 'fu' can also be categorized as 'poetry style,' 'ci style,' 'song style,' and 'fu style'. In the West, there is no term to represent the whole article, and we can only use poetry, prose, and epic to express it. There is another word, style, which does not really mean the whole article, but refers to the language expression form of the article, so it cannot refer to various types of articles [24]. De Guy posits that the emergence of Chinese style theory was rooted in a period characterized by radical economic and social "changes". Commerce remained parasitic in nature. Cao Cao proposed the "Tuntian" system, which solved some social problems to a certain extent. He pointed out that the new dynasty was not a new government in the social and economic sense, but a special change of the old system. While feudalization still existed, it was relatively limited when compared to Europe's economic and social evolution. In ancient China, there was no ancient land property like that in Europe to develop, so the feudal "change" was not thorough. Herzig believes that De Guy explored the development of Chinese literature and aesthetic theory from the 3rd to the 6th century. He believes that this period was full of conflicts, power decline, but art developed. De Guy's observations regarding the ideological forms of social and political history during that period hold limited value, which is a matter of academic debate [25]. De Guy also mentioned the "Asian mode of production". He called the feudal land distribution system from the 3rd to the 6th century the "Asian mode of production", which is different from the Western land production mode. Kulik posits that between the early 1930s and the mid-1960s, China and other societies previously understood by Marx as the Asian mode of production were reclassified as variants of the feudal mode of production. This reclassification was influenced by the understanding of feudalism's diverse forms, as seen in the distinct economic structures of European and Asian feudal societies, where the latter exhibited a more complex and interconnected relationship between rural and urban economies, as well as a more intricate set of social contradictions. This reflected a certain reluctance, often implicit, to move beyond the theoretical dogmatism inherent in Stalin's strict mechanization process. This tendency is reflected in the materials written by many Marxist scholars and practitioners, such as Maurice Dobb (1950) and Guo Mohao (1957). Perry Anderson supports the view that the Asian mode of production is a stage in the development of productive forces before the ancient mode of production. In discussing the relationship between the state and the economy under the Asian form of property, Marx is mainly concerned with the relationship between appearance and reality. But here lies the true face of land ownership in tribal communities: Oriental despotism seems to have caused economic losses. However, this system was established through the integration of manufacturing and agriculture [26]. In his discussion of the literary style of Cao Cao and his sons, De Gay may have overlooked the significant influence of Confucianism on their poetry, which is evident in their use of Confucian classics and expressions of Confucian ideals. He further stated that Cao Pi's "Classics and Essays" incorporated "Taoist" philosophy, yet remained fundamentally rooted in "Confucian" thought. Thus, one can deduce that De Gay's exploration of Cao Cao and his son's literary flair aligns with the scholarly consensus on the so-called "Jian'an style," albeit with a slight uncertainty regarding its tilt towards Confucianism or Taoism.

Some scholars have noted that Liu Xie's Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons dedicates over half of its

content to exploring literary style theory. In his Preface, it is said: "If it is to discuss the theory of literature and writing, it is limited to distinction." Mr. Yang Mingzhao used "the origin to show the end" to explain the literary style theory adopted by Liu Xie in his article. He further stated that when discussing specific literary styles, he traced their origins back to roots. For example, he pointed out that Qu Yuan's *Li Sao* used "taking the meaning of the classics" and "establishing the meaning based on the classics." This approach, which takes time as its starting point, meticulously delineates the evolution of each literary style, while illustrating the ebb and flow of these styles through emblematic historical incidents, makes Liu Xie's literary style theory have profound characteristics of literary history. This coincides with De Gay's evaluation of Liu in 'The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons', Liu Xie delves into the evolution of literary styles, examining their genesis and historical progression to elucidate the historical laws governing their development and the inherent continuity within the literary tradition. He viewed literature as continually evolving across time and space, believing that the fundamental transformation of literary style is its internal driving force, whereas society and human life constitute the external influences shaping its development. On this basis, Liu Xie constructed a historical literary style classification system [27]. Some scholars also say that Liu Xie's "Wen Xin Diao Long" discusses relevant propositions of literary theory in the style of parallel prose. The 'Wen Xin Diao Long', a literary masterpiece from the Southern Dynasties, has been passed down through the ages and remains a subject of profound study and research by scholars. In addition to possessing a grand system and profound conception, it is also renowned for its outstanding parallel prose. For example, in the chapter "Objects and Colors", it says: "Spring and autumn come and go, yin and yang change, and the movement of objects shakes the heart. When yang energy blossoms, the black horse prances; when yin energy gathers, the red bird retreats, and even the minute insects are stirred. The animals of the four seasons are profound." This passage uses beautiful words to describe the emotions of joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness caused by the change of seasons. [28] As can be seen from the above, Liu Xie's stylistic theory is regarded by De Gay and other scholars, as a stylistic work, holds a significant place in the Chinese literary world, much like the esteemed position of 'The Dream of the Red Chamber' and other classical Chinese novels. The enduring value and influence of a work are significant, as evidenced by its use as a reference by subsequent scholars in their own creations.

In addition, when discussing the term theory, Culler said that we do not need to measure theory with the yardstick of literature. Specifically, theory encapsulates the following characteristics: Firstly, it transcends the confines of a single discipline, and its discourse system transcends the characteristics of any single field; secondly, theory constitutes a logical argument and inference, endeavoring to uncover the essence contained within what we term language, writing, subjects, and so forth. Third, theory is a judgment of basic knowledge and an evaluation of natural concepts. Culler said that theory is more like a certain activity, a force outside of literature. While it is inseparable from literature, it retains an essentially critical nature; Nature is the crystallization of history and culture, necessitating our braveHas broken through the constraints of disciplinary boundaries, and intervening in society through criticism; it is theory that supports us in this endeavor [29]. Habermas also expressed his own views on this. He believed that the fact that scholars such as Derrida were respected by American university literature departments was related to the view of the "rhetorical turn". Derrida holds that rhetoric preceded logic and elucidates that rhetoric can serve as a tool for interpreting all texts, thereby asserting that there is no definitive boundary separating philosophy from literature. Hence, literary criticism can be employed to uncover the fundamental essence of philosophical texts. Of course, literary criticism can also enrich our understanding of philosophical works. n also be regarded as a universal model, that is, " a critical paradigm applied to everyday language and non-everyday language, and the deconstructive method applies this paradigm to philosophy and science, with the intention of revealing their restricted rhetorical meaning." [30] In short, the theoretical propositions mentioned above are more abstract than the stylistic theory mentioned by De Gay. From a disciplinary perspective, Culler feels that the theory has broken through the scope of a certain discipline and plays a role in different disciplines. It is interdisciplinary and has also expanded the scope of the connotation of the theory itself.

6. CONCLUSION

Overall, this paper is based on De Gay's 'Genre Theory in China during the 3rd to 6th Centuries.' The first section of this paper is based on De Gay's theoretical propositions regarding the origins of Chinese style. It starts with a cross-cultural perspective and presents De Gay's views on Chinese style theory before *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, as well as the contributions and deficiencies of ancient literati such as Cao Cao and his sons, Lu Ji, Zuo Si, and Zhi Yu in style theory. In some aspects, I agree with De Gay's stylistic characteristics contained in the articles created by typical literati. I also find De Gay's description of their style to be quite objective, and his analysis of the historical context surrounding their articles to be rather accurate. Nonetheless, De Gay notes in this section that Chinese style theory, prior to *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, lacked systematic

organization in its early stages, existing merely as fragmented stylistic insights. Combining the views of other scholars, this paper does not quite agree with this point. The rationale behind this disagreement lies in De Gay's measurement criteria for Chinese style theory, which exhibit marked Western natural scientific traits. Cultural disparities exist in the historical context, system construction, and interpretation of Chinese style theory by representative literati. His views are also worth considering.

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