

Reinterpretation on Wang Guowei's *Youmei and Hongzhuang*

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Abstract

In Wang Guowei's famous poetics work, *Ren Jian Ci Hua* (人间词话) (1908), he distinguished two categories of Chinese classical aesthetics—*youmei* (优美), or the beautiful, and *hongzhuang* (宏壮), or the magnificent, which appeared in the fourth paragraph that *Wuwozhijing* (无我之境) (worlds without I) can be obtained in the tranquility of nature. Generally regarded as the last master of Chinese Classical Poetics, Wang Guowei had tried to take Chinese traditional poetics discourse and to combine it with the connotation of Western aesthetic theory, rather than simply using Western classical poetics theory to interpret and judge Chinese classical literature or theories.

Keywords: Chinese classical poetics, *youmei* (优美), *hongzhuang* (宏壮), aesthetic theory

1. Introduction

Wang Guowei is generally regarded as the last master of Chinese Classical Poetics. At the same time, his *Review on A Dream of Red Mansions* (红楼梦评论), published in 1904, is considered as the outset of Chinese modern literary theory and criticism. In the studies on Wang Guowei's works, many scholars have pointed out that not only was he nourished by Chinese traditional culture but was also influenced by Western philosophy and aesthetics. Through his writings, the interdisciplinary effect of Wang Guowei's dual thoughts had been vividly expressed. From his earlier works, such as the *Disabuse on Philosophy* (哲学辨惑) (1903) to *On the Academia in Recent Years* (论近年之学术界), *Schopenhauer's Philosophy and Education Theory* (叔本华哲学及教育学说) and other articles, it is obvious that in his early years, Wang Guowei was a new figure who had devoted himself to Western philosophy. This is especially visible in an article titled *Autobiography* (自序), which clearly recorded his study on Schopenhauer and Kant. After the *Autobiography II* (自序二) (1906), Wang Guowei had written that he was tired of philosophy, and had gradually shifted from philosophy to literature, and wanted to seek a direct comfort from it (Wang, Guowei, 2010). However, during this period, he had written a series of Chinese Classical literature reviews, such as the *Short Review on Literature* (文学小言), *Ren Jian Ci Hua* (人间词话) and *Qu Yuan's Literary Spirit* (屈子文学之精神), that still had contained a reflection of the vision of Western theories. As Chen Yinke (陈寅恪) had said, "[Wang] takes the foreign concepts and inherent materials to make mutual references."¹

However, after the Revolution of 1911 or (辛亥革命), Wang Guowei's thoughts had manifested a change. Whether for the narrative of history, for academic considerations, or for the concern of his current situation, his writings showed a new tendency that differed from previously created works. In 1914, Wang Guowei had written in the *Preface of Guo Xue Cong Kan* (国学丛刊序) that the trend of Chinese academia was becoming increasingly meaningless.² Since then, Wang Guowei began to change his cultural position, and had stopped believing that there could be any kind of consistency between Chinese and Western knowledge that implied that Western and Chinese academia was positively correlated. On the contrary, he lamented the subversion and impacts on Chinese traditional thinking caused by Western culture.

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Chinese classical aesthetics—*youmei* (优美), or the beautiful, and *hongzhuang* (宏壮), or the magnificent, which appeared in the fourth paragraph that *Wuwozhijing* (无我之境) (worlds without I) can be obtained in the tranquility of nature. *Youwozhijing* (有我之境) (worlds with I) can be obtained only from the process of changing from dynamic to a static state of being. Thus, *worlds without I* belongs to the beautiful, and the other belongs to the magnificent. Consider the third paragraph, which describes the difference between *worlds without I* and *worlds with I* via the way of observation, or *guan Zhao* (观照): “In the *worlds with I*, observations are from the perspective of me (以我观物), so everything is painted by my colors. In the *worlds without I*, observations are from the perspective of objects (以物观物), so it is unknown, which is the object, and which is me.”³ An induction could be made that Wang Guowei’s *worlds without I* correspond roughly to the beautiful, since they are both based on the poet’s creative thinking of observations from the perspective of objects, since there is no person. Thus, it can be induced that *worlds with I* correspond to the magnificent, since it is written from the poet’s observation of the poet’s own ego. In addition, the third paragraph ends with this: “The ancient poets usually wrote *Ci* [词 or lyrics], which focuses more on *worlds with I*. Most of them could not write *worlds without I*, because only those heroes amongst the poets could achieve that.”⁴ It seems that he implies that the number of the beautiful poems is significantly less than that of the magnificent poems. It could also be seen that Wang Guowei implies that the creation of the beautiful is more difficult to achieve than that of the magnificent as only a rare handful of poets can write those kinds of poems. From the two paragraphs aforementioned, a series of Wang Guowei’s obscure and ambiguous concepts have been conceptualized into detailed discussions and elaborated upon by different scholars: What is the relation between the beautiful and the magnificent? As for the relationship between the two terms, does the former describe the latter’s attributes, or does the latter belong to the former’s category? What is the difference between the view from me and the view from objects? What is the singularity of the heroes who can create *worlds without I*? Is it possible that Wang Guowei had been influenced by Western cultural hegemony to construct a hermeneutical pattern based on Western theories?

I will focus on the duality of Wang Guowei’s system of knowledge, which leads to an internal conflict between two poetic discourses utilized in his research process. I will also focus on an oft-neglected essay named “The Position of *Guya* in Aesthetics” (古雅之在美学上之位置) to elucidate the obscurity between the beautiful and the magnificent, and the relationship of Chinese and Western poetics behind the two terms.

2. The Beautiful and the Magnificent in Western Classical Aesthetics

Taking above questions into consideration, several scholars who delved into Wang Guowei’s works presumed that the beautiful and the magnificent are influenced by Western aesthetic concepts. Some argue that the two terms can be traced to the sublime and to the beautiful in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. Ye Jiaying (叶嘉莹) believes that *worlds with I*, as well as *hongzhuang* (宏壮), have a stake (利害关系) with the poet (which is one of Schopenhauer’s concepts), while *worlds without I*, as well as *youmei* (优美), do not. Luo Gang (罗刚) and Xiao Ying (肖鹰) respectively claim that the theoretical source of Wang Guowei’s argument here is not from Schopenhauer but from Schiller’s *On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature*, and that Wang Guowei tries to reconcile the conflict between Schiller’s and Schopenhauer’s theories.

In Wang Guowei’s manuscripts of *Ren Jian Ci Hua*, one sentence in the third paragraph had been deleted from the final publication: “This is the division of subjective and objective poetry.” In Wang Guowei’s manuscripts, “observations from the perspective of me” is equivalent to “subjective poetry” and “observations from the perspective of objects” is equivalent to “objective poetry”. However, in the seventeenth paragraph, Wang Guowei retained the expression of “subjective poets” and “objective poets”, and had used Li Yu (李煜) as the representative “subjective poet”, for whom “it is not necessary to read much about the world, because the less he reads, the more genuine his emotion is.” On the other hand, he regarded *A Dream of Red Mansions* as a representative work of “objective poem”, and that its author needs to “read more about the world, because the deeper he reads, the more abundant and flexible the materials are.”

The concept of observation, or *guan* (观), in *Ren Jian Ci Hua* is deeply influenced by Schopenhauer’s intuition, or perception. In *Schopenhauer’s Philosophy and Educational Theory* (叔本华哲学及教育学说), Wang Guowei pointed out that “the knowledge of art is all intuitive knowledge, and no concept is mixed in it.”⁵ However, in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, there are two kinds of subjects of perception: one is that an individual suffers in the world due to one’s individual will, the other is kind of pure subject of cognition. In terms of Schopenhauer’s or Kant’s aesthetics, both the beautiful and the sublime are beyond subjective interests, and the individual will, and only a pure subject of cognition is able to grasp the two aesthetic experiences. Wang Guowei’s understanding on Schopenhauer is very precise:

若不视此物为与我有利害之关系，而但观其物，则此物已非特别之物，而代表其物之全种。……而美之中，又有优美与壮美之别。今有一物，令人忘利害之关系，而玩之而不厌者，谓之曰优美之感情。若其物直接不利于吾人之意志，而意志为之破裂，唯由知识冥想其理念者，谓之曰壮美之感情。⁶

“If I do not regard a thing as something that has a stake with me, but only observe it, then this thing would not be

a non-special thing, on behalf of its category. Of beauty, there is a difference between the beautiful [*youmei*] and the magnificent [*hongzhuang*]. If a thing attracts people to forget interests and stakes and to appreciate it, it is called the emotions of the beautiful. If the thing is directly detrimental to the will of the people and only can be obtained by the contemplation of knowledge, then that are the emotions of the magnificent.”

Similarly, in the *Preface of Ren Jian Ci II* (人间词乙稿序), Wang Guowei continued to stress the significance of observation in the creation of the artistic world: “The reason why there is a world in literature is that it has a capacity to observe [...] while I cannot be seen through nothingness, I always exist when observing myself.⁷ Here, the observation (观) emphasizes the possible way to create worlds; that is, the relationship between authors and outside things. That is similar to Schopenhauer’s intuition or perception, as they both assign the most important status to a pure cognitive subject I. On one hand, pure cognitive subject observe things; on the other hand, the subject observes his or herself. The observed I is a kind of self-consciousness, an emotional intuition, while “at the same time is the cognition of the subject of will.”⁸ However, this observation of the pure cognitive subject conflicts with Wang Guowei’s statement that “observations are from the perspective of me so everything is painted by my colors”; it also conflicts with the idea that “the poetry-persons are those who never lose their pure heart”. This conflict exists because the latter two sentences both emphasize an intensive subjective emotion: the genuine emotion. Therefore, Wang Guowei’s so-called *youmei* and *hongzhuang* cannot be equated with the categories of Western classical aesthetics. According to Kant’s view, the sublime and the beautiful are equally important aesthetic judgments, but to the object, the beautiful only involves the form of the object, while the sublime involves the non-form of the object. In other words, the occurrence of the sublime is from things towards subjects, as the sublime occurs through the inescapable impression of an inscrutable outside object upon the subject. Wang Guowei’s *hongzhuang* and *worlds with I* are the opposite of this definition; both of his concepts are generated by subjects towards things—the subject projects his/her own emotions and consciousness upon the surrounding scenery and things.

Based on the discord between the Western concept of sublime and the concept of the world with I, scholars Xiao Ying and Luo Gang argue that the origin source of *youmei/ worlds without I* and *hongzhuang/ world with I* is, in fact, not from Schopenhauer, but from Schiller’s literature. In it, Schiller makes the distinction between the naive and the sentimental. When the poet and nature are in a state of harmony, his/her poems fall into the category of naive poetry, which correspond to the concepts of worlds without I (*youmei*). When the poet and nature are in a state of contradiction, his/her poems are classified as sentimental poetry, which correspond to the concepts of *worlds with I* (*hongzhuang*).⁹ However, to explain Wang Guowei’s concepts with Schiller’s ideas means to inevitably deviate far from the context of Schiller’s epoch. After all, when Schiller distinguished naive poems and sentimental poems, he had focused on the time period of literary changes. That is to say, the distinction is based on the historical development of literature: naive poems emphasize a kind of complete experience and a representation of harmonious nature, in which the poet is satisfied with natural world of reality, thus conveying mimesis is via the way of literary expression. However, according to Schiller, sentimental poets need to bridge the emotional and rational split, as well as to pursue lost harmony as a literary ideal. Schiller’s three types of sentimental poems consist of satirical poems which mock society, and of elegies and pastorals which pursue the ideal; all of the three types of works contain the negation of finite reality. This is not the same as Wang Guowei’s *hongzhuang/ observations from the perspective of me*, and *youmei/ observations from the perspective of objects*. Firstly, Wang Guowei did not use two kinds of worlds as two different periods of literature history. Secondly, Wang Guowei once mentioned that “all the worlds are set up for poets; no poet, no such worlds.” What he upheld is a semblable view as that of the lyricism¹⁰, which is highly different from Schiller’s naive literature based on mimesis.

3. *Youmei* and *Hongzhuang* Inside the Stylistic Theory of Chinese Classical Poetics

As previously mentioned, *youmei* and *hongzhuang* do not seem to be equivalent to Western aesthetic judgments of the beautiful and the sublime. Regardless of any attempts to utilize Schopenhauer’s or Schiller’s points of view to explain Wang Guowei’s philosophy, there are too many unexplained exceptions to fully reconcile the theories. Since *youmei* and *hongzhuang* do not contain the aesthetic categories of *worlds with I* and of *worlds without I*, the next question to explore is whether it is possible to regard the two concepts as two different types of worlds within Chinese literary styles. Wang Guowei wrote his *Ren Jian Ci Hua* according to in a traditional way of evaluating poetry known as *shiwenping* (诗文评). This allows for extraction of some excerpts of his reviews for specific poems, which may assist the reader to get a sense of literary styles to understand the answer to the above-mentioned question.

太白纯以气象胜。“西风残照，汉家陵阙”，寥寥八字，遂关千古登临之口。后世唯范文正之《渔家傲》、夏英公之《喜迁莺》，差足继武，然气象已不逮矣。（第十则）

Li Bai is invincible with atmospheres. “Westerly flicks the sunset light, graves and palaces of the Han Dynasty” (西风残照，汉家陵阙), with only eight characters, he had forced all of the poets who came before him to be

quiet. In later generations, only Fan Zhongyan and Xia Song could continue with this tendency, but their atmospheres never reached that height. (Paragraph 10)

《诗·蒹葭》一篇最得风人深致。晏同叔之“昨夜西风凋碧树，独上高楼，望尽天涯路”，意颇近之。但一洒落，一悲壮耳。（第二十四则）

Jian Jia from in the *Book of Songs* is a most emblematic poem. Yan Shu's verse "westerly yesterday night withered green trees; alone on the high-rise, see that road disappeared in the horizon" (昨夜西风凋碧树，独上高楼，望尽天涯路) has a similar world to it. However, while But one is carefree [or *saluo* 洒落], the other is tragic and moving stirring [or *beizhuang* 悲壮]. (Paragraph 24)

“‘风雨如晦，鸡鸣不已’；‘山峻高以避日兮，下幽晦以多雨，霰雪纷其无垠兮，云霏霏而承宇’；‘树树皆秋色，山山尽落晖’；‘可堪孤馆闭春寒，杜鹃声里斜阳暮’；气象皆相似。”（第三十则）

[These four lines] all share a similar atmosphere. (Paragraph 30)

昭明太子称陶渊明诗“跌宕昭彰，独超众类；抑扬爽朗，莫之与京”。王无功称薛收赋“韵趣高奇，词义晦远，嵯峨萧瑟，真不可言”。词中惜少此二种气象，前者唯东坡，后者唯白石，略得一二耳。（第三十一则）

Xiao Tong praised Tao Yuanming's writings as "variegated and evident, surpassing everyone else; rhythmical and incomparable". Wang Ji praised Xue Shou's rhyme prose (赋) as "noble and unique rhythms with obscure meanings; the bumpy and desolate (萧瑟) is truly really beyond description". It is a pity that the two atmospheres rarely occur in lyrics [or *Ci* 词]—only Su Shi contains got a little from Tao Yuanming's style, the former, and only Jiang Kui contains got a little from Xue Shou's rhyme prose, the latter. (Paragraph 31)

Terms such as *saluo* (洒落) and *beizhuang* (悲壮) undoubtedly refer to the emotions conveyed by poems. The word atmosphere is not only used to describe poets belonging to the Unconstrained School (豪放派), such as Li Bai, whose literary styles are usually magnificent and strong, but also to refer to specific beautiful or bleak poems. If Wang Guowei's commentary is regarded as a kind of impressionistic criticism that has existed within the traditional Chinese poetic discourse system, it is undoubtedly possible to trace his philosophy back to the stylistic theory of Chinese classical poetics. According to the perspective of Chinese classical poetics, *yumei* and *hongzhuang* are not diametrically opposite in stylistic theory; rather, they are a blend of each other. Commentaries of different styles, in particular, with the distinction of dichotomy, can be easily found in theoretical discourse resources in ancient Chinese literary criticism. One such example is Yan Yu's (严羽) summary: "There are probably two [styles], one is *youyoubupo* (优游不迫), one is *chenzhuotongkuai* (沉着痛快)." ¹¹ Also, in Qing Dynasty, Yao Nai (姚鼐) from Tongcheng School came up with a well-known theory named *yinyang gangrou* (阴阳刚柔). In the article *Respond to Lu Xiefei's Letter* (复鲁絜非书), Yao Nai elucidated the distinction between two literary styles by referring to Tao, which is made up of two parts (two kinds of Chi)—yin, or the soft, and yang, or the strong. Yao Nai then said that the best literature is by saints who can mix the two parts into a perfect balance; while it is still good literature if one has a tendency for either part, a balance should be maintained. When a certain prose leans extremely to one style without the other part, it cannot absolutely be called literature. ¹² Only two types of style have to be reconciled and complement each other in order to create a true artistic beauty. The contrast and complementarity of yin and yang are not only the basis of the changes of life, but also gradually evolved into two basic tendencies in the classical Chinese literature style; this embodies the two basic forms of the state of life while regarding literature in an anthropomorphic way. Yin and yang must intersect in order to produce all things, and only the harmonious state of the yin and yang can produce a perfect aesthetic feeling.

On this basis, we can re-review Wang Guowei's most controversial statement in the third paragraph of *Ren Jian Ci Hua*, in which he quoted two lines to exemplify *worlds with I*. The lines he quoted, albeit is consistent with "observations are from the perspective of me, so everything is painted by my colors", have nothing in common with the emotion of *hongzhuang*. However, it can be evaluated from the definition of blending of two literary styles. The line from Ouyang Xiu's (欧阳修) *Dielianhua* (蝶恋花) is a perfect example of this: "Tears asked the taciturn flowers, petals flying over the swing." 泪眼问花花不语，乱红飞过秋千去 This line describes a sad scenery, similar to the concepts of soft and beautiful, but it also expresses weakness and the desolate feelings of the passage of time, which is quite a significant and deep perspective. Therefore, Wang Guowei in Paragraph 27 mentioned: "*Yongshu* [Ouyang Xiu] ... has a deep thought in the unconstrained, which is especially excellent." Yao Nai in the *Preface of Hai Yu Shi Chao* also made a similar evaluation of Ouyang Xiu: "Ouyang and Zeng's prose are partial to the soft beauty ... the majestic and straightforward prose must be the warm and deep (温深而徐婉). Authors of this kind are rare and must be talents who care about the world." ¹³ In addition to this line from the works of Ouyang Xiu, Wang Guowei's analysis of Nalan Xingde (纳兰性德) also possesses a similar internal inconsistency. Paragraph 51 in *Ren Jian Ci Hua* argues that Nalan Xingde can express spectacular worlds. However, in the *Preface of Ren Jian Ci II*, Wang Guowei claimed that, "Nalan's lyrics are desolate and

gorgeous” (悲凉顽艳), from which it can be seen that *youmei* and *hongzhuang* are difficult to distinguish; one can argue that these two concepts do not need to be distinguished, since they are complementary to each other.

The only fallacy of the study of the above-mentioned stylistic theory seems that it ignores the very important correspondence between the concepts of observations from the perspective of me/observations are from the perspective of objects and *youmei/hongzhuang*. This raises the question whether it is possible that the origin of Wang Guowei's discourse exists in Chinese classical poetics. In the *Preface of Ren Jian Ci II*, Wang Guowei claimed that the two types of observations are often mixed; the poem can be biased towards either, but none of the observations can be neglected. This may be a paraphrase of Yao Nai's similar statement from the *Preface of Hai Yu Shi Chao* (海愚诗钞序): “The juxtaposition of yin/yang and strong/soft cannot be neglected”.¹⁴

Paragraph 52 of *Ren Jian Ci Hua* states “Nalan Rongruo [Nalan Xingde] observes things through eyes of nature and expresses emotions with the tongue of the nature. [...] Since Song Dynasty, only he can do that.” Wang Guowei regarded Nalan as the only excellent poet of the Qing Dynasty who undoubtedly belongs to heroes who can write *worlds without I*. There is also a relationship between *observing things* and the theory of style for traditional poetics. Yao Nai explained the relationship between human beings and objects in terms of *yinyang gangrou* that:

自诸子而降，其为文无弗有偏者。其得于阳与刚之美者，则其文如霆，如电，如长风之出谷，如崇山峻崖，如决大川，如奔骐驎。其光也，如杲日，如火，如金镞铁；其于人也，如凭高视远，如君而朝万众，如鼓万勇士而战之。其得于阴与柔之美者，则其文如升初日，如清风，如云，如霞，如烟，如幽林曲涧，如沦，如漾，如珠玉之辉，如鸿鹄之鸣而入寥廓。其于人也，濛乎其如叹，邈乎其如有思，暖乎其如喜，愀乎其如悲。¹⁵

“From the philosophers of the various schools (of the fourth and third centuries B.C.) downwards, there have been none whose writing is not biased (in favor of the yang or the yin). If one has obtained the beauty of the yang and strong, then one's writing will be like thunder, like lightning, like a long wind emerging from the valley, like lofty mountains and steep cliffs, like a great river flooding, like galloping steeds; its light like brilliant sun, like fire, like fine gold covering iron; and compared to human beings, like one leaning from high up and looking afar, like a monarch receiving homage from a multitude of thousands, like one fighting against ten thousand brave warriors aroused by drums. If one has obtained the beauty of the yin and gentle, then one's writing will be like the sun just beginning to rise, like a cool breeze, like clouds, like vapor, like mist, like secluded woods and meandering streams, like ripples, like water gently waving, like the sheen of pearls and jade, like the cry of a wild goose disappearing into silent void; and compared to human beings, like one deeply sighing, or mentally far away and wrapped in thoughts or warmly happy, or sad with changed countenance.”¹⁶

In the quotation above that is based on the yin/yang, Yao Nai made an inner bond between the beauty of real things and the temperament of abstract individual states. In complementary juxtaposition, Wang Guowei's so-called “observations are from the perspective of me, so everything is painted by my colors” intend to show that the expression of external objects is often closely connected together with the author's state of mind. It is authors, with their own emotions and feelings, who are able to have a profound understanding of the relevant objects and to deliver a complete artistic performance, such as Li Bai (“Li Bai is invincible with atmospheres”) and Li Yu (“Li Yu's lyrics can be described as written by blood”). Yet, the evasive level of “observations are from the perspective of objects, so it is not sure which is me or which is the object”, which can only be achieved by heroes (only a handful poets), is in fact the isomorphism of mind and object.

Actually, Liu Xie (刘勰) has already elucidated the ideal subjective state of creation, (神与物游), in the *Shen Si* (神思) of *Wen Xin Diao Long* (文心雕龙). Prior to Liu Xie, Lu Ji (陆机) may have been the first critic who had noticed this particular hypothesis. In the *Rhyme prose of Literature* (文赋), Lu Ji advocated to meditate; the author his or herself is in the universe to observe, to follow the natural way in order to get insights into all things and to grasp the concept of time, and to embrace the purity of the lofty pleasure of creative activities. The first sentence is “standing in the centre of the universe to observe its mysteries (伫中区以玄览)”, which is probably originally from Lao-Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*: “In cleaning your mystic vision, can you make flawless?” (涤除玄览，能无疵乎). That is, authors intuitively observe the natural way without rational knowledge; before designing the structure, they are able to adjust their own mentalities to achieve the state of emptiness and tranquility necessary to deeply understand the minute details of the observed things.

Another line that supports the concept of transcending one's own consciousness states that “their quintessential spirits (ching) gallop to the eight extremities of the earth, their minds wander to the region thousands of feet above” (精骛八极，心游万仞). This explains that when the subject of creation gets rid of sensory perceptions of the object, and purely relies upon spiritual concentration, a miraculous awakening occurs that allows to capture the eternal and the infinite of things. This idea is from Zhuang Zhou (庄周), whose article *Tian Di* (天地) says, “One who forgets about things and forgets about heaven is called a self-forgetter; when one has forgotten one's self, this is called entering heaven.”¹⁷ Both of the writers mentioned above place an emphasis on the freedom of

spiritual activity, which breaks the limits of the forms, and the limits of time and space. The value of natural things is mainly determined through the subject delving into the landscape of nature with an immersive emotional investment; this allows one to get spiritual freedom via the correspondence between forms of objects and emotions of the subject. In the case of the relationship between the mind and object, the story in which Zhuang Zhou had dreamed of transforming into a butterfly, as well as an excerpt from the essay *Da Zong Shi* (大宗师), which reads “not knowing why birth, not knowing why death, not knowing what comes first, not knowing what comes last, as if transforming into things”¹⁸, both describe the cancellation of the relationship between the subject and the object. This also cancels the border between the subjective consciousness and the objective reality, allowing human beings to be combined with the natural things and to wander in the unitary Chi of heaven and earth. This connotation corresponds with Wang Guowei’s so-called “observations are from the perspective of objects, so it is not sure which is me or which is the object.”

The relationship between the author and the object is generally equal to the relationship between emotions, or *qing* (情), and sceneries, or *jing* (景). In the *Short Review on Literature* (文学小言), Wang Guowei had said that the emotion and the scenery are two primary essences of literature. Before Wang Guowei, Wang Fuzhi (王夫之) had also stressed the relationship between emotion and scenery, writing that the two “mutually possess each other’s house”, that is, “Yang enters yin, yin beautifies yang”; only through the “mixing yin and yang” one is able to achieve the situation that “not mutually exclusive, yin and yang inter-contain each other and be high-quality.”¹⁹

In Qing Dynasty, Li Chonghua (李重华), in his *Zhen Yi Zhai Shi Shuo* (贞一斋诗说), had said: “There are two methods in the poetry chanting things, one is to put authors themselves inside the things, one is to stand next to the things”, which also accords with Wang Guowei’s two ways of observation. Yao Nai had, in the *Preface of Dun Zhuo Tang Shi Ji* (敦拙堂诗集序), emphasized the combination of yin/yang and the Tao of heaven and earth, so as to reflect the ideological tradition of unity of human beings and nature. “Literature is art ... when human beings and heaven are one, then the literature is incomparable.” From the perspective of the theory of style in Chinese classical poetics, the elucidation seems to be more on the characteristics of *worlds without I*, and that the more appropriate interpretation that *youmei* and *hongzhuang* should not be split, in order to explain the paradox of their inherent inconsistency.

4. *Youmei* and *Hongzhuang* from the Perspective of *Guya*

At the same time when *Ren Jian Ci Hua* was published, Wang Guowei also published a very important aesthetic article in 1907, titled *The Position of the Guya in Aesthetics* (古雅之在美学上之位置). In this article, Wang Guowei once again clearly discussed the two concepts of *youmei* and *hongzhuang* and had also put forward a rather original concept of *guya* (which may be translated as the quaint). That is actually a conscious construction of theory between the Western and Chinese poetic discourses: “in the Western aesthetics, there has never been an aesthetic category called *guya* that can be juxtaposed with *youmei* and *hongzhuang*.”²⁰ Therefore, it is of great significance to carefully study the concept *guya* for clarification of Wang Guowei’s transformation of academic thoughts and for clarification of the specific motivation for his theoretical composition.

The first of Wang Guowei’s arguments to take into consideration is that beauty is in pure forms, which abandon specific materials and subjective wills or feelings, and which does not involve the relationship of the interests and stakes, nor the purpose of practical functions. The concept of *guya* has the same nature as the general validity of aesthetics, which is also a kind of form that is based on pure beauty. However, while *youmei* and *hongzhuang* belong to the first form that directly expresses the object of beauty, *guya* is not at the same level as them, which is what allows the expression of the first form of beauty:

故除吾人之感情外，凡属于美之对象者，皆形式而非材质也。而一切形式之美，又不可无他形式以表之，惟经过此第二之形式，斯美者愈增其美，而吾人之所谓古雅，即此种第二之形式。即形式之无优美与宏壮之属性者，亦因此第二形式故，而得一种独立之价值，故古雅者，可谓之形式之美之形式之美也。²¹

“In addition to my feelings, everything belongs to the objects of the beauty, which are all forms rather than materials. And all beauty of forms have to be expressed by other forms and through those named as the second forms; this allows the beautiful ones to be more beautiful. My so-called *guya* is this the second form. The forms that are of no nature of *youmei* and *hongzhuang* will be profited from as the second form for obtaining an independent value. Therefore, the *guya* can be described as the beauty of the [second] form of the beauty of the [first] form.”

In his earlier work *Review on Dream of Red Mansions*, Wang Guowei had discussed an essence which contradicts *youmei/hongzhuang*, a primitive *xuanhuo* (眩惑), which may be translated as dizziness. Unlike *youmei* and *hongzhuang*, which are transcendent and rise out of everyday desires, *xuanhuo* is just the opposite. In short, it is not to achieve the pure subject of cognition in an aesthetic relationship, but to reflect the will of the emotional desires in literature, so it is not detached but realistic instead. In the 1907’s article, *The Position of*

Guya in *Aesthetics*, although *guya* is different from the first form of *youmei* and *hongzhuang*, it still is an indispensable factor in literature in terms of the independent value, which is the opposite of *xuanhuo*. *Guya* and *xuanhuo* are two dichotomic concepts that are related to literary parts of non-genius and non-intuitive artificial factors. Nonetheless, *guya* had become a way to explain *youmei* and *hongzhuang*, since only through hard studying and creating are poets able to obtain an elegant aesthetic nature. *Xuanhuo*, on the other hand, hinders the creation of literature, since it prevents poets from rising to the mental state of pure, cognitive subjects. This is because *xuanhuo* originates from the will of individuals, which makes *xuanhuo* fundamentally a kind of anti-aesthetic factor. *Guya*'s surmounting of *xuanhuo*, indicates Wang Guowei's theory of poetics gradually developing independence. It shows the self-reflection, combined with critical thinking, that had led him to no longer blindly treat Western theories as the standard, and to try to find new ideas that can be used with Chinese classical poetics discourse in order to bridge and supplement his theoretical system.

With respect to the aesthetic structure, *guya* has a double connotation since it serves as the second form of the aesthetic experience of the first form. On one hand, it is connected with *youmei*, "the form of beauty makes people calm; the form of *guya* makes people rest; it can also be described as the lower degree of *youmei*"²². On the other hand, it can reflect the characteristics of *hongzhuang*, since "the form of *hongzhuang* often use irresistible forces to evoke reverent feelings inside people; because the form of *guya* is not accustomed to secular eyes and ears, it can evoke a kind of surprise—the beginning of reverent feelings inside people; so it is also reasonable to describe *guya* as the lower degree of *hongzhuang*."²³ Therefore, the position of *guya* seems to be located in the direction of the tendency of *youmei* and *hongzhuang*, but had not yet reached the intuitive experience of the two phenomena. In general, these three are aesthetic patterns. However, Wang Guowei's intention is clearly not to simply provide an aesthetic pattern, but to concern about the aesthetic spirit behind it. For example, Wang Changling (王昌龄) in his *Shi Ge* (诗格) had once defined *guya* as one of the five basic standards of poetry.

From creative thinking in the literary creation practice, *youmei* and *hongzhuang* are the direct manifestations of the form of beauty, and of the inspiration for the talents that embody them. On the contrary, *guya* is a supplement to inspiration, which is a kind of imitation, similar to carving art:

“其去文学上之天才盖远，徒以有文学上之修养故，其所作遂带一种典雅之性质。而后之无艺术上之天才者，亦以其典雅故，遂与第一流之文学家等类而观之。”²⁴

“It is far from the genius of literature, which only due to their literary cultivation, works with the characteristic of *guya* share an elegant nature. Later, writers without genius of art can also be compared to first-class writers by virtue of the elegance in their works.”

Both in his evaluation of Jiang Kui (姜夔), which stated that the work has “no internal beauty, but has capacity of cultivation”, and in his evaluation of Zhou Bangyan (周邦彦), that consisted of “more talented in creating tones, less talented in creating worlds” displayed Wang Guowei's focus on a binary principle of genius/elegance as the inductive way to judge a piece. He believed that Su Shi (苏轼) and Qin Guan's (秦观) lyrics can be regarded as having worlds. Although there may be a difference between *worlds with I* and *worlds without I*, at least they both belong to the poets who can create worlds themselves, with inspiration of genius. By contrast, Jiang Kui, has “no hard work on worlds”, so he does not reach the level of the creation of worlds, that is, not belong to the first form of intuitive beauty; only by virtue of his deliberate formal styles, his lyrics can be classified into the artistic level of the *guya*. Similarly, in Wang Guowei's point of view, the reason that Zhou Bangyan is among first-class authors is because of his skills, and because he is more of the formalistic type of poets who acquire literary rhyming skills but lack innate intuition of creative talents.

It is hard to say that *guya* is a unique concept created by Wang Guowei. The term *guya* itself is derived from the different expressions in Chinese classical poetics, and its emphasis on the connotation of subjective efforts to practice the non-genius knowledge of poetry had previously existed in classical literary theory. For example, in the *Wen Xin Diao Long*, Liu Xie mentioned four factors about writers: “the talent (才), the temperament (气), the learning (学), and the practice (习)”. This had distinguished the innate talent and temperament from the acquired learning and practice, with innate talent and temperament being the fundamental foundation. Despite the difference, acquired learning and practice also play an extremely important role in the formation of the creative personality.

The concept of *guya* and the distinction between *youmei* and *hongzhuang* in different poetic and theoretical discourse provide various representations of contradictions and tensions in Wang Guowei's thought. However, one cannot completely proceed with judging of cultural hegemony, since the texts imply that Wang Guowei had built a system of non-equal participation and dialogue mode, which is unconsciously based on Western theories. It is visible that he had tried to take Chinese traditional poetics discourse and to combine it with the connotation of Western aesthetic theory, rather than simply using Western classical poetics theory to interpret and judge Chinese classical literature or theories.

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¹ The original words are “取外来之观念与固有之材料互相参证”, from Chen Yinke, *Haining Wang Jingan xiansheng yishu xu*, *Wang Guowei quanji*, 20, pp. 213.

² The original words are “自顷孟陬失纪, 海水横流, 大道多歧, 小雅尽废. 番番良士, 劣免儒圃, 莘莘胄子, 翻从城阙. 或乃舍我能掌, 食彼马肝, 土苴百王, 枇糠三古.非无道尽之悲, 弥切天崩之惧”, from Wang Guowei, *Guoxue congkan xu*, *Wang Guowei quanji*, 8, pp. 607.

³ The original words are “有我之境, 以我观物, 故物皆著我之色彩. 无我之境, 以物观物, 故不知何者为我, 何者为物”.

⁴ The original words are “古人为词, 写有我之境者为多. 然未始不能写无我之境, 此在豪杰之士能自树立耳”.

⁵ Wang Guowei, *Schopenhauer's Philosophy and Education Theory* 叔本华哲学及教育学说, *Wang Guowei quanji*, Vol.1, pp.50.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

⁷ *Wang Guowei quanji*, Vol.14, p.682. The original words are “原夫文学之所以有意境者, 以其能观也.然非物无以见我, 而观我之时, 又自有我在”.

⁸ Luo Gang 罗钢, *The Fantasy of Tradition: Wang Guowei's Poetics in the Cross-Cultural Context* 传统的幻象: 跨文化语境中的王国维诗学, (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2015), p.87.

⁹ Xiao Ying 肖鹰, “With I or Without I: Combinations of Nature and Ideal” 有我与无我: 自然与理想的结合方式, *Journal of Tsinghua University* 3:2(2008).

¹⁰ As David Wong and Chen Guoqiu 陈国球 wrote in *The Modernity of Lyricism*, the argument of worlds or *jingjie* 境界, is still inside the tradition of Chinese lyricism.

¹¹ Yan Yu, (2014). *Canglang shihua*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company), pp. 12.

¹² Yao Nai, (2009). *Fang Bao, Yao Nai ji*, ed. Xu Jie and Pan Wuzheng, (Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing), pp. 228.

¹³ Yao Nai, (2009). *Fang Bao, Yao Nai ji*, ed. Xu Jie and Pan Wuzheng, (Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing), pp. 186.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 228.

¹⁶ This part of translation is quoted from James J.Y. Liu's book, *Chinese Theories of Literature*.

¹⁷ The original is “忘乎物, 忘乎天, 其名为忘己. 忘己之人, 是谓入于天”.

¹⁸ The original is “不知所以生, 不知所以死, 不知孰先, 不知孰后, 若化为物”.

¹⁹ The original is “互藏其宅” “阳入阴中, 阴丽阳中” “阴阳浑合” “阳非孤阳, 阴非寡阴, 相函而成质”.

²⁰ Luo Gang, *The Fantasy of Tradition: Wang Guowei's Poetics in the Cross-Cultural Context*, (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2015), p.87.

²¹ Wang Guowei 王国维, *Guya zhi zai meixue shang zhi weizhi* 古雅之在美学上之位置, *Wang Guowei quanji*, Vol.14, pp.108-109.

²² The original is “优美之形式使人心平和; 古雅之形式使人心休息, 故亦可谓之低度之优美”.

²³ The original is “宏壮之形式常以不可抵抗之势力唤起人钦仰之情, 古雅之形式则以不习于世俗之耳目故, 而唤起一种之惊讶, 惊讶者, 钦仰之情之初步, 故虽谓古雅为低度之宏壮亦无不可也.” Wang Guowei 王国维, *Guya zhi zai meixue shang zhi weizhi* 古雅之在美学上之位置, *Wang Guowei quanji*, Vol.14, p.111.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 110.

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