Abstract

This Academic Exercise aims at analysing and assessing the literary thought of Huang Zongxi (黄宗羲) [1610 - 1695], a famous poet and philosopher in the Qing dynasty. Huang's outstanding achievement in classical and historical studies and poetry writing have been widely recognised. However, his literary thought has long been neglected by scholars.

This paper attempts to reconstruct the theoretical framework of Huang's literary thought by assembling his literary viewpoints previously published as prefaces in Chinese classics, history; and from his letters and poetical works.

This study shows how Huang constructs his literary thought by examining the studies conducted by his literary predecessors and the prevailing philosophies of his time. Huang emphasized the importance of social consciousness in literature. He believed that literature must reflect social and political realities. He also felt that good writing must accommodate a flow of inspired and spontaneous feelings and emotions. He actively criticized the imitative style and the rigid coherence to established literary forms widely practiced by his contemporaries. A comparative study in this paper between Huang and his contemporaries, namely Gu Yanwu (顾炎武) [1613 - 1682] and Wang Fuzhi (王夫之) [1619 - 1692], will further substantiate his achievements in literary thought and criticism.