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Committed to bridging tradition and innovation, JHAP explores the intersections of arts, technology, society, and ecology with theoretical depth and practical relevance. We particularly encourage submissions addressing digital-era transformations in humanistic research, cross-cultural dialogues, and contemporary challenges through creative and critical perspectives.

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Narrative, Identity and Communication: The Construction Status and Optimization Path of "Chinese Story" in Online Movies

Yanling Wang [a], **Zongye Gu** [a], **Bingtao Xu** [a,*]

[a] *School of Journalism and Communication, Tianjin Normal University, Tianjin 300387, China*

ABSTRACT

As an important form of online art, online films bear significant responsibilities and missions in promoting the main melody and inspiring positive energy. Given the young demographic of online film audiences, telling stories that align with the main melody, conveying the values of truth, goodness, and beauty, and inspiring positive energy among young audiences while guiding them to enhance their moral judgment and sense of honour are inherent requirements for online films to strengthen their positive orientation. Although the box office revenue of online films has been growing year by year, and an increasing number of films have achieved both box office success and critical acclaim, the overall quality of online films still needs improvement, and their ability to tell Chinese stories effectively remains underdeveloped. Based on an analysis of the current state and issues surrounding online films in telling Chinese stories, this paper proposes three pathways for online films to effectively tell Chinese stories.

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid advancement of the internet and information technology, China's film industry has displayed a wide array of development levels and structural complexities. The integration of internet technology and new media has not only transformed artistic forms of expression but also given rise to numerous innovative genres, sparking significant shifts in both artistic concepts and practices. Online films, as a distinct category, contrast with traditional theatrical films. They represent a new mode of film consumption enabled by the rapid growth of the internet. These films are characterized by relatively low production costs, a runtime exceeding 60 minutes, high production values, a complete narrative structure, and adherence to national policies and regulations, with primary distribution through mobile and online platforms (Ulin, J, C, 2019). In 2014, China's video streaming platform iQiyi introduced the concept of online feature films and set industry standards for this new genre. In 2019, the China Online Film Industry Committee, in collaboration with major platforms such as iQiyi, Youku, and Tencent, issued an industry initiative that further clarified and standardized the definition of online films. Since then, online films have exhibited a trend of structured growth within the mainland Chinese market.

FROM THE MARGINS TO THE MAINSTREAM: RESHAPING THE VALUE OF CHINESE NARRATIVES IN ONLINE FILMS

Since iQiyi introduced its online feature film initiative in 2014, online films have undergone years of evolution, becoming a complementary sector to traditional theatrical films in both content and genre. Over time, they have developed into an industry ecosystem with distinct characteristics. In their early stages, online films experienced rapid growth in quantity, with a focus on short, fast, and efficient production methods aimed at maximizing returns in the shortest time possible. This approach led to widespread issues such as homogenization and imitation. In terms of management, the relatively lax review environment at the time resulted in a surge of low-quality, poorly produced films flooding the market. Since 2018, however, influenced by relevant policies, the number of new online films released in China has steadily declined year on year. Yet, in terms of both film quality and audience preferences, there has been a marked improvement compared to previous years. According to data from the Beacon Professional Edition, The Grey Men topped the 2024 online film box office chart, earning 37.671 million yuan in revenue. It is foreseeable that the development of online films will continue to become increasingly standardized, with their revenue and quality advancing toward more sustainable, high-quality growth.

As a significant form of expression within network literature and the arts, online film holds an important responsibility in promoting key themes and fostering positive energy (Chen, S, & Lunt, P, 2021). Given the young demographic of online film audiences, it is essential for these films to tell stories that highlight core values—such as truth, goodness, and beauty—while inspiring positive energy. This process also aims to guide young viewers in enhancing their moral judgment and cultivating a sense of honor. Strengthening the positive orientation of online films in this way is a fundamental requirement. In the new era, how to use artistic works to tell Chinese stories well has become a shared challenge for cultural workers. This, in turn, represents a new mandate for online films moving forward.

THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF ONLINE FILMS IN TELLING CHINESE STORIES

The genres of online films are becoming increasingly diverse, presenting significant potential for the development of original works. On one hand, due to historical and creative inertia, online films have primarily focused on genres such as fantasy, martial arts, comedy, and mystery. On the other hand, driven by industry regulations and the evolving preferences of real-world audiences, there has been a rise in realist-themed works that center on the lives of ordinary people, contemporary issues, and heroic figures. This shift has broadened the range of genres available within the online film market.

IP-Adapted Films: Achieving Greater Maturity

Currently, a significant number of online films are adaptations of existing intellectual property (IP). On one hand, IP naturally attracts a dedicated audience due to its inherent popularity. On the other hand, IP provides a pre-established narrative framework or character design, which greatly facilitates the creative process. The majority of online films fall under the fantasy adventure genre, while also incorporating elements from other genres. According to statistics, among online films with box office revenues exceeding 10 million yuan, the Ghost Blows IP is the most popular, followed closely by the Di Renjie IP. Notably, online film producers have increasingly focused on adapting traditional classical mythological IPs, marking a proactive effort to tell Chinese stories through this medium. Among these, the Creation of The Gods IP has produced five online films: The Fox Demon Su Daji, Jiang Ziya, Nezha Conquers the Dragon King, Alluring Woman, and The First Myth Clash of Gods. Similarly, the Journey to the West IP has inspired five works: Qi Tian Da Sheng, Biography of Demon, Havoc in Heaven, Flame Mountain, and The Pig King. However, despite the popularity of these IPs, statistical data shows that the cumulative box office revenue for both franchises has yet to exceed 100 million yuan.

The Continued Diversification of Realist Themes

In recent years, mainstream and realist-themed online films have made significant strides in both quantity and quality, with several standout works emerging. Chinese Fighting Man, which tells the story of a delivery rider striving to make a living, earned a box office revenue of 25.87 million yuan and achieved an 8.9 rating on the platform, with a production budget of 15 million yuan. Similarly, films like Fragrance, which focuses on disaster relief and rescue, and The Spring of Salweven, which highlights the spirit of rural poverty alleviation, also garnered high ratings of over 8 on the platform. The diversified development of realist-themed online films is driven by multiple factors. On one hand, the influence of industry policies plays a crucial role, encouraging major online streaming platforms like iQiyi, Youku, and Tencent Video to prioritize the demand for realist films. On the other hand, as the online film industry continues to mature, production teams from the traditional film and television industry, equipped with strong capabilities, have increasingly ventured into this space. This influx of talent has fostered a diverse range of realist-themed works, leading to the widespread integration of realist themes in online films.

Cross-Cultural Elements: Starting To Yield Results

Online films are increasingly integrating cross-cultural elements to tell Chinese stories, reaching diverse audiences through more flexible approaches. Some productions preserve the essence of traditional Chinese culture while incorporating globally popular narrative structures and visual styles. For example, certain martial arts online films depict martial arts rivalries, blending them with Hollywood-style character development arcs, which help overseas audiences better grasp the concept of chivalry (Wong, W, 2019). Other fantasy-themed works cleverly merge divine figures from Chinese mythology with magical settings typical of Western fantasy, thus creating a unique and expansive worldview. This fusion is not merely a collection of disparate elements, but a bridge for cross-cultural communication, constructed through shared cultural themes such as courage, justice, and familial bonds. Market feedback reveals that online films featuring these cross-cultural elements have garnered strong viewership on international platforms. This success not only broadens the global appeal of Chinese stories but also paves new avenues for the internationalization of online film.

CHALLENGES IN TELLING CHINESE STORIES THROUGH ONLINE FILMS

Although online film box office revenues have been steadily increasing, with a growing number of films achieving both commercial success and critical acclaim, there remains a notable imbalance between the total number of online films released and the number of films that generate over 10 million yuan in box office revenue. In other words, the overall quality of online films still requires improvement. As previously mentioned, online film producers have begun actively exploring innovative ways to tell Chinese stories, and while some successful experiences have been accumulated, significant challenges persist.

Narrative Level: Weak Interpretation of Chinese Stories

In recent years, the Chinese online film industry has experienced steady growth in production volume, with numerous adaptations of classic literary works such as Journey to the West and Creation of The Gods. The Journey to the West and Creation of The Gods intellectual properties alone have spawned dozens of online films. However, the quality of these films has not kept pace with their quantity, leading to a market flooded with low-quality productions criticized for their crude storytelling and illogical plots. A high-quality online film cannot rely solely on dazzling special effects, exaggerated costumes, and props. It must also demonstrate refined narrative techniques, anchored in a rigorous script and coherent storyline (Zwarun, L, & Hall, A, 2012). Moreover, it needs a solid academic and cultural foundation to truly resonate—for instance, when adapting the story of Three Times Beating the White Bone Demon, the film should preserve the core themes of distinguishing good from evil while using nuanced character development to convey the deeper logic behind Sun Wukong's rebelliousness and Tang Sanzang's stubbornness.

Unfortunately, many online films take a careless approach to adapting these classics, often employing subversive, reconstructive, or even satirical techniques. Some depict Tang Sanzang as a cunning, opportunistic merchant, reducing Sun Wukong to a comedic caricature. Others simplify the Creation of The Gods narrative into a shallow, childish monster-slaying adventure, stripping away the original text's profound explorations of divine mandate and human nature. While these adaptations may present themselves as innovations on the classics, they ultimately undermine the spiritual essence of Chinese storytelling. This reflects the entertainment-driven trend in film and television adaptations within modern consumer culture (Artz, L, 2015). Film and television works have increasingly become a means of fragmented leisure and entertainment. Creators often prioritize attracting attention with sensational plot twists and quick popularity over a thoughtful exploration and accurate interpretation of the philosophical ideas, ethical concepts, and cultural values embedded in Chinese stories. As a result, many works fail to convey the depth and power of Chinese narratives beyond transient sensory stimulation.

Production Level: the High-Start, Low-End Phenomenon Is Widespread

The online film industry, with its relatively low entry barriers, has attracted a flood of capital and creative talent, resulting in significant disparities in the quality of films available in the market. A notable phenomenon within this landscape is the high-start, low-end trend—many films achieve impressive box office results through extensive pre-release marketing, yet their critical reception remains consistently poor, creating a stark contrast.

This phenomenon is driven by several industry-wide issues. During the promotional phase, some production companies have mastered the traffic formula, overly relying on the fan base and buzz generated by popular intellectual properties (IPs), or resorting to tactics such as inviting celebrity cameos and crafting sensational trailers to elevate audience expectations. For example, a online film adapted from a classic martial arts IP released teaser clips showcasing the protagonist's stylish fight scenes, meticulously designed costumes and props, and appearances by veteran martial arts stars. These elements initially sparked high anticipation, resulting in millions of views on its release day.

However, when audiences actually watched the film, they found that the content was severely disconnected from the promotional materials. The plot was riddled

with logical flaws, the main storyline diluted by numerous irrelevant subplots, and glaring contradictions between scenes. Character development was superficial, with forced motivations, and iconic, well-rounded characters were reduced to flat, one-dimensional symbols that failed to resonate. The production quality was notably subpar—only a few standout scenes from the trailer met expectations, while the rest of the film featured crude special effects, poorly constructed sets, and continuity errors. Overall, it fell far short of the cinematic-quality production promised in the promotional campaign.

What is even more concerning is the rampant trend of imitation within the industry, which further exacerbates the vicious cycle of high expectations followed by disappointing results. Once a particular genre or format achieves market success, a flood of similar works quickly follows. For example, after a particular online film combining suspense and folk elements became wildly popular, dozens of similar films were released within just six months. These films largely adhere to the same plot framework, with even their poster designs and promotional slogans bearing striking similarities. However, they fall far short of the original in narrative depth and production quality. Ultimately, they rely on riding the initial wave of popularity to attract traffic, only to be abandoned by the market due to negative word-of-mouth. This mindset of prioritizing traffic over quality and imitation over innovation not only erodes audience trust but also impedes the sustainable development of the online film industry (Chen, Y, 2024).

Promotion and Distribution: Homogeneous and Monotonous Marketing Strategies

The promotion and distribution of online films are encountering significant challenges, with the increasing homogenization and monotony of marketing strategies forming a major bottleneck in effectively reaching target audiences. From a content perspective, the industry has almost established a fixed promotional template: generating buzz through the film title, employing exaggerated terms to reinforce genre labels (such as epic or revolutionary), or leveraging the popularity of classic IPs to create vague associations. Similarly, poster designs have become formulaic, often featuring a mishmash of celebrity faces and fantastical elements, or mimicking the visual style of similar blockbusters, making it difficult for audiences to quickly identify a film's unique qualities amid a sea of similar imagery.

The industry also relies heavily on the strategy of treating the first six minutes as a golden window for audience acquisition, which has led many films into a vicious cycle (Lagerstrom, L, et al, 2015). In these cases, the first six minutes are excessively intense, while the subsequent content lacks momentum. To capture audience attention quickly, some works strategically place climactic scenes at the beginning or use editing tricks to create a "high-energy illusion." However, this short-sighted approach not only disrupts the narrative flow but also raises doubts about the overall integrity of the film. Audiences are left questioning whether the initial intensity is a genuine reflection of the film's quality or merely a marketing gimmick.

From a marketing standpoint, while the concentration of online platforms aligns with the distribution characteristics of online films, it has also heightened internal competition. The iron triangle of promotional strategies consists of homepage recommendations on streaming platforms, topic virality on social media, and distribution through short video platforms. However, the challenges faced by short video channels are particularly pronounced. In the early stages, short videos capitalized on their ability to deliver fragmented content, becoming an efficient tool for online films to reach younger audiences. A 15-second clip packed with humor, excitement, or emotional moments could drive a significant increase in viewership (Qi, M, et al, 2024).

However, as the market has become more saturated, short video promotion has entered a hyper-competitive phase. The cost of top-tier traffic slots has risen nearly fivefold over the past three years, while user fatigue with movie montages and spoiler-style promotions has intensified, leading to a sustained decline in conversion rates (Huang, R, 2019). Even more concerning is the lack of diversity in marketing strategies, which is also reflected in the insufficient exploration of emerging promotional channels. While some films have attempted collaborations with the gaming and live-streaming sectors, these efforts often remain superficial, failing to create the deeper synergy of content co-creation.

Moreover, offline promotion and distribution have been largely neglected. Only a handful of top-tier films hold small-scale premieres, missing opportunities to leverage city landmarks, themed events, and other promotional settings in the way theatrical films do. When all works are funneled into the same channels and compete for user attention with similar marketing tactics, it not only drives up overall promotional costs but also causes high-quality works to be drowned out in the flood of information due to marketing homogenization. As a result, these films struggle to showcase their true content value.

PATHWAYS FOR ONLINE FILMS TO TELL CHINESE STORIES

Building on high-quality film content, the combined effects of targeted marketing and efficient operations are strengthening the ability of online films to tell Chinese stories. After analyzing the current state and challenges faced by online films in this regard, this article proposes three key pathways for improvement.

Adhering to the "Three Closeness" Principle in Content Creation

The "Three Closeness" principle, originally applied in the Party's propaganda and ideological work, emphasizes being close to reality, close to life, and close to the people. This principle is equally relevant to content creation in online films. Online films should reflect the spirit of the times, maintain a people-centered creative focus, effectively tell Chinese stories, and embody the Chinese ethos. The ideological theme serves as the soul of a film (Stuckrad, K, 2022). Universal themes possess enduring appeal, as they resonate not only with contemporary audiences but with people across all ages and cultures. Creating audiovisual works around the socialist core value system can subtly guide the public toward correct worldviews, perspectives on life, and values, playing a positive role in establishing foundational social moral standards and fostering a constructive social atmosphere.

From the perspective of production companies, there should be a dedicated effort to refine and deeply cultivate content, with the aim of producing high-quality online cultural works. The creation of archetypal characters is central to producing high-quality content (Bassil-Morozow, H, 2024). The artistic execution of these characters not only determines the overall quality of cultural works but also reflects the artistic standards of the era. Only by developing iconic characters can cultural works possess real appeal, emotional resonance, and vitality.

From the perspective of platform operators, the prioritization of high-quality content should be the sole criterion for online scheduling. Platforms should allocate more promotional resources to content that attracts higher user engagement, longer viewing times, and better word-of-mouth reviews. By directly presenting user viewing data, comments, and evaluations, platforms can help audiences avoid the uncertainty of blindly choosing films.

In summary, all reforms should center around content as the core, employing fair and transparent distribution mechanisms, along with multi-dimensional business models, to provide outstanding online films with greater opportunities to stand out.

Integrate Innovation Throughout the Entire Production Process

In recent years, cultural and artistic workers have actively explored and innovated, allowing traditional Chinese art to captivate the world. As mentioned earlier, adapting classical intellectual properties (IPs) has become a significant approach for online films to tell Chinese stories. However, it is important to note that one of the main reasons behind the prevalence of adaptations is the current lack of original screenwriting capabilities. This highlights a deficiency in originality and vitality within China's screenwriting community. Premium film and television works should originate from screenwriters' original creations, as originality carries power, energy, and courage. Therefore, the industry must vigorously encourage creativity and provide the necessary support for outstanding original works.

Furthermore, innovation in realist-themed online films should be prioritized, with continuous progress in both aesthetic expression and value. We must firmly reject pseudo-realism—a portrayal that is disconnected from life and the masses. In contrast to the fleeting popularity of IP-adapted dramas, original online films have the potential to better convey profound themes and strive for artistic excellence, offering audiences more lasting appeal.

Online film creators should aim high, embracing innovation in line with the times, and continuously explore and refine the effective implementation of realism. They should use their own artistic personalities to drive this innovation. Creators must also cultivate a craftsman's spirit, staying grounded and avoiding superficiality. It is essential to respect the true nature of life and authentically portray the essence of characters (Grossberg, L, 1993). Only realism crafted with a craftsman's spirit can withstand the test of time, leaving an indelible mark in the ever-evolving landscape of cinematic art.

Leveraging New Platforms for Comprehensive Marketing

With the rise of the online film industry, numerous platforms have actively explored cross-media marketing strategies to broaden the promotional channels for films. At present, the promotional and marketing budgets for top-tier online films are on par with those of theatrical releases, and online films are increasingly demonstrating a trend toward diversified marketing approaches.

Online promotion is conducted through emerging platforms and channels such as social media, live streaming, bullet comments, and short videos. Offline, comprehensive promotional efforts are executed through roadshows and scene-based marketing. For instance, The Enchanting Phantom utilized a Weibo cloud roadshow live stream for promotion and, following the film's release, leveraged the influence of Weibo KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) to encourage audience reviews, effectively spreading word-of-mouth and sustaining the film's popularity.

The marketing strategy for online films is diverse, encompassing themed season marketing, IP marketing, word-of-mouth promotion, and the integration of short videos and platform marketing to establish a comprehensive, multi-dimensional marketing system (Araujo, A, V, F, 2018). Additionally, video platforms leverage their resource advantages to offer robust support for online film marketing. For example, iQiyi launched a joint marketing program, while Youku introduced its "youku" commercial cooperation model.

In terms of marketing strategies, there is a strong focus on the direct promotional impact of marketing on the film's revenue-sharing box office. In terms of marketing methods, high-quality promotional materials are employed to enhance the precision of ad targeting. Tencent Video and Youku have also introduced dedicated ad slots for online films, while iQiyi continues to improve the conversion efficiency of its existing performance-based ad formats. As a result, the personalized recommendation and commercial marketing capabilities within video platforms are gradually improving.

CONCLUSION

Currently, the development trend of online films is characterized by standardization, orderliness, and quality improvement. Alongside the steady growth of the entire industry and the domestic film sector as a whole, online films are showing positive progress across multiple dimensions, including industry regulation, capital investment, genre innovation, box office performance, and reputation building. We have every reason to believe that online films will continue to surpass their previous achievements, making new strides in telling Chinese stories and promoting Chinese culture. In doing so, they will contribute significantly to the flourishing development of China's film industry.

Conflicts of Interest The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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A Study on Interaction Optimization of Home Service Robots Based on Generative AI: Focusing on the Aging Population

Yang Wang [a], **Zhangyi Ye** [a], **Wei Guo** [b], **Kyung Min Hong** [a,*]

[a] *Daejin University, Pocheon 11159, South Korea*
[b] *Namseoul University, Cheonan 31020, South Korea*

KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of smart home technologies, increased market demand, and policy backing have facilitated the extensive deployment of home service robots. However, the complexity of domestic environments has gradually exposed the shortcomings of traditional household robots. With the advancement of generative AI, home robots can now better comprehend natural language and handle diverse data, enabling them to deliver more personalized intelligent services. This paper explores the applications of generative AI-based robots in multimodal interaction, emotional computing, and intelligent services through the analysis of typical domestic robot product cases from both home and international markets. To improve user experience, this paper proposes innovative strategies that integrate emotional intelligence, personalized services, adaptive learning, and augmented reality technologies, with the goal of enhancing the performance of robots in interacting with elderly users, offering emotional companionship, and adapting to smart homes, thus improving elderly users' experiences with intelligent, personalized, and emotional services.

INTRODUCTION

Propelled by the "Internet Plus" initiative and advances in intelligent manufacturing, home service robots are being deployed in a growing number of households. By integrating speech recognition, computer vision, and multimodal perception, home service robots deliver convenient, personalized assistance and have become pivotal components of smart home systems[1]. Generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI), via advanced natural language processing, has substantially advanced home service robots capabilities, enhancing language comprehension, affective expression, and context-sensitive reasoning.

Concurrently, accelerating population aging further complicates inherently complex household environments, drawing increased attention to home service robots. On 9 June 2025, China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly issued the "Notice on Paired Key-Problem Tackling and Scenario-Application Pilot Work for Intelligent Elderly-Care Service Robots," aiming to direct home service robots development toward improving older adults' quality of life and alleviating the burden of family

Table 1 | Differences in Interaction Experience with Smart Devices Between Younger and Aging Groups

Dimension	Younger	Aging
Technology Acceptance	High, quick adaptation, strong understanding	Lower, resistance to complexity, adaptation difficulties
Language Interaction Ability	Natural, fluent, easy comprehension	Weaker comprehension, pronunciation barriers
Emotional Feedback Needs	Rational, efficiency-oriented, functional	Highly dependent on emotional responses, prefers humanized interactions
Tolerance for Complexity	High, able to accept complex features	Low, prefers simple, intuitive interfaces
Visual Perception Ability	Average, strong visual functions	Weaker, needs larger fonts, higher contrast
Auditory Perception Ability	Average, good hearing	Weaker, needs amplification, clearer speech
Physical and Mobility Abilities	Strong, free interaction	Weaker, may need supportive devices
Safety Awareness	High, knows how to operate safely	Highly sensitive to safety, aware of risks
Cognitive Response Time	Fast, quick to react and adapt	Slower, needs more time to process and respond

caregiving[2]. Globally, governments and enterprises are advancing innovations in home service robots, with research focusing on human–robot empathy, multimodal interaction, and proactive service.

Despite the growing adoption of Gen AI in home service robots, the literature largely emphasizes isolated technological breakthroughs, with limited attention to holistic interaction optimization and to the needs of users across age groups. Among older adults, cognitive, affective, and physiological heterogeneity means that conventional robots often fail to provide adequate socioemotional companionship and intelligent interaction[3]. Consequently, leveraging Gen AI to improve the interaction experience of home service robots has become a pressing challenge for the smart home domain.

The present study examines how Gen AI can optimize interaction in home service robots—particularly for older users—proposes targeted strategies, and offers theoretical and practical guidance to advance the field.

USER EXPERIENCE THEORY AND AGING POPULATION

User experience (UX) theory originates in the field of human–computer interaction (HCI) and is among the core topics of contemporary design research. Cognitive psychologist Donald Norman introduced the concept in the 1990s, arguing that user experience extends beyond product usability to encompass users' emotions, psychological responses, and subjective satisfaction during use[4].He further maintained that design should shift from a product-centered to a user-centered orientation, explicitly considering users' needs, expectations, and emotions to achieve harmony between technology and people[5].Given heterogeneity in users' needs and affect, their experiences necessarily vary with context of use.

With the advent of an aging society, the application of UX theory has become increasingly important. Older adults differ markedly from younger users in cognitive, emotional, and physical status, implying that the design of intelligent products must address not only functionality and intelligence but also the physiological and psychological needs of older users[6].

Moreover, the challenges older adults face when using intelligent products differ from those encountered by younger users[7]. First, sensory abilities often decline in later life, especially vision and hearing[8].Such sensory decline can lead to incomplete information transmission or misinterpretation of instructions. Second, age-related reductions in cognition and memory make it difficult for older adults to understand and execute complex instructions[9].

Furthermore, the affective needs of older adults warrant careful attention. With advancing age, social networks tend to contract, intensifying loneliness and affective needs[10].Emotional design is therefore particularly important for improving user experience. The application of Gen AI enables home service robots to more accurately identify older adults' affective needs and to provide personalized interactive feedback, thereby mitigating loneliness and strengthening trust and reliance. The differences in the interaction experience with smart devices between younger and aging groups are shown in **Table 1**.

As home service robots technologies advance, the interaction experiences of older adults have become a central consideration for design and optimization[11]. In home service robots design, user experience (UX) theory provides a theoretical framework and practical methods for improving the quality of interaction between robots and older adults. home service robots should be conceived not merely as tools but also as companions for older adults.

Table 2 | Core Differences Between 'Traditional Robots' and 'Gen AI-powered Robots' in the Field of Service Interaction

Dimension / Comparison	Traditional Robots	Robots Empowered by Gen AI
Interaction Ability	Rule-based, fixed interaction, pre-set scripts	Natural language generation, open-ended dialogue, adaptable
Emotional Perception And Expression	Simple emotional algorithms (e.g., facial expressions, tone)	Wide range of emotional expressions, empathetic communication
Learning And Adaptation Ability	Pre-programming, manual intervention required	Self-adaptation, few-shot learning, contextual reasoning
Knowledge Reasoning And Creativity	Predefined knowledge bases, limited creativity	Reasoning, content generation, suggestions, multimodal creativity
Multimodal Interaction Ability	Basic perception (voice, images), weak fusion	Multimodal integration (voice, text, images, video), strong understanding
Service Personalization Level	User tags, manual rules, weak adaptability	Dynamic adjustments based on history and feedback, high personalization
Self-Explanation And Transparency	No explanation, execution process shown	Explanatory text, enhanced decision-making transparency

Figure 1 | Bionic Robots Appeared at the Zhongguancun Forum Annual Conference (http://www.bkmedia.cn/)

GEN AI-ENABLED HOME SERVICE ROBOTS

Traditional home service robots, due to their functional limitations, have gradually failed to meet the increasingly complex demands and changes in modern household environments. Through its strong natural language understanding and content generation capabilities, Gen AI is emerging as a key technology reshaping human–computer interaction. It leverages large-scale deep neural networks to model and reason over multidimensional data—including language, knowledge, and affect—thereby enabling complex tasks such as natural dialogue, affective support, knowledge integration, and multimodal content generation[12]. As large-scale AI models advance, Gen AI applications in the home service robots domain are deepening, driving more personalized, affective, and intelligent interaction experiences. The core differences between "traditional robots" and "Gen AI- powered robots" in the service interaction domain are shown in **Table 2**.

At the Zhongguancun Forum Annual Conference in March 2025, several leading technology companies showcased home service robot (home service robots) technologies built on large-scale Gen AI models[13]. These systems demonstrate deep understanding of natural language and multimodal data, deliver personalized intelligent services, and exhibit strong interactive and autonomous capabilities. They perform well in language understanding, image recognition, and multimodal processing, enabling precise and efficient intelligent support across diverse domestic scenarios.

Drawing on the robots exhibited at the event and on comparable products abroad, this paper compiles nine representative home service robots driven by large-scale Gen AI models. The **Table 3** summarizes their application scenarios, advantages, and distinguishing features.

Through the research conducted on the above content, Gen AI has prominently demonstrated its substantial advantages in enhancing the natural dialogue capabilities of home service robots. Traditional human–computer interaction systems typically follow an "instruction-

Table 3 | Functions and Products of Gen AI-based Home Service Robots at Home and Abroad

Company	Large Model	Application Scenarios	Product Advantages and Features
Baidu	ERNIE	Search, smart assistants, content creation	Strong language capabilities, multimodal input/output, enhanced personalization
Alibaba	Qwen	Customer service, education, finance, smart speakers	Multi-scenario integration, home schedules, health advice, user engagement
Amazon	Alexa+	Security, reminders, voice control	Natural dialogue, complex tasks, mobile platform, home monitoring integration
LG	EXAONE	Home management, companionship, monitoring	Movable AI agent, multimodal perception, conversational interaction
Tencent	Hun Yuan	WeChat, QQ, responses, multimedia, retail, healthcare	Chinese reasoning, multimodal interaction, multi-platform applications
ECOVACS	YIKO-GPT	Floor cleaning, remote control	Natural language interaction, multi-turn conversation, real-time control
iFlytek	Spark Desk	Voice assistants, education, speech recognition	Strong recognition, multilingual adaptability, AI+education, AI+healthcare
SenseTime	Sense Nova	Digital humans, virtual assistants, facial recognition	Humanized interaction, virtual expressiveness, emotional computing
Megvii	Brain++	Smart cities, security, robot perception	Enhanced perception, Gen AI technology, multi-scenario integration

Figure 2 | Home Service Robots Doing Household Chores (https://news.cnr.cn/)

response" model, lacking deep contextual understanding and personalized expression, which makes it challenging to effectively address users' evolving needs. However, by leveraging contextual situational awareness, Gen AI enables multi-turn dialogues and autonomous knowledge generation, allowing for smoother and more natural communication based on users' historical behavior, conversational context, and tonal shifts[14]. In the smart home application scenario, users can engage in real-time communication with robots via voice for tasks such as life reminders, health management, and household chores. Gen AI not only allows for more precise understanding of user needs but also proactively offers suggestions and adapts to user preferences over time, ultimately achieving the goal of adaptive service.

Furthermore, Gen AI has introduced more advanced emotional computing and companionship functions to home service robots. As mental health issues such as loneliness become increasingly prominent within the elderly population, emotional services are gradually emerging as a key design focus for robots. By leveraging emotion recognition algorithms and emotion generation models, Gen AI can analyze multimodal signals such as users' voice, facial expressions, and body movements to assess their emotional states and generate comforting and caring responses appropriate to the situation[15]. This emotional interaction significantly enhances users' sense of belonging and well-being. Currently, several leading products can automatically generate care reminders or emotional support based on elderly users' daily routines and health status, even

proactively encouraging communication with family members to alleviate social isolation.

On the other hand, Gen AI's multimodal interaction capabilities have brought innovative advancements to the smart home experience. In addition to supporting text and voice interactions, Gen AI can also automatically generate images, videos, audio, and other content as needed[16]. While meeting the cognitive training and entertainment needs of elderly users, Gen AI can create personalized puzzle games, targeted content recommendations, or memory albums, thereby greatly enriching the product's entertainment and emotional value. In addition, by integrating Internet of Things (IoT) technology, Gen AI enables environmental awareness and intelligent adjustment[17]. For example, based on user behavior patterns, Gen AI can automatically adjust home lighting, temperature, and security settings, creating a smart and adaptive living environment for users.

INTERACTION EXPERIENCE OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES DRIVEN BY GEN AI

Through case studies of typical home service robot products currently on the market, we have conducted an in-depth analysis of the actual performance and main issues of Gen AI-driven robots in service interaction experiences. Based on the above analysis, this paper proposes targeted strategies for optimizing interaction experiences.

Emotional Intelligence

Gen AI demonstrates significant potential in emotion recognition and processing, capable of analyzing and assessing speech, facial expressions, and behavioral patterns. Home service robots utilizing this capability can possess emotional intelligence, making their interaction more diverse and nuanced. The inclusion of emotional intelligence enhances the adaptability of robot functionalities and endows them with emotional companionship characteristics, fostering a more natural and humanized interaction with users.

Traditional home robots mostly function as tools, responding based on fixed programs or instructions, lacking emotional understanding and resonance. The emotional intelligence module can capture and analyze the user's emotional state in real-time, recognizing emotions such as anxiety, happiness, anger, and fatigue through voice tone, facial expressions, and body posture, and adjusting tone, content, and environmental parameters accordingly. When users experience anxiety or fatigue, the robot can offer emotional support through a gentle tone, soothing language, or by playing relaxing music.

Traditional home robots often struggle to meet the emotional needs of elderly individuals, such as loneliness, emotional emptiness, and mood fluctuations.

However, home service robots with emotional intelligence can provide detailed and considerate companionship by accurately identifying emotions and offering personalized responses. When loneliness or anxiety is detected, the robot can not only comfort the user with voice but also utilize facial expression recognition to further assess emotional changes, adjusting its interaction strategies in a timely manner to offer a more humanized companionship experience.

Adaptation and Personalization

Compared to traditional intelligence, the enhanced data processing and learning capabilities of Gen AI offer new opportunities for innovation in service robots. Service robots can utilize adaptive learning technologies to deeply learn from the behaviors, contexts, and life patterns of household members, providing personalized services and predicting actions. By combining adaptive learning with personalized predictions, robots can not only respond more quickly to user needs but also proactively provide services even before users express their requirements, thereby preemptively meeting needs.

The key to this innovative strategy lies in the personalized behavior prediction model, which allows robots to forecast future needs based on users' historical behavior data. After analyzing users' daily activity logs, robots can continuously optimize service strategies and identify potential needs in advance. For instance, by understanding users' wake-up times, dietary habits, and work schedules, robots can automatically send health reminders, adjust the home environment, and even inquire if help is needed. In addition to regular tasks, this prediction can address special situations, such as reminding elderly users to take medication or schedule health check-ups. The robot's proactive involvement can improve users' quality of life, particularly for elderly individuals, reducing emergencies and enhancing their independence and sense of security.

For instance, with elderly individuals living alone, home service robots can analyze their daily wake-up time, eating habits, and routine activities to automatically adjust their schedules. The robot can remind the elderly to eat breakfast, take medication on time, suggest suitable walking and home activities, and coordinate with smart home devices to adjust indoor temperature and lighting, creating a more comfortable living environment to enhance life quality.

Immersive Interaction With XR Technology Integration

With the rapid development of extended reality (XR) technology, home service robots, through integration with XR, can provide users with a more immersive interaction experience. XR encompasses augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), and when combined with Gen AI, it not only enhances the robot's ability to

perceive vision and space but also improves the user interaction experience.

Traditional interaction methods primarily rely on voice and touchscreen; however, with XR devices, users can gain a more immersive experience. For example, after wearing a VR headset, users can interact with robots, enter virtual environments, and break free from the constraints of text or voice. AR technology overlays virtual information onto the real world, allowing users to see real-time guidance and advice from the robot through AR glasses or screens, enabling more intuitive spatial interaction.

This innovative strategy overcomes the limitations of traditional interaction, granting robots stronger intelligent perception capabilities to sense and understand user needs in three-dimensional space. This XR-integrated interaction method provides users with a novel sensory experience, especially for elderly users, as XR technology can effectively reduce their unfamiliarity with high-tech devices and ease of use, increasing engagement and interest.

For example, elderly users can experience "virtual tourism" at home through VR devices, interact with family members remotely, and enjoy family time. AR technology also helps them learn daily living skills, such as using kitchen appliances or performing basic home care tasks, with AR glasses providing real-time operational guidance and feedback when difficulties arise.

Multimodal Collaborative Interaction

Traditional home service robots typically rely on voice recognition or touchscreen input, which, while simple and intuitive, prove inflexible and limited in complex environments. To address this issue, multimodal interaction systems have emerged as a key technology for enhancing user experience.

Multimodal collaborative intelligence systems integrate various sensory modalities such as vision, touch, and hearing, enabling multidimensional interactions between humans and devices. Home service robots, through this technology, can automatically switch interaction modes based on the environment and user needs. For example, by combining visual recognition, speech recognition, gesture control, and haptic feedback technologies, robots can provide more natural and seamless responses during user operations, enhancing both interaction quality and convenience.

In practical applications, robots work in synergy through various sensory technologies. By combining eye-tracking and voice commands, they can accurately capture user intentions. For example, when a user gestures with their eyes to direct the robot, the robot not only understands the intent but also responds according to the voice command, improving the flexibility and accuracy of interaction. Furthermore, the inclusion of gesture control technology allows users to operate devices through simple gestures without needing voice commands. Adjusting volume, lighting brightness, or temperature can be done effortlessly, greatly improving operational convenience.

Smart Device Integration

The widespread adoption of smart home devices has created an extensive data network of various household devices, such as smart locks, lighting systems, and appliances. Traditional smart home devices typically perform simple collaborative functions through single commands, often resulting in fragmented user experiences. To enhance the level of smart living, Gen AI improves the collaboration between different smart devices, thereby enhancing the intelligence and personalization of home services.

The core of this innovative strategy is to establish an efficient smart home system integration platform using Gen AI, enabling devices to seamlessly connect and collaborate effectively. Through this platform, home service robots are no longer limited to single tasks but can interact and collaborate with other devices. For example, the robot can automatically adjust the home's temperature, humidity, and lighting based on the user's behaviors, habits, and external environmental changes. When the user leaves home, the robot links with the security system and activates the security mode automatically.

Data Privacy Protection

Home service robots are indispensable in areas such as health monitoring and emotional companionship. These robots, when providing services to users, need to collect and process large amounts of sensitive personal data, such as daily activities, health conditions, and emotional changes. Ensuring the privacy and security of this data has become an urgent issue that needs to be addressed. Especially in Gen AI decision-making processes, the "black-box" effect makes it difficult for users to understand how data is collected and used, which may reduce their trust in the robots and, in turn, impact their adoption.

To address this issue, this paper proposes a new solution that combines Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) technology with a transparent data privacy protection mechanism. With XAI, the decision-making process of Gen AI models can be visualized and explained, enabling users to understand how robots collect, process, and use personal data. In health monitoring scenarios, users can clearly see how the robot provides personalized recommendations based on health data such as weight and blood sugar, and the purpose of each piece of data used. This transparent mechanism not only enhances user trust but also alleviates concerns regarding privacy issues.

In addition to explainability, a transparent data privacy protection mechanism is also crucial. The system should allow users to view and adjust the robot's data access permissions at any time. The robot can present the privacy policy through a simple interface, clearly

outlining the processes of data collection, storage, and processing to ensure users understand every step. Users should also be able to control data access and decide whether to share certain information. For example, in health monitoring, users can decide whether to share data such as weight and blood sugar with the robot and whether to accept personalized health advice.

CONCLUSION

This study combines industry practice, academic research, and user experience (UX) theory to propose strategies for optimizing the interaction experience of Gen AI-driven home service robots, which primarily include emotional intelligence, personalized adaptability, XR-enhanced immersion, multimodal collaboration, smart device integration, and privacy-preserving explainability.

Emotion-aware AI plays a crucial role in improving the mental health of elderly users. Through multimodal emotion recognition (such as voice, facial expressions, and gestures), generative AI robots can adjust their interaction styles based on the user's emotional state, alleviating feelings of loneliness and anxiety. The adaptive learning capability of Gen AI enables robots to predict and proactively respond to the needs of elderly users, thereby enhancing task compliance and service personalization.

XR technology offers an immersive environment for elderly users, reducing cognitive load and social isolation, while bridging the "digital divide." By combining eye-tracking, gesture control, and voice recognition, multimodal collaboration technologies enable robots to better adapt to users with sensory impairments. With the help of explainable AI (XAI) models, robots enhance the transparency of decision-making processes, thereby increasing user trust and addressing data security concerns.

This study expands user experience theory by integrating the adaptability of generative AI and affective computing as core elements, proposing design strategies for home service robots focused on elderly populations, thus addressing gaps in prior human-computer interaction research. Furthermore, it offers practical guidance to the industry and provides scalable solutions for global markets. Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of these robots in real-world settings, explore the influence of cultural differences on emotional interaction norms, and address energy efficiency issues in generative AI models to facilitate cost-effective deployment.

In conclusion, Gen AI-driven home service robots meet the household needs of elderly users through personalized, emotionally resonant, and user-centered services. Implementing the strategies outlined in this study will help create more inclusive, trustworthy, and emotionally engaging robots to address the challenges of the aging global population.

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The Practice of AI-Generated Gongbi Painting: Comparative Analysis of Multi-Platform Tools and Stylistic Exploration

Mohan Kan [a,*]

[a] *Baekseok University, Cheonan 31065, South Korea*

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the capabilities and limitations of artificial intelligence (AI) image generation platforms in simulating the stylistic features of traditional Chinese Gongbi painting. Focusing on four widely used platforms—leonardo.ai, Doubao, ChatGPT, and Artbreeder—the research conducts a comparative analysis across two key modalities: text-to-image and image-to-image generation. Using parameters such as composition, line quality, color treatment, and style fidelity, the study evaluates each platform's performance in reproducing the refined aesthetics of Gongbi painting. The classic Chinese art theory Six Principles of Xie He is employed as a critical framework, assessing the AI-generated images through six dimensions: spirit resonance (qiyun), structural brushwork (gufa), formal likeness, color application, compositional arrangement, and stylistic imitation. Findings reveal that while AI systems demonstrate competence in replicating visual structures and color harmonies—making them suitable for preliminary sketching and stylistic exploration—they struggle with the nuanced expression of brush rhythm, cultural semantics, and artistic intentionality that define traditional Chinese painting. The study concludes that although current AI platforms cannot replace human artists as primary creative agents, they serve as valuable tools for inspiration, stylistic experimentation, and augmenting traditional workflows. This research thus contributes to a deeper understanding of how AI can interact with and extend the practices of classical art in the contemporary technological context.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have witnessed rapid and continuous development, particularly achieving groundbreaking progress in fields such as deep learning, image recognition, and natural language processing. These advancements have brought unprecedented innovation to the field of image generation, significantly increasing AI's participation in artistic creation. From early applications in basic style transfer to current capabilities in generating highly aesthetic works based on textual prompts or visual references, AI image generation platforms are gradually becoming essential tools in contemporary visual practice.

Notably, in the area of stylistic simulation, AI is now capable of approximating classical Western styles such as Impressionism and Surrealism, and has also begun to engage with Eastern traditional painting styles that are deeply rooted in regional culture and specialized techniques—an emerging trend that has drawn increasing attention from both scholars and artists.

Among these, Chinese Gongbi painting stands as one of the most representative forms within the traditional Chinese painting system, with a long historical lineage and a highly rigorous technical framework. Since its maturation during the Tang Dynasty, Gongbi painting has been characterized by meticulously refined line work, multi-layered coloring techniques, and carefully structured compositions that emphasize symmetry and spatial rhythm. Unlike the expressive and interpretive qualities of Xieyi (freehand) painting, Gongbi demands both precise figurative representation and harmonious integration of brushwork, color, and compositional energy. It values the unity of form and spirit, requiring from the artist a high level of aesthetic judgment, observational acuity, and technical mastery. These qualities also present significant challenges for AI systems attempting to emulate this style.

At present, numerous AI image generation platforms have emerged, including DALL·E, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, Leonardo.ai, Doubao (ByteDance), and Artbreeder, each employing distinct algorithmic architectures and generative models. However, they share a common goal: to convert abstract natural language descriptions into concrete visual imagery through deep generative models. Increasingly, these platforms demonstrate enhanced capabilities in text-image alignment and stylistic control, making them adept at reproducing specific visual styles and contextual content with notable vividness. Nevertheless, when faced with a highly stylized and culturally embedded art form like Gongbi painting, it remains unclear whether AI can transcend the limitations of semantic interpretation to accurately replicate technical nuances, reconstruct spatial logic, and convey the ink-based aesthetic spirit central to Chinese traditional art.

This study originates from a critical inquiry into this very issue, centering on the stylistic simulation of Gongbi painting through empirical testing and comparative analysis across multiple mainstream AI image generation platforms. Specifically, the research focuses on Leonardo.ai, Doubao, ChatGPT, and Artbreeder, evaluating their generative performance along two methodological axes: text-to-image (T2I) and image-to-image (I2I). The analysis emphasizes key evaluative criteria including compositional layout, brushstroke texture, color handling, and stylistic coherence.

Methodologically, the study involves the use of standardized prompts and visual references to examine each platform's semantic comprehension of "Gongbi painting" and its strategic approach to image generation. Furthermore, a selection of the author's own Gongbi-style artworks serves as comparative material to assess each platform's ability to preserve details and transfer stylistic attributes in I2I scenarios. To strengthen the cultural and theoretical foundation of the analysis, the study also incorporates the "Six Principles of Chinese Painting" (Xie He's Six Laws) as an aesthetic evaluation framework. This traditional art theory, formulated in the 6th century, allows for a nuanced examination of AI-generated images through the lenses of vitality (qi yun), brushwork (gufa), formal structure (ying wu xiang xing), coloration (sui lei fu cai), composition (jing ying wei zhi), and imitation (chuan yi mo xie), thereby enriching both the analytical rigor and cultural depth of the study.

The ultimate aim of this research is not to reject the value of AI in artistic production, but rather to use the highly codified paradigm of Gongbi painting as a lens to assess the boundaries and potentials of AI-generated imagery when confronted with intricate, codified, and culturally significant visual languages. On one hand, the findings of this research help identify current limitations and challenges in AI's capacity for stylistic reproduction and artistic simulation. On the other hand, they also provide theoretical and practical insights for developing future frameworks of "human-machine co-creation" in the arts. Through this exploration, the study seeks to expand the dialogue between traditional art and contemporary technology, ultimately contributing to the emergence of new pathways for art generation in the age of algorithmic intervention.

PLATFORM TYPOLOGIES AND EXPERIMENTAL PATHWAYS

The current landscape of AI-driven image generation is marked by increasing platform diversification and refined functional specialization. Different platforms exhibit distinct characteristics in terms of algorithmic architecture, training data sources, interaction models, and stylistic tendencies, contributing to a complex and evolving ecosystem of tools. In order to ensure the representativeness and generalizability of this study, four widely used and influential platforms—Leonardo.ai, Doubao (ByteDance), ChatGPT, and Artbreeder—were selected as comparative samples. These platforms were chosen based on four criteria: image generation quality, stylistic control capability, linguistic adaptability, and user operability. The core objective of this section is to systematically evaluate each platform's ability to simulate the stylistic features of Chinese Gongbi painting.

As shown in **Table 1,** the four selected platforms exhibit clear distinctions in terms of functional priorities and operational logic, making them representative of two primary technological pathways: text-driven generation and image-driven generation. Leonardo.ai and ChatGPT, with their dual capabilities, demonstrate strong adaptability to both text and image inputs.

Table 1 | Fundamental attributes and functional classifications of the selected platforms

Platform	Type	Image/Text Generation Capabilities
Leonardo.ai	Image Generation Platform	Supports both Image-to-Image and Text-to-Image generation
Doubao (ByteDance)	Chinese-language Intelligent Platform	Supports Text-to-Image (limited Image-to-Image capabilities)
Chat GPT	Multimodal AI System	Supports both Image-to-Image and Text-to-Image generation
Artbreeder	Image Blending Platform	Does not support text prompts; only Image-to-Image mixing

Doubao stands out for its advanced understanding of Chinese semantic structures, while Artbreeder emphasizes image fusion through genetic algorithms, supporting gradual style evolution rather than precise semantic matching.

In the text-to-image generation experiment, the study focuses on critical dimensions such as prompt comprehension, compositional execution, stylistic alignment, and color rendering accuracy. This pathway provides an insight into AI's "creative" capabilities, wherein the system generates an image based directly on user-provided language prompts. Given the abstract and highly compressed nature of textual input, a platform's ability to accurately interpret and reconstruct Gongbi-related terminology and aesthetic intent becomes a core metric of its stylistic simulation capacity.

This study positions the four platforms within the two dimensions of text-to-image and image-to-image generation. Leonardo.ai, Doubao, and ChatGPT are examined primarily in the text-to-image pathway, focusing on their performance in linguistic interpretation, compositional arrangement, and stylistic fidelity. ChatGPT and Artbreeder are tested within the image-to-image framework, with attention paid to style transfer, detail preservation, and chromatic consistency.

By conducting a cross-pathway comparative analysis, this paper aims to reveal the platforms' adaptability and underlying mechanisms when confronted with the stylistic demands of Gongbi painting. This approach provides a technical and conceptual foundation for subsequent sections addressing semantic prompting and stylistic migration. Additionally, it offers actionable insights for artists seeking effective AI tools, enabling more efficient integration of AI into traditional artistic workflows.

SEMANTIC-DRIVEN VISUAL GENERATION: PROMPT ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

In AI-based image generation systems, textual prompts function as the primary gateway to visual creation. This is especially critical in the simulation of highly codified and aesthetically rich traditional styles like

Figure 1 | Author's original Gongbi painting.

Chinese Gongbi painting, where prompts serve not only to define content and composition but also to convey stylistic cues and activate cultural semantics. Therefore, the construction of informative and culturally coherent prompts is essential to facilitating the platform's ability to replicate a specific visual language.

This section introduces a set of manually designed semantic prompts aligned with the conceptual sketch illustrated in **Figure 1**. These prompts are tested across Leonardo.ai, Doubao, and ChatGPT to compare how each platform processes Gongbi-related semantics and responds in terms of stylistic fidelity.

Prompt Structure and Semantic Framework

The hypothetical artwork shown in Figure 1 is defined as follows:

This is a traditional Chinese Gongbi floral painting with a pale beige background. The composition is gentle and serene, characterized by soft lines and refined coloration. Broad blank spaces are left in the upper left third and lower right area of the canvas, forming a natural fan-shaped negative space to highlight the rhythm of vine growth and spatial density contrast. The main subject features two clusters of Campsis flowers. The primary cluster, in red-orange tones, is located at the upper right intersection of the nine-grid composition, with slightly faded edges. The secondary cluster, in lighter tones, is situated at the lower left intersection. Three symmetrical feather-like leaf groups are positioned above, surrounding the main flower. Another leaf group appears behind the secondary cluster, connected by fine stems and small leaves to create a layered effect. Overall, the composition exemplifies the ethereal beauty and natural structure typical of Gongbi painting.

The prompt follows a three-tier structure: **1)** primary compositional elements; **2)** stylistic emphasis; **3)** spatial rhythm and color guidance. This approach attempts to communicate key aspects of Gongbi practice, such as layout logic, visual hierarchy, coloring techniques, and the concept of intentional negative space, to the AI platform.

Leonardo.Ai: the "Illustrative" Deviation in Semantic Interpretation

Leonardo.ai, primarily trained on English-language data, exhibits certain limitations in prompt comprehension due to cultural and semantic gaps. Initial tests with prompts such as "Chinese Gongbi painting of flowers with elegant composition and fine lines..." produce images with discernible botanical layering, yet the overall style leans heavily toward digital illustration. The outputs display high color saturation and stark contrast, aligning more with concept art aesthetics than traditional painting.

This "illustrative" bias stems from the platform's misinterpretation of the term "Gongbi." Although "Gongbi" is increasingly recognized in global art discourse (Chen, 2022), Leonardo.ai often reduces it to a proxy for "delicate" or "floral illustration" in the absence of contextual cues. This undermines the painting's traditional stylistic features, such as linear precision, subdued transparency, and tranquil composition.

To address this issue, the prompt was revised to "Meticulous-style Chinese painting," explicitly detailing technical features rather than relying on ambiguous phonetic transcription. This modification led to some improvement in coloration, with occasional ink-wash-like gradients. However, the images retained a highly stylized digital texture, lacking the paper-air and ink-spirit qualities of hand-painted works. This highlights a broader issue of "cultural semantic rupture," where even syntactically sound prompts yield approximate visual equivalents when training data lacks sufficient cultural specificity.

Doubao: Semantic Precision and Structural Limitations in a Chinese Platform

In contrast, Doubao—trained primarily in Chinese—demonstrates superior comprehension of traditional art terminology. Upon receiving the same Chinese prompt, it successfully reproduces key compositional and chromatic elements such as vine movement, feathered foliage, and beige backgrounds. This suggests strong proficiency in parsing descriptive structures related to spatial orientation and color coordination.

Doubao's outputs resemble the "Mogu" style of Chinese painting, wherein linework is minimized and shapes are formed through layered shading. This aesthetic aligns well with neural networks' preference for blurred forms, and the results show decent atmospheric coherence. Particularly, Doubao exhibits superior handling of tonal harmony and spatial fusion, closely approximating the visual ethos of Gongbi painting.

However, Doubao currently lacks multi-turn interaction capability, meaning users cannot iteratively refine prompts to direct the generation process. Each image is treated as an isolated operation, limiting creative flexibility. This "single-turn decision model" poses a bottleneck in complex creative workflows that rely on iterative adjustment, thus constraining its application in advanced art generation scenarios.

ChatGPT: Potential in Multi-Turn Interaction and the Paradox of Semantic Decay

Unlike the above platforms, ChatGPT enables dynamic multi-turn interactions, maintaining user intent across multiple prompt iterations. For instance, after an initial prompt, users can follow up with refinements such as "enhance the curvature of the vines," "adjust background to a softer beige," or "increase leaf symmetry." ChatGPT accommodates these adjustments based on prior outputs, enhancing both control and stylistic granularity.

This cooperative capability allows for a more dialogic creative process, wherein users and system engage in iterative negotiation. However, a key drawback emerges in the form of "semantic decay": the platform's response to early prompts weakens over time, with newer instructions potentially overriding prior directives. This is especially problematic in intricate compositions or when balancing multiple stylistic objectives. It reveals that while the model possesses memory structures, its output prioritization still leans on prompt recency rather than conceptual importance.

Summary: Prompt Design Strategies and Platform-Specific Optimization

In summary, text-based image generation relies heavily on prompts as both technical inputs and semantic bridges. Each platform showcases distinct strengths and weaknesses: Leonardo.ai excels in fine detailing but struggles with cultural alignment; Doubao offers robust semantic parsing in Chinese but lacks iterative logic; ChatGPT supports interactive refinement but requires improvements in semantic consistency.

Effective prompt design must therefore be tailored to platform-specific traits. For Leonardo.ai, a segmented keyword structure (e.g., "delicate vines, symmetrical leaves, pale yellow background") proves useful. Doubao responds best to poetic and impressionistic phrasing (e.g., "藤蔓交织，空灵留白"). ChatGPT benefits from layered prompts combining initial layout, stylistic guidance, and iterative commands.

Future integration of AI and traditional art will hinge on more sophisticated language understanding systems capable of modeling not only vocabulary but also context, emotion, and cultural depth.

IMAGE REGENERATION AND STYLISTIC MIGRATION

With advancements in image-to-image transformation, AI's capacity to deconstruct and reconstruct visual features based on image inputs has become an important benchmark for stylistic learning. This mode allows users to bypass the ambiguities of text prompts, providing more precise control over visual output. To evaluate this, the study introduces original Gongbi paintings into two platforms—ChatGPT and Artbreeder—to examine how each processes, retains, or reinterprets traditional stylistic elements across the Six Principles.

Theoretical Foundation: Xie He's Six Principles as Evaluation Criteria

Xie He's Six Principles—proposed during the Southern Qi Dynasty—constitute the earliest known theoretical framework for Chinese painting, encompassing the following dimensions: spirit resonance (氣韻生動), structural use of line (骨法用筆), formal likeness (應物象形), color application (隨類賦彩), compositional design (經營位置), and stylistic transmission (傳移模寫) (Xie He, ca. 6th century / 1962). These principles not only established the foundational standards for evaluating classical Chinese painting, but also embody the discipline's core artistic pursuits—including formal language, aesthetic ideals, and technical spirit.

In this study, Xie He's framework serves as the theoretical basis for evaluating the aesthetic performance of AI-generated Gongbi-style images. Each principle is mapped onto a corresponding evaluative dimension— spirit, linework, form, color, composition, and imitation—reflecting the essential characteristics of Gongbi painting.

Traditionally, stylistic transmission (傳移模寫) referred to the practice of copying and studying canonical artworks, emphasizing the inheritance of technique, style, and spiritual essence. However, since the reference images used in this research are original Gongbi paintings created by the author, this principle is reconceptualized as stylistic simulation—that is, the AI's ability to reproduce and transform the visual attributes of the input images.

This methodological adjustment honors the internal value system of Chinese painting while establishing a culturally grounded framework for assessing AI-generated imagery. It enables the systematic analysis of how AI replicates or deviates from traditional aesthetics, revealing the creative potential and expressive gaps in technical simulation.

By using this model, the study facilitates a shift from purely technical replication toward aesthetic judgment, transforming traditional subjective standards into analytical dimensions applicable to AI-generated visual art.

ChatGPT Img2Img Analysis: Strength in Structure, Weakness in Nuance

When provided with original Gongbi reference images, ChatGPT generates images that show relative structural clarity and compositional integrity. The botanical forms—such as vines and leaves—are generally accurate in shape and positioning, reflecting strong image recognition and spatial mapping capabilities.

However, limitations emerge in the areas of spirit resonance and linework. The visual atmosphere often feels flat, lacking the poetic elegance and spiritual rhythm intrinsic to Gongbi painting. Line treatment tends to rely on pixel blending rather than deliberate brush-like articulation. As a result, the outputs fall short in replicating the nuanced control of brush pressure, rhythm, and tonal modulation characteristic of traditional hand-drawn techniques.

Color rendering also reveals a tendency toward simplification. Although base tones are retained, layering effects—such as the fine glazing techniques used in Gongbi—are underdeveloped, resulting in either over-blended areas or uniform color patches. This indicates that while ChatGPT is capable of replicating structure, it struggles with expressive detailing and tonal complexity.

Artbreeder Img2Img Analysis: Success in Atmosphere, Shortcomings in Form

Artbreeder, by contrast, emphasizes genetic blending of images, enabling it to excel in stylistic migration. When input with images sharing tonal unity, the platform produces visually coherent results with preserved atmosphere and stylistic consistency. The platform is particularly effective in translating the ethereal quality of

Gongbi through soft transitions, diffused light, and delicate color gradients.

In terms of spirit resonance and color rendering, Artbreeder often achieves a painterly softness and tonal luminosity akin to Gongbi's aesthetic. Background transitions are smooth, and the ambient tone aligns well with traditional Chinese concepts of balanced emptiness and poetic subtlety.

However, Artbreeder's performance in shape accuracy and linework is less consistent. Structural deformities—such as distorted leaves or misaligned petal arrangements—frequently occur. Fine details, especially in vines and stamens, are often simplified or blurred. The system favors soft diffusion over precise contouring, making it less suitable for works requiring formal fidelity.

Compositional balance is another mixed area. While Artbreeder maintains a general sense of layout, it lacks fine-tuned control over focal points and negative space management. The outputs tend to be densely packed, violating Gongbi's emphasis on compositional breathing room and spatial poetics.

Style Fusion Experiments: Comparative Results

To further test the platforms' capacity for stylistic synthesis, a batch of three author-created Gongbi works with unified color palettes was input into both platforms. The results diverged in significant ways: ChatGPT's outputs remained stable in tone but showed limited stylistic variation, indicating weak responsiveness to input diversity. In contrast, Artbreeder displayed greater flexibility, adjusting hue, rhythm, and atmospheric tone in accordance with the reference set. This demonstrates Artbreeder's superior aptitude for stylistic adaptation.

In terms of stylistic transmission (傳移模寫), Artbreeder outperforms ChatGPT by more effectively absorbing and reconfiguring aesthetic features. However, neither platform demonstrates adequate proficiency in brushwork simulation (骨法用筆) or compositional cadence (經營位置), both of which are foundational to Gongbi artistry.

Summary: Artistic Potential and Technical Constraints of Img2Img Generation

In summary, ChatGPT and Artbreeder each present unique strengths and limitations within the Img2Img domain. ChatGPT is better at structural reconstruction, making it suitable for representational image regeneration. Artbreeder is more adept at atmosphere and stylistic blending, offering promise for poetic or impressionistic visual outputs.

Yet both platforms fall short in replicating the calligraphic rhythm, nuanced detailing, and compositional logic required for high-fidelity Gongbi simulation. The core challenge lies in the AI's inability to internalize non-quantifiable elements such as brush energy, spatial intentionality, and aesthetic philosophy—facets deeply rooted in the Gongbi tradition.

Future advancements in AI art generation must therefore move beyond stylistic mimicry toward deeper modeling of traditional artistic consciousness, integrating algorithmic precision with culturally attuned visual intelligence.

CONCLUSION

This study systematically compared four mainstream AI image generation platforms—Leonardo.ai, Doubao, ChatGPT, and Artbreeder—from two perspectives: text-to-image generation and image-to-image transformation. It aimed to evaluate the capability, mechanism, and limitations of these platforms in simulating the stylistic essence of traditional Chinese Gongbi painting. The findings reveal that although current AI platforms have made considerable progress in areas like color blending, visual style approximation, and shape recognition, they still face significant limitations in achieving higher-level artistic expression and cultural representation.

From the text-to-image generation perspective, most platforms produce results that resemble a visual collage based on extracted keywords rather than a deep understanding of the aesthetic logic underlying Gongbi painting. Critical features such as line quality, brush structure, and compositional rhythm remain elusive. Despite efforts to refine prompts for better output, existing models struggle to grasp and reproduce traditional Chinese art terms, aesthetic metaphors, and cultural subtleties. Even Doubao, which operates within a native Chinese semantic context, exhibits limitations in multiround semantic linkage and compositional control, revealing broader issues in constructing multi-dimensional aesthetic frameworks through AI.

In contrast, the image-to-image pathway offers a more promising route for AI to simulate Gongbi styles. Notably, Artbreeder demonstrates a degree of proficiency in capturing stylistic consistency and atmospheric coherence, while ChatGPT shows strength in structural reconstruction and formal likeness. However, both platforms fall short in replicating core aesthetic principles such as brushwork vitality (骨法用筆) and spiritual resonance (氣韻生動), which are fundamental to Gongbi artistry. These gaps largely stem from the AI's reliance on visual statistics and algorithmic inference, lacking the embodied artistic intelligence that human creators employ through a synthesis of hand, eye, and mind.

Overall, AI has shown considerable capability in mimicking surface-level visual elements, including color schemes, compositional structure, and general stylistic tone, suggesting its potential as an auxiliary tool. By inputting reference images or refining prompt descriptions, creators can quickly generate visually appealing drafts, which is particularly useful in early-stage concep-

tualization, stylistic exploration, and visual brainstorming. For students, illustrators, and curators needing rapid visual ideation, AI serves as an effective "inspiration trigger."

However, this generative ability remains superficial, limited to the manipulation of formal features such as shapes, hues, and spatial arrangements. It lacks the depth required for cultural interpretation, aesthetic reasoning, and emotional transmission—dimensions that define the artistic spirit of Gongbi painting. Gongbi is not merely about representation but about intention. It embodies sensitivity to nature, rational structuring, meticulous brushwork, and an overarching spiritual coherence. Current AI systems are not yet capable of modeling or expressing these non-verbal, non-formalized dimensions of artistic experience.

Moreover, while AI can mimic the appearance of traditional paintings, it bypasses the procedural rigor of artistic training, omitting the multi-layered development path of brushwork, modeling, composition, coloration, and spiritual refinement. This form of "shortcut generation" may satisfy visual output demands but weakens the value of skill cultivation and personal artistic growth. In other words, AI has yet to fulfill the role of art-making as a practice of self-cultivation. The resulting images, while visually polished, often lack emotional depth and a sense of lived vitality.

To fully integrate AI into the domain of traditional artistic practice, future research must move beyond algorithmic imitation and engage with the deeper cognitive, emotional, and cultural layers of visual intelligence. Only through such integration can AI evolve from a tool of visual synthesis into a true collaborator in aesthetic creation.

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A Critique of Animal Science Knowledge Production in *We are All Completely Beside Ourselves*

Yuan Tian [a,*]

[a] *School of Foreign Studies, Minzu University of China, Beijing 100074, China*

KEYWORDS

We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves;
Science Knowledge Production;
Situated Knowledge;
Animal

ABSTRACT

Animals who can not independently voice their own conditions are put into a representational strategy dominated by human scientists. However, situated in anthropocentric ideologies, the scientists are usually not faithful narrators of animal stories, but ventriloquists for the animal's other status. As a novel exploring an experiment in which a human and a chimpanzee are raised up together, We are All Completely Beside Ourselves puts this situated process of animal science knowledge production under scrutiny: Conducted against the anthropocentric background, the experiment inevitably shows a tendency to emphasize the human-animal binary opposition and the animals' other status in the world. Disappointed by this phenomenon, the human girl who has grown up with a chimpanzee and believes in human-animal affinity, Rosemary, chooses to reject the logocentrism and human-animal distinctions propagated by scientists, and to disseminate her own knowledge of human-animal similarity, love and mutual-respect. However, since Rosemary's experience can not be reproduced in the reality, the novel's nihilist tendency to deny all the scientific achievements is dangerous. The scientist's role as a spokesman for animals and nature is still irreplaceable in reality, and a compromise should be reached between the dogmatic scientism criticized and the radical disbeliever to science advocated by the novel.

INTRODUCTION

We are All Completely Beside Ourselves is a highly inspiring yet underestimated novel published by American bestselling writer Karen Joy Fowler in 2013. As a novel winning British Book Awards, the Faulkner Award and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, it delves deeply into the animal issue in the posthuman era and provides profound insights to it. There have been studies that pay attention to the boundary issues between humans and animals in this novel, highlighting the unpleasant consequences brought by this boundary to the

main character(Calarco, 2014), and this study will focus on an essential factor in constructing human-animal boundary: animal science knowledge production: This novel imagines a cognitive experiment in which a human girl, Rosemary and a female chimpanzee, Fern are raised up together as a pair of twins by Rosemary's scientist father "to compare and contrast developing abilities, linguistic and otherwise (Fowler, 2013)" between human and chimpanzees. The experiment in the novel puts the process of animal science knowledge production under scrutiny, and on this basis, questions

about the truthfulness of human-animal binary opposition as well as the solidness of boundary are raised: Is the established truth of animal inferiority really truthful and the nature-culture binary opposition natural? Can scientific studies be independent of the ideologies prevalent in non-scientific situations? The answers given by the novel is absolutely no.

All kinds of knowledge, no matter how independent and objective as they seem to be, are produce in situation, or in a definite social milieu, not in vacuum (Mannheim, 1936). That is a conclusion has already been supported by Karl Mannheim early in 1930s. In 1980s, American theorist Donna J. Haraway introduced this concept of "situated knowledge" into literary criticism to support arguments of posthumanist animal studies and on this basis to blur the boundary between human and animals, culture and nature as well as science and fiction. She audaciously claims a special relationship between nature and colonized spots (Haraway, 2004), and use Spivak's much-debated postcolonialist term "subaltern" to describe the muteness and otherness of the animal in a world dominated by human voice (Haraway, 2008): the animal other can not speak and the nature can not self-evidently reveal its laws, so they are put into a representational strategy dominated by human beings, especially animal scientists. Therefore the scientist, as a preacher of animal science knowledge and the medium for the public to learn about the nature, is seen as the perfect spokesman for nature. However, the spokesmen are not all the time objective, their judgement, conclusion, even the selection and processing of raw information, are restricted by anthropocentric situations. On this basis the scientists become advocators of human-animal binary opposition and ventriloquists for "the other" (Haraway, 2004). The knowledge they have produced not only does no good for the animals to be truly understood by the public, but on the contrary aggravate the institutional oppression of animals in a human-dominated world. In the novel We are All Completely Beside Ourselves, the author uses the eyes and mouth of Rosemary to sharply criticizes the representational paradigm in animal science knowledge production: As a twin sister of a chimpanzee, a daughter of animal scientist and a student in college, Rosemary detects the influence of anthropocentrism to animal science studies and, instead of blindly believing in the human-animal binary opposition propagated by modern science, she tries to disseminate her knowledge of human-animal affinity, love and mutual respect, which comes from her personal experience to cope with her chimpanzee sister Fern, forming a resisting power to the institutionalized anthropocentric knowledge. Through Rosemary's thought and action Fowler offers a imaginary path for human to overthrown the scientific mechanism of oppression to the other, but Rosemary's story can hardly be replicated in reality. Disbelief to scientific knowledge in reality will merely put the animal other into another abyss of unknowability. To truly understand animals and forge a better future for human and animal alike, the proper method is to improve the ethical scrutiny for scientific knowledge production, rather than completely deny the function of scientific achievements in people's realization of nature.

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE SITUATED IN ANTHROPOCENTRISM

In the novel, Rosemary's father as a scientist continually studies on chimpanzee's cognitive abilities and behavior. He is not a unkind person who deliberately ignores animals' rights, but in comparison with his daughter, who grows up with a chimpanzee and is designed to signify human's pure affinity to animals in the novel, he is still inevitably influenced by the anthropocentric tradition of human world and becomes an unintentional supporter of animal inferiority and the definite boundary between human and animal. His study is based on anthropocentric conclusion drawn by former researchers and he has no sensitivity, ambition or energy to overthrown the anthropocentric tradition, so at the very beginning, his study has already been carried on in a anthropocentric situation. He asks chimpanzee Fern to learn human's language rather than try to let human understand Fern's language, and when Rosemary's brother Lowell raises questions about this issue, he criticizes that "Lowell was confusing language with communication", arguing "we still didn't know for sure that Fern was even capable of learning a language, but we did know for sure that she didn't have one of her own." (Fowler, 2013), but when it comes to the essential distinction between human language and animal communication, he does not offers a definite answer. This "animals have no language" assumption actually can be seen as an expression of "Anthropological Machine of Humanism" proposed by Giorgio Agamben. Human scientists, especially linguists, have invented Anthropological Machine to dehumanize animals, and the core elements of this exclusionary strategy is language: traditionally the passage from animal to man is not believed to be produced by biological and natural difference, but is presupposed by the so-called identifying characteristic of the human: language (Agamben, 2004). However, the difference between animal communication and human language is rarely discussed. On this basis, Agamben comes to the conclusion that human and animal distinction is "a historical production" (Agamben, 2004), and so does Rosemary in We are All Completely Beside Ourselves. By emphasizing "the specific way each particular organism experiences the world (Fowler, 2013)", she silently revolts against her father's propaganda of human-animal binary opposition in the heart.

The anthropocentric situation also prevents Rosemary's Father from selecting really important information in observing Rosemary and Fern's interaction. In Rosemary and Fern's early childhood, when Rosemary

still could not speak English, they once invented an idioglossia, a secret language of grunts and gestures. This was a valuable phenomenon worth studying, but Rosemary's father chose to ignore it and refused to write it up, because he believes that this evidence "thin, unscientific, and, frankly whimsical (Fowler, 2013)". Under similar circumstances, when Fern expresses her love to Rosemary with her unique arrangement of red poker chip, the father again regards it as "nothing useful" (Fowler, 2013). The father's judgement actually comes from his deep-rooted anthropocentric preconception of "animals have no language", which causes him to deny Fern's unique way to express, neglect many precious possibilities and finally drives him into a bottleneck of research.

Moreover, in the process of concluding results of some minor experiments and analyzing phenomenon in his paper, Rosemary's father also shows a tendency to reach a conclusion which is more suitable to accommodate anthropocentric expectations. For example, He designs an experiment in which Rosemary and Fern are asked to watch a demonstration on how to get food out of a puzzle box and then to get the food out by themselves, and in the experiment, the behavior of Rosemary and Fern are different: Rosemary reproduces every steps shown in the demonstration regardless of its necessity, but Fern chooses to skip the unnecessary steps to go straight to the treat by her own way. This experimental result can show that a chimpanzee can detect the misleading directions and is thoughtful enough to solve the problem independently, but in his paper, the father ignores the chimpanzee's sufficiency and thoughtfulness, and spares no efforts to argue that the human baby's slavishly imitative behavior is more superior (Fowler, 2013). The anthropocentric situation of father's researches has prevented it from getting a truly objective conclusion, and the publishing of its conclusion again strengthens the established prejudice towards animals in return.

When Lowell and Rosemary discuss their father's failure as a scientist, their opinion is sharp and profound: "Dad was always saying that we were all animals, but when he dealt with Fern, he didn't start from that place of congruence... It would have been more scientifically rigorous to start with an assumption of similarity. (Fowler, 2013)". "Similarity" here means blurring the boundary between Rosemary and Fern, and between human and animals, and on this basis to respect the animals as an equal existence with human beings. Only by admitting similarity can scientists be good spokesmen to objectively represent the animal for the public and to help to build an atmosphere in which human and animals coexist harmoniously, but unfortunately, influenced by anthropocentric situations, most scientists fail to do so, including Lowell and Rosemary's father. Having become instruments of anthropocentric ideologies, they are not even conducting researches objectively, but merely finding supports for their established prejudice of human-animal binary opposition, and it is through their "researching" processes that the oppressing and exploiting mechanism to animals is built and strengthened.

ROSEMARY'S SUBJUGATED KNOWLEDGE TO ANIMALS

Having known her father's anthropocentric tendency in scientific research, Rosemary becomes disappointed to the legitimacy of the scientific knowledge and the so-called rational thinking propagated by modern science: "The Socratic method makes me want to bite someone. (Fowler, 2013)" This anti-logocentric standpoint makes her reject modern science and animal scientists as spokesmen for animals and nature, and view herself as a more appropriate person to represent them: As Fern's human twin sister who has lived with her since birth, Rosemary can naturally understand Fern and the habits of other chimpanzees, and has a deeper understanding to the similarity and affinity between human and animals. "By the time I turned three, I was already serving as Fern's translator (Fowler, 2013)." However, in the world in which anthropocentrism is emphasized to justify human's exploitation to the animal and the nature, her voices are inevitably subjugated by the mainstream.

In Rosemary's childhood, her understanding of chimpanzees' similarity with human has been always refuted by their father, who tends to speak "at much greater length" to advocate human-animal binary opposition; when Rosemary enters school, her situation becomes worse and talking about her own understanding about chimpanzees and human-animal relationship is almost impossible. Because of her experience of growing up with a chimpanzee, she bears many chimpanzee-like features in her habits and behaviors, which makes her unacceptable in her classmates. She is bullied and is called as "monkey girl". To get rid of the "monkey girl" nickname and integrate into the crowd, she has to mute herself on the topic of chimpanzees and other animals. In the astronomy class of the college, when everyone is amused by the chimpanzee who is sent to the space and who is "grinning from ear to ear in their helmets", Rosemary feel an urge to tell the rest of her class that this chimp is far from being happy, because chimpanzees grin like that only when they're frightened, but she fails to summon her courage to do so (Fowler, 2013). To revolt against the dominated knowledge risks getting oneself alienated and isolated, and that's to much for an individual to suffer.

Finally, Rosemary becomes brave enough to demonstrate her own opinions and argue for animal rights. After knowing more animals' sufferings in a human-dominated world, she decides to write her radical complaint to anthropocentrism into her final examination papers of the "Religion and Violence" class, driven by "an attempt to get them out of my head and into some-

one else's". In consequence, her is denied by Dr. Sosa, the professor of the class. By criticizing the paper's deviation from religion, the professor asks Rosemary to change a topic and threats to flunk her, but Rosemary refutes him by arguing "science could be a sort of religion for some people. (Fowler, 2013)" This opinion actually comes from Rosemary's deep understanding of the huge impact of anthropocentric scientific knowledge to the human mind: Modern animal science, which is based on anthropocentric situations, constructs human-animal binary opposition in a seemingly objective and "scientific" way, and prepares the ground for the other anthropocentric knowledge by influencing the public and scientists of the next generation. In this process an anthropocentric conclusion is expressed in the form of "scientific knowledge", and then turned into "common sense", and then becomes manipulative, dogmatic religion. No one dares to re-evaluate it or overthrow it; when their personal knowledge can not fit the mainstream, their voices are subjugated, and they have to change themselves instead of the world. That is how human domination is legitimized and the animals' "other" status is institutionalized. In arguing her personal knowledge about science and animal in her paper, Rosemary bravely questions the objectiveness of animal science knowledge production as well as the legitimacy of the science's representation to animals, and makes herself a more reliable spokesman for human-animal equality and animals' rights.

In the end of the novel, Rosemary serves as a teacher in a kindergarten, and on this position, she begins to try to makes her students accept her personal knowledge about chimpanzees and animals: not knowledge about superiority and inferiority, not about boundary and distinction, but about similarity, mutual respect, and "the love of the Other" (Le Guin, 1987) . She teaches the child the habits and sigh language of chimpanzees, asks them to use "proper chimp etiquette", and make "friendly chimp faces" to greet the chimpanzees in the Center for Primate Communication (Fowler, 2013), in which every human kindergartners of Rosemary can understand the affinity between human and animals and imagine a shared future with chimpanzees together. With her courage and efforts, Rosemary successfully envisions a possibility to reject the scientific yet anthropocentric way of animal knowledge production, and to use her instinctive understanding and her personal experience of growing up with the chimpanzees, to disseminate the knowledge of human-animal affinity in resistance to anthropocentrism. She has become a much more appropriate person to speak for the animals and the nature in human community than the scientific researchers.

SHOULD SCIENTISTS SPEAK FOR THE ANIMALS?

In the novel We are All Completely Beside Ourselves, Fowler points out the anthropocentric situation of animal science knowledge production, denies the objectiveness of the scientists' representation of nature and animals, and on this basis questions the legitimacy of human-animal binary opposition. Scientists represented by Rosemary's father are ventriloquists for "the other", instruments of anthropocentric ideologies, rather than faithful recorder of animal abilities and brilliant discoverer of natural wonder. They have lost their credit in representing nature and speaks for the animals to the public. Under this circumstance, Fowler invents Mary to use her personal experience of growing up with a chimpanzee to interpret animals, and puts her on the position of the proper spokesman of animals. This arrangement of plot solves the credibility crisis of animal science in a very heartwarming yet non-replicable way. In reality, almost no one can be really raised up as a twin with a chimpanzee or other wildlife. Most people's understanding to nature and animals still have to come from scientific education. Therefore, the status of animal scientists as the animals' spokesmen is almost irreplaceable. In reality, the novel's nihilist attitude to science will greatly expend the gap between human and the animal other, which is even harmful to the harmony between human and nature.

Therefore, a good compromise should be reached between the dogmatic scientism and the radical disbeliever of science represented by the novel. The real appropriate measure to speak for the animal other, is to improve the animal scientific knowledge production, rather than to simply abandon it. Back to the "animal subaltern" concept mentioned before, even when Spivak herself discusses the concept of colonized "subaltern" who can not speak, she still admits that there is still method like voting, negotiation to envision "the symbolic circuit of the mobilizing of subalternity into hegemony (Spivak, 1999)". Other scholars like Watson also points out that the subaltern concept which emphasizes the absolute muteness of colonized people may risks "conflating the temporarily unknown with the permanently unknowable (Watson, 2014)". Here, completely denying the function of science of representing the animal other will also cause the same problem: Nowadays scientific researches about animal cognition and behavior are still at their starting stage. To completely deny them may obliterate the hope of "let subaltern speak" that brought by scientific development in the future, which will brought the animal into the abyss of absolute unknowability, and aggravate the fracture between humanity and nature. Therefore, the proper methods is not to reject the role of scientists as the spokesmen for animals in the human world, but to emphasize the ethical code of objectiveness in scientific

knowledge production, and to encourage public criticism concerning scientific research.

CONCLUSION

At a time witnessing prominent ecological crises, living in harmony with animals and forging a shared future for human and non-human species alike have become an increasingly important issue. However, deep-rooted ideologies of human-animal binary opposition justifies human's exploitation over the animal and prevents human from truly sympathizing the sufferings of the animal other. Modern animal science's representational strategy to the animal, as well as its animal knowledge production situated in anthropocentrism, is the greatest accomplice to this institutionalized oppression. In We are All Completely Beside Ourselves, a novel depicting a cognitive experiment in which a human girl and a baby chimpanzee are raised up together as a pair of twins, this process of knowledge production is scrutinized: the human girl, Rosemary's father as a representative of scientists, always carries on his study in the anthropocentric situation and unintentionally finds support for his preconception of human-animal binary opposition. At the very beginning of research, his basis has already be built on the anthropocentric conclusions made by former scientists; in the process of selecting information, he usually ignores the brilliant expressive behavior of the chimpanzee, and regards them as "nothing useful"; when analysing experimental results in his paper, he still tends to emphasize the superiority of human ability to accommodate the outer anthropocentric expectations. His study is neither objective or successful and makes her own daughter disappointed to the logocentrism in scientific research. Having questioned the legitimacy of scientists' status as representatives of nature and spokesmen of animals, Rosemary choose to speak for the animals' rights by herself. Although at the beginning she is isolated and her personal knowledge is subjugated by the anthropocentric mainstream, with her effort and bravery, she finally becomes a teacher in the kindergarten to disseminate the knowledge of human-animal affinity to the children, which means she has turned into a more reliable spokesman than scientists, who are merely ventriloquists of the animal other. Rosemary's story is a heartwarming solution for the credibility crisis of animal science in the literary world. However, her experience can not be replicated in the reality. In real world, the public's understanding to animals still comes from scientific education and the status of animal scientists as the animals' spokesmen is almost irreplaceable. To emphasize the ethical code of objectiveness in scientific knowledge production, and to encourage public criticism concerning scientific research are appropriate methods to speak for the animals, rather than simply deny the achievements of scientific researches. To avoid putting the animal other into the abyss of unknowability, the scientists should be and must be the spokesmen of animals.

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Nostalgia, Original Desires and Utopia:
A study on Jirí Menzel's Cinematic Aesthetics

Ying Zhao [a],*

[a] *Jackie Chan Movie & Media College, Wuhan Institute of Design and Sciences, Wuhan 430205, China*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the films of Czech director Jirí Menzel, a leading figure of the Czechoslovak New Wave, through the lens of nostalgia, original desires, and utopia. It argues that Menzel's "pastoral trilogy" constructs a nostalgic aesthetic by reimagining rural landscapes as poetic spaces of escape, compensating for the anxieties of modern society and offering a sense of belonging amid historical dislocation. At the same time, his films repeatedly foreground bodily needs and primal desires, dramatized in playful and carnivalesque forms, which serve both as a release of individual trauma and as an implicit critique of political repression. The construction of utopian worlds—shielded from external intrusion yet subtly marked by political allegory—reveals the deep tension between reality and ideality in Czechoslovak cultural identity. By blending humor, poetry, and desire, Menzel developed a distinctive cinematic language that not only reflects the lived experiences of his generation but also expresses a collective longing for freedom and self-definition.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FILMS OF JIRÍ MENZEL

In the 1960s, the New Wave film movement first rose in France in an unprecedented way and then spread to the rest of the world, including Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States (the New Hollywood Film Movement). Meanwhile, the tide of this wave inevitably arrived in Eastern Europe, and the Czechoslovak nation. After several decades, when we go back to that age and see the series of New Wave films, we could still praise Czechoslovak as "a small country with great films." In 1998, to commemorate the centenary of Czechoslovak film, the Czechoslovak film critics voted for the 100 best films in Czechoslovakia, with 112 films on their shortlist. Of these 112 films, more than 50 films were created between 1962 and 1970, during the Czechoslovakian New Wave. The essence of centuries-old Czechoslovakian films has been concentrated for almost eight years. Therefore, the marked impact of the New Wave on Czechoslovak films is evident.

The Sun in a Net by Štefan Uher in 1962 fired the first shot of the Czechoslovakian New Wave, followed by a number of filmmakers, such as Vojtech Jasný, Miloš Forman, Věra Chytilová,Ján Kadár, Pavel Jurácek, Juraj Jakubisko, and Jirí Menzel. They emerged to bring Czechoslovak films to the world in their own way. This article focuses on Jirí Menzel, who won the 40th Berlin Golden Bear Award for Best Picture by *Skylarks on a String* and has been nominated many times in the three major film festivals throughout his decades of film career. At the same time, he is also a screenwriter, an actor, who is in his 70s and created the film *Skirt Chasers* in 2013, and is still active in the film industry. I will give

a brief analysis of Menzel from the perspective of Utopia, nostalgic aesthetics and original desires in his films.

AESTHETIC NOSTALGIA: THE RETURN OF THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

The appearance of the rural landscape is a major feature of Menzel's films.

Especially in the 1980s, Menzel successively created three films: *Cutting It Short*, *The Snowdrop Festival*, and *My Sweet Little Village*, which are hailed as his "pastoral trilogy". The political metaphors that often appeared in his former films, such as *Skylarks on a String*, *Closely Watched Train* disappeared and were replaced by beautiful rural scenery in the three films. At this time, Menzel's creating style began to change obviously. The content of the films presented something "not related to modernity", since the complexity of modern industrial society did not exist, and the hometown, the homeland, and the old time became important landscape elements of Menzel's image expression.

Ordinary daily country life has become a major feature of Menzel's film: livestock, fields and gardens, and country roads have become important elements of his image poetry. Menzel shows us one after another wonderful picture of rural life in Czechoslovakia with poetic lens and warm stories. The people in the films celebrate for hunting a wild boar; the men's eyes only stay on the long-haired beauty; the poultry of all kinds are scattered throughout the country lanes and brick houses... In the 1980s, Czechoslovakia was in a "dramatic change". Whether for its economy or politics, it was not optimistic. The growing dissatisfaction of the people with the Soviet model also led to the escalation of contradictions... But those conditions were not shown in Menzel's films. The ironies and political metaphors in his early films no longer existed, replaced by beautiful rural life and rural vision in the new films. In films of beautiful countries far from modern life, "nostalgia" has become one of the themes of Menzel's narration.

For 'nostalgia', many scholars have different definitions. Keith Tester (1993) believes that "…nostalgia is in important part a mythical response to the experience of the urban. The sense of futurity attaches to the city whilst the sense of nostalgia attaches to the country. 'Nostalgia, it can be said, is universal and persistent.' " (p.64) Scott Lash & John Urry (1996) believe that "nostalgia is a reminiscence of an idealized past, a narration of a purified tradition rather than history."(p.247) There are many related definitions. In my opinion, the nostalgic return of the rural nature in Menzel's film is a utopian escape from the modern Czechoslovakia.Itis a compensation and adjustment to the pain of reality. It points to a perfect ideal state with a strong poetic aesthetic structure. At the same time, it is the director's fiction and re-creation of the 'past'. The 'past' becomes infinitely-beautiful in the director's creation. The return of the rural landscape can further subside the turmoil and inner vacancy of the Czechoslovaks for decades.

A typical example is *Cutting It Short*, a film adapted from the Czechoslovakian writer Halabar's novel *Cutting It Short* based on his parents ' and childhood experiences, focusing on the daily life of a family. The most beautiful woman in the village married a winemaker. She has a waterfall-like long blond hair, often rides a bicycle on a country road. The owner of the barbershop will drive away other guests because of her arrival. The men on the roadside are all glancing at her, which is similar to the role played by Monica Bellucci in *Malèna*. Malèna is attractive and sexy, who draws all men's attention no matter where she goes. But they are somehow not the same, as Malèna is tagged as a "slut" in the film, who is humiliated by the unscrupulous men, and hurt by the jealous women. Yet in *Cutting It Short*, the heroine is sexy and not lascivious, with a little girl-like innocence, knocking around the town, who is admired by all the opposite sex: "This fountain and that lady's hair are the Pride of our town." They will climb up the chimney for her and use every method to save her down, and she climbs so high just to see the distant scenery. In this vibrant village that has not been affected by modern civilization, the heroine with all feminine traits such as kindness, innocence and sexiness has become the most important symbol of Menzel's nostalgic aesthetics.

There are many kinds of means for modern people to comfort themselves and save themselves, and nostalgia is only one of them. But compared to extreme experience in real life, aestheticization of daily life, or transcending the secular enjoyments and entering the high level of belief, nostalgia is the easiest way to calm the restless hearts of modern people and appease the harm of modern technology to them, because it is closest to the theme of homecoming. As a small country, Czechoslovak had been controlled by other more powerful countries for centuries, whether it was the Austro-Hungarian Empire before World War I, or Germany during World War II, or even the high-pressure control of the Soviet Union after World War II. In politics, we cannot hear the voice of the Czechoslovak people. What was their identity? Where was their home? In the process of being invaded again and again, Czechoslovakian literature and art had become stronger and stronger. We can see that optimism and humor were deeply rooted in the blood of the Czechoslovak people. In the field of literature, Hashek's humor is accompanied with ironies; Kundera's humor is with some coldness; Javier's humor contains absurdity. In Menzel's films, poetry and comedy are mixed together, so the countryside, fields and gardens, and beautiful innocent girls are probably the source of his sense of belonging.

UTOPIA CONSTRUCTION: POLITICAL ANXIETY UNDER A GOOD VISION

The term "Utopia" is not new to us. In the long history of mankind, we can see that both the East and the West have an endless stream of ideas about "a perfect country that is different from the real world." In the West, there are Plato's "ideal country", and Moore's "Utopia"; in the East, there are Confucian ideology "the world is like a commonwealth shared by all", and Tao Yuanming's "They (the people live in the Peach Colony) thus completely cut off from the world, and asked what was the ruling dynasty now. They had not even heard of the Han Dynasty (two centuries before to two centuries after Christ), not to speak of the Wei (third century A.D.) and the Chin (third and fourth centuries)." (Translated by Lin Yutang, 2002, p.31). This good wish for the ideal country always exists. He Lai (1998) says that "It stays on the periphery of normal discourse, transcending and independent of the manipulation of specific interests such as power and capital, and criticizing human existence with its unique value standpoint." (p.7) But similarly, Utopia construction is inseparable from the real life and real world. It is precisely because of the dissatisfaction and incompetence of the world that there will be such a super-realistic ideal world. This transcendentalism can make this kind of "incompetence" in Utopia become "not important" or "no longer a problem."

And we can see that Menzel has built a world in his image that is completely undisturbed by the outside world. *Capricious Summer* just tells us that a young magician and his female assistant suddenly came up in a village. The young and pretty female assistant instantly became the dream woman of all the men in the village, and the hostess of the swimming pool was deeply attracted by the magician. But in the end, the magician and his assistant left and the village returned to peace. *The Snowdrop Festival* tells of a carnival that was held after people in two villages hunted a boar that plunged into the two villages. *Closely Watched Train*, which is well known to the majority of film audiences, built this "Utopia" at a train station, with the concupiscent Hubička, the virgin Miloš, the photographer of the photo studio…What they cared about were never "war", or "aggression", but lust. Even under the theme of war, the people in the film were still entertaining themselves, and these external factors could not affect them. On the contrary, this serious subject turns extremely humorous under Menzel's creation: when the German plane dropped a bomb to the Czechoslovak territory and the house was blown up, the photographer woke up from his sleep and laughed; in the train compartment, the German nurses brought only sexual orgies to the conductors; the seal representing the German soldiers became a sex tool for girls.

After studying carefully on these stories, we find a structural pattern in which an originally calm place is invaded by outsiders, and these outsiders will stir up a turmoil here, but in the end these intruders will be forced to leave. Whether it is a magician, a boar or a German, these "outsiders" can never change the world built in Menzel's image. Instead, they will be driven away (destroyed). In *Capricious Summer*, everything goes back to the beginning; in *The Snowdrop Festival*, the boar is killed, and after a carnival, the villages return calm; in *Closely Watched Train*, the coming German train is blown up.

This structure reflects the political anxiety hidden in the hearts of the Czechoslovak people. Czechoslovak had long been under the control of different political forces and could not get released. The country had always been under the pressure of big countries, especially before and after World War II. After it finally pulled itself out of the German claws, it was squeezed into the Soviet socialist camp. The influence of these two powerful forces from the outside world on Czechoslovak was apparent, and the Utopia in the film that was not changed by any external factors was what they longed for. When they were dissatisfied with real life and their political demands could not be met, the construction of Utopia appeared in the works of art.

However, the structure of this utopia is not very stable. Many plots and contents imply a metaphor for politics. In *The Snowdrop Festival*, in order to celebrate the hunt for the boar, the people in the two villages held a banquet, but ultimately they fought with each other and brought the party into chaos because of the pointing direction of the boar head. The two villages stand for the two camps, arguing for a piece of spoils. Does the director really just tell us a pig story? *Closely Watched Train* is more interesting. Impotent young man went to see a doctor. The doctor answered him: "You are healthy as an ox, maybe too healthy. When a young man's too healthy, he can suffer from premature ejaculation, I had it too. It's just nerves. You're overly sensitive. There are natural, normal things. You need to be matter-of-fact about it." Being impotent is too healthy, and the morbidity is presented because it is too normal. If you want to get rid of this morbidity, you can only be "unhealthy." At the end of the film, the boy was no longer impotent, had sex experience, and completed a boy-to-man transition. At the same time, he became a hero, but he died prematurely. On the contrary, those who were not interested in things other than sex, such as more morbid Hubička were undisturbed. The mediocrities like Hubička became survivors. This typical irony of Jirí Menzel is similar to the spirit of "cynics".

It can be said that the director builds a utopian egg for his audiences in his film.

Thepressurefromtheoutsideworldcannotbringanyinfluencetotheegg,butthe internal life vaguely wants to break through the shell.

DEPICTION OF THE ORIGINAL DESIRES: BODILY NEEDS AND LUSTS

If "Utopia" is not enough to reflect the characteristics of Menzel's films, then the original desires such as bodily needs and lusts are common factors in his works. From the early film *Closely Watched Train* (1966) to the latest film *Skirt Chasers* (2013), we can easily see Menzel's preference for this proposition.

In Freud's theory, the ego, the id, and the super-ego are harmonious and unified, and the close cooperation of them enables people to effectively carry out various interactions with the external environment. The id is filled with the impulse of instincts and desires, driven by happiness, blindly pursuing satisfaction; the ego is influenced by the perpetual system and also a part of the id that mediates between the desires ofthe id and the super-ego. It acts according to the reality principle, supervises the impulse of the self, and pleases the id's drive in realistic ways; the super-ego is the part that represents ideals in the personality structure, represents social norms and self-ideals, and follows the "moral principle." Hence, the ego is oppressed by the three parties: happy principle of the id, idealism of the super-ego, and the real society. If the power of the ego is not enough to mediate the relationship between the id and the super-ego, the personality structure will be in an unbalanced state, which will cause anxiety, and the causes of anxiety are mostly due to traumatic memory.

Menzel's films infinitely magnify the original desires (the id), and the individual lusts are presented to the audiences in a playful and surrealistic way: in *Skylarks on a String*, the official who guards the prisoners especially loves secretly bathing the gypsy girl; the couple in *The Snowdrop Festival* quarrels, and the wife lets a dog swallow her husband's car keys; in *Closely Watched Train*, the passion of sex is displayed through the broken sofa; in *My Sweet Little Village*, the woman kisses her lover at her husband's swimming breathing breaks; in *Capricious Summer*, the man finally swindled the girl to his house with food, but fell asleep at the crucial moment; In *Cutting It Short*, the woman and her beautiful long hair became the spiritual belief of all the men in the village... In the Utopia world built by Menzel with his lens language, if there is anything important, it is lust. This kind of lust does not mean perpetual love or unbroken vows, but natural consequences.

Similar to the lusts, the bodily needs are also common: in *The Snowdrop Festival*, the man stole and ate most of the sausages; in *Capricious Summer*, a table of food was instantly wiped out by the girl; *Cutting It Short* describes a charming woman who is beautiful and often gobbles down food.

Mankind's most primal needs have been repeatedly mentioned by Menzel. The things that the audiences cannot see in real life are dramatized and exaggerated, and the original desires are in a clear view. It seems that the characters in the films are "degraded". Menzel uses this "degeneration" to bring the audiences a different feeling. The army, politics, political power, and economy have long since disappeared, leaving only "carnival." And this kind of perceptual, personalized carnival of primitive desires is a vent of the creator trying to balance the traumatic memory from reality and the inability to obtain a balance of personality structure. The films as a "dream" are a method for unconscious or oppressive desires to seek self-satisfaction in the form of dreaming, as well as a cry against the centralized rule of the Soviet Union in Stalin period. His subconsciously constructed Utopia and quiet mountain villages are only concerned with lusts and bodily needs. They are undoubtedly a form of alienation of modern people. When this alienated aesthetic is passed on to the audiences, apart from novelty, a utopia that transcends reality to escape centralized rule will also be built in their subconscious. Furthermore, a political appeal that to get rid of Soviet Union's control is conveyed.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the emergence of the Czechoslovak New Wave film movement has brought our attention to this country that has never had much voice in history. It also gives us a better understanding of the innate humorous genes of the Czechoslovak people. Even so, there is a bit of bitterness in the humor. Jirí Menzel takes the lens as his weapon and stands on the shoulders of the Czechoslovak writers. He uses his images to create a colorful world for the audiences, which is not disturbed by outsiders. Sex and carnivals are the main theme of the world, and yet wars and disputes are just flavoring agents.

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Reception Aesthetic Interpretation and Comparative Analysis of Chinese Translations of Wordsworth's *The Rainbow*

Xiaofang Yang [a,*]

[a] *Yunnan Normal University, Kunming 650500, China*

ABSTRACT

William Wordsworth, a leading figure of British Romantic poetry, captivates readers with his nature poems that depict natural beauty and mystery through delicate imagery and profound emotion. From the perspective of Reception Aesthetics, this study conducts a comparative analysis of two Chinese translations of Wordsworth's classic nature poem The Rainbow--Zhang Baohong's version and He Gongjie's version--focusing on rhythmic transmission, imagery conveyance, reconstruction of artistic conception, and readers' horizon of expectations. The paper aims to deepen Chinese readers' understanding of Wordsworth's poetry and offer new insights for poetic translation.

AN OVERVIEW OF RECEPTION AESTHETICS

The genesis and evolution of Reception Aesthetics constitute a rich academic journey, deeply rooted in the intellectual soil of the University of Konstanz. The formation of this theoretical school is primarily attributed to five young literary theorists and professors of the Konstanz School, who collectively catalyzed the rise of Reception Aesthetics as an emerging field. Core members included Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, professors specializing in Romance literatures and English literature respectively, whose scholarly contributions laid the cornerstone for Reception Aesthetics.

The term "reception aesthetics" (Rezeptionsästhetik) was coined by the German scholar Hans Robert Jauss. His theoretical framework, primarily derived from Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, was also influenced by formalist schools including structuralism (Wang Zhongling, 2012). As a pivotal figure, Jauss integrated Gadamer's hermeneutic theory into his research, proposing key concepts such as the "horizon of expec-

tations" and "fusion of horizons". The "horizon of expectations" refers to the interpreter's cognitive orientation and anticipated fulfillment when engaging with a text, shaped by their prior experiences. The "fusion of horizons" denotes the dynamic interaction between the recipient's expectations and the horizons of the text or lived praxis (Fang Jianzhong, 2004).

Concurrently, Wolfgang Iser's theoretical work was influenced by Roman Ingarden's phenomenology. Iser focused on how readers actualize textual meaning during the act of reading, deepening the understanding of reader-text interactions and invigorating the development of reception aesthetics. Over time, Reception Aesthetics transcended literary theory to become an interdisciplinary methodology, exerting profound influence beyond literary studies—including art history, film theory, and beyond. Today, as a significant academic domain, its origins and evolution not only reflect scholarly progress but also offer novel perspectives for comprehending the relationship between texts and readers.

William Wordsworth, a pioneer of British Romanticism and the most accomplished poet among the Lake Po-

ets, devoted his career to composing lyrical poetry that predominantly celebrates natural landscapes while expressing profound reverence for nature (Li Yan, 2011). Stylistically, his verse harmonizes contemplative tranquility with imaginative depth, characterized by sincere, natural language and an unpretentious authenticity that captures quotidian details and excavates emotions embedded in daily life.

In Chinese translations of Wordsworth's poetry, these distinctive features and stylistic essences have been effectively transmitted and received, enabling Chinese readers to apprehend the unique allure of his poetic oeuvre. Grounded in Reception Aesthetics, this study selects two Chinese renditions of Wordsworth's *The Rainbow*—Zhang Baohong's translation (hereafter Zhang's version) and He Gongjie's translation (hereafter He's version)—for a comparative analysis. The examination focuses on four dimensions: poetic imagery, artistic conception, rhythm and meter, readers' horizon of expectations. This approach aims to provide novel perspectives for researching the Sinicization of Wordsworthian poetry.

RECEPTION AESTHETICS AND THE TRANSLATIONS OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

Reception Aesthetics, a literary critical theory pioneered by the German Konstanz School in the 1960s, centers on the reader's role in dynamically generating and enriching a work's value and meaning through textual interaction. This paradigm challenges traditional text-centric approaches by shifting the focus of aesthetic experience from the work itself to the reader's reception process. William Wordsworth, a pioneering figure of British Romantic poetry, infused his verse with profound aesthetic contemplation, expressing reverence for nature, humanity, and art. This study examines the interplay between Reception Aesthetics and Wordsworthian poetry, analyzing their mutual influence across three dimensions: aesthetic experience, textual interpretation and literary value.

Reception Aesthetics posits that reading constitutes active participation and co-creation, not passive consumption. Wordsworth's poetry vividly exemplifies this principle. In *To a Butterfly*, for instance, the poet employs the butterfly symbol to evoke nostalgia for childhood and passion for natural beauty. Readers engage not only with the depicted beauty but also actively construct new meanings and emotions through personal aesthetic experiences and imagination--embodying the reader-centric paradigm emphasized by reception aesthetics. Furthermore, Reception Aesthetics underscores the diversity of aesthetic experiences, asserting that readers' reception modes and aesthetic standards evolve across historical periods and socio-cultural contexts. This very diversity constitutes a core tenet of the theory.

Wordsworth's poetry is imbued with multifaceted aesthetic elements--encompassing natural aesthetics, narrative aesthetics, tragic aesthetics, and moral aesthetics. These elements not only augment the artistic value of the poetry itself but also expand the interpretive possibilities and depth for readers during the reception process. Central to Wordsworth's oeuvre is his profound contemplation of human nature, reflecting a deep engagement with ethical concerns. In *The Solitary Reaper*, for instance, the poet's symbolic depiction of the reaping maiden articulates a yearning for human-nature harmony and delivers socio-realist compassion for impoverished laborers. Simultaneously, the poem manifests the poet's humanistic vision toward existential human struggles. Such thematic depth evokes resonance and affective power among readers. When engaging with these verses, readers not only perceive poetic artistry but also draw human warmth and strength from the textual experience. This humanistic contemplation--interweaving ethical inquiry with emotional catharsis--epitomizes a core literary value pursued by Reception Aesthetics.

Therefore, a profound synergistic dynamic exists between Reception Aesthetics and Wordsworthian poetry. Reception Aesthetics furnishes novel hermeneutic perspectives for interpreting Wordsworth's works, foregrounding the reader-centric paradigm and the diversity of aesthetic experiences. Conversely, Wordsworth's poetry--through its multifaceted aesthetic elements and humanistic contemplation--supplies rich interpretive resources and aesthetic engagements for reception theory. This dialectical reciprocity collectively advances the evolution of both literary criticism and creative praxis. By interrogating this nexus, we gain deeper insights into the value and significance of literary works, while cultivating innovative analytical frameworks for appreciating and comprehending literature.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO CHINESE TRANSLATIONS OF *THE RAINBOW* THROUGH RECEPTION AESTHETICS

Rendering Poetic Rhythm

From the perspective of metric analysis, Zhang's translation demonstrates meticulous effort in preserving the original poem's rhythmic structure. First, Zhang adheres to the principle of "formal correspondence in poetic translation," striving to replicate the original's metrical patterns. The original poem employs iambic meter with strictly regulated feet per line. Zhang's translation maintains equivalent pause units (Chinese dun) to match the original's foot count, as evidenced in lines such as "我心欢跳，每当看见｜" ("My heart leaps up when I behold｜"). This precise rhythmic calibration allows the translated verse to generate cadences akin to the original when recited while preserving its underlying suspense. Second, Zhang exhibits exceptional skill in handling rhyme schemes. The original's rhyme pattern (ABCCABCDD) is adapted to AABAACDDD in the translation. Though the structure diverges, Zhang's deliberate lexical choices and syntactic adjustments ensure that the rhymes align with Chinese poetic conventions while conveying the original's melodic aesthetics. Such flexibility not only reflects the translator's technical

Table 1 | Original Poem and Chinese Translations

Original Text	He's Version	Zhang's Version
My heart leaps up when I behold A rainbow in the sky; So was it when my life began; So is it now I am a man; So be it when I shall grow old, Or let me die! The Child is father of the Man; And I could wish my days to be Bound each to each by natural piety.	我的心无比激动 威廉·华兹华斯 每当我看到天上的彩虹， 心情就无比激动。 过去我生活开始时是这样， 现在我成了大人也是这样， 愿我老了的时候也是这样， 不然，就让我死亡! 小孩是大人的父亲: 所以自然的虔诚，我希望， 能维系我一生的岁月时光。	我心欢跳 威廉·华兹华斯 我心欢跳，每当看见 彩虹飞挂天边: 人生之初心如此; 而今成年情不变; 此情弥笃到老年， 否则，不如死去! 三岁孩童百岁心; 但愿有生之光阴 天天充满着对自然的虔敬。
	*Translated by He Gongjie, selected from English and American Poetry compiled by He Gongjie	*Translated by Zhang Baohong, selected from *The World of English*, no. 10, 2008

mastery but also accommodates target readers' expectations, enhancing the translation's accessibility and resonance within the Chinese literary context.

He Gongjie's translation does not strictly adhere to the original poem's rhythm. Instead, it employs a domestication strategy aligned with Chinese linguistic conventions. For instance, the line "Whenever I behold a rainbow in the sky / My heart leaps with excitement" presents the adverbial clause ("Whenever I behold...") before the main clause ("My heart leaps..."). This structure conforms to Chinese readers' expectations by placing background information first and the focal content later. Regarding prosody, Zhang's rendition modifies the original rhyme scheme to AABBBBCBB, deviating from conventional fixed patterns (such as ABAB or AABB) in favor of a relatively free rhyme scheme.

In translating the original poem's third to fifth lines: "So was it when my life began; So is it now I am a man; So be it when I shall grow old," He Gongjie utilizes a simple repetitive structure: "过去我生活开始时是这样， / 现在我成了大人也是这样， / 愿我老了的时候也是这样". Conversely, Zhang employs a parallel progressive structure: "人生之初心如此; / 而今成年情不变; / 此情弥笃到老年". This approach not only preserves the emotional core of the original but also achieves progressive intensification (climactic effect). Each line accelerates in rhythmic momentum, generating heightened emotional intensity. This cumulative effect immerses readers in the poet's profound passion and conviction.

Transmission Of Poetic Imagery

Imagery constitutes the "vocabulary" of poetic grammar and embodies the soul of poetry (Zhang Baohong & Liu Shicong, 2002). Examining the characteristics of Chinese and Western languages, classical Chinese features relatively loose grammatical relations and highly flexible lexical properties, whereas English poetry demands strict syntactic structures with inflections for part of speech, number, case, and tense. This fundamental distinction significantly contributes to the divergent presentation of objects and distinct imagistic structures observed in Chinese and Western nature poetry (Su Hui, 1997). The English language's extensive use of modifiers and rigid syntax rigidly defines the relationships between images. Consequently, instead of the direct juxtaposition and presentation characteristic of classical Chinese poetry, English poetry often develops imagery through linear progression based on a specific perspective or visual focus. Consider the original lines:

"My heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in the sky."

Here, the verb "leaps up" is modified by "when", and "A rainbow" is modified by "in". The relationships between images are explicitly and rigidly defined, which compromises the autonomous independence and objectivity of the scenery. This limits polysemy and diminishes vivid visual effects.

In contrast, the translation employs the method of juxtaposing images. Zhang's rendition "三岁孩童百岁心" (The Child is father of the Man) juxtaposes the two images—"三岁孩童" (child of three) and "百岁心" (centenarian's heart)—inviting readers to freely imagine the connecting link between them. Readers readily connect "百岁心" (centenarian's heart) with preceding phrases like "我心欢跳" (my heart leaps up) and "人生之初心如此" (So was it when my life began), aligning with the profound connotations of the original work.

He's translation, "小孩是大人的父亲" (The child is father of the man), strictly adheres to the original's literal expression. While conveying the surface meaning that adults should learn from children to preserve innate innocence, it overlooks the polysemic potential of "father"—which also implies "origin" . Thus, the phrase could be interpreted as "三岁定老" (The child shapes the man), suggesting that adulthood stems from child-

hood, with many adult traits and dispositions rooted in early years.

Through comparison, Zhang's rendition more effectively prompts readers to contemplate the philosophical implications behind the imagery. Consequently, readers' horizon of expectations is both expanded and renewed.

Recreating Poetic Atmosphere

Zhang Baohong demonstrates meticulous lexical selection in his translation process. For instance, when rendering "leaps up", he avoids literal equivalents like "跳跃" (jump) or "跃起" (leap), opting instead for "欢跳" (leaps with joy). This choice employs a more affectively charged expression that more precisely conveys the poet's excitement and exhilaration upon first seeing the rainbow. Such lexical ingenuity not only preserves the emotional essence of the original poem but also endows the translation with vivid imagery, thereby recreating the original's atmosphere through evocative imagery. In contrast, He's version uses the adjective "无比激动" (immensely excited), which possesses less dynamic force and visual immediacy than Zhang's verbal expression. Within this sentence structure, a verb better captures the poet's mental state.

Zhang's translation of "a rainbow in the sky" as "彩虹飞挂天边" employs the verb "飞挂" (flying arched). This not only depicts the rainbow's suspended posture but also creates a dreamlike, fairy-tale ambience, rendering the entire scene more vivid and poetic. He's rendition, "天上的彩虹" (A rainbow in the sky), presents static beauty and faithfully reproduces the original image. However, since Chinese favors verbal dynamism, translating the prepositional phrase "in the sky" into a verb phrase better aligns with Chinese readers' expectations. This crafting of atmosphere perfectly presents the original poem's emotional essence and aesthetic beauty before the reader. Consequently, readers experience strong emotional resonance and aesthetic pleasure during the reading process.

Finally, the word "natural" carries dual meanings: "inherent" and "pertaining to nature". Here, both translators exercise translator's subjectivity, selecting the meaning "pertaining to nature" that aligns with Wordsworth's thematic focus on nature. This creates thematic coherence from the opening "rainbow" to the closing "natural", allowing readers to experience the poet's emotions throughout the text and fulfilling their horizon of expectations.

Reader's Horizon of Expectations

The concept of "horizon of expectations" comprises three intrinsic components upon structural analysis: the present understanding of literary genres; the forms and themes of familiar works; the opposition between poetic language and practical language. The first two components constitute the reader's determinant horizon in literary reception, while the third represents the innovative horizon (Sun Qian, 2014). The determinant horizon refers to the pre-existing framework formed by a reader's personal Weltanschauung, cultural perspective, artistic-literary cultivation, and aesthetic experiences prior to engaging with a literary work. This framework fundamentally shapes the reader's interpretative approach to the text. Conversely, the innovative horizon arises during the reading process as readers anticipate content and forms that transcend their pre-existing expectations. This dimension liberates readers from the constraints of the determinant horizon, enabling them to discover and assimilate new meanings and realities within the work.

Synthesizing the translators' approaches to imagery, atmosphere, rhythm, and prosody discussed earlier, both Zhang Baohong and He Gongjie accommodate Chinese readers' linguistic expectation. Their translations are structured according to Chinese cognitive patterns, allowing readers to perceive, comprehend, and resonate with the poetry.

While the translations by Zhang Baohong and He Gongjie diverge in lexical choices and prosodic preservation, both demonstrate profound comprehension of the source text and a distinctive pursuit of aesthetic excellence. In addressing the determinant horizon, Zhang's rendition prioritizes emotional conveyance and fidelity to the source. Through phrases like "我心欢跳" (my heart leaps with joy) and "彩虹飞挂" (a rainbow flying arched), he meticulously captures and transmits the poet's ardent passion for the rainbow. Simultaneously, his preservation of the original rhythm and cadence enables readers to immerse themselves in the poet's emotional world, evoking a shared experience of childlike wonder and exhilaration.

He's translation, conversely, emphasizes emotional resonance and the integration of modernity. Expressions like "每当我看到天上的彩虹" (Whenever I see a rainbow in the sky) and "心情就无比激动" (my heart is immensely stirred) foreground the poet's sensibility toward natural beauty and affective kinship. He retains the original poetic atmosphere while employing contemporary diction, as seen in "愿我老了的时候也是这样" (May it be so when I grow old) and "不然，就让我死亡" (Else, let me die). These choices articulate the poet's cherishing of life and aspirations for the future, endowing the translation with enhanced temporal relevance and modern sensibility.

Regarding the innovative horizon, Zhang provides readers with an emotionally proximate version through nuanced affective depiction and scrupulous source-text reproduction. He, however, manifests a unique modern perspective. His linguistic innovation and assimilation of contemporary expressions align the translation more closely with modern readers' reading conventions and aesthetic needs, offering a novel aesthetic experience during the reading process.

CONCLUSION

Within the framework of Reception Aesthetics, the reader's horizon of expectations is regarded as a pivotal element for elevating aesthetic realms and enriching aesthetic experiences. This study conducts a comparative analysis of two translators' distinct approaches to poetic imagery transmission, atmospheric reconstruction, and prosodic treatment from a Reception Aesthet-

ics perspective. Specifically, Zhang Baohong's rendition prioritizes faithful retention of the original imagery while placing particular emphasis on prosodic restoration, resulting in a translation characterized by clear rhythmic cadence and strong metrical coherence. In contrast, He Gongjie's version focuses on preserving the source text's imagery while simultaneously infusing the translation with distinct temporal relevance and modern characteristics.

Regarding lexical choices, Zhang's translation demonstrates a preference for dynamically potent vocabulary, effectively recreating the original atmosphere and endowing the target text with enhanced poetic resonance. He's rendition, comparatively, exhibits limitations in this dimension. Nevertheless, both translations successfully convey the artistic effects of the original poem to varying degrees, offering readers diverse reading pleasure. As culturally literate individuals, the translators bring distinct interpretive insights to Wordsworth's nature poetry. Accordingly, many tend to interpret the text based on their personal understanding during the translation process--a practice that fully embodies translator's subjectivity.

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Nomadism in a Becoming-Labyrinth in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*

Yiman Chen [a,*], **Shanshan Yang** [b,*], **Zhaoyan Li** [a]

[a] *Northwest University, Xi'an 710127, China*
[b] *Yonsei University, Seoul 03722, South Korea*

KEYWORDS

*Becoming-Labyrinth;
Rhizome; Nomadic Subject;
Decentering;
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ABSTRACT

Thomas Pynchon's novel The Crying of Lot 49 constructs a wholly new "Becoming-Labyrinth" narrative via the tangled underground postal system known as Tristero. Unlike the linear structure of a traditional labyrinth, in which a hero is guided to a central truth, Pynchon's Becoming-Labyrinth thrives on rupture, drift, and uncertainty. The protagonist Oedipa Maas continually wanders nomadically through fragmented clues and decentered spaces, embodying the modern individual's existential plight adrift between discourses of power and illusions of truth. Grounded in Deleuze and Guattari's theories of rhizomes, deterritorialization, nomadism, and becoming, this paper examines how Oedipa navigates an ever-expanding network of meaning within the Becoming-Labyrinth, revealing how Pynchon's rhizomatic writing resists the grand narratives and rationalist centers of modernity. In the end, the novel denies any possibility of reaching a final truth and instead points toward an endless process of meaning-generation, thereby constructing a pluralistic, open, and politically resistant postmodern aesthetic paradigm.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Pynchon's 1966 novel The Crying of Lot 49 is one of his most experimentally daring early works. Though brief, it deploys a highly condensed narrative structure and an intricate system of symbols to deliver a searing critique of modernity. The protagonist, Oedipa Maas, is unexpectedly named executor of the estate of her late ex-lover and real-estate magnate Pierce Inverarity. She travels to San Narciso to settle his affairs, only to discover that Pierce's tangled holdings are entwined with an underground postal organization called Tristero. The Tristero network inverts and subverts the official order of mainstream society, and Oedipa's task of sorting out the estate becomes a journey through this labyrinth in search of understanding—ultimately drawing her into a hidden web woven from symbols, clues, texts, and riddles.

This web exhibits the structural hallmarks of a labyrinth, yet it departs sharply from the linear pattern of the traditional myth—where a hero, aided by a single guide, traverses corridors to reach a definitive center of truth. Jacques Attali, in Chemins de Sagesse : Traité du Labyrinthe, distinguishes between "a maze that can be walked out" and "a maze from which one can't escape" (Attali, 1999: XXVII). In the former, any patient explorer may eventually find the way out; in the latter, wanderers are doomed to remain lost. Tristero is unmistakably an inescapable labyrinth. It is riddled with circuitous dead ends—what one might call "Roundabout paths"—that

lead Oedipa Maas ever further astray. As she follows successive clues offered by different guides, each thread inevitably fractures, trapping her in ever-shifting passages. Yet just as each lead collapses, a new guide—and a fresh cluster of Ariadne wires—appears, only for the narrative to cut off before their direction can be fully revealed. In this context, the clues Oedipa encounters are intrinsically fragmented and discontinuous; the guides themselves are multiple and fluid; and the Ariadne's thread no longer delivers her to a clear center or singular truth but continually spawns new ambiguities and bewilderments.

Each new clue Oedipa uncovers deepens her uncertainty, drawing her further into a web with no final destination. Pynchon, by scattering multiple, contradictory leads, undermines both the reader's and the protagonist's quest for a determinate truth, thereby exposing the anxiety and bewilderment of modernity. The novel thus presents—in both its diegesis and its reception—a defining feature of contemporary society: indeterminacy, which mirrors the spiritual disorientation of its inhabitants. This "inescapable labyrinth" is not only realized through the text's nonlinear, decentered structure but also serves as Pynchon's metaphorical critique of the modern subject's epistemological predicament and the mechanisms of social control. By deploying an ever-shifting, indefinitely deferred network of meanings, the narrative dismantles the classical clue–truth–resolution logic(Doob, 1992; Eco, 2014), drawing both protagonist and reader into an unending interpretive game. Such a repudiation of fixed truths and deconstruction of grand narratives heralds the emergence of a postmodern aesthetic paradigm in which the "labyrinth" itself becomes the embodied fissure of modernity and the crisis of signification.

LABYRINTHINE SPACE—TRISTERO

Labyrinth, as a cross-cultural symbolic structure, has long embodied the complex interplay of order and chaos, center and boundary, knowledge and power. Archaeological and anthropological research shows that, "the labyrinth can never be reduced to some sort of local epiphenomenon, we find it occurring everywhere over thousands of years. Amazingly similar patterns recur Africa and America"(Attali, 1999:XXII). The term "labyrinth" (or "maze") derives from the ancient Greco-Roman world and is traditionally defined as a "system of intricate passageways and blind alleys"(Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.) and also denotes buildings that are completely or partially on the ground and contain many rooms and passageways that are difficult to walk out of.

One of the earliest large-scale material exemplars is the "Egyptian Labyrinth" at Hawara(Hall, 1905), erected in the late Twelfth Dynasty (c.1840 – 1760 BCE)(Oppenheim et al., 2015). Herodotus relates that it pos-

sessed "twelve roofed courts, … double sets of chambers, three thousand altogether, fifteen hundred above and the same number under ground" (Herodotus, 1920, 2.148) accommodating administrative assemblies, religious rites, and funerary functions alike. In its final form the complex served as the mortuary palace of Pharaoh Amenemhat III, and its intricate corridors were imagined as a sacred barrier separating the king's spirit from the mundane world. Greek myth transforms this architectural marvel into a symbolic narrative: on Crete, King Minos orders the master artisan Daedalus to replicate the Egyptian design at Knossos, creating an immense labyrinth to confine the Minotaur, a bull-headed monster born of Queen Pasiphaë and the sea-god Poseidon. Every nine years Minos compels Aegeus, king of Athens, to send seven boys and seven girls as tribute for the creature's voracious appetite. The hero Theseus volunteers to sail with the victims; guided by the "clew of thread" bestowed by Minos's daughter Ariadne, he slays the Minotaur and escapes the maze with the princess. Because Ariadne falls in love with the foreigner and thus betrays her father and homeland, the labyrinth comes to signify desire, errancy, and the struggle to overcome evil and find the single true path toward a central(Padel, 1996), absolute value—it is at once a passage through bewilderment and mortal peril and a journey toward renewal.

This myth condenses into a four-part narrative matrix—hero, guide, quest, and labyrinthine space(Attali, 1999)—that Western literature repeatedly re-orchestrates. The Odyssey recasts the labyrinth as the Aegean archipelago and the walled city of Troy, with the "Trojan Horse" functioning as an Ariadne-like thread that slices through the maze. In the medieval Divine Comedy, Beatrice leads Dante along a spiraling itinerary through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, elevating the labyrinth to a pilgrimage of spiritual redemption(Eternalised, 2024). This structure has become both a metaphorical mechanism and the prototype of the "knowledge labyrinth" in the Western cultural imagination. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the labyrinth figures a mental journey of desire - disorientation - epiphany - rebirth; from a narratological angle, it offers a generative template that can be endlessly recombined. The traditional core mission—slay the monster, reach the center, and emerge renewed—is not merely an act of violent conquest but a multidimensional inquiry into identity, ethical choice, and the limits of knowledge. By contrast, Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 enacts a distinctly post-modern labyrinth. Here, Tristero functions as an ever-shifting maze without fixed boundaries, subverting the classical hero–quest–exit triad. The novel's labyrinth is a fabric of signs, symbols, and insinuations that mirrors the precarious positions of marginalized groups—queer communities, drifters, ethnic minorities—whose disorientation and downward spirals converge to form the very core of

Tristero's maze: a space saturated with desire and bifurcating paths.

Unlike the traditional labyrinth narrative—where a heroic figure ultimately negotiates the maze—Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 centers on Oedipa Maas, a middle-class housewife who is anything but heroic. She epitomizes the modern nomad, a subject marked by disorientation and ceaseless search. Oedipa's journey is devoid of a clear "hero's thread"; instead, she is steered by highly symbolized signs such as the cryptic postal network W.A.S.T.E. Whereas classical labyrinth tales culminate in the hero's triumphant solution, Oedipa never discovers an exit, nor any final truth or enlightenment. She becomes ensnared in boundless chaos and uncertainty. In this way, the novel constructs a distinctly post-modern labyrinthine narrative—one whose very form reflects the fragmentation and lostness characteristic of the post-modern condition.

The Tristero kingdom runs an underground postal network whose emblem is a post-horn fitted with a mute and whose operations are conducted under the acronym W.A.S.T.E. According to the novel's pseudo-history, this marginal communications system originated in sixteenth-century Europe and was transplanted to the United States in the nineteenth century, expressly to serve those excluded from mainstream society. To signal membership and to mock the state's monopoly over the mail, Tristero deliberately issues counterfeit stamps that closely resemble official U.S. postage yet carry subversive alterations in their imagery and denomination. As key artefacts of Pierce Inverarity's estate, these symbols both furnish Oedipa with clues for her investigation and announce Tristero's systematic subversion of "official space" and state discourse.

Tristero's iconography—above all the muted post-horn, makes the everyday cityscape itself labyrinthine through its very ubiquity and recursion. At first Oedipa assumes the emblem surfaces only in San Narciso or San Francisco; yet when she returns to her own middle-class suburb of Kinneret she discovers that even her psychiatrist—and perhaps her husband—may be linked to Tristero. Wherever she goes the post-horn reappears. The symbol thus becomes a looping detour that stitches together disparate cities and social strata, a path that perpetually folds back on itself and never opens onto an exit. Tristero possesses no chartable territory; instead, by saturating the built environment with its signs it labyrinthises' reality. Caught in this rhizomatic network, Oedipa wanders like a classical hero on a maze-quest, yet one that can never arrive at a center or definitive truth.

RHIZOMATIC GUIDES

Oedipa's "maze-quest" in The Crying of Lot 49 is not directed by a single Ariadnean thread; rather, it is pulled along by a constellation of ever-emerging, splitting, and relinking "rhizomatic guides". These figures and signs fulfil Deleuze and Guattari's three principles—connection & heterogeneity, multiplicity, and asignifying rupture—and together constitute a decentralized navigation system that fractures the classical labyrinth's linear logic into an open network perpetually ready to be rewritten (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Attorney Metzger is the first to usher Oedipa into the thicket of Pierce's semiotic estate. He draws her attention to the counterfeit stamps and to the clandestine W.A.S.T.E. labels, then steers her to the bar "The Scope", where the restroom graffiti exposes her— for the very first time—to the muted post-horn, the maze's central emblem. Yet Metzger soon vanishes(Pynchon, 2006: 24-28). His guiding trajectory thus foregrounds the rhizome's principle of asignifying rupture: any given thread may terminate abruptly at one node, only to pick up unexpectedly elsewhere.

The Courier's Tragedy functions as Oedipa's second guide. The half-spoken hints of the teenagers in the Echo Courts lounge spark her curiosity, so she goes to see the play and then questions its director, Randolph Driblette, about textual anomalies. A single disputed line alerts her to the existence of three distinct versions of the script, and the ensuing hunt becomes a fresh episode of territorialization: She searches a second-hand bookstore, learns that a ninety-year-old collector named Mr. Thoth possesses the "original text," and drives to the Twilight Home where he lives. Thoth, wearing a gold ring engraved with W.A.S.T.E., recounts a fragment of Native-American massacre lore and explains that the ring was sliced from an Indian's finger by his grandfather. Through these shards, Oedipa uncovers another layer of the Tristero postal system's covert history: in early-modern Europe two rival networks—Thurn-and-Taxis and Tristero—contested the mails; the latter was officially "defeated," yet it survived in disguise and re-emerged in nineteenth-century California, loyal to its founding mission of serving those shut out of the mainstream. Tristero not only brandishes its own emblem but also commands a dispersed body of believers and users. When the second-hand shop burns down and both Thoth and Driblette die, the deterritorialization of The Courier's Tragedy comes to an abrupt halt. The divergent scripts, however, have already performed the rhizome's principle of multiplicity: each textual branch can cross-link laterally with any other, throwing off new clusters of meaning, yet never coalescing into a single, authoritative source.

On the streets of San Francisco—the third guide in Oedipa's maze—the muted post-horn crops up everywhere. Spotting a lapel pin stamped with the emblem, she tails its wearer into a gay bar called The Greek Way. The man explains that the pin is the badge of an outfit known only as IA; its members communicate exclusively by telephone numbers routed through W.A.S.T.E. and never meet face-to-face. He recounts

IA's founding tale: a former Yoyodyne executive, replaced by an IBM 7094 computer, placed a newspaper plea for help but received nothing but a bundle of letters from botched suicides delivered by a ragged old courier. Still bereft of reasons to live, the read of a Vietnamese monk's self-immolation, fetched gasoline, and prepared to follow suit. Just then his wife returned, trysting with an efficiency expert who blurted: "Nearly three weeks it takes him… to decide. You know how long it would've taken the IBM 7094? Twelve microseconds. No wonder you were replaced"(Pynchon, 2006, p. 48). The would-be suicide roared with laughter for ten minutes; as the flame-soaked envelopes curled, the post-horn bled through the stamps. He vowed: "My fatal error was love. Henceforth I will love no one—male, female, dog, cat, car, or thing. I shall found an association of the utterly alone, and this mark revealed to me by the gasoline that almost destroyed me shall be its sign" (Pynchon, 2006, pp. 416–417). Since then, IA—an anonymous network of failed suicides—exchanges messages solely via W.A.S.T.E. numbers, never congregating in person. The episode dramatizes a rhizomic line of flight: its members flee the disciplinary grids of mainstream society(Salami & Rahmani, 2018) through anonymized communication, yet the post-horn emblem simultaneously reinscribes them within Tristero's cartography. As lines of flight and reterritorialization recur, the labyrinth sheds its mappable edges and unfolds as a boundless, origin-less web.

The labyrinth's complexity mirrors the complexity of human fate and of our systems of knowledge. In a postmodern frame, however, that complexity is no longer orderly or hierarchical; it is a ceaselessly generating, center-less, rhizomatic network. Oedipa's passage through the labyrinth proves even more intricate than any classical heroes. She has no reliable guide. A swarm of clues keeps erupting; whenever she seems close to the truth a thread snaps, only for new threads to surface, and she becomes hopelessly entangled in them. Every rhizome is threaded with segmentary lines — routes where it becomes layered, territorialized, organized, and given meaning. At the same time, it is shot through with deterritorializing lines that perpetually break away. Whenever one stratified line erupts into a line of flight, the rhizome undergoes a rupture, yet that fleeing line still belongs to the rhizome. All these lines weave back into one another without end, sustaining the rhizome's restless mesh. As Deleuze writes, they are "intensive variations and unlimited lines of flight" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). Like Deleuze's rhizome, the network obeys the principle of connection and heterogeneity(any point can and must connect with any other), the principle of multiplicity(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8), and the principle of asignifying rupture(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 9). It thus presented a decentered, deconstructive post-modernity.

These rhizomatic guides ceaselessly deterritorialize the landscape, blurring Oedipa's judgement and eroding any claim to stable truth, yet they never sever their ties to her—or to the maze itself. Like a rhizome, each broken thread immediately sprouts new shoots. No longer does a single Ariadnean filament lead the protagonist toward a fixed revelation; instead, the guides remain inside Tristero's labyrinth as open, ever-generating formations with no beginning and no end. By deploying such guides, Pynchon dismantles the grand, linear narrative and replaces it with rootlessness, celebrating difference and plurality. A guide can surface at any moment, vanish just as suddenly, and still interlink with every other clue, continually spawning fresh paths and conversations. In this way the novel stages a meditation on modern humanity's search for vital meaning in a world where all lines are provisional and forever in flux.

THE NOMAD IN THE LABYRINTH

Oedipa's quest can be read as a nomadic passage along what Deleuze and Guattari call the three "lines of life" — the rigid line, the supple line, and the line of flight. According to Deleuze and Guattari, lines constitute all the things in the world. Both individuals or groups, they are made of lines. "They put forward three kinds of lines: the molecular and supple line, the molar segmented line or rigid line, and the nomadic line of flight"(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 202). Along Oedipa's quest, fragmentary signs such as counterfeit stamps, the muted post-horn, and W.A.S.T.E. logos act like sutures, linking otherwise separate scraps of experience and constantly spawning new events. Bits of information scattered throughout the city knit themselves together, gradually assembling Tristero's labyrinth; as ever more fragments attach and spill outward, the labyrinth's perimeter keeps expanding, until it becomes a site where meaning can proliferate without limit.

Oedipa's departure from her habitual life to administer Pierce Inverarity's estate marks a shift from the rigid, molar line to the supple, molecular line. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, this is the moment when the subject's territorial boundaries first loosen. Counterfeit stamps and the muted post-horn flash across her field of vision, intimating the presence of another order system. At this stage, Oedipa's deterritorialization is neutral—what Deleuze calls a relative deterritorialization carried out along the second, supple line.

As she pursues these fragments further, Oedipa abandons her middle-class routines and finally reaches the third line—the line of flight—where she encounters a heterotopic domain: Tristero, an underground network of marginal communities signified by the muted post-horn and the name W.A.S.T.E. Shuttling back and forth across all three lines, she repeatedly deterritorializes and reconnects them, letting Tristero generate ever-expanding layers of meaning; this labyrinthine, corridor-

ridden space, in turn, reflects the modern subject's restlessness, bewilderment, and disorientation.

Oedipa passes from one rhizomatic entry point to another rhizomatic exit: every fresh clue marks a new territorialization, and every attempt to pursue that clue demands a deterritorialization in search of a way out—yet the thread invariably breaks somewhere along the line. Shaken by excessive information, she longs to retreat to the first, rigid line and to seek help from her former life; so she leaves Pierce's San Narciso and returns to her comfortable middle-class suburb. But as the W.A.S.T.E. network of clues erupts and multiplies—Metzger's guidance falters, Driblette dies, the stranger in San Francisco vanishes—the cycle of "rupture and reconnection" propels her onto the line of flight. Tristero's signs spread laterally like a rhizome: any node can open onto a new path, yet none can coalesce into a single center.

She enters a state of absolute deterritorialization the moment her former life ceases to offer any place of return. At first she pins her hopes on Dr Hilarius's professional salvation, only to discover that the psychiatrist is more deeply insane than his patients; Mucho, meanwhile, is rendered equally useless by hallucinogens. With both avenues of help abruptly closed, Oedipa sets out once more—alone—back to San Narciso, hoping to find an exit inside Tristero's maze. At this point the labyrinth is no longer an obstacle to overcome but becoming itself—a process that can be approached forever yet never completed. This second flight signals that she no longer has any fragments or any territorialization. Oedipa throws herself wide open, letting Tristero's web of signs re-weave her very being; in that surrender she experiences a perpetual flux of becoming and confronts the modern subject's rootlessness and disorientation.

Oedipa moves like a nomad—forever crossing borders yet finding no place to settle. In her pursuit of Tristero she never stops gathering fresh clues and probing for new breakthroughs. Within a Deleuze/Guattari framework, nomadism is not only spatial but also temporal: it names a mode of becoming—a continuously proliferating, ever-shifting multiplicity. Tristero, therefore, is not a fixed "location" at all; it is a generative network that can expand at any moment, a rhizomatic collage stitched together by counterfeit stamps, the muted posthorn, W.A.S.T.E. emblems, and other fleeting guides.

In any rhizomatic open system, being is never static; it is a continual process of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming entails breaking existent forms, subjects, and organs into streams of particles and then weaving relations of speed and slowness, motion and rest among them. From this particle-flux arises the lines of flightpaths of deterritorialization. Becoming is therefore always underway, never finished: to exist is to change. Remedios Varo's painting Bordando el manto terrestre (Embroidering the Earth's Mantle) gives the idea a vivid image: imprisoned at the top of a circular tower, young women embroider a tapestry that slips through a narrow window and tries vainly to fill the void outside—"the tapestry was the world" (Pynchon, 2006, p. 11). When Oedipa first sees the canvas, she realizes that her own "tower" is merely another territory; fleeing it cannot bring her to a true "outside," because the void can be filled only by the dynamic world generated from her own internal multiplicity of rhizomes. Deleuze reminds us that only by becoming a nomad, escaping the coding of power, can an individual enter this rhizomatic realm of endlessly proliferating meaning and avoid lapsing into nihilism. Oedipa's journey, then, is not a search for an exit but an attempt to experience and enact the possibilities of becoming within an endlessly generative labyrinth.

By overturning the deep structure of the labyrinth tale, Thomas Pynchon dismantles the Cartesian model of cognition and recasts it as a nomadic archaeology of knowledge. When Oedipa tries to crack Pierce Inverarity's estate by applying the linear logic of classic detective fiction—gather clues, trace connections, unveil the truth—she encounters instead an endlessly proliferating chain of signifiers: the Tristero emblem may point to an actual resistance network, a madman's hallucination, or a simulacrum generated by capital's own circuitry. This produces a double paradox for the modern nomad. Her mobility is at once a forced drift under the pressure of global capitalism (Oedipa's investigation is shadowed throughout by real-estate speculation) and a deliberate flight from the tyranny of absolute truth. Once the traditional maze-center—Truth—is hollowed out, the nomad's path no longer needs to aim at a final destination; it improvises temporary dwellings in the folds of signs. This mode of being echoes Zygmunt Bauman's diagnosis of "liquid modernity", in which stable structures are continually dissolved and individuals must improvise their dwelling amid uncertainty(Lee, 2005). Thus, when Oedipa finally confronts the Tristero system—one that might open a path to "Another America"—she opts to suspend judgment, neither embracing it outright nor rejecting it altogether. Such a stance offers the most candid response to the post-modern epistemic quandary: truth is no longer waiting at the maze's exit; it lives only in the endless work of interpretation.

TRISTERO OF BECOMING

Pynchon's Tristero is not a labyrinth with a single exit but a self-generating, kinetic network that moves through successive cycles of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. Each act of territorialization occurs when Oedipa captures a fresh clue in the urban fabric; deterritorialization follows as she interrogates and dismantles the clue's provisional center of meaning; reterritorialization then fills the resultant fissure with new symbols and pathways, extending the web and spawning fresh possibilities. Tristero is not

simply a site of obstruction and bafflement; it is a perpetually widening semantic grid in which old links are cut and new ones surface, branching into rhizomatic multiplicities. Entering this maze no longer leads toward a single telos—its possible endpoints multiply, continually redefining both the labyrinth itself and the seeker who traverses it.

Oedipa's entire pursuit can be read as a concrete rehearsal of the territorialization–deterritorialization–reterritorialization loop. Each time she seizes a new sign, she carves out a provisional territory within the city's fragmented spaces. First, the muted post-horn she spots on the street leads her to a macabre enterprise that fashions cigarette filters from human bone. Almost at once, a cryptic line in The Courier's Tragedy flings her toward three mutually incompatible versions of the script, shattering the prior territory and plunging meaning into a new phase of deterritorialization. Next, the counterfeit stamps in Pierce's will and the stark "WASTE" logo on a trash can activate one another, forming a new nodal point that directs Oedipa to a mysterious buyer—yet just as the veil is about to lift, the narrative cuts off. This ceaseless rhythm of rupture and reassembly keeps her roaming inside a self-propagating web of significance. For the reader, the sensation of endless diffusion is precisely what makes Tristero's labyrinth feel boundless.

Within the Tristero paradox, every clue Oedipa grasps triggers a fresh deterritorialization: she immediately interrogates and dismantles the meaning-center that has just taken shape, only to watch it collapse when the trail breaks off. Bereft of bearings, she latches onto another cluster of signs and is hurled into the next cycle of deterritorialization, roaming inside a self-replicating, never-sealed web of symbols. She inhabits a world with no fixed foothold, where the center is forever on the move: whenever she nears what appears to be a stable nucleus of meaning, it slides away or simply vanishes, leaving yet another fragile center for her to pursue(Olsen, 1983). The loop exposes Tristero's landscape as one of perpetual deterritorialization / reterritorialization: every "center" is a surface effect, while the only constant is ceaseless drift itself.

Through each new act of deterritorialization, Oedipa confronts one grotesque episode after another and gradually pieces together Tristero's clandestine, eight-century itinerary. From the thirteenth century onward, Tristero stood as a rival to the Holy Roman Empire's official courier, Thurn and Taxis; after the Reformation and the French Revolution it slipped underground. By the mid-nineteenth century the network had migrated to the New World, waging a covert battle against the United States' own Pony Express— "From the battle of Austerlitz until the difficulties of 1848, the Tristero drifted on, deprived of nearly all the noble patronage that had sustained them; now reduced to handling anarchist correspondence; only peripherally engaged"(Pynchon, 2006, pp. 142–143). In modern America the underground post has insinuated itself into the social capillaries: the gay bar The Greek Way, the anarchist haunts The Scope, the shop-floor at Yoyodyne, a cheap Mexican restaurant, the teenagers of Echo Courts, the pensioners at Vesperhaven, even Black neighborhoods echoing with muted post-horns, Chinatown, and inner-city slums. For such marginalized communities the official mail has long since lost meaning, and Tristero has become a "ghost network," quietly binding together those forgotten by the system—while steering Oedipa ever deeper into an endless labyrinth of interpretation.

When Oedipa's trail carries her into queer bars, cheap Mexican diners, Black neighborhoods, and hippie motels, she realizes she has crossed into an alien territory: the urban codes familiar to a middle-class consciousness—banks, offices, suburban households—cease to function here. As Deleuze and Guattari note, any delimited "segment" locks the subject inside a compound of imposed coding and territorialization; every apparatus of power is a machine that simultaneously classifies and encloses (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 504). Different social groups are thereby walled off by symbolic fortifications: the prevailing codes and over-codes form layer upon layer of "iron houses", nailing people to seemingly impassable walls of meaning. Yet these apparently unbreakable lines yield only through deterritorialization. As clues fracture and recombine, Oedipa is forced to abandon her middle-class viewpoint and enter the subaltern network signified by Tristero—a parallel system that recognizes itself through muted post-horns, clandestine mail, and underground symbols. It is within this continual process of de- and reterritorializing that the novel exposes a deep tension between two social spaces: the stable center of official mail and middle-class order, and the nomadic edge communication fashioned by those expelled from the mainstream. In other words, only deterritorialization can tear a hole in the symbolic wall, allowing new subject positions and chains of meaning to emerge—and bringing the structural conflict between Tristero and the bourgeois world into full view.

At the novel's close, Oedipa's question— "Who, exactly, owns the America inscribed in Pierce's will?"— shifts the focus from a private puzzle to a public structure. The query lays bare the depth of racial inequity in the 1960s and gestures toward Pynchon's hopes for a more pluralistic society. Setting the story in 1964 proves crucial: the year still carries the oppressive residue of 1950s McCarthyism while foreshadowing the cultural radicalism soon to crest, hinting at an imminent historical fracture. Oedipa glimpses the roots of America's racial injustice and feels a flicker of reformist zeal. She considers handing part of the estate directly to nameless, oppressed people. If Tristero still exists—hidden, isolated, yet waiting—she may even join its ranks and use legal means to pry the system open. In that thought experiment, Oedipa stops being merely an executor; instead, she envisions herself as a potential Tristero

recruit. Her budding identification with this underground network, combined with a yearning for social change, leaves the novel's open ending resonating as an unfinished summons(Barros-Grela & Bobadilla-Pérez, 2014).

Tristero is best understood as a "generative labyrinth"—a symbolic apparatus that continually reproduces itself and never fully closes. It functions both as a metaphor for the fluid architecture of post-modern society and as a reflexive response to the dilemmas of modernity. Its generative nature first appears in the relentless expansion of its signifying web and the constant slippage of meaning: Oedipa's inquiry oscillates between approaching the truth and watching that truth dissolve. The W.A.S.T.E. watermark on counterfeit stamps, the fractured lines from The Courier's Tragedy, and the murky insignia of an underground postal system all seem to confirm Tristero's existence—yet each clue instantly splits into fresh enigmas that propel her into another round of interpretation. Pynchon thereby exposes the paradox embedded in Enlightenment rationality: the linear pursuit of truth sets off an endless cascade of signifiers, revealing that truth itself cannot be fixed. Tristero's labyrinth, then, is not merely a spatial trap; it is a device that lays bare the structural contradictions of modernity and compels readers to reconsider the status of reason, order, and truth.

Tristero's "generative labyrinth" ultimately takes root in the breakdown of language itself. The novel brims with cryptic codes, like W A S T E, N A D A, K C U F, which look airtight yet sever the bond between signifier and signified. N.A.D.A. is both the "National Automobile Dealers' Association" and, in Spanish, plain "nothing". The W A S T E mailbox leads to "Kirby", a label that proves equally hollow. Pynchon thus sketches a post-modern arena where language circles back on itself and cannot anchor reality: the world becomes an absurd word-game. In this maze, the classical logic of a hero arriving at truth is cancelled. Oedipa drifts from detective-style verification toward a nomadic life inside the folds of signification. She abandons any finish line and learns to dwell in limitless interpretation. Tristero therefore reads as an irony on instrumental reason: Enlightenment thinking sought to impose order by classifying and controlling, yet the labyrinth's entropic spread reveals that "order" is itself a construct of power. Truth no longer waits at the end; it flares up for an instant—and is gone—in the very act of interpretation. By exposing the collapse of grand narrative, Pynchon opens an indeterminate aesthetic path for reconstructing meaning amid fragmentation.

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Visual Translation of the Imprint of Life: Re-exploration of Caravaggio's Paintings

Yingpeng Zhang [a,*]

[a] *College of Fine Arts, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou 730070, China*

ABSTRACT

Caravaggio's art opened the door to European realism in the 17th century. His short and glorious life was full of suffering and disappointment. He lost his parents in a minor and experienced social suppression after adulthood. Under the dual stimulation of physiology and psychology, his heart was extremely distorted, his personality was eccentric, his temper was irritable, and he was full of rebellion towards society. He stood on the opposite of "stylism" and academicism, and fought against the times with his own unique artistic language. This article starts from the vision of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, analyzes Caravaggio's life's missing experience and deconstructs the visual presentation of this missing experience in his artistic creation.

INTRODUCTION

As the most iconic theoretical system of humanistic psychology, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory constructs a five-level demand model from basic survival to spiritual transcendence, namely physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, respect needs and self-realization needs. The five needs are distributed in a pyramid-like manner, among which physiological needs are the lowest level needs and the motivation is the strongest(Hu, 2015),This theory has extensive application value in many fields such as education and teaching, medical care, and art research, especially in the generation of artists' creative motivation. As far as Caravaggio is concerned, his life is like his artistic creation, full of drama. He is not only an artistic genius, but also a fugitive criminal. Art is his means of survival and a window for his emotions to vent. His works are secular and violent, and the strong contrast of light and shadow makes his works extremely tense. Behind these works that are contrary to the mainstream of the times is a
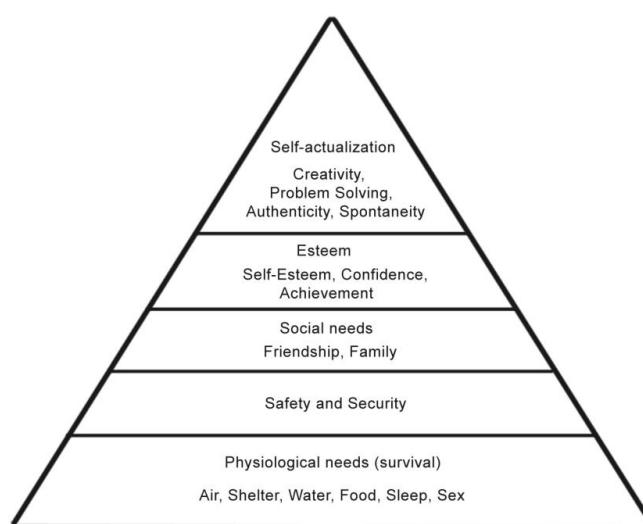

Figure 1 | Maslow's hierarchical theory diagram

mirror projection of Caravaggio's lack of sexual experience throughout his life (**Figure 1**).

CARAVAGGIO FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HIERARCHY THEORY

Maslow believes that in every period, one kind of demand will dominate, and other needs will be subordinate. In the process of the dominant demand being constantly satisfied, the interaction between the individual and the social environment will also deepen. When one's own cognition and thinking develop, the individual's awareness and perception of his own state will continue to deepen, thereby producing and developing a strong sense of self(Ye, 2025).Caravaggio experienced a double suppression of physiological and psychological pressure in the process of self-realization, which directly led to his self-consciousness being suppressed in the process of awakening, so his personality becomes perverse and his behavior is uncontrollable.Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we will further analyze the internal logic contained in Caravaggio's psychological appeals and behavioral motivations at different times.

Through the Maslow hierarchy of needs, it is not difficult to find that physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, and respect needs are located below the pyramid, so we can regard these four needs as the basis needs.Among them, physiological needs are the need to maintain individual survival and racial development, and are also the most primitive, basic and limited need among human needs.It is shared by humans and animals, including food, water, sexual intercourse, excretion and sleep(Jiang & Zhang, 2010).Caravaggio was a lack of basic needs. His father unfortunately died in the plague that broke out in 1576, and his mother also died around 1590, which brought great trauma to his growth.For the sake of life and ideals, he went to Rome alone. When he first arrived in Rome, he was poor and destitute, without any clothes, unable to feed himself, and even contracted diseases. He was in different studios. He was extremely unstable and often had conflicts with people.This underlying life experience gradually alienated his psychological structure, which in turn gave birth to his pathological psychological traits.

Generally speaking, Maslow's hierarchy of demand is an increasing trend, that is, when one layer of demand is met, the desire for another layer of demand will arise.However, this relationship is not absolute. In special environments, multiple needs will exist at the same time.Caravaggio was regarded as a madman in Rome. Some people said that he often mingled with alcoholics, gamblers and prostitutes, and was very vulgar; others said that he had a bad temper, rebellious personality, unruly, and often wore swords. He was a demon king in the world.Especially the street policemen in Rome were very disliked by him and often caused trouble for him.

Their illegal behaviors were recorded in the case and even had experiences of murder and jailbreak(Chen, 2019).These extreme behaviors often put him in danger and were on the way to escape. Therefore, during Caravaggio's life, physiological needs, safety needs, and social needs were not met accordingly. It is worth noting that he has received help and appreciation from some patrons in the field of painting, so he has received some respect. However, the inherent meaning of respect mentioned by Maslow is not only respected by the outside world, but also the pursuit of personal value. The most important thing in the process of respect and being respected is the emergence of self-confidence. In this way, Caravaggio did not develop self-confidence, he was only part of the need to achieve respect.

When the basic needs of physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and respect needs are not met, people will be unable to realize themselves and will be in a pathological self-consuming manner, which will lead to a lack of experience. In the field of artistic creation, this lack of experience will eventually be translated into a very tension language, forming the artist's unique artistic style.

VISUAL TRANSLATION OF MISSING EXPERIENCE IN PAINTING

In the second half of the 16th century, Italy's people's uprising continued, with the country's internal and external troubles, and the basic needs of the lower-class people were seriously threatened. The reactionary forces of the Catholic Church have strengthened. They refused to use realistic methods to express nature and human art. Then "styleism" and academics have gained a mainstream position in the painting world. Styleism distorts the inherent image and is full of subjective colors. The academics pursue simple and distinct compositions and magnificent forms, based on ancient myths and Bibles, and follow the inherent laws of creation and pursue idealized images(Fsevolozkaya & Zhang, 1982). Caravaggio was physically and psychologically full of rebellion against society under the premise that many needs were not met. Then he stood on the opposite of "stylistics" and academics, pulled the gods into reality, bravely chose realism, and pioneered the Baroque.

Image Translation—Decaying Fruit

The images in Caravaggio's works are not noble, great, and flawless heroes, but lower-level figures such as poor people and beggars. He portrays these characters truthfully without any embellishment, so his works are more realistic and realistic(Zhu, 2023). At the same time, his early works have a strong atmosphere of life and will boldly choose some materials that are not favored by everyone to create, among which the fruit basket is one of his faithful choices.

Figure 2 | "Still Life with a Basket of Fruit"
1601 31cm×47cm

Figure 3 | "Supper at Emmaus"
1600-1601 139cm×195cm

Caravaggio, who was in a dilemma of demand, presented the fruits in the basket with almost paranoid realistic skills when he created the "*Fruit Basket*" series. In "*Still Life with a Basket of Fruit*" (**Figure 2**), the fruit basket is placed in the center of a horizontal tabletop, which is particularly prominent against the dark yellow background. There are various fruits placed in the basket. Each fruit has insect eyes of different sizes on the surface. All kinds of leaves show different degrees of lesion characteristics, showing a tendency to decline after ripening. In "*Supper at Emmaus*" (**Figure 3**), the painter highlights the same fruit basket on the edge of the table from a low perspective, giving people a sense of danger of overturning at any time. Withered branches and leaves, corrupt fruits and imbalanced composition jointly created the "imperfection" of Caravaggio's early artistic creation. This "imperfection" is not his technical imperfection, but his "imperfection" in personality, a concrete projection of the survival crisis of real society, and a way to realize oneself through the reality of art, and it is also a spiritual mark of breaking through the suppression of demand.

Light and Shadow Translation—"Wine Cellar Light"

Light and shadow play an important role in the creation of Western oil paintings. The use of light and shadow is not only a technical means, but also a philosophical carrier of artistic expression. Caravaggio's almost perverted use of light and shadow had a great impact on Baroque and even today's oil painting cre-

ation. His "blackening" style of "cellar light" is closely related to his life experience.

A few years after his first arrival in Rome, he won the appreciation of Cardinal Del Monte with "*The Card-sharps*", so he received brief protection. During this period, his physiological needs were temporarily met. His works such as "*Boy with a Basket of Fruit*", "*The Fortune Teller*", "*The Lute Player*", and "*The Musicians*" (**Figure 4**) were warm tones, bright light, and lively and natural characters. But as he continued to release himself, alcoholism, fighting and wandering became the norm of his life, and his heart became restless again. So from "*The Calling of Saint Matthew*", his creation became increasingly "black", and the dark background, profound plot, and dramatic body language of characters all appeared in the works of this period(Wang, 2019). "*The Calling of Saint Matthew*" (**Figure 5**), "*The Crowning with Thorns*", "*Supper at Emmaus*", "*The Seven Acts of Mercy*" and other works all realize the unity of opposition between the picture and light and shadow. Looking at his artistic creation path, the "black" evolution of light and shadow in his works may be the visual compensation of his psychological imbalance, and the beam of light shot from the side of the picture has become a reconstruction of his own needs.

Self-Translation—Self-Portraits in Multiple Scenes

Fromm once said: "Many artists and creative writers, music conductors, and dancers are very narcissistic. Their narcissism does not affect their art, but on the

Figure 3 | "The Musicians"
1595 92.1cm×118.4cm

Figure 4 | "The Calling of Saint Matthew"
1599-1600 322cm×340cm

Figure 5 | "Narcissus"
1594-1596 110cm×92cm

Figure 6 | "David with the Head of Goliath"
1610 125cm×100cm

contrary it often helps them."(p.57) Caravaggio is such a painter with a strong sense of self-awareness and very "narcissistic". He expresses his understanding of the objective world through a very personalized artistic language, and paints the divine characters in myths and the Bible into the images of ordinary people who are real, touching and full of humanity(Chen & Tong, 2020). and even himself, in order to metaphor his desire for different needs in different periods.

Caravaggio first placed himself in the picture. "*The Sick Bacchus*" created in 1593. In the painting, the Baccaratus has pale skin, tired eyes, half-naked body, and a sick look. This is closely related to his first arrival in Rome and his disease was infected. This pathological presentation is also his desire for a healthy state of survival. Compared with "*The Sick Bacchus*", "*Boy with a Basket of Fruit*","*The Kids Holding Fruit Basket*" is lively and healthy, but the withered leaves and insect-eaten fruits in his hand hold the fruit basket hidden his anxiety about his living environment. His slightly forward body and confusing expression make people think deeply. "*Narcissus*" (Figure 5) is the extreme of his self-attention, and it is intertwined with various emotions such as obsession and indulgence in the self. In a

sense, this work can be said to have shaped Caravaggio himself. He freezes the picture at this moment. In Nacasus and the reflection, Caravaggio determined the existence of himself. He abandoned all other characters and even backgrounds and placed Nacasus in the center of the picture, so that the viewer's attention is completely focused on Nacasus, in order to express his desire and attention to himself(Chen & Tong, 2020).

In the later period, Caravaggio was on his way to escape, so his creations were violent and bloody. He even cut off his head and put it in his hands in "*David with the Head of Goliath*" (Figure 6) and "*Salome receives the Head of Saint John the Baptist*", which fully reflects the reverse collapse of his self-needs. He no longer beautifies his self-image, but alienates it into a decapitated sinner, trying to gain respect through self-punishment.

CONCLUSION

Caravaggio's artistic creation trajectory reflects his self-exploration of human needs. When his demand pyramid collapses, he expresses the mental cracks in his own unique way in the picture. Those suppressed emotions are translated into artistic images of decline, violence, and bloody, strong contrast of light and shadow, and tension-filled characters. The dramatic scenes subvert the perfect paradigm of the Renaissance. He is always proving that the real world is far more spiritually heavy than the ideal picture, and the people at the bottom deserve praise. Caravaggio used his short and glorious life to reconstruct the aesthetic standards of European art in the 17th century, pulling gods into reality, sending fire to the Baroque, and promoting the progress and development of world art.

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Journal of Humanities and Arts Perspectives

Exploring the Construction and Design Value of Digital Image Systems for Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Review of The Theory and Method of Atlas Weaving for Intangible Cultural Heritage

Wei Guo [a], **Hui Ye** [b,c,*]

[a] *Namseoul University, Cheonan 31020, South Korea*
[b] *Qingdao Huanghai University, Qingdao 266427, China*
[c] *Hoseo University, Asan 31499, South Korea*

ABSTRACT

The Theory and Method of Atlas Weaving for Intangible Cultural Heritage stands out as a milestone in the development of ICH atlas studies in China. Authored by Professor Cai Fengming and his research team, and published by Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press in 2020, this monograph offers foundational academic guidance for universities and professional ICH protection institutions. This book systematically discusses the comparative landscape of atlas systems in China and abroad, the theoretical core and methodology of ICH atlas research, and the significance of digitization in the big data era. By proposing new directions for the transmission and representation of ICH, the book provides a vital reference for the generation, revitalization, and design innovation of China's ICH atlas systems, fostering interdisciplinary academic integration.

INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

The preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) have become central topics in the contemporary cultural and academic landscapes, especially in the context of digital transformation. The book under review offers a timely and comprehensive theoretical intervention into how digital image systems and atlas methodologies can reframe the understanding, documentation, and dissemination of ICH in China. By bringing together traditional scholarly approaches with state-of-the-art technologies such as GIS and knowl-

edge graphs, the authors chart a path for both theoretical innovation and practical application.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES: PRACTICES IN CHINA AND ABROAD

At the very beginning, the book highlights the crucial differences between Chinese and foreign atlas systems, providing a thorough analysis of the essential connotations of the ICH atlas. In China, the construction of the ICH atlas system has evolved from the traditional atlas tradition, which is deeply rooted in bibliographic classifi-

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cation logic and places equal importance on both imagery and textual narrative. The representational fidelity of traditional Chinese atlases underscores their functional value—not merely as records but as tools imbued with cultural meanings, such as the concept of order and orthodox values that define Chinese heritage.

The book delves into representative practices in Europe and Japan. In Europe, the German folklore map is analyzed as a groundbreaking example of incorporating geographic science into the realm of folklore studies. Over decades, Germany has refined a systematic methodology for creating folklore maps, which has influenced other European countries. These maps use visual symbols to record cultural phenomena, offering new perspectives for cultural mapping. In Japan, the development of folklore maps has followed a dual path: "folklore record maps" for documentation and "folklore research maps" for analysis, exemplified by the dialect zone theory. Both the European and Japanese cases emphasize scientific data collection, visualization, and the practical transformation of cultural materials.

The authors then draw a key distinction: While China's ICH atlas system is broad, comprehensive, and steeped in millennia of cultural continuity, Western systems tend to emphasize technical and disciplinary integration, especially with geography and the use of innovative visualization technologies. From a design perspective, the construction of a digital ICH genealogy system in China requires not only the inheritance of tradition, but also an openness to the strengths of international approaches, balancing artistic aesthetics and scientific design, and fostering cross-disciplinary integration.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ESSENCE AND STRUCTURE OF ICH ATLAS DESIGN

A significant portion of the book is dedicated to unpacking the theoretical underpinnings of the atlas system. The authors point out that the traditional Chinese atlas is composed of two inseparable elements: "tu" (image) and "pu" (genealogy/record). The essence of constructing a digital image system for ICH is the "atlasization" of knowledge—transforming fragmented or textual information into systematically visualized, interconnected, and accessible forms. Digitization not only facilitates intuitive visualization, but also enables the aggregation and analysis of vast volumes of cultural data.

The book stresses the necessity for a robust and multi-layered methodological system, integrating both research and operational methods, and combining theory with practice. Through in-depth analysis of Chinese and foreign ICH digital genealogies, the authors reveal that the core differences stem from cultural origins and the deployment of geographical information. The endurance of Chinese civilization has resulted in a vast, all-encompassing ICH atlas system, whereas international approaches, especially in Europe and Japan, often use technology and scientific disciplines to supplement cultural mapping.

The authors argue that the development of digital genealogies must pay attention to the dynamic processes of historical evolution, geographical distribution, and the fluidity of cultural forms. This requires a well-designed system that not only standardizes but also accommodates diversity, innovation, and interdisciplinary cooperation.

ATLAS DESIGN AND CONTENT STRUCTURE: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Chapters Three to Five of the book review the conceptual categories and functions of ICH atlas design, systematically distinguishing between artistic and scientific forms of visualization. The "artistic atlas" emphasizes emotional and aesthetic needs, seeking to evoke the cultural meaning and affective resonance of heritage items. In contrast, the "scientific atlas" aims for objectivity, mapping the inherent patterns and empirical realities of cultural phenomena.

The authors detail several traditional Chinese forms:

- Tujing (Illustrated Records): Combining maps and texts, emphasizing both visual and literary elements.
- Tulu (Atlas/Catalogue): Organized pictorial records that compile extensive documentation of cultural phenomena.
- Tuyang (Diagram/Schema): Explanatory diagrams illustrating the structure or process of ICH.

In addition, the book points out that traditional ICH atlases often lack comprehensiveness and systematicity, particularly in the editing, genealogy, and internal relational mapping of images. Through a genealogy-oriented approach, the book lays the groundwork for subsequent methodological and practical development.

Chapter Five offers a nuanced and detailed classification of ICH atlas structures into four modes:

- Spatial Structure: Examines regional diversity, spatial distribution, fluidity, and the integration or comparison of ICH resources, ranging from cross-regional to national scope.
- Temporal Structure: Divides ICH resources into four temporal types, such as those with long continuity, those lost over time, those revived after interruption, and those close to contemporary society.

- Cultural Structure: Analyzes the complex interplay of ecological, social, and ethnic factors in shaping ICH, referencing Fei Xiaotong's "pluralistic unity" theory.
- Spatiotemporal Interaction: Focuses on how the growth of transmission regions and the expansion of timeframes lead to complex, multi-directional developments, reinforcing the diversity and richness of China's ICH.

By analyzing these multifaceted structures, the book reveals the necessity of sophisticated atlas design capable of representing the internal logic and dynamic evolution of ICH.

TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION: GIS, KNOWLEDGE GRAPHS, AND THE VALUE OF DIGITIZATION

A highlight of the book is its advocacy for integrating modern information technologies, particularly Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and knowledge graphs, into ICH atlas construction. In Chapter Six, the authors present numerous case studies demonstrating how digital atlases can transform physical ICH items into visually accessible and comprehensively organized forms, thereby expanding both their explanatory and organizational functions.

Chapter Seven articulates the multiple values of ICH digitization, including:

- Documentation and Preservation: Safeguarding knowledge for future generations.
- Education and Public Awareness: Supporting cultural transmission through intuitive and engaging digital tools.
- Scientific Research: Enabling quantitative analysis and comparative study.
- Aesthetic and Artistic Value: Providing platforms for creative reinterpretation and appreciation.
- Management and Social Application: Facilitating cultural management, policy-making, and community involvement.
- Despite the significant progress, the book notes that the practical utilization and design of ICH resources remain in their early stages.

Chapter Eight proposes core principles for digital atlas design: "image-based, category-oriented, progressive reasoning, and a combination of holistic and detailed approaches." This dynamic framework allows for flexibility, adaptation, and systematic expansion. The final chapter introduces the application of knowledge graphs and GIS in the field of atlas studies—technologies that enable the visualization, cross-referencing, and efficient management of complex cultural information.

The authors emphasize that the digitization of ICH requires the creation of robust databases for information retrieval and sharing. User-centered interface design, system interaction, and the development of cloud-based architectures are vital for supporting large-scale data management in the era of big data.

However, the book also acknowledges challenges such as information security and intellectual property protection, especially for confidential ICH resources. These practical considerations underscore the need for ethical frameworks and technical safeguards as digital platforms expand.

CONCLUSION: THEORETICAL-PRACTICAL COUPLING AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

The Theory and Method of Atlas Weaving for Intangible Cultural Heritage makes a profound contribution to the emerging field of digital ICH atlas systems. By systematically synthesizing traditional wisdom with cutting-edge technology and cross-disciplinary methodology, the book sets a new standard for both academic research and professional practice in China.

Its influence is expected to grow as China continues to pursue the "digital metaverse" of ICH, empowering the revitalization of traditional culture and supporting the country's quest for cultural confidence. As both a theoretical framework and a guide to practical innovation, this book stands as a model for the integration of design aesthetics and advanced technology in the service of cultural preservation.

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Manuscripts must adhere to the Author Guidelines and be prepared in Microsoft Word. Detailed formatting instructions are available on the journal's website. Submissions should be made via the online portal at: https://press.jandoo.ac/journal/jhap. For inquiries, please contact the JHAP editorial team at E-mail (editorialoffice.jhap@press.jandoo.ac).

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