

Clockwise and Anticlockwise Mutual Imitation of Language and Image: New Theory on the Relation between Literature and Image

ZHAO Xianzhang, Nanjing University

Translated by ZHANG Huan, Shanghai University

Abstract: The mutual imitation of language art and image art has drawn much attention in the literary history at home and abroad. However, there is an asymmetry in terms of the mutual imitation: image imitating language is referred to as the clockwise imitation, while language imitating image the anticlockwise imitation. Lessing has realized this point in *Laocoon* and made a new discovery after incorporating it into the context of “the age of literature’s encountering image” that the primary reason for the asymmetry of mutual imitation lies in the different symbol attributes. Language is symbol of congruent reference, which is dominant, while image is symbol of phantom reference, which is weak. Therefore, deconstruction and expulsion, or delay and oblivion of image on the part of language are likely to occur when the two symbols share a text. Such being the case, language itself will not be harmed in the situation of literature visualization, while image, as a carrier and tool, helps spread literature.

Key Words: language; image; symbol; imitation

The relationship between poetry and painting has always been a traditional topic of literary and art theory at home and abroad. However, there is a phenomenon that has not been paid enough attention to or interpreted in detail, namely the artistic effect of the mutual imitation of poetry and painting. The majority of paintings which imitate poems have become classic in painting history; however, the majority of poems which imitate paintings have an inferior status when compared to the former in poetry history. Poems on paintings written by famous poets, like Li Bai and Du Fu, cannot match their other works of pure poems in terms of artistic achievement. On the contrary, many paintings which imitate their poetry have been passed

About the Author: Zhao Xianzhang, professor of the New Chinese Literature Research Center of Nanjing University, is mainly engaged in the studies regarding aesthetics of literature and art, literary research methodology, and has been committed to relevant research of graphic relations and form aesthetics in recent years, whose representative works include *The Methodology in Literature and Art Studies*, *Studies on Western Form Aesthetics, Style and Form*.

on as great works. Such phenomenon can be referred to as the asymmetry of the mutual imitation of poetry and paintings, which is bound to contain some aesthetic rule that remains a mystery to us.

If we further expand our horizons, we will find that the asymmetry is prevalent not only in the mutual imitation of poetry and painting, but also in the whole literary history and artistic history. There are a large quantity of tales, legends and classic stories in various philosophy and literature that have been replicated by both literature and image, thus forming a beautiful landscape, sparkling, in the literary history and art history, while their mutual imitation is not symmetrical: image works based on linguistic texts tend to have higher artistic merit and become masterpieces in artistic history; however, image works adapted to linguistic texts can hardly achieve higher artistic merit. This asymmetrical situation is very common in the poetry and paintings of the Han Dynasty, religious doctrines and their statues, novels, dramas, texts and illustrations, and comic books and dramas, films and televisions, etc which have appeared since late Qing Dynasty. Data show that 45% of films and TV series are adapted from linguistic works, among which 85% have owned the prize of Oscar Best Picture and 70% the Emmy Awards, which indicates the reliance of image works on linguistic works and its significance of improving image art. On the contrary, rewritten works of original films and owned television programs are liable to be secondary in novel world.

Facts have shown that asymmetry in artistic effect prevails in the mutual imitation of language and image, including that of poetry and paintings: image works' imitation of linguistic works is clockwise imitation, while linguistic works' imitation of image works is anticlockwise imitation. This paper will fundamentally elucidate the complicated relation between literature and image by launching intensive study.

1. Pain of *Laocoon*

The earliest and most systematic discussion of the mutual imitation of linguistic art and image art can date back to the study of *Laocoon* by Lessing in the 1760s. Therefore, our discussion may begin here.

We know that the dissimilarity of painting and poetry is the elementary proposition in *Laocoon*, as the subtitle shows, the limits of painting and poetry. That is to say, Lessing aimed at taking *Laocoon* as a typical example and analyzing different ways of presenting this character in poem and painting (sculpture) so as to elucidate the heterogeneity of linguistic art and image art. What's puzzling is that why he took time to repeatedly confirm when Roman poet Virgil's epic and the group por-

trait of *Laocoon* were created? In fact, this question seemingly irrelevant to the subject is raised to prove his hypothesis that epic is the chief source of sculpture, the latter being the former's imitation, not the other way around. However, tablet inscriptions found by archaeologists have proven that Lessing's hypothesis is totally wrong: actually, both Vergil's epic and the group portrait of *Laocoon* were completed not long before 21 B.C. Even if Virgil's epic was earlier, it cannot be the chief source of the other as it was published by the poet's friend (19 B.C.) after his death. Such being the case, it seems that we can deduce that there may be some logical relation between Lessing's endless effort to prove his hypothesis and his theory of limits of painting and poetry.

We can find out that this link does exist after carefully reading *Laocoon*: Lessing's theory of poetry and painting can only be supported by historical facts if the hypothesis exists that sculpture was based on the epic but not the other way around. More importantly, such hypothesis is in line with the discipline of the mutual imitation of language and art. Otherwise, Lessing's hypothesis would not only lose its historical basis, but also fail to prove his theory of poetry and painting. In other words, the heterogeneity of poetry and painting can only be possible and effective if it is clockwise imitation, namely image imitating language, which is a fact that has been often ignored by academic circles in the past.

The fact mainly manifests in his special attention to the pain of *Laocoon*. As he questioned in the first chapter, "Why *Laocoon* didn't wail in the sculpture, but did so in the poem?", indicating the starting point of his theory. Therefore, we can get access to the fact that he wished to hide by clarifying the scientific logical of *Laocoon*.

Lessing's question is mainly about Winckelmann's concept, who thought that the ideal of ancient Greek art was "noble purity and grand silence". Therefore, sculptor wouldn't show *Laocoon*'s pain on his face. As a result, "he wouldn't painfully wail as he did in the epic. He was not allowed to wail with open mouth. He'd better sign with abstinence... the pain of his body and the grandness of his spirit seemed to have been measured." Lessing didn't deny the fact pointed out by Winckelmann, and he just didn't agree with his reason that "pain with abstinence" is considered as the artistic expression of "noble purity and grand silence".

Lessing criticized the saying of "pain with abstinence" by taking ancient Greek tragedies and epics as example. He maintained that wail is the natural expression of pain out of human nature, which was not looked upon as a shame to Greeks, and that Greeks just were unwilling to see that the weakness kept them from attaining glory or fulfilling duties. In this sense, Greeks are both transcendental and natural humans rather than some philosopher who advocated ascetic practices and suppressed sensual passion or emotions. Loyal to the ancient Greek tragedy and epic,

the depiction of the great pain caused by giant snake was the reproduction of Greek spirit. That is to say, wail caused by great pain and Greek's grand mind were compatible, which cannot be used to explain why the sculpture didn't imitate the wail. There must be some other reasons to be discovered for Laocoon's sculpture without wail expression due to great pain.

What's the reason on earth? Lessing thought that it lied in the symbol attribute of painting after denying Winkelmann's psychic determinism.

First of all, formative arts, such as painting is the art imitating objects in space, whose subjects are only confined to beautiful objects, or we can say beauty is the supreme law of plastic arts. Fine resemblance is less important than beauty. Laocoon's facial features would surely become twisted if the sculptor presented his painful wail. Therefore, like other Greek arts, Laocoon "had to sign a little instead of showing severe pain". It is not because wailing shows that the mind is not noble, but it makes the face distorted and disgusting. If he opened his mouth and wailed in pain, it would present an ugly picture with a hole in the sculpture.

Lessing's another reason was the "instant theory", which believes that the greatest effect didn't come from the climax of plot or emotion, but the instant with the richest possibilities. Climax shows the limitation and termination, which confines imagination and will disappear immediately; however, the instant with the richest possibilities is continuous and free for mind. Therefore, when Laocoon signed, people would hear his wail in imagination; but when he wailed, people's imagination would be only limited between death and groan. Either way, we would see him in a plain and boring state.

The above mentioned two reasons based on the main characters of painting and other plastic arts are well grounded. As for the reason why poetry are not limited to those rules, Lessing had to go back to the epic of Virgil, which Winkelmann had compared. Lessing thought that models of poets were not confined to concrete ones as models of painters were and that readers would feel them by their hearing instead of vision. If Virgil depicted the picture of Laocoon's wail, readers couldn't help but thinking of the ugly scene. Thus, it is clear that beauty is not the supreme law of poetry and that poets are not confined to the requirement of depicting beauty. Besides, poetry, as an art of time, is not necessarily framed in one instant. Instead, poetry can describe every movement and its extension at will.

The above are the basic connotation of the dissimilarity of poetry and painting, which can be summarized as the "broad sense poetry and narrow sense painting". That is to say, poetry is vast and limitless while painting is not in terms of time and space. There is no doubt that Lessing's dissimilarity of poetry and painting implies that poetry is superior to painting: how superior life is to a picture, so is a poet to a painter.

As known to all, Lessing's theory of dissimilarity of poetry and painting and poetry's superiority to painting really shocked the critical circles of his time, which could be questioned by taking advantage of the loophole in his logic. For example, he advocated that the theme of painting should imitate that of poetry in terms of the context of "picturesque poem", rather than the total equivalence of the two in his criticism of Winckelmann. If so, Laocoon's pain became Lessing's pain. Therefore, it is not enough for Lessing to totally put forward his ideas before the Chapter Four of Laocoon. Thus, Lessing needed more proof to amend and prove his viewpoints, especially literary historical facts. Therefore, it is necessary to repair and correct the above views. The creation time of Virgil's epic and Laocoon's sculpture and the question as for which one imitates the other have become the content of Chapter Five, Six and hereafter. Since poetry is superior to painting, the latter imitating the former has become the "natural flow" of poetic language, which is clockwise imitation; on the contrary, linguistic art deriving from image art has become the anticlockwise imitation.

As a matter of fact, many of Lessing's arguments are not well grounded. For example, how could he conclude that the lost epic was not different from the present Greek work without any reasons? How could he judge that Virgil's epic is earlier than the sculptures and that the latter imitate the former by the fact that the epic is different from earlier depiction but the same with the sculptures? In fact, Lessing himself was not sure about his deduction and admitted that he was assuming such was the fact and inspecting how his theory worked. However, although I dare not make other historical conclusions on this basis, we believe that we can use the above argument as a hypothesis at the very least, whether the argument of sculptor using Virgil epic as a model has been proved. It is thus clear that despite the fact that Lessing knew his deduction was not well grounded, he insisted on taking it as the theoretical premise, without which he couldn't continue his argumentation of the dissimilarity of poetry and painting. It is clear that this assumption is crucial to his argument.

Lessing's discussions on the dissimilarity of poetry and painting was furthered after he confirmed the assumed premise, some of which were very convincing. For example, in Virgil's epic, the snake tied up the father and the two sons, with their arms free, which is copied by the sculpture. However, the image that the snake twined around Laocoon's body and neck with venom flowing to his face wasn't presented in the sculpture for fear it would harm the aesthetic effect. Another example is that as the flamen of Apollo, Laocoon was dressed in priest frock and wearing scarf in the epic, but both he and his two sons were naked as sculptures. Such detailed textual analysis further proved the theory of the dissimilarity of poetry and painting: beauty should be the supreme law and something unimportant can be a-

bandoned to make some change at the instant with the richest possibilities when sculpture imitates poetry. Different from the man-made symbols of linguistic art, plastic art featuring natural symbols is bound to be confined to the imitation objects and modes.

On the other hand, his argument would not be well grounded if he didn't make such hypothesis. Furthermore, if the fact was the opposite: the epic was the imitation of the sculpture, why would Virgil add something that didn't exist in the sculpture? Why would he rewrite the mild sign into the bitter wail? Such being the case, his theory would be groundless.

In fact, there were many debates as to the imitation between the epic and the sculpture. Despite the fact that Lessing knew there would be another possibility that both the poet and the sculptor shared a same ancient source of an epic (lost) by a Greek poet of 7th century B. C. , he soon gave up this question and insisted on confirming the sculpture's imitation of the epic. Therefore, before the end of *Laocoon* (Chapter 26-28), Lessing went back to continue his research which showed how much he cared about the problem. It seems that the third possibility Lessing put forward is actually a plot to gain time. This possibility also belongs to sculpture imitating poetry and can also be used to support Lessing's theory of poetry and painting, but the problem lies in the fact that the lost epic cannot be used for textual analysis.

In one word, Lessing was confirmative about his hypothesis and only in this way can he further his discussion about "the dissimilarity of poetry and painting", especially the text analysis, among which the idea of the dissimilarity of painting and poetry is likely to be the most effective. Although later archaeological research has proved that Lessing's hypothesis was wrong, it didn't affect the logical correctness of the theory. *Laocoon* has covered Lessing's logic of argument and his theory of broad sense poetry and narrow sense painting as well as the theory of poetry's being superior to painting. However, negligent scholars of later generations have ignored the fact that Lessing is the originator of the hypothesis.

2. Clockwise Imitation

Qian Zhongshu cited various authorities in his *Chinese Poetry and Chinese Painting* to illustrate the fact that: in spite of the fact that Southern School Painting is the most representative and predominant in the history of Chinese painting, Romantic Charm School Poetry with the similar style cannot stand for Chinese old-style poetry. For example, Wang Wei, as the originator of Southern School Painting and a master of Romantic Charm School Poetry, "whose poetry and painting shared the

same style, didn't enjoy the same status in the circle of old-style poets as he did in the old-style painters. The greatest poet enjoying popular confidence since the middle Tang Dynasty is Du Fu...thus it is clear that there are different criteria as to the traditional Chinese literary criticism of poetry and painting." Abstraction and related styles are appreciated when it comes to the valuation of paintings, while concreteness and related styles are appreciated when it comes to the valuation of poetry. Qian also quoted Su Shi and illustrated his idea by comparing Wu Daozi and Wang Wei. Wu Daozi is not as good as Wang Wei in terms of taste of painting. However, critics tend to compare Wu Daozi to Du Fu in comparison of their painting style and poetic style. In other words, the inferior painting style of Wu is equivalent to the supreme poetic style, while the supreme poetic style of Du is equivalent to the inferior painting style. He summarized at the end of the article that there are divergences in the criteria for criticism of Chinese poetry and painting, "which is a fact in criticism history. It should be admitted and explained"; that is a question Qian left to later scholars.

Qian's question refers to the key issue of Chinese poetry and painting--what contributes to the difference of the criteria for criticism of Chinese poetry and painting? Obviously, Lessing's theory wouldn't be suitable in Qian's context. We need get back to symbol attribute as Lessing took into consideration: is there any difference of the criteria for criticism of Chinese poetry and painting due to their different symbol attributes? Lessing classified the two different symbols as being "artificial" and "natural", which is not accurate. Especially in terms of modern semiotics, are the image composition, lines and the colors natural symbols when compared to the artificial symbols of poetry? Pure natural symbols should be found in nature itself, while pictorial symbols are obviously humanized. Similar to the distinction between natural sound and human voice, natural scenery is also different from human painting. Or we can hardly explain the "organic whole of words and painting". For example, which category does cliff painting, both the language of primitive men and their painting, belong to according to Lessing's classification? Similarly, which category do Chinese calligraphy and seal cutting which also constitute an organic whole belong to? Therefore, no matter verbal symbols or pictorial ones, symbols are undoubtedly artificial in that only human can create and understand them. Only after figuring out this problem can we compare poetry and painting on the same level and get back to "Qian Zhongshu's question".

Du Fu is respectfully referred to as "poet sage" by traditional Chinese poetry circles in that his poetry mainly depicts history, while Wang Wei the ancestor of Southern School Painting by traditional Chinese painting circles in that "romantic charm" is emphasized in his painting. "Worshipping concreteness and abstract" are not only the features of Du's poetry and Wang's painting, but also the mainstream

characteristics of Chinese poetry and Chinese painting, or the characteristics of Chinese poetry and painting approved by the mainstream criticism. If we go further and ask what contributes to such distinction, then it will be a matter of personal taste. The key lies in the different symbols used in Chinese poetry and painting, namely the functional distinction between linguistic symbols and pictorial symbols. It is due to the functional distinction that there are varied criticism criteria of Chinese poetry and painting. Only by elucidating the functional distinction of language and image in terms of semiology can we get access to Qian's question and make sensible answers.

Belgium surrealism painter Rene Magritte's *The Betrayal of Image* offered a good case to analyze the symbolic functions of language and image as well as their relations. Despite the fact that the case has been cited by many scholars, Foucault wrote a paper named *This is not a Pipe*.

Many works of Rene Magritte are dedicated to the subversion of visual experience and habits. His painting, *The Betrayal of Image* (1926), is a giant pipe but with a French sentence below that writes *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. (Graph1) The most common explanation is that Magritte is reminding us that the pipe in the picture is not a real one, but an artistic symbol of pipe, which aims at warning audience that we they should not put too much faith in the preproduction function of art and that the artistic reproduction and the object reproduced are not the same. According to such interpretation, the painting is more like a brain twister. we can generalize all artistic forms and label any painting with contradictory words. However, the riddle has been solved so fast that it doesn't bring any pleasure. "It is not a pipe, but an image of a pipe". Such explanation is not wrong, but too superficial. The painter has created many similar works during his lifetime, which indicates that he has pondered over such questions for a long time.



Graph 1 The Betrayal of Image

As is known to all, traditional painting is supported by "confirmation" "reliance" and "similarity". The fact that *This is not a Pipe* shows a similar image to a pipe but is labeled by contradictory words has evicted the most basic

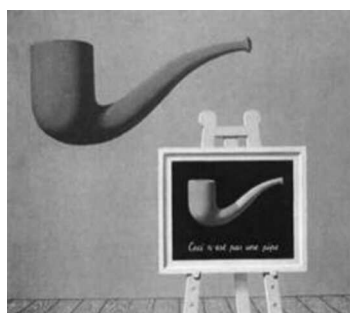
confirmation. As a result, image falls to the realm of words. Foucault said that “For pictures with marvelous conception, such as *This is not a Pipe*, their images can generate with their titles which break away from space and enter floating status. We have no idea whether they are close to their titles or not, or similar to their images or not. Thus it is clear that what *This is not a Pipe* implies is the penetration of language into objects and the potential ability of denial and dissection of language. It seems that all elements in space need to obey the sole appearance and resemblance principle. However, linguistic symbols which wander around image in distant are exceptional. The title seems to have separate itself from image forever. Apparently, Foucault was repeating his theory of the division of words, images and objects.

There is no doubt that Foucault’s interpretation is profound enough. He noticed that the contradictory relation between language and image in this picture and the strong penetration and deconstruction of the former noticed have subverted the confirmation principle of the similarity between images and objects. The principle is actually about the credibility of image. Namely under somewhat similar circumstance people can associate image with the object, thus confirming their assumption. However, language is not the same in that it refers to the same signified object, or it will be criticized as failing to express ideas. Language has always been regarded as the instinct and essence of human, hence the most reliable symbol in human history. Therefore, people depend more on linguistic documents as conclusive proof in our understanding of history regardless of the saying that pictures prove history. Archaeologists tend to rely on linguistic documents to serve as proof in spite of new and real images they have dug out. However, linguistic texts they found needn’t be verified or falsified by image data. Such is the credibility of linguistic symbols against image ones as well as the authority and power brought by credibility.

It deserves our further attention that as a painting, the pipe image and illustrative words share a same text. Considering the space occupied by the image and words or the time sequence of viewing, the pipe image predominates, and words come next. However, the different functions of language and image contribute to the fact that the words taking up smaller proportion weigh over the image or viewers would pay more attention to the words that are smaller and under instead of the image. Language and image have different functions: Language is the congruent reference, which determines its credibility, while image the phantom reference. Therefore, the authority of language manifests when it contradicts with image. As a result, linguistic art, including poetry, features its concreteness in this sense. Writing realistically is not only the functional characteristic of linguistic symbols, but also its advantage, thus determining the worship of concreteness of all

linguistic art different from pictorial art.

We can further analyze, *Riddle of Double* (Graph 2), another work of Magritte to study linguistic symbols and image symbols. Its first riddle should be the painting, *This is not a Pipe*, set up above the ground, but the difference lies in the fact that it is framed, which indicates that it doesn't refer to any real pipe. The second riddle, as shown to us, is the relationship between the suspending pipe image and *This is not a Pipe*, which is obviously an imitation of the suspending pipe as the completed work is now in a new context like the "display" of something similar to a teaching aid. The words under make sense now. The pipe in the frame is less clear and realistic than its image in *This is not a Pipe*, and the suspending pipe is more rough and obscure, which implies the illusory pipe image. It means that the painting in the frame is not an imitation of pipe, but of the image of the pipe, which adds an empty reference between the image and object, thus further detaching art from reality. Therefore, *This is not a Pipe* has been given broader significance: it is not only used to refer to the pipe image in the frame, but also the suspending pipe image as well as the painting, *Riddle of Double*, at the same time. In this regard, Magritte has repeated Plato's conception in his own unique way that art is the copy of copy and the shadow of shadow; there are three levels between it and nature.



Graph 2 Riddle of Double

Thus it is clear that despite the fact that the linguistic expression of "This Is Not a Pipe", has been shrunk in terms of space, its function and expressive force have been further enlarged in the *Riddle of Double* to such a degree that we can imagine the link between all arts and reality and subvert the principle of pictorial reproduction and similarity confirmation. That is to say, image symbol in *Riddle of Double* has become further unreal and the authority and deconstruction ability of linguistic symbol have been further strengthened. Considering the fact that the *Riddle of Double* is a sequence to *This is not a Pipe*, people have watched the former when the latter came out. The words in *This is not a Pipe* have subverted the classic

image of the pipe; but the sentence has not been extended to cover the whole picture in *Riddle of Double*. How can we make the same interpretation and think that it is a further betrayal to *This is not a Pipe*? This is about enigmatic language. Although words like *This is not a Pipe* haven't controlled the whole picture, their influence hasn't vanished. Experience of watching and reading has been brought in. Illocutionary meaning further shows the authority and deconstruction ability of language as the primary symbol.

According to Foucault's interpretation, linguistic deconstruction of image is not unidirectional and one-off. Magritte denied the explicit similarity of image, and the name which he prepared to make for the image, constituting the contrary and supplementary image. The bossy title seems to detach itself from the image, but in fact, it is approaching image secretly: it is not a pipe, so what is it? Similar answers can be listed. Thus, although Magritte cut down the link between similarity and confirmation, the preservation of painting's nature makes it possible to pursue limitless similar images and free extension from confirmation, because confirmation has the possibility to reflect the image similar to which kind of image. It is a painting, not "exposition" or "signs", so it can "exclude" the nature closest to speech. Such being the case, it seems that chaos has been brought in the two paintings by linguistic symbols, however, in fact, it is the virtuality and uncertainty of image that cause chaos. Besides, "chaos" itself constitutes the linguistic symbols' pursuing similarity of virtual image. Image virtualization has offered infinite space for the questioning of concrete language.

This is the endless dialogue between language and image in the confrontation between the worship of concreteness and abstract, which leads to the continuous strengthening of the respective features of linguistic symbol and pictorial symbol. Therefore, at the sight of the coexistence of the pipe image and words saying it's not a pipe, we choose to believe the reference of linguistic symbol without hesitation and start endless questioning and doubt of the virtual image symbol.

In summary, it is due to the function difference of language and symbol that poetry worships concreteness and that painting abstract. Despite of the fact that there has been the literary history when poetry worshipped abstract while painting concreteness in the literary history, such works couldn't be authoritative in their respective fields, or be thought highly of by mainstream criticism. In this sense, the imitation of linguistic art on the part of pictorial art is well grounded despite the fact that it's the "imitation of imitation".

We have elucidated the distinction of broad sense, narrow sense, superiority and inferiority between language and image as artistic symbols by analyzing *Laocon*, and interpreted the difference between concreteness and abstract by analyzing the pipe drawn by Magritte. All above can be summarized as the problem of clock-

wise imitation or anticlockwise imitation in terms of the effect of linguistic art's imitating image art. However, linguistic art is unlikely to imitate image art as the latter is virtual. Therefore, such imitation can be anticlockwise due to the fact that abstract is not the expertise of linguistic symbols.

3. Anticlockwise Imitation

As mentioned earlier, Lessing took Homer as an example in *Laocoon* to express the dilemma of language imitating image despite the fact that he didn't use the concept of "anticlockwise trend". In Lessing's view, language symbols are higher than image symbols, but this does not mean that the former's imitation of the latter can be handy and arbitrary because language is good at describing continuous action, not juxtaposed objects. If a poet must describe juxtaposed objects, he cannot deal with such a subject as a painter, and instead, he needs to make the best use of the advantages and avoid the disadvantages. For example, Homer describes an object and usually writes only one feature, such as "a black ship" or "an empty ship", without further description of the ship. However, he would depict the ship's sailing or landing in detail. If it is necessary to describe the object in detail, Homer would skillfully put the object in a series of successive instants and make it appear differently in every instant. For example, Homer would have people assemble the parts of the Queen's horse one by one. When depicting Agamemnon's costume, Homer let the king put all his clothes on one by one. He even wrote more than 100 lines of verse for the famous shield of Achilles; but he did not paint the shield as a finished product. Instead, he considered it as a work being completed, thus "converting things that are juxtaposed at the same time into something that has been continued". Thus, the boring description of an object is transformed into a vivid picture of action. What we see is not the shield, but the artistic master's work show". If a picture was painted, Homer also broke the picture into the history of the painted object, and all natural parts would be shown one after another, as the language developed. We can only see what has been done in a painter's works, while in a poet's works, we see the process of its completion.

Lessing's expression implies that language imitating an image is not as naturally as an image imitating language. Therefore, language imitating image can only make the best use of the advantages and bypass the disadvantages or temporalize objects in space. The reason lies in the fact that this imitation must be accompanied by a clash between two different signs, namely between image symbols good at depicting objects and linguistic symbols good at narrating. This kind of conflict is the "symbol barrier" of the language imitating the image. It is difficult for language to

imitate image. Despite the fact that poets can transform language to image, it is impossible to fully and simultaneously present objects as image does, which is the limitation of language and poetry. It is in this sense that Lessing believed that the paintings in poetry were not real paintings as a result of poetic language activating imagination, which were inferior in the effects. Thus, it is very difficult for a painter to express things in words and lines. So he warned poets not to do such a stupid thing, or they might fail.

In a word, it is the symbolic conflict between language and image that leads to the obstacle of the former's imitating the latter, which is bound to be an "anticlockwise imitation", while there is no symbolic conflict in image's imitating language as only the most meaningful moment is selected to be painted. The problem is that what are the possible consequences of language's imitating image when language is as "a strong symbol"? Lessing who had not faced such a problem did not say anything about it. If we are not limited to the domain of Lessing and shift our focus to the history of Chinese literature and art, we will find that language's imitating image is not as easy as Lessing said, as is exemplified by the "delaying" and "forgetting" about image in Chinese poetry.

Chinese poems with paintings can date back to "paintings with chant poems" about tangible objects and persons of Wei and Jin period. Poems praising paintings which belong to poems with paintings in the broad sense have similar features from the Wei and Jin Period to Sui and Tang Dynasties. First, poems are not directly presented on the picture. Those poems and paintings are presented separately. Besides, the poem aim at interpreting the painting itself and praising the persons and objects in it. Du Fu's *Painting of Eagles* and Bai Juyi's *Painting of Bamboo* belong to conventional poetic rhetoric focusing on "eagle" and "bamboo" despite some implication. Therefore, the relationship between language and image is harmonious and complementary to each other.

Poems with paintings in real sense have appeared in the Song and Yuan Dynasties when paintings and poems shared the same texts. Thus, poems have become indispensable to paintings, which has evolved into a new form of Chinese paintings. Scholars have paid attention to poems with paintings and accepted the perspective of "the integration of paintings and poems." Poems with paintings after the Song and Yuan Dynasties feature the complementary expression of feelings by means of poems, which aims at the implication of poems instead of interpreting paintings. Subjects are added to complement the lacking elements of paintings. For example, in the line of "The duck knows first when the river becomes warm in spring" by Su Shi of the painting of *Hui Chong Chunjiang Evening Scene*, how could the poet know "the duck knows first when the river becomes warm"? That is to say, the implication of being "warm" and "knowing" has expanded beyond the painting. It

was impossible that the monk painter Hui Chong could depict the warmth of river and duck's knowing of it. Yuan Haowen's *Early Visit of Snowy Valley* has gone beyond the picture and become the alternative name of painting, poetry, and expressing nostalgia and ambition. Wang Meng, one of the four masters of the Yuan Dynasty, ditched the tradition of picture following poem in his poem with the painting *Cottage and Chanting*, nor did he depicted the cottage and chanting in detail. Readers can only associate the scene of "chanting in cottage" through one of his lines. Poems with paintings since the Song and Yuan Dynasties have tended to start from the interpreting paintings rather than the implication of poems. Thus, the so-called "poems with paintings" have become "voice-over", an addition to paintings.

The relationship between poems with paintings and paintings has changed since the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Southern School has dominated Chinese paintings since the middle Ming Dynasty, and further exerted the human nature of literati painting in the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Despite the gradual lacking of conscientiousness, literati paintings in the Song and Yuan Dynasties are not very different from the professional painters before the Tang Dynasty. Chinese paintings have evolved into calligraphic paintings from drawing paintings in routine style or freehand style since the middle Ming Dynasty. The representatives of drawing paintings, referred to as the Orthodox School, are Dong Qichang and Qing Liujia; the representatives of calligraphic paintings, referred to as the Wild School, are Xu Wei, Qing Si'seng, Eight Eccentric Artists of Yangzhou and Wu Changshuo. Both schools pay too much attention to poems, handwriting and Buddhism while taking drawing skills less seriously. Thus, the significance of poems in their paintings have become pronounced. The homology of paintings and poems have become the same method of paintings and poems.

According to Xu Jianrong, it is the "expulsion" of images on the part of language, as is exemplified in the works of the Wild School. Previous poems with paintings remain complete and independent if we remove the poems, while it is not the same case with works of the Wild School. For example, the deletion of the inscription of Zheng Banqiao's painting of bamboo blurs the composition and artistic conception, whether it is used to offer birthday congratulations, or express cynicism or lofty feelings. Zheng Banqiao's integration of calligraphy in paintings is a typical example of language's expulsion of images. The five character poem in his famous painting, *Bamboo and Rock*, has nothing to do with the drawing and besides, his way of painting bamboo shows calligraphic skills. Zheng's original handwriting technique with its pictorial style forms a delightful contrast with the painting itself. Thus, "writing style" has become the "subject of painting", which is more attractive and meaningful. Poems with paintings have expelled both

pictures and subjects of painting. People no longer pay attention to the paintings themselves in poems with paintings, which is similar to Magritte's *This is not a Pipe*. But the difference lies in the fact that the contradictory coexistence of image and language leads to the deconstruction of image on the part of language in Magritte's works, while the harmonious coexistence of language and image in Zheng's work leads to the oblivion of painting itself.



Picture 3 Bamboo and Rock

Too much importance attached to poems with paintings has hindered the development of Chinese paintings, the main body, resulting in many inferior works with abstract and obscure picture modeling without any skills. Now we seem to understand that some artists since the Ming and Qing Dynasties who are accomplished and renowned for their paintings though, don't pay too much attention to their paintings and even regard them as their minor achievement, and instead, are very proud of their poems and books. They are not being humble, and the fact is that Chinese poems with paintings have gradually abandoned paintings, the main body, since the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It has become a standard and common sense for painters to express the implication of paintings by poems with the increasing popularity of Chinese poems with paintings. The independence of image language has been deserted and painters have gradually paid no attention to paintings while pursuing the maximum of spirit.

Thus, an explicit line of relationship between language and image in Chinese poems with paintings can be concluded as follows: poems with paintings are used to express and interpret paintings from the Wei and Jin period to the Sui and Tang Dynasties, which constitute a harmonious relationship; poems with paintings are necessary and complementary to paintings, the main body, to present an intriguing whole after the Song and Yuan Dynasties; however, the addition of poems into paintings has evolved into that of calligraphy into paintings, and the homology of paintings and poems has become the same method of paintings and poems since the

Ming and Qing Dynasty. Poems with paintings and their writing method have a strong impact on the painting noumenon, as a result of which, poems with paintings have expelled paintings, thus shifting their positions in Chinese paintings since the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

It is clear that the invasion of Chinese poems in paintings is the process of language' evicting and abandoning image where the latter is forced out of the independent function of making explicit implication by language, "the congruent reference symbol". Its strong inertia brought out "dust flying". After the dust settles, the images of "remnant" and "debris" fly into a "floating state" (Foucault).

As a matter of fact, language's evicting and abandoning image in the history of the their intertextuality has started since *The Book of Changes* rather than poems with paintings, as is exemplified by the interpretation of symbols of hexagrams and lines on the part of remarks of hexagram and lines. Guo Moruo considered Yang hexagram and Yin hexagram in *The Book of Changes* as the relict of ancient phallism. Drawing a picture of male penis and split it into two, thus presenting a female vulva, and hence the evolution of the ideas of male, female, parents, Yin and Yang, rigidity and flexibility as well as heaven and earth. However, others didn't agree with him and thought that Yang hexagram and Yin hexagram were just symbols used by ancient wizards in divination, thus having nothing to do with phallism. Either way, it is certain that remarks of hexagram and lines are the interpretation and deduction of symbols of hexagrams and lines. Once fully elucidated by language, the original meaning of symbols of hexagrams and lines is no longer important. Instead, only the connotation of the symbols concerned about.

In summary, the discussion of the mutual imitation of language and image can date back to the period of Lessing's *Laocoon*. He gave up the stale psychic determinism and elucidated in terms of different symbol attributes of language and image from academic perspective. However, Lessing did not face the dilemma of "literature's encountering image" in the 18th century, and the relationship between poetry and paintings, as he referred to, was also independent. Currently, we would find the profundity of this proposition. For instance, we need to reexamine the history of the relationship between language and image by using modern semiotics as to what change will take place concerning the relationship between language and image when language enters image's world and shares the same text with it. We find that congruent reference and phantom reference are the basic attributes of language and images which are as two basic symbols of human. Language, the congruent reference, is dominant, while images, the phantom reference, are weak. There will be no change with regard to their symbol attributes when language enters the world of image and shares the same text with it, and on the contrary, it may lead to the expulsion of image. Such being the case, there are two kinds of different circumstances. First, a special case of the combination of language and

image is presented when language and image are contradictory to each other, such as Magritte's series paintings where language subverts the similarity recognition principle of images. Second, a more common situation is the harmonious coexistence of language and images. However, language won't be confined by the images, such as Chinese poems with paintings. Language expels images; but different from the first case, it is more like an oblivious expulsion. Therefore, language loses its own non-intuitive character and gains the loyal intuition of images. Likewise, modern images serve as the carrier and tool of literature in the literary adaptation of current film and TV creations. Even if there are distortion or deconstruction in adaptation, it will not lead to any change in the original works; even if criticized, the adapted works will be affected while original ones remain intact. As a matter of fact, modern imaging technology is contributing to the self-exile and nirvana regeneration of literary works instead of marginalizing them.

Notes

- 1 Wu Hui. "Adaptation is Also an Art." *China Social Sciences*. Nov. 17th, 2009.
- 2 Lessing. *Laocoon*. pp. 5-6.
- 3 Lessing. *Laocoon*. p. 16.
- 4 Lessing. *Laocoon*. p. 83.
- 5 Lessing. *Laocoon*. p. 19.
- 6 Lessing. *Laocoon*. pp. 35-36.
- 7 Qian Zhongshu. "Chinese Poetry and Chinese Painting." *Qi Chuo Ji*. Beijing: Sanlian Publishing House, 2002, pp. 22-23.
- 8 Cassirer. *An Essay on Man*. Trnslated by Gang Yang, Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, 1982, p. 34.
- 9 Michel Foucault. "This Is Not a Pipe." *Foucault Collection*. Edited by Du Xiaozhen , pp. 123-25.
- 10 Congruent reference and phantom reference are the basic symbol attributes of language and images.
- 11 Michel Foucault. "This Is Not a Pipe." *Foucault Collection*. Edited by Du Xiaozhen, p. 114.
- 12 Plato. *Literary Dialogues*. Translated by Zhu Guangqian, Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1963, pp. 67-81.
- 13 Xu Jianrong. *Preface and Postscript Lecture Six*, Shanghai: Shanghai Fine Arts Publishing House, 2004, pp. 12-15.