

Study of Intertextuality in “Meta-painting” of the Ming Dynasty

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Abstract

In the 1960s, the semiotician Kristeva first introduced the concept of "intertextuality", which is "the representation of other texts that cross over in a text. " In subsequent developments, intertextuality has come to involve a variety of human intellectual practices, such as painting and music, which can be considered as texts. This article explores the "intertextuality" of "Meta-painting" in Ming dynasty painting, taking painting as the textual object. As a form of “painting-within-painting”, the “painting-within-painting” are both mutually referential and interconnected to the whole picture. Thus the transformation and meaning generation between the texts of paintings have been realized.

Keywords

Ming dynasty; "Meta-painting"; Intertextuality; Inner meaning.

1. Introduction

The ancient Greek poet Symonides once said, "Painting is a kind of silent poetry, poetry is a kind of sound painting", and Su Shi, the great lyricist of the Northern Song Dynasty, commented on Wang Wei, "When you taste Wang Wei's poems, you can appreciate the meaning of the paintings from the poems; when you view Wang Wei's paintings, you can appreciate the flavour of the poems from the paintings." People from different civilizations in different periods still have the same opinion when confronted with the relationship between poetry and painting. This suggests that there is a certain commonality between Western pictorial poetry and Chinese inscribed poetry in terms of the intertextuality of "language-picture". In the 1960s, Julia Kristeva, a leading contemporary French semiotician, first introduced the concept of "intertextuality", which is "the representation of other texts that cross over in a text. " [1] Subsequently, the concept of intertextuality, which originally belonged to the realm of literature, was gradually extended to include painting, music, film, photography and other areas of human intellectual practice, all of which can be called texts. In the visual sphere, the text of painting, there is a deep intertextuality, and in addition to the intertextuality of the relationship between poetry and painting, the intertextuality between painting and painting is also extremely important, such as the painting form of "Meta-painting". The article takes "Meta-painting" of the Ming dynasty as the object of study, and further explores the transformation and meaning generation between the texts of the whole picture by the "painting-within-painting".

2. About "Meta-painting"

In 1993, the Swiss art historian Victor I. Stoichita published his book "The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting", this book examines the emergence of the "painting-within-painting" genre in northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, using the unique perspective and path of "meta-painting" or "painting-within-painting", from which three modes of self-awareness or "meta-painting" of images - "split", "assemblage" and

"inversion" - are extracted. These three perspectives - the visual structure of the picture, the production mechanism of the painting, and the subjective intervention of the painter - form a circular and progressive sequence of thought and narrative structure. [2] But Stoichita was also influenced by his teacher, the French art historian André Chastel, whose essay wrote in 1964, that "Painting-within-Painting" provides an in-depth analysis of the threads of Western painting from the Renaissance to the modernist "painting-within-painting". [3] The difference is that Stoichita uses "meta-painting", whereas Chastel discusses "painting-within-painting". Whereas Chastel's "painting-within-painting" was a compendium of the types of painting that existed at the time, Stoichita's "meta-painting" is more systematic and structured, belonging to the theoretical issues.

The study of the phenomenon of "meta-painting" was first shown in the West, so it is necessary to explore the Western interpretation of "meta". In English, the word "meta" means "self-referential (of creative work); referring to the class traditional; meta". As a root word "meta-" means: 1. "change"; 2. means "after", "beyond"; 3. means "a higher form of" [4] In China, the Eastern Han Dynasty scribe Xu Shen has this explanation for "meta" in "Shuowen Jiezi": "meta, beginning, from one, from wood." Firstly, it means "one". At a time when the universe was still in its primordial chaos, when all things were silent, the Tao gave birth to one, creating heaven and earth and giving birth to all things. Therefore, "one" is the essence of all things, the "Tao" that can be named but not named, and has metaphysical and philosophical connotations, as does "meta, from one". Secondly, it belongs to "wood", "with a sense of lofty prominence, expressing a higher, upper dimension." [5] "Meta, from Wood", also means this.

By combining the Chinese and Western interpretations of "meta", we can see that there are commonalities. The second meaning of "meta-", "after" and "beyond", has the same philosophical connotation as the meaning of "meta, from one" in the "Shuowen Jiezi". For example, Aristotle's "Meta-physic", which translates into Chinese as metaphysics, is consistent with the meaning of "meta, from one, the essence of all things". The third meaning of "meta-" is "of a higher form", "of the second level", which is the same as the meaning of "meta, from wood" in the "Shuowen Jiezi", both means "higher logical form." [6] In Greek, however, "meta" means "after" or "beyond" and has a self-referential, self-conscious and parodic meaning. Therefore, in a nutshell, "meta" is an after, transcendent, higher form of logic, and "meta-painting" is painting about painting, with self-referentiality and self-consciousness as its essential attributes.

Chastel and Stoichita both start from the Western "painting-within-painting"/"meta-painting", while in traditional Chinese painting there is also the "painting-within-painting"/"meta-painting" form of painting, which has been studied mainly in Wu Hong's *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* and Craig Clunas's *Chinese Painting And Its Audiences*. In *The Double Screen*, Wu Hong discusses both the "medium of painting" and the "reproduction of painting", and the paintings that contain these two elements are called "meta-pictures". Zhou Wenju's "Meeting Chess on a Heavy Screen" is a typical example of a "meta-picture", taking as an example the screen painting, which is both a piece of furniture and a medium for painting. As Wu Hong says, "A meta-painting must be reflective, either reflecting on other paintings or reflecting on oneself. The former is a cross-reference, the latter is a self-reference." [7]

In *Chinese Painting And Its Audiences*, Craig Clunas refers to paintings in which the viewer is looking at the painting as "meta-painting". In Du Jin's "Painting of the Eighteen Scholars", for example, the scholars are shown looking at a scroll painting depicting several ink bamboos, a stubborn stone, a dead tree, and a few birds perched on it. In addition, paintings such as Ren Renfa's "Painting of the Eighteen Bachelors" (Tokyo National Museum Collection) from the Yuan dynasty, the anonymous "Painting of the Eighteen Bachelors" (National Palace Museum, Taipei) from the Ming dynasty, and the anonymous "Painting of the Eighteen Bachelors of Tang"

(Yale University Art Gallery Collection) from the Ming dynasty, all of which depict literati viewing paintings in an outdoor setting. In addition to the subject of the Eighteen Bachelors, works such as An Zhengwen's "Yellow Crane Tower" (in the collection of the Shanghai Museum), Xie Huan's "Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden" (in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art), Lv Wenying and Lv Ji's "Longevity Gathering in the Bamboo Garden" (in the collection of the National Palace Museum), and Qing Yu Zhiding's "Qiaolai Painting and Calligraphy for Amusement". All of these works depict literati having a divine encounter with the masterpieces of the ancient sages. The combination of the natural landscape and the landscape in the painting allowed the literati to appreciate both the real landscape and to "lie down and swim" in the painting, both of which together formed the ideal life that the literati aspired to in their hearts. In addition to the "meta-paintings" of the literati viewing and viewing paintings, there are also depictions of citizens, women and emperors viewing paintings. In these "meta-paintings" of the viewer viewing the painting, Kruger intends to use the medium to reveal the ways in which the painting is viewed and the cultural constructions of power that the viewing entails. [8]

It is clear from the above that a "meta-painting" is a painting about a painting, a painting-within-painting (which can be both a painting and another image within a painting) that displays a deep intertextuality with the art that precedes it. In other words, a painting that contains another image within a whole is a "meta-painting", with self-referentiality as its fundamental attribute. In the study of traditional Chinese painting, whether it is Mr. Wu Hong's "meta-picture" or Mr. Craig Clunas's "meta-painting", both of them only have a different focus. Wu Hong's study focuses more on the appearance of another picture within the picture, while Craig Clunas's study focuses on the appearance of another painting within the picture. In Wu Hong's and Craig Clunas's studies, a "meta-painting" is a "painting-within-painting", some of the "painting-within-painting" forms of the same subject matter are, as a transcendent, later form, then a "meta-painting" form. This essay examines the intertextual relationship between the "painting-within-painting" and the text of the whole picture, using Mr. Craig Clunas's viewpoint to investigate the "meta-painting" form of the Ming viewer's view of the painting.

3. "Painting-within-Painting" and "Words in Painting"-Intertextuality in "Meta-Painting" of the Ming Dynasty

The study of "meta-painting" reveals that a form of painting in which a "painting-within-painting" can be called a "meta-painting", in which the picture within the painting refers to another painting. This form of painting developed to a certain extent during the Ming dynasty. Among the paintings using Li Tang's "Eighteen Bachelors" as their parent subject, the well-known Du Jin of the Ming dynasty and a number of anonymous "Eighteen Bachelors" paintings have both inherited and rewritten the subject matter. As we can tell from the images, these paintings depict scholars in high positions engaged in the ancient activities known as the Four Arts of the Gentleman, namely, guqin, chess, calligraphy and painting, usually in the form of a quadriptych of standing scrolls, each representing an elegant event, among the themes of qin, chess and calligraphy. "In the scenes on "guqin", "chess" and "calligraphy", the figures are engaged - playing the guqin, playing the game and writing - while in the scenes on "painting", the act of "painting" is not shown. "In the scenes about painting, the act of "painting" is not shown, but rather "viewing and appreciating painting", and there are almost no scenes about literati painting in Ming dynasty paintings, all of which appear as "viewing and appreciating painting", which This seems more in keeping with the elite demeanour of the literati and gentry. In Xie Huan's "Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden" and Lv Wenying and Lv Ji's "Longevity

Gathering in the Bamboo Garden" we can even see officials in official robes watching the painting.

As Kristeva said "any text is a mosaic of quotations, any text is an absorption and adaptation of another text." [9] By embedding a painting within another painting, the whole painting is seen as one text and the other painting embedded as another text, the two being interrelated and influencing each other. The paintings known to the literati through these scenes depicting them viewing paintings are often more noble than the paintings depicting them viewing scenes, as they often represent the work of the ancient sages. In Du Jin's "Painting of the Eighteen Bachelors", we can see the officials viewing a work depicting "dead wood, bamboo and stone", and although there are no specific details about the author of this painting, the style of painting easily reminds us of the work of Su Shi, who, as a distinguished representative of the literati, was an artist of unquestionable achievement. As an outstanding representative of the literati, Su Shi's artistic achievement cannot be overstated. If we consider this work to be either a work by Su Shi or an imitation of his brushwork, we seem to be able to better understand such a dialogue and exchange. In the Ming dynasty, the literati were exceptionally fond of Su Shi, not only because of his status in literature, art and politics, but also because of the similarity in fate between the Ming literati and Su Shi. The scholar had great political aspirations, but he was relegated to a poor career. In the Ming Dynasty, the political and official world was dark, and for the literati and scholars of the Ming Dynasty, who were unable to realise their ambitions, it was a great desire to get away from the official world and seek spiritual liberation. As people of later generations, we can read the works of the sages and engage in a cultural exchange with the ancients across time and space, and everything in the picture is a representation of the leisurely life of the literati, which they aspired to. In the series of works named after the Eighteen Scholars, an intertextual relationship is created with the famous Eighteen Scholars of the Tang Dynasty. For the literati, who were deeply influenced by Confucianism, the Eighteen Bachelors of Tang represented a group of wise and virtuous scholars who were well versed in the ancient and modern worlds and were valued by the rulers, and for the literati, the Eighteen Bachelors of Tang was their aspiration - to bring their political talents to bear and "rule the country and level the world". However, in the political environment of the Ming dynasty, it would have been difficult for a scholar to achieve this level of sophistication. We can see the artistic style of the painting more clearly in the anonymous "Painting of the Eighteen Bachelors" and in Xie Huan's Painting of an "Elegant Gathering in an Apricot Garden", which is similar to the art form of landscape painting in the Southern Song dynasty, the exact date of the author of the painting is unknown to us. It may be by a court painter of the Southern Song dynasty, or it may be by a member of the early Ming "Zhejiang school" who followed the Southern Song landscape painting style. But in any case, the textual implications of the marginal landscape paintings of the Southern Song - "the remnants of the mountains and the broken state" - are incomparable to the meteorology of the Ming Empire. Here, the referent embedded in the painting itself in the picture is referenced in another text - the whole picture - carrying its own meaning in relation to the visual meaning of the whole picture, which has been altered as an energetic reference for the viewer within the whole picture.

For the landscape paintings viewed by the subject of the picture, they have, since their very beginning, contained the spiritual support of the literati. The Chinese literati were a special cultural group; they were scholars when they were not successful in their studies; they were officials when they were successful in their studies; and they were prestigious gentry when they resigned from their posts and returned home. In the series of "Bachelor's Pictures" from the Ming dynasty, as well as in the works "The Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden" and "The Longevity Gathering in the Bamboo Garden", the images depict the second level of literati - officials of merit and prestige - in attendance to view and enjoy the paintings. As officials, it was their goal to "rule the country and level the world", but when faced with a bad career or when

they wanted to retire, they would always look to the mountains and the countryside. The ideal life for the literati was to swim in the landscape, for the intimate communion with it allowed them to be both virtuous and wise. Away from the hustle and bustle of politics and travelling through the landscape, the "physically and mentally exhausted" literati were able to enjoy themselves physically and emotionally, thus further uniting their ideal selves with the landscape, which is revealed in the picture as an expression of and aspiration for the idea of returning to the true nature of seclusion. By embedding this literati landscape painting, which embodies the idea of seclusion, into a documentary figure painting, their reference has changed. As a documentary portrait of a group of high-ranking officials, they reveal a political significance: under the Ming Empire, the sea was calm and the river was clear, and only then could they, as courtiers, have the time to engage in this elegant activity of enjoying paintings, which in turn gave the ruler greater peace of mind and thus established the legitimacy of this activity. The text embedded in the picture becomes a discursive practice in its own right because it becomes the object of viewing.

In addition to the "meta-painting" form, which depicts elite groups viewing paintings, there are also "meta-painting" forms from the Ming dynasty about citizens viewing paintings, such as the sixteenth-century Zhang Lu's "Painting Viewing" and the anonymous "Exorcism painting". In the Ming Dynasty, with the prosperous development of the commodity economy, the class consciousness of the scholar, farmer and industrialist was gradually broken down, and the merchants who belonged to the lowest class were no longer satisfied with the social status of the lower class as they had accumulated capital. This was a time of further change in literary thinking, when the refined arts, symbolising the literati, were gradually popularised, commercialised and secularised. For the sake of "elegance", people also hang paintings and calligraphy in their homes to enhance their "cultural heritage", and as a result, paintings are bought and sold all the time. The sale and purchase of paintings and antiques everywhere shows us that the elegant art that previously symbolised the status of the literati and the aristocracy had become "a thing", a "thing made for commercial trading". [10]

The exact date of the painting of Zhang Lu's "Painting Viewing" and the anonymous "Exorcism Painting" cannot be verified, and can only be assumed to date from the sixteenth century. By this time, the social and economic development of the society had been rapid, and the flourishing of the civic class led directly to a tendency towards secularisation of literature and art. With the popularity of Yangming Xinxue, people also gradually came to admire freedom and emancipation. The economic prosperity, the liberation of ideas and the rise of the municipalities had a significant impact on the elite class of literati. The images embedded in these two works clearly reflect the fact that the elegant activities of the literati have "fallen from grace" and that the art of painting has entered the homes of ordinary people in the face of the demands of folklore.

Embedded in the painting is an image depicting an eagle catching a rabbit. The elegant art of the literati is now being viewed by the countryside villagers, and the pleasure of the landscape and nature sought by the literati is now being experienced by the lower class. Zhang Lu, a famous artist of the "Zhejiang school", has created such a work as if to show us - "imagine how your own paintings are being scrutinised at this moment, when the humble villagers are imitating the gentlemen of the upper class". [11] In The Exorcism Painting, a group of peasants are looking at a portrait of the divine ruler Zhong Kui. By its name we can tell that the picture depicts the ritual of the divine monarch Zhong Kui exorcising a demon. As a Taoist deity specialising in fighting ghosts and driving away evil spirits, Zhong Kui's portrait has a textual meaning of warding off evil spirits and ensuring peace. In this ritual exorcism in the countryside, the feudal underclass is still terrified of ghosts and spirits, as seen through the image of a woman covering her eyes and an old woman praying with her hands clasped together. However, Zhong Kui's presence is so powerful that even if it is only a portrait, it can still protect their

village. In addition, the two works contain one thing in common - that there are both men and women in the picture, a mixture of both sexes, on equal footing. This is a far cry from the paintings of the literati, where women are the "other" in the upper classes, but in these two paintings these humble village men and women are imitating the refined "viewing" of the upper class gentry.

In these "meta-painting" meanings that viewer views, there is an embedded image, but the textual meaning of the text of the painting as a whole cannot be directly attributed to a single image symbol; the embedded image text is referential in its own right, but it is also referential to the picture as a whole, as are the other image symbols in the picture. In this way, all texts are intertextual, they are all referential in the picture, the reference can only be traced in a series of symbols.

4. Conclusion

As a meta-painting art form, the intertextuality of a painting-within-painting is perceived differently from that of the whole picture. The relationship of meaning between the texts of paintings is fluid, not fixed. "One hundred readers have one hundred Jia Baoyu", and the Ming dynasty "meta-painting" show us how the viewers viewed the paintings, and how they understood and perceived the paintings differently, depending on their status and literary training. Each viewer, depending on his or her experience, can feel not only the feelings of the painter, but also his or her own journey. In the "meta-painting" of the viewer's view of the painting, the figure in the painting, as the viewer, is both the owner of the painting being viewed and a participant in the picture of the whole painting. While the person in the painting is viewing the painting, the "us" outside the painting is also viewing the painting as another type of viewer. What I am looking at, what you are looking at, what they are looking at, and what they are feeling, involves the multiple perceptions of different subjects, but is no more than the "Dharma body".

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