

Re-envisioning the Aura

— The Manifestation and Application of Mythological Value Forms in the Cultural and Creative Industries

Author's Biography

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ABSTRACT

Primordial humans created myths rooted in their reverence for the natural world as divine. In their consciousness, all elements of their surroundings were imbued with a unique "aura" — a halo of authenticity and sacredness. However, with the advent of the technological age of replication, from mechanical to digital reproduction, the "aura" of artworks or myths, as Walter Benjamin theorized, has gradually dissipated. Narratives and artistic works, once confined to the veiled sanctity of ritualistic worship, were liberated from their primordial womb, drawing closer to human existence and mass culture. As myths increasingly permeate everyday life, they have shifted from serving solely ritualistic-magical ends to undergoing continuous value transformation within the cultural industry, traversing from one pole of static tradition to another of dynamic reinvention.

How can the "Aura" of Mythology Survive Dissolution in the Ocean of Mass Culture?—Reconstructing a Network of Secular Integration Without Distortion, and Unleashing the Driving Force of Cultural Creativity Through Mythic Narratives
The "aura" of mythology, once rooted in sacred authenticity, now faces existential threats as it drowns in the tides of mass culture. The critical challenge lies in capturing its fading traces—like grasping a wisp of smoke—and reweaving them into a dynamic network that both integrates into secular society and resists distortion or overexploitation. Central to this endeavor is harnessing mythology's inherent storytelling power to activate latent creative energies within the cultural and creative industries.

Keywords: Aura, Mythology, Narrative, Cultural and Creative Industries, Value Transformation, Cultural Consumption, Technological Reproduction **Chapter 1**

Introduction

Section 1.1 Research Purpose and Significance

Walter Benjamin elevated the concept of the "aura" to an artistic level, theorizing its role in artworks. Today, mythic narratives embedded in such "aura"-laden works have become a highly sought-after creative prototype in the cultural industry. The rich cultural, economic, and social values they embody are being reinterpreted and repurposed across industries to varying degrees. This reimagining of myths and reconfiguration of the aura has yielded numerous successful cases, regardless of sector. This paper explores methods of reconstructing the "aura" within the cultural and creative industries through the lens of mythology.

As an indispensable part of Chinese traditional culture, mythic stories exist fragmentarily throughout history, lacking a cohesive system. Yet their creation is deeply intertwined with human sensory experiences and emotional responses to the external world.¹ Primitive artworks, serving as vessels for myths and ritualistic narratives, possessed a "cult value" exclusive to their sacred function, characterized by an unreproducible and inaccessible "aura." In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin systematically elaborates on the "aura" and discusses how mechanical reproduction triggers its dissolution, leading to a transformation of value.

Furthermore, in *The Storyteller*, Benjamin proposes that the "aura" can be transmitted through the traditional art of storytelling. He frames storytelling as an act of "transferring experience," where the tale's portrayal of worldly phenomena merges with the storyteller's life before disseminating to the audience.² [Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*.] However, the rise of mechanical reproduction technologies—such as printing—spurred the proliferation of novels and news

1. Yuan Ke, *Ancient Chinese Mythology*, Huaxia Publishing House, 2006, p. 2.

2. Yuan Ke, *Ancient Chinese Mythology*, Huaxia Publishing House, 2006, p. 25]

media, which diverged from the oral tradition of storytelling. This shift precipitated the decline of storytelling as an art form, a phenomenon that may also be interpreted as the withering of the narrative "aura."

Mythological narratives, emerging from primal societies, served as survival mechanisms for early humans with limited productive capacities. To endure harsh natural environments, they conjured heroic figures—symbols of resilience—to inspire collective perseverance against adversity. Simultaneously, myths arose to explain phenomena beyond their comprehension, giving birth to deities as a "collectively imagined reality." These intangible beliefs coalesced communities, gradually evolving into ethnic identities. Such shared convictions may be interpreted as the "aura" embedded in collective consciousness—a manifestation of the communal "dream." Mythologist Joseph Campbell once stated, "Myths are public dreams; dreams are private myths."¹ Similarly, as noted in *Myths, Legends, and Beliefs of the Black Tortoise* (edited by Ye Shuxian), "Myths are the source of literature and culture, embodying the dreams of human communities."

²

In contemporary society, the "aura" of mythic narratives undergoes dual trajectories: dissolution and renaissance. While mechanical reproduction erodes the cult value of myths in artworks, the ascendancy of cultural and creative industries has transformed myths into consumable cultural symbols. Within this paradigm, mythic storytelling reemerges as a potent archetype for creative innovation. The narrative potency of myths—bridging ancient symbolism and modern relevance—is revitalizing their role as catalytic forces in cultural production, attracting renewed scholarly and industrial attention.

¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

² Ye Shuxian (ed.), Chen Qiwen, *Myths, Legends, and Beliefs of the Black Tortoise*, Shaanxi Normal University Press, 2013, p. 1.

Today, consumers no longer prioritize merely the utilitarian function of products but increasingly value experiential engagement and the sensory-emotional resonance evoked during consumption—a phenomenon where products act as conduits for self-reflective perception. Simultaneously, the cultural and creative industries face inherent uncertainties in consumer satisfaction. Producers struggle to predict the subjective preferences of buyers, who may or may not embrace new products, leading to potential discrepancies due to asymmetric information alignment between supply and demand.¹ Such misalignments risk fostering a cycle of producers blindly chasing transient consumer trends—a precarious strategy in myth-driven markets.

Mythological narratives now permeate diverse industries, targeting heterogeneous consumer demographics through multifaceted formats. Market analyses reveal that within China's cultural and creative sector, mythological archetypes fuel the explosive growth of online literature genres—such as fantasy, science fiction, wuxia (martial heroes), and xianxia (immortal heroes)—which in turn inspire film, television, and gaming adaptations. This trend underscores myths' protean adaptability as premium creative content. However, critical challenges persist: Bridging the gap between story-driven creativity and contemporary cultural-entertainment consumption patterns; Upholding ethically anchored value systems during mythic reinterpretation to avoid narrative dilution or ideological drift. This paper interrogates how mythological storytelling can negotiate these tensions, proposing frameworks to harmonize commercial viability with cultural integrity in the age of symbolic capitalism.

Amidst the prevailing trend of "aestheticization of everyday life" in the creative economy, this study seeks to explore how traditional Chinese myths and supernatural tales can be revitalized through culturally innovative storytelling techniques. By reimagining these narratives in a new "linguistic form," the author aims to foster interactive resonance between ancient traditions and modern

¹ Richard E. Caves, *Creative Industries: Contracts between Art and Commerce*, translated by Sun Fei et al., Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House, preface p. 4, 2004.

audiences within the cultural and creative industries. Central to this endeavor is **mythic retelling**—a creative process that begins with excavating the profound symbolism embedded in archaic texts.

While myths and legends from antiquity persist in classical canons and folk literature, they often exist as fragmented, elliptical accounts. Reconstructing them for contemporary consumption demands a dual approach:

1.Deep Archeological Engagement: Unearthing latent cultural codes and cosmological wisdom obscured by millennia of textual brevity;

2.Canonical Fidelity with Creative Rupture: Innovating while preserving the "original essence" (yuandian xing)—the fixed cultural ethos and symbolic meanings crystallized through centuries of transmission. As scholar Bai Ye notes, such retellings face inherent tensions: "Mythic narratives carry archetypal cultural DNA; their creative adaptation requires balancing reverence with reinvention."¹

This paper investigates how the reactivated aura of mythic narratives—after periods of cultural sedimentation—generates new value within creative industries. It analyzes how consumers, through immersive engagement, participate in the **resurrection of mythic aura** amidst ongoing value transformations. [Ibid.] Echoing this dynamic, Japanese artist Takashi Murakami observes in ***The Extreme Theory of Creativity***: "Individual creativity thrives on cognitive multiplicity, while organizational creativity hinges on structural strategy. To achieve global relevance, one must shatter conventional paradigms while honoring ancestral wisdom."

Within the thematic cluster of "Mythology and Chinese Cultural Development", 20 relevant papers were identified, focusing on topics such as the evolution of mythic narratives, the interplay between zhiguai (supernatural tales) and

¹ Bai Ye, "Retelling Myths: A Win-Win for Literature and Cultural Creativity", Literature and Art Daily, May 23, 2007.

traditional culture, and the relationship between mythic fiction and religious development. Among these, nine articles provide critical insights for this study:

1. **Wu Hung**, "*Transmediation and Interpretation in Visual Art*" ¹, examines the challenges of interpreting artworks like Freud's analysis of Michelangelo's Moses in an era of cross-media reproduction. By interrogating how digital platforms "transmediate" classical art into fragmented visual codes, Wu argues for a hermeneutic approach that reconciles **auratic authenticity** with decentralized digital consumption.

2. **Wei Fengjuan**, "From 'Earthly Netherworld' to 'Buddhist Hell': The Evolution of Afterlife Concepts in Wei-Jin Supernatural Tales", traces the transformation of the Chinese underworld from a continuation of human society (Han Dynasty, from 202 BC to 220 AD) to a karmic tribunal (post-Buddhist integration). Her study reveals how syncretism between Daoist cosmology, Confucian ethics, and Buddhist reincarnation doctrines reshaped death narratives in zhiguai literature, offering a framework to analyze mythic adaptation as cultural hybridization.

3. **Wei Aitang**, "The Dialectic of Myth/History: An Anthropological Perspective", deconstructs the binary opposition between myth as "collective memory" and history as "factual record." Through cross-cultural case studies, Wei posits that myths and histories exist in a symbiotic continuum, co-evolving through dynamic reinterpretations—a paradigm crucial for understanding myth's role in contemporary cultural industries.

4. **Wu Xiaodong** (*Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*), in "*Mythic Representation and Research in Pluralistic Contexts*"², identifies **deep-structural parallels** across global myth systems. He contends that apparent divergences

¹ published in Fine Arts Panorama

² Pingdingshan University Journal, 2017

stem from cultural fragmentation rather than primordial differences, proposing a "unified mythic archetype" theory to guide transcultural creative adaptations.

5. **Yang Xian's** *doctoral dissertation Studies on Han Dynasty Mythology*¹ comprehensively examines Han-era myths through four dimensions: historical context, ideological-cultural frameworks, textual sources, and their literary legacy. By analyzing ritual bronze inscriptions and tomb murals, Yang reveals how Han myths functioned as **political cosmologies**, legitimizing imperial authority while encoding folk beliefs into official historiography.

6. **Ye Shuxian**, in *How to Retell Myths*², philosophically interrogates 21st-century mythic adaptation. He advocates for **archetypal alchemy**—a process where narrative archetypes are revitalized through metaphorical displacement and intertextual layering, arguing that mythic retelling must "transmute archaic symbols into electrolytes of contemporary consciousness."

Additional pivotal works include:

Zhang Yan's *Three Grand Motifs in Chinese Mythology*³, which identifies creation-cataclysm, heroic trials, and cosmic renewal as foundational narrative matrices shaping Chinese mythopoetic traditions.

Guo Fang's *Ancient Chinese Mythology and National Cultural Spirit*⁴, tracing how primordial myths like Pangu's cosmogony crystallized Confucian-Daoist syntheses of 天人合一 (Heaven-Human unity).

1 (Sichuan Normal University, 2012)

2 Journal of Yangtze University, Social Sciences Edition, Vol. 29 No. 1, 2006

3 Shandong University, 2014

4 Guanzi Journal, No. 1, 2000

Within the research domain of "Cultural and Creative Industries, Mythic Narratives, and Ethnic Culture", 18 relevant papers were identified, of which three hold significant reference value:

1. **Lou Yunhe's** *"Reconstruction of Ethnic Elements from a Cultural Policy Perspective: A Correlative Study"* ¹investigates how state cultural policies shape the commodification of traditional ethnic elements in the era of economic globalization and digitalization. Lou argues that national policy frameworks—encompassing value-oriented principles, institutional mechanisms, and resource allocation strategies—serve as both catalysts and regulators in transforming cultural heritage into commercial assets. Her analysis underscores the dual role of policy: enabling the creative reinterpretation of mythic-ethnic symbols while safeguarding against cultural dilution.

2. **Hu Wuyi's** *"Original Creativity in Cultural and Creative Industries: A Case Study of Six Cultural Practitioners in Taipei, China and Shanghai, China"* ²adopts a praxis-oriented approach to dissect the genesis of cultural originality in China's creative sector. Through comparative ethnography of artisans in Taipei, China, (hypothetical placeholder; original text unspecified) and Shanghai, China, Hu maps how grassroots creativity evolves into industrial ecosystems, emphasizing the interplay of socio-institutional frameworks, managerial practices, and localized cultural epistemologies.

3. **Yang Lihui's** *"An Ethnographic Study of Contemporary Oral Myths"* ³ revitalizes the discourse on mythic orality. Yang interrogates oral myths as living socio-cultural texts, tracing their adaptive survival through modernization. Her fieldwork reveals how oral narratives—once vehicles of communal memory—now

1 Chinese National Academy of Arts, 2011

2 Fudan University, 2009)

3 in *Frontiers in Folk Literature Lecture Series*, 2014

function as negotiated heritage in urban festivals and digital storytelling platforms, demonstrating myth's fluidity as both tradition and creative commodity.

Mythological Studies and Cultural Historiography:

1.Fu Yanzhi's *A Retrospective and Prospective Study on the Publication of Liaozhai Lianhuanhua since 1949* (Shandong University) examines the evolution of Liaozhai myth-themed sequential art (lianhuanhua)—a precursor to modern graphic novels. By periodizing its development into three phases (1950s–1970s, 1980s–1990s, post-2000), Fu analyzes how these illustrated narratives adapted Pu Songling's supernatural tales into visual mythography, reflecting shifting socio-political contexts through publishing trends and consumer reception.

2.Yuan Ke's *History of Chinese Mythology* systematically traces mythic narratives from prehistoric totemism to Daoist immortals, establishing a canonical framework for analyzing mythic "aura" as cultural DNA.

3.Gan Chunsong's *Chinese Deity Worship and Legends* deciphers the interplay between folk beliefs, ritual practices, and mythic archetypes, offering insights into the sacred-profane dialectic inherent in cultural commodification.

Theoretical Foundations in Cultural Industries

1. Xiang Yong's *Introduction to Creative Industries*¹ provides a structural analysis of China's creative ecosystem, framing mythic IP development as a value chain integrating content mining, symbolic abstraction, and experiential consumption.

2.Li Wuwei's *New Perspectives on Creative Industries* theorizes "cultural resource capitalization," advocating for mythic semiotic systems to serve as meta-narratives driving cross-sector innovation.

¹ Peking University Press

Critical Synthesis . While existing scholarship engages with discrete nodes of mythology, aura, or cultural industries, none holistically addresses their triadic interplay. This study bridges this gap through transdisciplinary triangulation: Recontextualizing Benjaminian "aura" within mythic IP development cycles; Mapping value transformation pathways from ritualistic symbols to consumer experiences; Establishing evaluative frameworks to balance cultural authenticity and industrial viability.

By hybridizing methodologies from aesthetic philosophy, cultural economics, and narrative studies, this research constructs an original matrix to reactivate mythic "aura" as both cultural anchor and creative catalyst.

Section 1.3 Research Methodology

This study employs a hybrid methodology combining literature synthesis and data-driven analysis.

1.Literature Synthesis:Core arguments and theoretical frameworks from selected scholarly works are systematically collated, with emphasis on mythic "aura," cultural capital, and creative industry dynamics.Prioritizes Chinese scholarship on mythology (e.g., Yuan Ke, Ye Shuxian) while integrating foundational Western theories (Benjamin, Bourdieu).

2.Data Analysis:Utilizes industry reports, market analytics, and consumer behavior datasets¹ to map mythic narratives' commercial viability and audience reception.Employs NVivo for qualitative coding of mythic motifs in successfulCultural and Creative Products(e.g., Black Myth: Wukong, Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child).

1 Tencent Cultural Consumption Index, Douban myth-IP ratings

Section 1.4 Thesis Structure

The thesis unfolds through the following interdisciplinary framework:

1. Benjaminian "Aura" Reconstructed

- Conducts a hermeneutic analysis of Walter Benjamin's "aura" theory, reinterpreting it through the prism of digital mythopoeia. Synthesizes critical debates on aura's dissolution (mechanical reproduction) versus regeneration (participatory worldbuilding in creative industries).

2. Diachronic Mapping of Chinese Mythic Narratives

- Classifies mythic evolution into four paradigms:
 - Ritual-Embedded (pre-Qin bronze inscriptions as sacred-political codes)
 - Cosmological Bricolage** (Han tomb murals fusing Daoist immortals with bureaucratic afterlife imaginaries)
 - Literary Hybridity (Tang-Song *zhiguai* tales as proto-fiction)
 - Industrial Reincarnation** (post-2000 transmedia myth-IP ecosystems)

3. Bourdieusian Field Analysis of Mythic Capital

- Traces the transmutation of mythic symbols across **cultural fields:
 - Sacred Field*: Shang-Zhou ritual bronzes → Han stone reliefs → Buddhist cave murals
 - Secular Field*: Ming-Qing vernacular prints → Republican-era "butterfly" fiction → digital *xianxia* franchises
 - Economic Field*: From imperial patronage to algorithm-driven IP valuation models

4. Neo-Auratic Rebirth in Creative Industries

- Proposes Mythic Alchemy Framework for cultural adaptation:

- Extraction: Distilling core archetypes (e.g., Journey to the West's "redemptive pilgrimage")
- Transmutation: Recontextualizing via technological mediation (e.g., Black Myth: Wukong's Unreal Engine 5 hyperrealism)
- Embedding: Weaving adapted narratives into experiential economies (e.g., Dunhuang VR cave tours)

5. Market Dynamics & Case Studies

- Analyzes myth-IP performance metrics across sectors:
 - Literature: 34% CAGR for zhiguai-themed web novels (2018–2023)
 - Gaming: 62% of top-grossing Chinese RPGs leverage mythic lore (2023 Tencent report)
 - Film: Creation of the Gods I (2023) grossing \ \$400M+ via mythic epic modernized as political allegory

This structure interlaces theoretical rigor with empirical validation, positioning mythic "aura" as a dynamic interface between ancestral wisdom and algorithmic modernity.

While this study centers on the "cultural and creative industries," the expansive scope of its ancillary themes — "aura" and "mythic narratives" — necessitates deliberate scholarly bracketing.

1. Delimiting Mythic Studies

Interdisciplinary Nexus: Acknowledging mythology's intersections with folklore, art history, philosophy, politics, and economics, this research adopts a focused Sinocentric lens, prioritizing seminal Chinese scholars (Yuan Ke, Ye Shuxian) while selectively integrating Western theorists (Campbell, Lévi-Strauss) as heuristic complements.

Conceptual Pragmatism: Bypassing endless debates on myth's ontological definitions, the study operationalizes myth as narrative archetypes with ritual-symbolic residues, filtered through Chinese cultural historiography.

2. Mythic Iconography: A Han-Centric Focus

Primary Corpus: Han Dynasty stone reliefs (huaxiangshi) and brick carvings (huaxiangzhuan) are foregrounded as **proto-mythic media**, embodying: Ritual-political cosmologies (e.g., Queen Mother of the West iconography) Early narrative sequencing (e.g., filial piety tales in Shandong tomb art)

Supplementary Materials: Ming-Qing vernacular paintings (e.g., Water Margin woodcuts) and contemporary digital myth-art (e.g., Zenless Zone Zero character designs) are selectively referenced to trace continuity.

3. Theoretical Anchoring

Aura: Strictly adheres to Benjamin's Kultwert (cult value) vs. Ausstellungswert (exhibition value) dialectic, resisting postmodern reinterpretations.

Cultural Capital: Applies Bourdieu's field theory to map mythic symbols' transmutation from sacred habitus (Han ritual art) to neoliberal illusio (theme park spectacles).

This methodological bracketing ensures analytical depth within defined epistemological parameters, enabling rigorous interrogation of mythic "aura" as a dynamic interface between ancestral memory and algorithmic modernity.

Chapter 2: The Efficacy of Aura—Manifestation of Mythic Cult Value

Section 2.1 The Genesis of Aura

Within the philosophical canon, Walter Benjamin first conceptualized "**Aura**" in his 1931 essay *Little History of Photography*, framing it through the interplay of early photographic technology and human perception. Analyzing a childhood portrait of Franz Kafka (Fig. 1), Benjamin described how light and shadow coalesced into an "aura"—a term rendered as "灵氛" (*lingfen*) in Chinese translations—that suffused the subject with an atmosphere of solitude and melancholy. He observed:

"The aura emerges at the intersection of time and space—a haze clinging to distant mountains, the dappled shimmer of sunlight through foliage. It is the residue of uniqueness: the shadowed contours of a subject's being, irreproducible in its lived immediacy."¹

As photographic technology advanced, practitioners mastered the nuanced manipulation of light, expanding applications from portraiture to documentary and archival uses. Yet this technical progress paradoxically eroded the "aura," which Benjamin linked to the cultic presence of the unrepeatable moment. Early photographs retained traces of ritualistic solemnity—akin to ancestral tablets or sacred relics—while mechanized reproduction transformed images into exhibition-value commodities, stripped of their spatial-temporal singularity.

For Benjamin, aura's dissolution mirrored modernity's broader disenchantment: the replacement of contemplative immersion with distracted consumption. This dialectic underpins his later elaboration in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, where aura's decline becomes symptomatic of capitalism's colonization of cultural memory.

1 Walter Benjamin, *Little History of Photography*, in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 518



Figure 1. Childhood Portrait of Franz Kafka

(Image source: Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in Methods of Seeing and Everyday

Life, trans. Ni Yang, p. 33.)

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin further explicates "aura" as the aesthetic essence of authenticity (Echtheit) inherent in artworks—a quality forged by their unique spatiotemporal existence and the atmospheric interplay of their surroundings. This "aura," he argues, is constructed through lived experience, imbuing the work with an irreplaceable, quasi-sacred significance that demands ritualistic reverence.

Linguistic Genealogy of "Aura"

The term "aura" originates from the Greek verb αὔω (auō), meaning "to blow" or "to breathe," signifying phenomena such as wind, airflow, and ethereal "breath" (pneuma)¹. In Xie Daren's *Latin-Chinese Dictionary* (Commercial Press, 1988, p. 60), the Latin "aura" encompasses:

Natural phenomena: Gentle breezes, vapors, sunlight, celestial radiance.

Cultural semiotics: Ethos (Volksgeist), acoustic reverberations, luminous halos.

¹ Yang Junjie, *Revisiting Benjamin's "Aura"*, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2014, p. 23]

Mystical connotations: Sacred halos in Western iconography, symbolizing divine presence [Zhang Yuneng, Reflections on Translating Benjamin's "Aura" into Chinese, Foreign Literature Studies, 2007.5, pp. 151-161].

In German contexts, "aura" carries polysemous meanings:

Religious/Artistic: A "radiant halo enveloping the body," a state of spiritual communion, or the luminous nimbus surrounding sacred figures in Christian art ¹.

Medical: The premonitory "aura" preceding epileptic episodes, metaphorically linked to light as a harbinger of revelation²

Sinological Interpretations and Semantic Fluidity

Chinese scholars have rendered "aura" variably as 气息 (qi xi, "breath"), 灵韵 (lingyun, "numinous resonance"), 灵光 (lingguang, "numinous radiance"), or 光晕 (guangyun, "luminous halo"), reflecting both the term's etymological roots in "breath" (qi) and "light" (guang), as well as its conceptual ambiguity. This multiplicity arises from Benjamin's deliberate framing of "aura" as a liminal concept straddling sacred aura and secular aesthetics.

Symbolist Underpinnings: The George Circle

The term "aura" gained philosophical traction through the Stefan George Circle, a German Symbolist movement influenced by French l'art pour l'art ("art for art's sake"). Centered on George's journal *Blätter für die Kunst* (Pages for Art), this school elevated art as a vessel of transcendent beauty. George's poetry collection *Hymnen* (Hymns/Odes, 1890)—particularly its eighth

¹ Zhu Hongju, Unpacking Benjamin's "Aura" in Literary Criticism, *Modern Philosophy*, No. 1, 2004, p. 124

² Yang Junjie, *ibid.*

poem Wandel (Metamorphosis)—exemplifies this ethos through solar mysticism and luminous imagery ¹.

Benjamin's "aura" thus inherits this Symbolist legacy, reimagining art's sacred luminosity within the dialectics of mechanical reproduction.

From Stefan George's Hymnen (Hymns/Odes), the eighth poem Wandel (Metamorphosis), here is the original German text followed by its English translations:

German Original:

First Stanza:

"Abendlich auf schattenbegleiteten wegen / Über brücken den türmen und mauern entgegen / Wenn leise klänge sich regen: // Auf einem goldenen wagen / Wo perlgraue flügel dich tragen / Und lindenbüsche dich fächeln / Herniedertauche / Mit mildem lächeln / Und linderndem hauche!"

Second Stanza:

"Unter den masten auf rüstig furchendem kiele / Über der wasser und strahlen schimmerndem spiele / In glücklicher ferne vom ziele: // Auf einem silbernen wagen / Wo lichtgrüne spiegel dich tragen / Und schaumgewinde dich fächeln / Herniedertauche / Mit frohem lächeln / Und kosendem hauche!"

Third Stanza:

"Lang ist nach jauchzendem tode die sonne verschollen / Mit den planken die brausenden wogen grollen / Und dumpfe gewitter rollen: // Auf einem stählernen wagen / Wo lavaschollen dich tragen / Und grell lohe wolken dich fächeln / Herniedertauche / Mit wildem lächeln / Und sengendem hauche!"²

1 Song Qiuguo, A Study of Stefan George's Aesthetic Poetry, Xi'an International Studies University, 2014, p. 2

2 Stefan George, Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algalal, Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke, Band 2, Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1928, pp. 27-29

English Translation:

First Stanza:

"Evening falls on shadowed paths / Over bridges toward towers and walls / As soft melodies stir: // In a golden chariot / Borne by pearl-gray wings / And fanned by linden boughs / Descend / With gentle smiles / And soothing breath!"

Second Stanza:

"Beneath the masts on a sturdy, cleaving keel / Over shimmering waters and radiant play / In blissful distance from the goal: // In a silver chariot / Borne by light-green mirrors / And fanned by foaming waves / Descend / With joyous smiles / And caressing breath!"

Third Stanza:

"Long has the sun been lost after jubilant death / With the planks, the roaring waves churn / And muffled storms roll: // In a steel chariot / Borne by molten lava / And fanned by blazing clouds / Descend / With wild smiles / And scorching breath!"

From the Poem's Imagery, the author employs three chariots of distinct materials—gold, silver, and iron—as symbolic Western motifs to evoke the divine "auras" of a goddess, each representing a celestial light:

Golden Chariot: Symbolizes the dazzling sunlight of day, accompanied by a "soothing breath."

Silver Chariot: Embodies the serene moonlight of night, exuding a "caressing breath."

Iron Chariot: Represents the midnight lightning's electric fury, radiating a "scorching breath." ¹

¹ Yang Hongqin, *Ibid.*, p. 6.

The recurring motif of "breath" (hauche) aligns with the etymological roots of "**aura**"—originally signifying "air" or "breath"—while mapping the goddess's tripartite divine manifestations onto temporal and spatial shifts. This progression mirrors humanity's ambivalent relationship with the sacred: a blend of reverent awe and empathetic communion, where the human and divine coalesce through synesthetic harmony. Wolfdietrich Rasch, a scholar within the George Circle, termed this phenomenon the "**breath of life**" (Lebenshauch), framing aura as a vitalist force bridging mortal and immortal realms [Lin Yinji, *The Aura in Water Lilies: A Study of Monet's Late Paintings*, China Academy of Art, 2011, p. 16].

Benjamin's Reconfiguration of "Aura"

Zhao Yong, in *Integration and Subversion: The Dialectics of Mass Culture*¹, traces Benjamin's conceptual evolution of "aura":

Pre-Modern Ritual: Aura emerges from artworks embedded in cultic practices (e.g., totemic masks, ancestral tablets).

Renaissance Shift: Aura migrates from religious relics to autonomous art, sacralized through artistic genius.

Mechanical Reproduction: Aura's dissolution under industrial replication, lamented in *The Storyteller* as narrative traditions yield to fragmented media.

Shock of Modernity: Mass culture's "aestheticization of politics" replaces aura's contemplative depth with tactile distraction.

Scholars emphasize Benjamin's "originality" in redefining "aura" beyond the George Circle's mystical usage. For Benjamin, aura embodies an "unapproachable distance"—a paradoxical intimacy where the artwork, while physically present, remains transcendently remote. This dialectic manifests when viewers confront an artwork in a museum: the piece exerts a gravitational pull, inviting the observer into a silent dialogue across temporal chasms. In this

¹ Peking University Press, 2005, pp. 152–160

mutual gaze—the viewer's contemplation met by the artwork's silent "returned gaze"—aura emerges as a liminal space where subject and object negotiate presence and absence. As Nietzsche famously observed, "When you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you," encapsulating aura's reciprocal haunting.

Key Theoretical Contributions

Aura as Distance: Benjamin's insistence on aura's "cultic remoteness" critiques modernity's erosion of contemplative space.

Synesthetic Communion: The interplay of breath, light, and materiality in George's poetry prefigures Benjamin's multisensory aura.

Dialectical Materialism: Zhao Yong contextualizes aura's decline within capitalist commodification, contrasting Rasch's vitalist interpretation.

This synthesis positions "aura" as a prism refracting art's sacred lineage, industrial alienation, and the enduring human yearning for transcendence.

According to the poem, the author makes a beautiful description of the three "rays of light" of the deity through the symbols of "carts" made of three different materials, namely gold, silver, and iron, which are used to describe the gods in the West. These three "rays of light" respectively represent: the golden cart symbolizes the dazzling sunlight of the day; the silver cart symbolizes the soft and tranquil moonlight of the night; the iron cart symbolizes the lightning light of the rapid current in the late night. At the same time, the poem also corresponds the atmosphere of these three "rays of light" one by one. The sunlight of the day is the "gentle breath", the moonlight at night is the "breath of love", and the thunder at midnight is the "scorching breath".¹ The "breath" that appears in the poem also corresponds exactly to the meaning represented by the word "Aura". By

¹ Ibid., p. 6.

depicting the changes in three different times and spaces within a day, the author corresponds to the three different divine "rays of light" of the goddess. The progressive description of the atmospheric phenomena also expresses people's emotional attitude of connection and worship towards the deity, as well as the synesthetic effect that can be generated when human nature and divinity are reconciled with each other. In the same school, "Wolf Skeel calls this 'ray of light' the 'breath of life'."¹

In his book "Integration and Subversion: The Dialectics of Popular Culture", Zhao Yong brings up the term "aura" at the beginning of the third subsection in the third chapter when interpreting Benjamin. And in the footnote at the end of the article, he elaborately explains the origin and the original usage of the word "Aura". In the article, the author systematically tells the story of Benjamin's concept of "aura" in chronological order, from the emergence of the function of pre-modern artworks following witchcraft and religious rituals, to the displacement of the aura of artworks in religious theology during the Renaissance period, which entered the field of art theology. Then, it criticizes the disappearance of the aura in the era of industrial reproduction. In "The Storyteller", he expresses regret for the disappearance of his "aura" with the emergence of "storytelling" along with the appearance of news and novels, and also gives an explanation for the appearance of the "shock" of mass consumption.²

The reason why scholars say that Benjamin's application of the concept of "aura" is of an "original" nature is mainly because, on the basis of the Georgians' application of the term "ray of light", Benjamin continuously endows this word with newer and richer connotations and meanings.³ In the definition of

1 Lin Yinji. "The Spirit in the Water Lilies: A Study on Monet's Later Paintings", China Academy of Art, 2011, p. 16.

2 Zhao Yong. "Integration and Subversion: The Dialectics of Popular Culture", Beijing: Peking University Press, June 2005, pp. 152-160.

3 Ibid., p. 190.

Benjamin's philosophy, "aura" is a distance that cannot be reached in both spatial and temporal dimensions, yet it has an invisible interaction with your whole body, absorbing and caring for each other. It can seem very close, but it is actually an unreachable artistic conception. For example, when people admire a famous painting or a statue in an art gallery, they will develop a feeling of looking up across the torrent of time and space towards the work and the artist. Standing still to appreciate it, they will feel the gravitational force emanating from the artwork at that moment. Thus, the audience will naturally generate associative perceptions that flood into their memories during the process of viewing, in relation to the environment. That is to say, when the artwork and the viewer are in the same field, people acknowledge the self-existence of the object. When they gaze at it until they forget themselves, they will get the "look back" from the other side. In other words, during the process of viewing, there is a distance between the subject on the "this shore" and the object on the "other shore" that the subject's consciousness has reached. In this distance, the two are in a process of mutual gazing and will receive feedback from each other. At this moment, in the space, an atmosphere and tone related to the "aura" will be created. This is roughly the same as the feeling generated by Nietzsche's famous saying: "When you gaze into the abyss, the abyss also gazes into you."

Along with the birth of things in the world that possess the power of "gazing" and establish a relationship with people, apart from the ancient religious icon sculptures and painting art, there are also mythological legends that emerged almost simultaneously with people's initial exploration and understanding of the world and nature. In *"A Brief History of Chinese Fiction"*, Lu Xun explains the origin of myths in this way: "In ancient times, the primitive people saw that all things in heaven and earth were constantly changing, and many of these phenomena were beyond the reach of human power. Therefore, they created various theories to explain them. What they explained is what we call myths

today." ¹When the primitive people worshipped and sacrificed to the so-called "gods" in nature that possessed "unknowable power", after the appearance of written language following the translation of images, the "stories" about these gods were passed down orally and combined with the chanting of poems, spreading and developing continuously. These stories then began to condense into an intangible collective common consciousness and belief, thus uniting the primitive people into a tribe, a village, a city-state, or even a country. Although these stories are no longer passed down through oral narration nowadays, they still connect the common beliefs of everyone through the invisible vibrations of the "aura" emanating from them. From the moment of their emergence, myths, just like artworks, have possessed the "aura" worthy of being worshipped.

The development of mythology in China is not as systematic as that in the West. Chinese myths are generally scattered among different historical ancient books and records. This is probably because mythology in China has undergone a process of historization. Within the scope of narrow mythological studies, there has been no mythology after the historization process. However, from a broad perspective, the development and evolution of Chinese mythology mainly went through four important periods: First, it was the mythological era during the period of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors when the "heroes" were deified under the worship of nature. The main content of these myths were stories such as the creation of the world, moving mountains, and chasing the sun. Next, during the Wei and Jin dynasties, in a realm where cultural thoughts and beliefs were slightly permeated but mostly in conflict and not much related to each other, the strange tales about immortals, witches, and ghosts gradually shifted towards politics, philosophy, and even morality. Examples include *Records of the Search for the Supernatural* [Gan Bao (Jin Dynasty, from 265 AD to 420 AD

¹Lu Xun. *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, July 2001. (5), p. 8

).¹ Records of Natural History [Zhang Hua (Jin Dynasty, from 265 AD to 420 AD). A Complete Translation of Records of Natural History, annotated and translated by Zhu Hongjie, Guizhou People's Publishing House, December 1992 (First Edition)], Biographies of Immortals Ge Hong (Jin Dynasty,). Collation and Annotation of Biographies of Immortals, collated and annotated by Hu Shouwei, Zhonghua Book Company Publishing House, September 2010], etc. Then, during the Song Dynasty (from 960 AD to 1279 AD), with the beginning of the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism and the establishment of a common belief in the secular world, there emerged documentary biographies mainly focusing on integration and compilation, such as Extensive Records of the Taiping Era [Li Fang and others (Song Dynasty,). Extensive Records of the Taiping Era]. Finally, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, there were 神魔小说 (novels about gods and demons) with religious implications, such as the well-known mythological stories like Journey to the West*, Investiture of the Gods, The Female Immortal Historian, Lü Dongbin's Dream of Immortal Ascension through the Peach and Willow, etc.

The formal citation of the term "myth" and the initiation of relatively systematic discussions on it began to rise in the early 20th century, which was also the period when the research on the "mythological revival" in Europe reached its peak. A strong upsurge of mythology studies spread eastward to Asia. ² The studies of mythology in China were influenced partly directly by the West and partly by Japan. At the beginning of this century, domestic scholars such as Lu Xun, Gu Jiegang, Mao Dun, and Liang Qichao, who were among the first to introduce "mythology" into literature as a part of academic research on traditional Chinese culture, all made contributions from the perspective of "mythology" to opening up new horizons and new fields for the study of Chinese literature, national culture, and cultural thoughts. The word "myth" originally came from the

1 Records of the Search for the Supernatural, translated by Wang Shaoying, Zhonghua Book Company, 1979

2 He Xuejun. "A Century of Chinese Mythology Studies", published in Social Science Research, 2000.5, p. 135.

ancient Greek word "mythos", which meant "legends of gods and heroes". In the 19th century, it could be found in the entry describing "myth (fictitious stories, extraordinary people and events)" in Williams' compiled book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Before that, the word "myth" merely meant "fable" or had some negative connotations with a satirical sense (however, in ancient Greece, the word "mythos" also once represented positive meanings such as "sacred stories"). Later, it was introduced into China indirectly through Japanese by Chinese scholars who studied in Japan in the early 20th century. After that, based on anthropology, Mao Dun began to conduct the first specialized and systematic research work on it, namely *Studies on Chinese Mythology*. Regarding the interpretation of "myth", C.S. Burne, the president of the Folklore Society in the UK in the 20th century, described myth in the *Handbook Of Folklore* as a "story of origin" with blurred semantic boundaries, used to explain the relationship between the phenomena involving gods, humans, and objects in the world. White people simply classified myths into stories about the deeds of real heroes and folk stories (Marchen), while for indigenous people, myths were only divided into two types: "blasphemous" and "sacred", playing a role of sacred worship in their settlements. The feelings of "reverence" and "sacredness" towards this mysterious story narration were the criteria for judging myths. In the book **Folklore** written by Lin Huixiang, his definition was adopted and summarized, with some minor adjustments made in the details. It was summarized and explained as the concept that although the story was strange and did not conform to the common sense of the human world, it was deeply believed by the people. The term "divine nature" cited by Lu Xun in *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* also indicates that "myths mainly revolve around the stories of gods", making people feel revered and admired, thus leading to the establishment of temples and altars for praise and worship, making these stories events that are commonly believed in. In terms of the schools of mythological research, they are mainly divided into several categories:

The first category is the "Theory of Linguistic Pathology" proposed by the philologist Max Muller and the philosopher Herbert Spencer. In the process of the development of human language, people's descriptions of things have gradually evolved from having the original function of simply expressing subjective perceptions to being able to convey phenomena through intentional or abstract statements. That is to say, myths stem from the ambiguity caused by the inherent weaknesses of language when people name certain external objects. In other words, the phenomenon of "homologous and similar words" in language indication is the root of all myths.¹ For example, the word "Daphne" in Greek mythology originates from the Sanskrit word "Aphanâ", which means "the red glow of dawn". Therefore, the myth of Apollo, the sun god, chasing Daphne and turning her into a laurel tree (the Greek word "Δάφνη" means "dawn" in Sanskrit), from the perspective of natural phenomena, represents the trajectory of the sun's movement in the sky within a day. It follows the sunset glow at dusk, passes through the night, and then the dawn appears with the glow in the sky. Therefore, Muller believed that "myths are the shadows that are not expressed in language." They are the potential forces exerted on human thinking. However, since this theory only takes a single cultural perspective and uses only natural phenomena as the theme of myths, its perspective and scope are too narrow and one-sided. As a result, it was criticized by the British anthropological school mythologist Andrew Lang and gradually faded into obscurity later on.

The second category is the naturalist school, which holds that myths emerged because humans were initially unable to resist natural forces, leading to the emergence of nature worship.

The third category is the ritualist school, which holds that myths are derivative explanatory texts emerging alongside religious and magical rituals, represented by James Frazer, author of *The Golden Bough*. In his book, Frazer argues through accounts of ancient Roman mythical practices and primitive

¹ Ernst Cassirer. *Language and Myth*, translated by Yu Xiao et al., Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, June 1998, pp. 31 - 33.

beliefs that primitive people practiced "sympathetic magic" composed of two principles: "contagion" (contact magic, where two objects continue to affect each other even after separation) and "similarity" (imitative or homeopathic magic, where similar causes produce similar effects). This form of magic preceded the emergence of religion and constitutes the essence of myth.¹ The conceptual relationship is illustrated in Figure 2:



Figure 2. Classification of Magic

(Image source: J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, translated by Xu Yuxin et al., Beijing: Popular Literature and Art Publishing House, January 1998, p. 21.)

The fourth category is the functionalist school of mythology, which posits that myths not only serve as narrative stories but also exert practical social functions, influencing aspects of human life such as magical rituals, cultural beliefs, and social institutions. Myths act as tools to maintain tribal continuity and guide behavioral norms. The fifth category is the well-known psychological school, represented by psychologists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Freud used the Oedipus myth to illustrate the division of human consciousness into conscious and unconscious realms. The unconscious, like the submerged bulk of an iceberg, contains repressed instincts that erupt under external stimuli—with myths being one such catalyst. Jung expanded this theory into the concept of "collective

¹ Frazer, J. G. *The Golden Bough*, translated by Xu Yuxin et al., Beijing: Popular Literature and Art Publishing House, January 1998, pp. 19 - 20

unconsciousness," elevating it to a shared cultural memory of nations or ethnic groups, manifested through myths. The sixth category is the deconstructionist school, primarily represented by Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myths using binary opposition, followed by the geographical school, which categorizes myths by regional divisions. As evident from the above, myths reflect primitive peoples' early cosmologies. As Mao Dun noted in **Studies on Chinese Mythology**, myths emerged from primitive imagination while fulfilling crucial cultural functions in organizing their lives. As the "aura" of primal perceptions of the natural world, myths embody humanity's earliest cognitive frameworks. Building on Andrew Lang's theories in *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, Mao Dun summarized six characteristics of myths: 1. Animism 2. Superstitious beliefs in magical transformations 3. Belief in postmortem souls dwelling in underworlds as life continuations 4. Belief in ghosts attaching to objects and souls shapeshifting freely 5. Minority beliefs in potential immortality cut short by betrayal 6. Explanations of natural phenomena encountered in dreams The origin of myths lies in primitive peoples' perception of the "aura" emanating from the natural world—a concept Benjamin viewed as the most authentic language of nature.

Rooted in primal psychological impulses sparked by imagination, myths emerged "against a backdrop of exalted mystical thinking"¹. This cognitive momentum established mythic belief systems, laying groundwork for totemic worship and spawning subsequent cultural, artistic, and ideological developments.

Section 2.2 The Cultural Orientation of Myth

As the "aura" of myths spreads through oral narratives, it generates a multiplicative effect of belief. According to ritualist school studies, myths emerge alongside magical rituals in collective ceremonial contexts. Within these rituals,

¹ Liu Yuqing, *Three Major Transformations of Chinese Mythology, Literary and Artistic Studies*, 2014.10, p.43

participants' perceptions and behaviors converge under the influence of environmental atmosphere, forming a gestalt (完形) structure — a holistic framework where the external environment becomes a transparent, integrated scenario field that encompasses the participants. Through this interactive structuration process, human biological rhythms and physical order merge into a unified spiritual field. [Zhang Yaojun. *The Metaphorical Body*, Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, July 2006, p. 15.] In such scenarios, the intense atmosphere created by shared emotions triggers what French sociologist Émile Durkheim termed "collective effervescence." Through shared experiences, participants resonate and establish collective memory, giving rise to a "worship effect."¹ This shared experience is then transcribed into myths.

Myths have always been embedded in human life. Starting from early totemism, as a source of tribal faith, myth consumption in this period was primarily tied to spiritual solace and experiential construction. Take, for example, the world-famous Göbekli Tepe (Figure 2), discovered in 1994 and built around 2500 BCE by hunter-gatherers. Its stone pillars are carved with fierce animals and figures engaged in rituals, centered around a temple structure—clear evidence of its use for religious ceremonies. Constructing this massive complex required collaboration among multiple tribes, united by shared beliefs or religious convictions. Nearby, in the Karacadağ Mountains, scholars have found the origins of domesticated wheat, likely cultivated to sustain temple activities.² Gradually, villages emerged around the site. This demonstrates that shared beliefs are the cornerstone of collective cohesion.

¹ Xiang Yong. *Introduction to Cultural Industries*, Beijing: Peking University Press, February 2015, p. 189.]

² Yuval Harari. *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, translated by Lin Junhong, Beijing: CITIC Press, February 2017, p. 87.

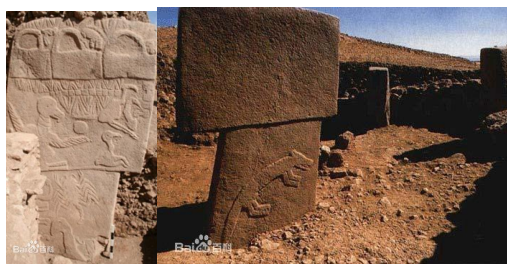


Figure 2. Göbekli Tepe

(Image source: Baidu Baike [Baidu Baike:

<https://baike.baidu.com/pic/%E5%93%A5%E8%B4%9D%E5%85%8B%E5%8A%9B%E9%81%97%E5%9D%80/2486026/0/fcbbb1519d39baae8d54302d?fr=lemma&ct=single#aid=0&pic=8c1001e93901213f30918e9554e736d12e2e95dd>])

Myth, as a form of belief consciousness, also represents the distance between consciousness and cognitive experience as defined by Benjamin when he elaborated on the concept of "aura". Within this distance, "language" serves as the connecting medium. Whether it is the transcendental language of symbols with referential meanings or written characters, it plays the role of "translation", conveying the spirit and thus enabling people to achieve experiential cognition. However, this process of cognition, which leans towards subjective consciousness and neglects the intuitive perception of objective reality, causes the "translation" to make the meanings of the two aspects approach each other in the process, but it also leads to deviations in the internal components of things that "cannot be expressed solely at the level of language". This results in the formation of illusory "fancies" and "dreams" in the judgment of relationships, dominated by self-consciousness. Even the myths generated from these fantasies will exhibit more or less differences. At the same time, precisely because of this, it gives birth to the unique cultural temperament and spiritual qualities of a particular nation. This is similar to the differences in the implications and cultural meanings between Chinese and Western myths. The reason for the "different paths" of the myths of the two sides lies in the fundamental differences in their initial development sources. The origin of Chinese myths is in the ethnic regions of the Pre-Qin Dynasty, while ancient Greece is the source of Western

myths. In the article "The Connotations of Chinese and Western Myths and Their Cultural Traditions", Wang Yi compares the punishments received by the gods for their dereliction of duty in the myths of Pufu and Talos to explain the differences in the concepts of the "relationship between humans and gods".¹ In terms of concepts, the depiction of the cruelty of Pufu's punishment in ancient Chinese myths is based on the concept of "humiliation" in the presence of onlookers, which mostly comes from mental torture. This is also the result of the unified combination of the national aesthetics, morality, and values in the collective spirit of China. It also reflects that Chinese ideological concepts provide a macroscopic care for the individual, starting from the harmonious collective of the people. In contrast, in the West, punishment is imposed on the body, directly inflicting sensory pain as a form of discipline. Thus, in Western myths, it reflects the independent self-consciousness of the individual and the cultural connotations of intuitiveness and rationality. There are also differences in the descriptions of the images of the gods between China and the West. For example, the descriptions of the gods in Chinese ancient books mostly depict them as having a form that combines human and animal features. For instance, in the "Classic of the Western Mountains" in **The Classic of Mountains and Seas**, the god Luwu of the Kunlun Mountains is described as "having the body of a tiger with nine tails, a human face and tiger claws". The Queen Mother of the West is described as "having a leopard's tail, tiger's teeth, being good at howling, with disheveled hair and wearing a headdress". In addition, in **Li Sao: Questions to Heaven** in **The Songs of Chu** and **Supplementary Records of the Grand Historian**, Nuwa and Fuxi are described as having the head of a human and the body of a snake, and other various myths have similar descriptions of the images. From the above, it can be seen that in ancient China, there was no definite aesthetic consciousness regarding the external features of the "gods". However, the descriptions of the gods in ancient Greek myths are exactly the opposite. They praise the

¹ Wang Yi. "The Connotations of Chinese and Western Myths and Their Cultural Traditions", published in **Cultural Perspective**, p. 23.] [Wang Yi. "The Connotations of Chinese and Western Myths and Their Cultural Traditions", published in **Cultural Perspective**, p. 23.

appearance of the gods, endowing the gods with human images, and the gods have strong and plump physical appearances, as well as emotional perceptions of love, hate, anger, and infatuation similar to those of humans, and a worldly atmosphere. Through comparison, it can be seen that in terms of spiritual culture, what Chinese and Western myths reflect respectively is that the ancient Chinese descriptions of the gods pay more attention to the development and manifestation of spiritual qualities rather than physical appearances. The characteristics of the gods depicted in Chinese myths often endow human "heroes" with the divine nature, having the qualities of putting the public interest first, eliminating selfish desires, punishing evil and promoting good, and loving the people collectively. For example, in the myths such as "Yu the Great tamed the floods and passed by his home three times without entering", "Shennong tasted a hundred herbs", and "Hou Yi shot down the suns". This is different from the Western culture, which personifies the gods, endows them with human beauty, and values the independent thoughts of the individual. [Ibid., pp. 21-24.] For example, in stories like Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, being indifferent to her duties due to the loss of her daughter, and the three goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite arguing endlessly over their beauty, people endow the "gods" with their own emotional aspects and emphasize the value of the individual. During the Middle Ages, the prosperity of Western theology immersed art and aesthetics in it, adding a layer of idealistic mystery to art. However, no matter how much emotional experience is applied in space, resulting in widely varying temperaments and atmospheres, myths have always been an indispensable part of both Eastern and Western cultures, existing in the daily lives and even consumption activities of the public. As an integral part of culture, when people construct myths, they are also consuming myths, but the patterns presented are different in different eras. In modern times, consumption is inevitably a term closely associated with economic and commodity exchange behaviors. But at the same time, it also refers to the autonomous activity of consciously consuming and using a certain object. It can be said that in order to

satisfy their inner desires, people are constantly "consuming" the things around them. This is a spontaneous and innate instinct that cannot be suppressed. From the air we breathe and the food we eat to the culture that satisfies our spirit, it is undoubtedly all a process of consumption. Similarly, in ancient times, people's "consumption" of myths mostly came from the worship of beliefs and gods, which is also a manifestation of the "worship value" of myths. This manifestation is reflected in everything from the mural images painted in palaces, temples, folk houses, Buddhist temples, Taoist temples, and grotto tombs, to the use of statues of immortals and Buddhist figures and folk belief artworks. All these are manifestations of people's application of myths through "image symbols". The story content in myths is expressed as symbols. And symbols are expressions of meaning. Through the presentation of images, they are present in a certain context, enabling the people who worship to feel the sacred atmosphere that is released from the symbols and contains a sense of distant respect and lingers around them, thus generating a sense of reverence and enabling the worship value of myths to be effectively exerted. And this defined atmosphere hovering around people, when they absorb and feel it, is the manifestation of the "aura". From the perspective of the aura described by Benjamin, it is something that can flow into space and be felt through one's own experience, combining the natural and the physical. When people are aware of the presence of the aura, they will "absorb the spiritual energy into their own situational feelings (Befindlichkeit), and the uncertain feeling qualities (Gefühlsqualität) that flow into the perceived space"¹ as the generation of the atmosphere. And when people come into contact with the objective representations of myths, the qualities they feel are the spiritual perceptions triggered by the "aura" and the "needs" obtained through the "consumption" of myths. Take, for example, the murals in the Han Dynasty tombs depicting the divine beings and immortal beasts in the celestial realm in myths, as well as the remaining painted bricks and stone reliefs. The murals found on the

¹ Gernot Böhme, **Atmospheric Aesthetics**, translated by Jia Hongyu. China Social Sciences Press, April 2018, p. 36.

ceiling of the Bu Qianqiu tomb in Luoyang, Henan Province, China (Figure 3) depict a group of continuous and imaginative horizontal long scenes. From the perspective of the picture, as marked by the serial numbers from right to left and from top to bottom (in the order from the inside to the outside of the flat ridge of the tomb ceiling), the images painted in sequence are all patterns of immortals and cloud beasts that appear in mythological legends. There are yellow snakes, the Golden Crow and the sun disc, Fuxi with a human head and a snake body, the tomb owner and his wife riding on a dragon and a phoenix, the Jade Rabbit, immortals, the White Tiger, the Vermilion Bird, Feilian, the Azure Dragon, the feathered man holding a scepter, the toad and the moon disc, Nuwa, and the curling and flowing cloud patterns painted around. [Huang Peixian. "On the Functions of the Murals in the Han Dynasty Tombs", published in **Studies on the Art of Ancient Tombs**, Volume 1. Cultural Relics Press, Beijing, 2011, p. 42.] These elements together form a vivid story scene of the tomb owner ascending to the celestial realm after death. In addition to playing a decorative role for the tomb, it also vividly conveys the Han people's imagination of the celestial realm, their attitudes towards the cosmic world, the relationship between humans and gods, and the concept of yin and yang, as well as other deeper symbolic meanings. Myth, as a form of belief consciousness, also represents the distance between consciousness and cognitive experience as defined by Benjamin when he elaborated on the concept of "aura". Within this distance, "language" serves as the connecting medium. Whether it is the transcendental language of symbols with referential meanings or written characters, it plays the role of "translation", conveying the spirit and thus enabling people to achieve experiential cognition. However, this process of cognition, which leans towards subjective consciousness and neglects the intuitive perception of objective reality, causes the "translation" to make the meanings of the two aspects approach each other in the process, but it also leads to deviations in the internal components of things that "cannot be expressed solely at the level of language". This results in the formation of illusory "fancies" and "dreams" in the judgment of relationships,

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being good at howling, with disheveled hair and wearing a headdress". In addition, in **Li Sao: Questions to Heaven** in **The Songs of Chu** and **Supplementary Records of the Grand Historian**, Nuwa and Fuxi are described as having the head of a human and the body of a snake, and other various myths have similar descriptions of the images. From the above, it can be seen that in ancient China, there was no definite aesthetic consciousness regarding the external features of the "gods". However, the descriptions of the gods in ancient Greek myths are exactly the opposite. They praise the appearance of the gods, endowing the gods with human images, and the gods have strong and plump physical appearances, as well as emotional perceptions of love, hate, anger, and infatuation similar to those of humans, and a worldly atmosphere. Through comparison, it can be seen that in terms of spiritual culture, what Chinese and Western myths reflect respectively is that the ancient Chinese descriptions of the gods pay more attention to the development and manifestation of spiritual qualities rather than physical appearances. The characteristics of the gods depicted in Chinese myths often endow human "heroes" with the divine nature, having the qualities of putting the public interest first, eliminating selfish desires, punishing evil and promoting good, and loving the people collectively. For example, in the myths such as "Yu the Great tamed the floods and passed by his home three times without entering", "*Shennong tasted a hundred herbs*", and "*Hou Yi shot down the suns*". This is different from the Western culture, which personifies the gods, endows them with human beauty, and values the independent thoughts of the individual. [Ibid., pp. 21-24.] For example, in stories like Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, being indifferent to her duties due to the loss of her daughter, and the three goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite arguing endlessly over their beauty, people endow the "gods" with their own emotional aspects and emphasize the value of the individual. During the Middle Ages, the prosperity of Western theology immersed art and aesthetics in it, adding a layer of idealistic mystery to art. However, no matter how much emotional experience is applied in space, resulting in widely varying

temperaments and atmospheres, myths have always been an indispensable part of both Eastern and Western cultures, existing in the daily lives and even consumption activities of the public. As an integral part of culture, when people construct myths, they are also consuming myths, but the patterns presented are different in different eras. In modern times, consumption is inevitably a term closely associated with economic and commodity exchange behaviors. But at the same time, it also refers to the autonomous activity of consciously consuming and using a certain object. It can be said that in order to satisfy their inner desires, people are constantly "consuming" the things around them. This is a spontaneous and innate instinct that cannot be suppressed. From the air we breathe and the food we eat to the culture that satisfies our spirit, it is undoubtedly all a process of consumption. Similarly, in ancient times, people's "consumption" of myths mostly came from the worship of beliefs and gods, which is also a manifestation of the "worship value" of myths. This manifestation is reflected in everything from the mural images painted in palaces, temples, folk houses, Buddhist temples, Taoist temples, and grotto tombs, to the use of statues of immortals and Buddhist figures and folk belief artworks. All these are manifestations of people's application of myths through "image symbols". The story content in myths is expressed as symbols. And symbols are expressions of meaning. Through the presentation of images, they are present in a certain context, enabling the people who worship to feel the sacred atmosphere that is released from the symbols and contains a sense of distant respect and lingers around them, thus generating a sense of reverence and enabling the worship value of myths to be effectively exerted. And this defined atmosphere hovering around people, when they absorb and feel it, is the manifestation of the "aura". From the perspective of the aura described by Benjamin, it is something that can flow into space and be felt through one's own experience, combining the natural and the physical. When people are aware of the presence of the aura, they will "absorb the spiritual energy into their own situational feelings (Befindlichkeit), and the uncertain feeling qualities (Gefühlsqualität) that flow into the perceived space"

[Gernot Böhme, **Atmospheric Aesthetics**, translated by Jia Hongyu. China Social Sciences Press, April 2018, p. 36.] as the generation of the atmosphere. And when people come into contact with the objective representations of myths, the qualities they feel are the spiritual perceptions triggered by the "aura" and the "needs" obtained through the "*consumption*" of myths. Take, for example, the murals in the Han Dynasty tombs depicting the divine beings and immortal beasts in the celestial realm in myths, as well as the remaining painted bricks and stone reliefs. The murals found on the ceiling of the Bu Qianqiu tomb in Luoyang, Henan Province, China (Figure 3) depict a group of continuous and imaginative horizontal long scenes. From the perspective of the picture, as marked by the serial numbers from right to left and from top to bottom (in the order from the inside to the outside of the flat ridge of the tomb ceiling), the images painted in sequence are all patterns of immortals and cloud beasts that appear in mythological legends. There are yellow snakes, the Golden Crow and the sun disc, Fuxi with a human head and a snake body, the tomb owner and his wife riding on a dragon and a phoenix, the Jade Rabbit, immortals, the White Tiger, the Vermilion Bird, Feilian, the Azure Dragon, the feathered man holding a scepter, the toad and the moon disc, Nuwa, and the curling and flowing cloud patterns painted around.

¹These elements together form a vivid story scene of the tomb owner ascending to the celestial realm after death. In addition to playing a decorative role for the tomb, it also vividly conveys the Han people's imagination of the celestial realm, their attitudes towards the cosmic world, the relationship between humans and gods, and the concept of yin and yang, as well as other deeper symbolic meanings.

¹ [Huang Peixian. "On the Functions of the Murals in the Han Dynasty Tombs", published in *Studies on the Art of Ancient Tombs*, Volume 1. Cultural Relics Press, Beijing, 2011, p. 42.]

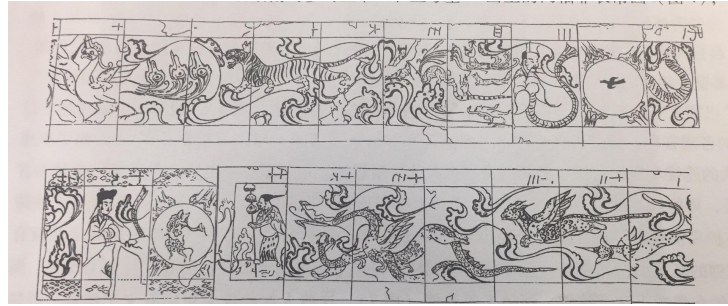


Figure 3. Line Drawing of the Ceiling Mural in the Bu Qianqiu Tomb in Luoyang, Henan Province, China

(Image source: Huang Peixian. "On the Functions of the Murals in Han Dynasty Tombs," published in **Studies on the Art of Ancient Tombs**, Volume 1, Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 2011, p. 42.)

The images of the main yin-yang deities in the tomb, who hold aloft the sun and moon discs while encircled by swirling clouds, establish a clear, orderly structure for the Han people's celestial cosmology—despite their flat, planar composition. The spiraling cloud motifs, four directional spirit beasts intertwined with dragon patterns symbolizing spatial orientation, and ethereal feathered immortals vividly reflect Han reverence for life's endurance and their longing for the joyous, illusory atmosphere of the divine realm. This also embodies the Han philosophical principle inscribed in these artworks: "Harmonizing yin-yang, emulating heaven-earth, transforming all things, governing mortal existence" ¹.

Though primarily intended for the deceased tomb occupant, the murals' integration into the tomb's spatial container inherently constructs a fantasy of celestial transcendence. When archaeologists later unearthed these buried artworks and displayed them in museums, their cultural aura traverses temporal and spatial barriers to engage viewers in silent dialogue. Each observer, shaped by personal perspective, encounters a unique "realm": "Realms born from varied hearts are neither past nor present, yet surpass mundane reality. Thus, mountains and rivers reveal their spirituality through me, their voice channeled by my consciousness" ². As subjective perception molds the scene, Benjamin's "aura"

1 [He Xilin. "An Examination of the Main Yin-Yang Deities in Han Dynasty Paintings," in the same volume as cited earlier, p. 127][He Xilin. "An Examination of the Main Yin-Yang Deities in Han Dynasty Paintings," in the same volume as cited earlier, p. 127]

2 [Wang Guowei. *Remarks on Ci Poetry in the Human World*, Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore, March

materializes instantaneously — a testament to myth's enduring power to bridge epochs.

Section 2.3 Value Embodiment and Application of Myth in Artworks

Naturally, apart from mural images, when various carriers with religious beliefs, such as statues, New Year paintings, and other media, are placed on the display shelves in museums or other venues as artworks, their inherent sacredness related to religious beliefs at the beginning, the authenticity closely associated with the creators and the era, and the untouchable distance maintained between them and the viewers start to expand and extend into the external space and society with the transformation of space, time, and even the viewing attitude. When the functional objects with the nature of "myths" gradually lose their original practical functions for which they were created and detach from their sacrificial or ritual functions, evolving into pure artworks, the aesthetic judgment made by the viewers at this moment makes their aesthetic value more obvious than their original worship value. The "myths" embedded in the artworks more or less satisfy people's spiritual or material needs. Although they have become objects for pure appreciation after hundreds or thousands of years, the mist of history and traces surrounding them over time still enables those who stop to admire them to experience a certain inapproachable spiritual atmosphere, evoking feelings of awe and admiration. At this moment, the "beauty" in artworks begins to separate and become independent from the practical application of religion. During the Western Renaissance, humanism was carried forward, and human individuality was liberated. Art started to be associated with the upper class and also became a way to improve people's self-cultivation. Later, artists were labeled with words like "genius," "creation," and "talent," and were recognized by people. Thus, they were no longer just the "makers" of artworks. In Plato's view, the "inspiration" of artists is that after a person's death, the soul

ascends to the sky, receives the care of the divine realm, and then attaches to the body again, carrying "recollections," that is, the attachment of the "recollections of the soul," which has a mysterious nature inherited from Greek myths. However, Hegel broke this mysterious color and regarded inspiration from a dialectical perspective. He believed that inspiration is a comprehensive entity bred by the integration of the external objective reality and the unconsciousness of one's own emotional sensibility. With the continuous definition of the word "inspiration," the attribution of these terms to artists, and the "independence" of art, artworks began to gradually detach from daily life and create a gap with the common people. Therefore, art is no longer just a matter of subjective intention but has become an object of judgment and aesthetic appreciation for people. American anthropologist Robert Redfield, based on the hierarchical structure of human civilization with the "wise elite and the ignorant common people," divided culture into the "great tradition" that can be written and mastered by the upper class and the educated, and the "little tradition" that is orally passed down in lower-level towns and villages.¹ This also corresponds to the highbrow and lowbrow cultures, the refined and the popular cultures. At this time, art gradually takes on the tone of "elite culture." But at the same time, the sacrificial utensils that have been transformed into artworks step down from the altar, and their functions and values change. Artists begin to infuse their own intended consciousness into artworks, completing emotional participation, and the audience also gains their own experiences through viewing the works.² Through the communication of artworks and the presence of the viewers, they can feel the aura in art.

Although art is no longer related to the "worship value" associated with religious beliefs, it has stepped onto the ladder of "aesthetic value," possessing its unique authenticity and irreplaceability. At this time, the aura attached to the artworks has not disappeared yet, but it has shifted from the perspective of

¹ Ye Shuxian. "The Great Tradition and the Little Tradition of Chinese Culture," Guangming Daily, August 3, 2012, Page 15

² Gernot Böhme. *Atmospheric Aesthetics*, translated by Jia Hongyu. China Social Sciences Press, April 2018, pp. 55–57

"sacredness" to the stance of being appreciated and viewed. Therefore, on the ladder of art's trend towards aesthetic functions, myths are reconstructed and become a way for people to understand the world, experience common experiences, and comprehend their own meanings. Just as Clive Bell said, they are "significant forms" that can stimulate people's aesthetic emotions and are higher than daily life. Art with an aura is Benjamin's judgment on the aesthetic value of classical art in the pre-capitalist era. Before the era of mechanical reproduction technology, the "aura" contained in original classic artworks is a metaphor that can be intuitively felt without interpretation when one holds one's breath and concentrates; it is what Chinese classical aesthetics calls "qiyun" (the rhythm of vitality); it is the "theory of stillness and emptiness" in the thoughts of Laozi and Zhuangzi; and it is also the artistic conception in the words written by Xin Qiji of the Southern Song Dynasty, "I find the green mountains most charming, and I expect the green mountains to see me in the same way." The aura "establishes the connection between things that are far apart physically" [Hannah Arendt (ed.). **Illuminations: Essays and Reflections by Walter Benjamin**, translated by Zhang Xudong. SDX Joint Publishing Company, September 2008, p. 33], and it is "a way to poetically present the unity of the world"¹. It makes the invisible things be presented before people's eyes through substitution and become experiences. These classical arts, including drama, music, painting, and other categories, have been passed down and praised by later generations, possessing unique functions and aesthetic characteristics in the society at that time. When the functions of myths are integrated into art, myths become a coexisting entity of substantial cultural value and aesthetic value. People can experience the "spiritual charm and artistic conception" of the works themselves through "contemplation," achieving the state of "grasping the essence and transcending the appearance." This is also similar to the realm of the unity of man and nature. When myths become symbols attached to artworks and are auctioned, or placed in expositions for trading as commodities, and are involved

¹Ibid.

in the economic field and enter the space construction system, the culture of myths takes on a display significance. It is divided into the upper and lower reaches, heading towards the exhibition venues in the world and among the people respectively, becoming a readable industrial trend, which is exactly the manifestation of the industrialization of art. Art thus begins to create a mythical kingdom of consumption. Take the relevant data records of the world art auctions in 2017 as an example: Throughout 2017, the global art auction volume reached 14.9 billion US dollars. Compared with the previous year, the global auction volume increased by 20 percentage points. Moreover, the number of countries participating in the art market increased from 34 to 59 compared with previous years.¹ And the turnover of the world's top five art markets all showed an upward trend, as shown in Figure 4:

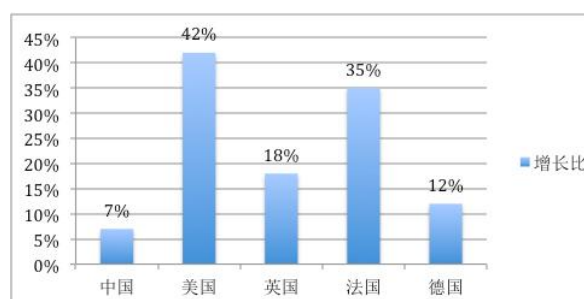


Figure 4. Growth Comparison of Turnovers in the World's Top Five Markets

(Image source: Drawn based on the data from "Looking at Art Auctions from Big Data: A Summary of the Data of the Auction Market in 2017", Sina K [4. Image source: Ibid.])

From the above data, the consumption and auction of artworks are on the rise, indicating that people's desire to access art is growing day by day, and the collection value of artworks has driven the upward growth of market transactions. Walter Benjamin stated: "The world's fairs established the reign of commodities. Grandville's (a French political cartoonist and writer) dreams propagated the

¹Datasource:http://k.sina.com.cn/article_6437475712_17fb415800010051vh.html?cre=techpagepc&mod=f&loc=5&r=9&doct=0&rfunc=100

character of commodities throughout the universe, modernizing it." ¹In the space of "world expositions," artworks transform into commodities revered by consumers, fully embodying their exchange value. This shifts the cultural capital embedded in myths into economic capital. Mythic cultural capital exists as an intangible symbolic form, materialized and consumed through symbols. These carriers include artworks, antiques, calligraphy, paintings, and other handicrafts. Their value lies in aesthetic appreciation, collectibility, and investment potential—like the *Venus de Milo* displayed in the Louvre. Originally crafted as a Greek-Roman symbol of love and beauty (Aphrodite), this statue once derived its "aura" from ritualistic veneration. Today, visitors are drawn not by mythic devotion but by the artwork's intrinsic beauty and historical resonance—storied layers of culture and custom preserved over time. Within museum settings steeped in historical atmosphere, viewers experience a paradoxical blend of immediacy and temporal distance. The desire to witness this "aura" and engage in its silent dialogue drives people to purchase museum tickets, transforming mythic cultural value into economic value. Myths evolve from ethereal divine narratives into self-contained "myths" of the artworks themselves. As Jean Baudrillard argued, consumption itself is a myth. Its allure lies in "exploiting change and history — much like how consumption appropriates historical and material realities through symbolic transformations. It offers a phantasm of the world and a quest for 'agitated' happiness within the enclosure of daily life" ². In bustling marketplaces, priced commodities become mythic entities: *"Our shopping malls are our pantheons, our Hells."*³ Here, people consume and venerate. In the realm of commodification, myths adapt — their elements repurposed but never absent. The "aura" of art, once tied to ritual, now manifests as a performative spectacle. Exhibited in curated spaces, its narrative and visual

¹ Benjamin, W. **The Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism**, translated by Zhang Xudong & Wei Wensheng. SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1989, pp. 185–189.

² Baudrillard, J. **The Consumer Society**, translated by Liu Chengfu & Quan Zhigang. Nanjing University Press, October 2000, pp. 8–9

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7

potency expand, luring audiences through consumption while maintaining an untouchable mystique.

Chapter 3 The Dissipation of Aura: Value Transformation of Myth in the "Mechanical-Digital" Reproduction Era

Section 3.1 The Mechanical Reproduction Era: Causes of Aura's Dissipation

Until capitalism, the era of the "mechanical reproduction age" in the industrial society as described by Benjamin was ushered in. In the context where artworks can be mass - produced, their "aura" begins to fade, the immediate and local authenticity no longer exists, and art gradually becomes closer to the public. However, this also means that culture, technology, and industry combine and interact with each other, setting the stage for a new industrial structure. In 1940, the Frankfurt School put forward the concept of "cultural industry" and criticized it, especially targeting American popular culture. They believed that artworks were mass - produced through reproduction technology and became commodities under the catalysis of the market, which actually annihilated individuality. In the mass culture of a commercial society, decorated by the allure of star entertainment and advertising dissemination, those so - called "entertainment industries" and "recreational industries" with unique features and popularity are actually the totalitarianism of advertising violence. This blinds the public with false liberation of individuality, eliminates the individuality of the masses, and makes the entire social ideology more uniform and flat. In the view of Adorno, a representative figure of the Frankfurt School, artworks in the "cultural industry" are all commodities formed by the interweaving of economy and technology, accompanied by the drawbacks of mechanical reproduction. They are "purposeful" cultural innovations and a large - scale, standardized production method.¹ Therefore, he strongly criticized the form of cultural

¹ Yao Wenfang. "Symptomatic Reading of the Frankfurt School's Critique of Mass Culture", Journal of Tsinghua University, April 2016 (Vol. 31), pp. 90 - 91.

consumption in the entire society under the influence of technology, believing that the totality of capitalism is no different from fascism, both of which annihilate different individuals and integrate them into one form. The public is attracted and confused by uniformly packaged commodities or other similarly structured and deliberately arranged social entertainment activities, and then becomes a member of fetishism. They ignore the breakthroughs brought by the technological innovation of the "cultural industry" to the development of contemporary cultural and artistic industries, as well as the positive role played by consumers' participation. They also distinguish "mass culture" from "cultural industry", but it is undeniable that the cultural commodities produced by industrial machinery have led to the transformation from elite culture to mass culture, meeting the public's need for culture and their desire to approach it.¹ In contrast to the extremely negative attitude towards the cultural industry held by Adorno and other members of the school, Benjamin, while criticizing, put forward a different view - that is, he recognized the breakthrough made by technical reproduction in the dissemination of mass culture. He noticed that "the fragmented truths discovered in specific fields present a false appearance through the construction of a supposed causal manner."²In this field full of "falsehood", people's demand for and worship of entertainment materials have led to the decline of the "aura" of traditional art. However, he also believed that this is the result of the growing admiration for beauty and the increasingly strong desire of the public to possess and approach "aura - endowed" artworks since the Renaissance. The emergence of mass culture is inseparable from people's strong desire to find the perfect presentation of things around them. Therefore, the redemption of art needs to be explored in the "mechanical reproduction technology" that can be stored in the developed industrial age. The dissipation of the "aura" is because the mechanical reproduction technology enables the mass reproduction of artworks, which, while eliminating their eternal value, also separates them from their ritual functions.

1 Xiang Yong. Introduction to Cultural Industry, Beijing: Peking University Press, February 2015, p. 145.

2 Zhu Ningjia. Art and Redemption: A Study of Benjamin's Art Theory, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 34.

People's visual perception has also changed as a result. If a pure counterfeit replicated by hand by the manufacturer is just a copycat behavior of the artwork and happens to achieve the integrity of the original, then mechanical reproduction is that the copy shows the public a new perspective of the original that cannot be seen with the naked eye through the language of replication. At the same time, it takes the original out of the fixed and immovable area and into the circle of people's real life, making the work lose its lofty and inaccessible halo. Since the invention and application of the printing technology of written language marked the starting point of world cultural dissemination, the cultural industry has emerged and developed, promoting the development of the production and printing industries. Electronic imaging and other media products, in the form of new media, have expanded and extended people's five - sense experience methods, quietly moving the public from the real world to the fantasy world of mass media dominated by the senses, belonging to radio, film, and television. Opera and music that could only be seen in the theater originally can now be enjoyed anytime and anywhere in any restaurant, tavern, or even at home through a phonograph. Stories, poems, or news that only circulated orally or in hand - copied books can now be printed and appear on paper, within everyone's reach.

Taking myths and legends as an example, their most primitive way of transmission in both China and the West is to be spread among the people accompanied by poetry or stored in biographies in historical libraries. However, after the emergence of printing and replication technology, they have been compiled into picture - books and become books and periodicals that can be sold on the market for civilians to read and entertain themselves in their spare time and understand culture. At this time, the sense of sacredness that mythological stories bring in people's minds begins to fade away, and they become popular stories full of magical fantasies in real words on paper, seemingly becoming closer to people's daily lives. This means that the printing and replication technology is quietly changing the way the public accepts things and also starting to change the industrial structure in social and economic life.

Especially since the founding of the People's Republic of China, as a cultural and artistic theme, there are numerous categories of comic books about myths published, which is due to the development of the country's politics and economy, as well as the public's need for visual culture. The following is the statistical table of the publication information of comic books about mythological and supernatural stories in two periods after the founding of the People's Republic of China by Tianjin People's Fine Arts Publishing House (Figure 5). The first period is from the mid - 1950s to the early 1960s, when supernatural comic books initially began to develop. The second period is from the late 1970s to the mid - 1980s. After the end of the "Cultural Revolution", comic books experienced a period of stagnation. After the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, they revived in the publishing industry and developed.

篇 目	编 者		绘 者		印数 (千册)		价格 (元)	
	第一时期	第二时期	第一时期	第二时期	第一时期	第二时期	第一时期	第二时期
宫梦弼	良 玉	曹作锐	王胤等	孙昌茵	110.1	651	0.20	0.14
嫦娥	王昌定	白 藻	逢 真	牛双印	143.1	491	0.22	0.14
鸽 异	林 彦	林 彦	逢 真	陈冬至	104.1	580	0.11	0.11
青 娥	杨 厚	荆 予	汪玉山 范志泉	张晓飞	91.1	1341	0.18	0.13
庚 娘	王昌定	王 君	汤义方	陈惠冠	110.1	600	0.19	0.13
仙人岛	王昌定	王 君	张 玮	张 玮	101.6	1000	0.15	0.10
小 谢	小 戈	小 戈	张令清 胡若佛	张令清 胡若佛	80.1	1000	0.20	0.13
细 柳	吴廷琯	定 兴	逢 真	湛孝安 施大畏	108.1	931	0.17	0.11
辛十 四娘	林 彦	林 彦	张令清 胡若佛	张令清 胡若佛	110.1	1000	0.19	0.13
黄 英	杨 淼	杨 淼	张锡武	张锡武	110.1	1000	0.17	0.17
翩翩	鹿 端	龚家玉	孙 信	季源业	95.1	1331	0.15	0.11
神 女	冯玉昆	冯玉昆	陈永智	叶永森	100.0	1000	0.18	0.12
素 秋	小 琴	辛 冰	江栋良	陈惠冠 陈 都	100.0	971	0.15	0.13
续黄梁	张国贤	张国贤	蒋 平	刘锡朋等	70.0	377	0.17	0.12
赛 女	王昌定	王 君	刘傅业	谢志高	100.0	460	0.16	0.13
画 壁	丁 元	丁 元	黄子希	黄子希	10.0	1000	0.11	0.08
鸦 头	林 珂	陈元宁	逢 真	王丽铭	70.0	932	0.19	0.13

Figure 5. Comparison of Selected Republished Titles of Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio (Liaozhai)

Comics by Tianjin People's Fine Arts Publishing House in Two Periods

From the table above, the print runs of comics in the second period increased by several to dozens of times compared to the first period, yet prices generally dropped significantly. In the first period, the cheapest titles Pigeon

Strangeness (《鸽昇》) and Painted Wall (《画壁》) were priced above 0.1 yuan, with the highest Chang'e (《嫦娥》) at 0.22 yuan. In the second period, the priciest Yellow Petunia (《黄英》) was only 0.17 yuan, while the cheapest Painted Wall plummeted to 0.08 yuan. The author attributes this fluctuation to three factors:

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Model (Figure 6): Post-social upheaval, China's unstable economy left the public's basic physiological and safety needs unmet, reducing demand for higher-level self-actualization and cultural enrichment.

Market Saturation: Reprinting similar titles in large quantities diminished public interest. As non-essential cultural commodities, comics faced oversupply and marginal effects, leading to price drops. Their non-essential, volatile, and diverse nature, combined with excess supply, eroded pricing power.

Media Disruption: The 1980s cultural renaissance coincided with the rise of radio/TV, shifting visual preferences to moving images. Some comics even reused film stills. Meanwhile, younger audiences embraced Japanese, Korean, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and Western comics with modern styles, surpassing traditional Chinese comic book. The publishing industry's failure to adapt (e.g., innovation, regulation) and objective factors like rapid media technology advancements further shrank the market¹.

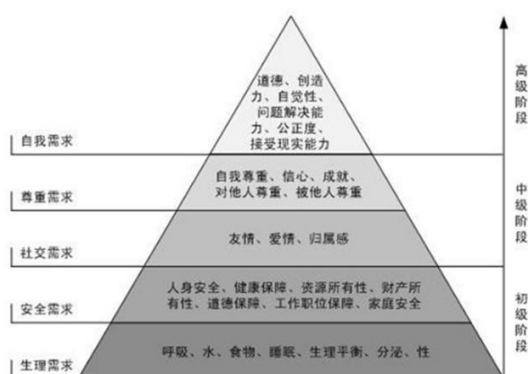


Figure 6. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Model

¹ Fu Yanzhi. "Retrospect and Prospect of Liaozhai Comics Publishing Since the Founding of New China," in Documentary Materials, December 10, 2004, p. 125.

(Image source: Baidu Images)

[.BaiduImages:

Benjamin took photography and film as examples to explain the turbulent impact of mechanical reproduction on traditional art, as well as the reasons and situations for the renewal and iterative changes of the industry. Through the camera lens, photography technology can capture the details and angles of things that people cannot see or observe with the naked eye. It can also infinitely replicate the same photo, making it lose the significance of distinguishing "original authenticity". The emergence of film has changed the way the public perceives life. Through dynamic and complex visual sensory stimulation, it has brought the public new aesthetic experiences and ways of "touching" art.

Moreover, regarding film images, the thinker Roland Barthes' theoretical research on "image rhetoric" holds that images are the encoding of language narratives. After World War II, with the development and popularization of communication media, images have become an important medium, playing a dominant role in it. This has enabled mass culture to take root in society and become a new driving force, influencing the public's perception of consumption and brands. Social ideology and symbols are embedded in it. Through the "encoding" and "rhetoric" of images, their timeliness of existence is concealed,

thus making them perpetually present.¹ Images cover up the "truth" of history in a more natural and lasting form, making the public indulge in a "mythologized" symbol system and reach a state of joy. At this time, myth has shed its outer garment as the content of story narration and has become a set of procedures or a certain way of constructing meaning, becoming the "revelation of past real things", just like "magic". It is just like the "stadium" of each frame in the video. Producers openly show their intentions and construct a fantasy world in which the audience can immerse themselves. People search for different "punctum" that can touch them and are hidden in this world, penetrating the real social life. "The Calligraphy Styles of Four Scripts" once recorded, "In ancient times, during the reign of the Yellow Emperor, things were created. There were Ju Song and Cang Jie who first made written symbols to replace the knot-tying records. It was probably inspired by observing the traces of birds...

The second is pictography, such as the sun and the moon; the third is pictophonetic characters, such as rivers and seas... For pictography, it is to imitate the shapes of the full moon and the waning moon; for pictophonetic characters, they use categories as shapes and match them with sounds." [Wei Heng of the Jin Dynasty, "The Calligraphy Styles of Four Scripts" // Also cited in: Zhang Xiaodi, "A Poetic sExploration of Chinese Contemporary Video Art from Benjamin's 'Aura'", Central Academy of Fine Arts, p. 25.] In ancient times, people observed "images" with their eyes and listened to "sounds" with their ears to understand the surrounding things, perceive the changes in the world and give them forms. With the advancement of mechanical reproduction technology, "audio-visual images" have played a direct leading role in the "impact" on vision between the camera lens and the huge screen, and have woven symbols into social and economic activities. This means that culture, as capital, has been integrated into the public's consumption behavior, playing the role of a

¹ Wu Qiong, "The Zero Degree of Images: Roland Barthes' Reading of Images", published in *Journal of Renmin University of China*, 2015, Issue 4, p. 3.

commodity, and its own aura has faded in the economic life of mass culture. Under the research of scholars on the neoclassical consumption behavior theory and the new consumption behavior theory in mass cultural consumption, what they are most concerned about are the price of goods, consumers' preference tendencies, and income as the three main factors influencing the public's cultural consumption, as well as the utility exerted by goods under their multiple characteristics.

The actual maximum economic utility and the maximum consumer surplus value are generated when these two aspects are integrated and brought closer to each other. However, the reaction of cultural capital, which is closely related to the form of cultural consumption, to consumption and the relationship between consumer preferences and it have not received attention and emphasis.

Therefore, under the neoclassical consumption theory that only cares about price and income at this time, cultural products are actually still treated as ordinary commodities. As a result, when the public is attracted by the charm of commodities mass-produced through industrialization and replication technologies such as photography, those so-called "original works" and "real scenes" begin to be integrated into the public and become part of industrial activities, and the mythical aura originally belonging to them fades away. The public's exposure to mythological stories has shifted from the genre of picture-story books to the image projection on the movie screen. This has also contributed to the emergence of the "media culture" during the industrial production period in the 1950s and 1960s.

For example, in the 1920s, the rapid development of the film industry represented by Hollywood in the West led to a global film trend. China took a vigilant stance and began to fully utilize traditional literary themes and cultural resources to produce a series of films of mythological, martial arts and other

types, and strived to maximize commercial interests, which in turn led to the first climax of commercial films in China. ¹Take the silent film *The Cave of the Silken Web* produced by Shanghai Film Company in 1927 as an example.

With the mythical novel *Journey to the West* as the background, after its release, the net profit of the box office reached 50,000 yuan. Calculated based on the living expenses of 30 yuan required by an ordinary family at that time, the figure was quite impressive. Before the film was screened, the journal *Shanghai*, which was edited and published by Shanghai Film Company and focused on film and television discussions (see Figure 7), in its fourth issue in April 1927, used a large amount of space to promote the film. Moreover, the magazine cover was printed in color for the first time, and the opening article's length was twice that of previous issues. According to the records, "It led the upsurge of shooting supernatural films at that time... and became a model of supernatural-themed works in the 1920s... According to statistics, in less than four years from 1926 to 1929, nearly thirty films related to *Journey to the West* were shot."²

According to the description in the documents recording this film, the film's "superb artistic conception and integration of painting into the film" on the shooting screen makes the audience feel a visual feast of "life is like a dream and a bubble". Benjamin took photography and film as examples to explain the turbulent impact of mechanical reproduction on traditional art, as well as the reasons and situations for the renewal and iterative changes of the industry. Through the camera lens, photography technology can capture the details and angles of things that people cannot see or observe with the naked eye. It can also infinitely replicate the same photo, making it lose the significance of distinguishing "original authenticity". The emergence of film has changed the way the public perceives life. Through dynamic and complex visual sensory

1 Wei Chenjie, "A Perspective on *The Cave of the Silken Web*: The Interaction between Chinese Films in the 1920s and Traditional Print Media", published in *Contemporary Cinema*, pp. 164-165.

2 Data source: http://m.look.360.cn/transcoding?sign=360_e39369d1&url=98f8ae7efe707afde

stimulation, it has brought the public new aesthetic experiences and ways of "touching" art.

Moreover, regarding film images, the thinker Roland Barthes' theoretical research on "image rhetoric" holds that images are the encoding of language narratives. After World War II, with the development and popularization of communication media, images have become an important medium, playing a dominant role in it. This has enabled mass culture to take root in society and become a new driving force, influencing the public's perception of consumption and brands. Social ideology and symbols are embedded in it. Through the "encoding" and "rhetoric" of images, their timeliness of existence is concealed, thus making them perpetually present.¹ Images cover up the "truth" of history in a more natural and lasting form, making the public indulge in a "mythologized" symbol system and reach a state of joy. At this time, myth has shed its outer garment as the content of story narration and has become a set of procedures or a certain way of constructing meaning, becoming the "revelation of past real things", just like "magic". It is just like the "stadium" of each frame in the video. Producers openly show their intentions and construct a fantasy world in which the audience can immerse themselves.

People search for different "punctum" that can touch them and are hidden in this world, penetrating the real social life. *"The Calligraphy Styles of Four Scripts"* once recorded, "In ancient times, during the reign of the Yellow Emperor, things were created. There were Ju Song and Cang Jie who first made written symbols to replace the knot-tying records. It was probably inspired by observing the traces of birds... The second is pictography, such as the sun and the moon; the third is pictophonetic characters, such as rivers and seas... For pictography, it is to imitate the shapes of the full moon and the waning moon; for pictophonetic

1 Wu Qiong, "The Zero Degree of Images: Roland Barthes' Reading of Images", published in **Journal of Renmin University of China**, 2015, Issue 4, p. 3.

characters, they use categories as shapes and match them with sounds." [Wei Heng of the Jin Dynasty, "The Calligraphy Styles of Four Scripts"]

Also cited in: Zhang Xiaodi, "A Poetic Exploration of Chinese Contemporary Video Art from Benjamin's 'Aura'", Central Academy of Fine Arts, p. 25. In ancient times, people observed "images" with their eyes and listened to "sounds" with their ears to understand the surrounding things, perceive the changes in the world and give them forms. With the advancement of mechanical reproduction technology, "audio-visual images" have played a direct leading role in the "impact" on vision between the camera lens and the huge screen, and have woven symbols into social and economic activities. This means that culture, as capital, has been integrated into the public's consumption behavior, playing the role of a commodity, and its own aura has faded in the economic life of mass culture. Under the research of scholars on the neoclassical consumption behavior theory and the new consumption behavior theory in mass cultural consumption, what they are most concerned about are the price of goods, consumers' preference tendencies, and income as the three main factors influencing the public's cultural consumption, as well as the utility exerted by goods under their multiple characteristics. The actual maximum economic utility and the maximum consumer surplus value are generated when these two aspects are integrated and brought closer to each other.

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integration of painting into the film" on the shooting screen makes the audience feel a visual feast of "Life is but a dream, illusion, bubble, shadow"



Figure 7. Cover of the April 1927 Issue of *Shanghai* Magazine, "The Cave of the Silken Web" Special Issue

(Image source: Xue Ning. "Overview of the Literary and Pictorial Historical Materials of *The Cave of the Silken Web*", published in *Rewriting Film History*, 2014, pp. 73 - 75.)

http://m.look.360.cn/transcoding?sign=360_e39369d1&url=98f8ae7efe707afde

From the above materials, it is clear that in the 1920s, with the combination of traditional Chinese printing and replication technology and film technology, the two interacted and promoted the development of the film industry, which in turn drove economic growth. The disappearance of the "aura" in art has enabled art to promote the growth and dissemination of social, economic and cultural aspects through mass media and mass consumption. Since then, myths have been separated from the dichotomy of "divinity" and "vulgarity". Through the medium of images, national literature that existed in the ideological and two-dimensional world has been brought into a vivid and tangible visual experience world. The

complementary explanations of the film's pictures and texts in the promotional periodicals have generated anticipation for the audience to watch the film.

Coupled with the dazzling visual effects of the film itself, it has greatly satisfied the curiosity hidden in the public's unconsciousness and liberated the imagination about supernatural and surreal creatures that was imprisoned in their minds.¹ At the same time, it has also brought rich extensions to the public's sensory experience in cultural consumption and expanded the spatial structure of the experience economy in society and the way of spreading social and cultural ideas. Still from the perspective of the public's film consumption, according to the film market consumption report for the first three quarters of 2018, the number of moviegoers in China exceeded that in North America by more than 400 million (see Figure 8). Moreover, compared with 2014, the proportion of films with medium or higher costs increased by 4 percentage points, and the box office revenue increased by 690 million yuan. Such high investment costs have laid the foundation for the industrialization of films and promoted the expansion of film production scale.²

With the continuous development of China's economy, people's consumption ability has been continuously enhanced, and the quality of their living standards has also improved. The public's demand for spiritual and cultural products is gradually expanding, which has stimulated consumers' interest in visual communication media. The combination of various industrialized media

1 Wei Chenjie. "A Perspective on *The Cave of the Silken Web*: The Interaction between Chinese Films in the 1920s and Traditional Print Media", published in *Contemporary Cinema*, pp. 164-165.

2 Data source:

[https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzA4OTA1MTYyMQ==&mid=2247495002&idx=1&sn=ebbc26c0c9872053136ddd518eec27b6&chksm=902275d0a755fcc6bde091a59b20afec199c49457868a19a76b6a6f595e7cea1b0e6d782348b&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=1207smWHUVQFpcBPUEZUVHBP&key=1f80b43a638a86d46e924640892b3e23bf9628e09d1859fa1947c40d7b3803b8b599dbfe08502ce9ee91bfb09ba2958d28f2fad76db675840a5227d27b3b78ea318034f16c6d179e1fc02cafd0de05b5&ascene=0&uin=MTQzMdI2Njc0MA%3D%3D&devicetype=iMac+MacBookAir3%2C2+OSX+OSX+10.10.5+build\(14F2511\)&version=11000006&lang=zh_CN&pass_ticket=ppLn0hE06cTM%2FjDtI1Q1CH4Mjok8abOkZQPWLSsQA9aZNLpgnb%2B0D75%2B1Br%2Bpye](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzA4OTA1MTYyMQ==&mid=2247495002&idx=1&sn=ebbc26c0c9872053136ddd518eec27b6&chksm=902275d0a755fcc6bde091a59b20afec199c49457868a19a76b6a6f595e7cea1b0e6d782348b&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=1207smWHUVQFpcBPUEZUVHBP&key=1f80b43a638a86d46e924640892b3e23bf9628e09d1859fa1947c40d7b3803b8b599dbfe08502ce9ee91bfb09ba2958d28f2fad76db675840a5227d27b3b78ea318034f16c6d179e1fc02cafd0de05b5&ascene=0&uin=MTQzMdI2Njc0MA%3D%3D&devicetype=iMac+MacBookAir3%2C2+OSX+OSX+10.10.5+build(14F2511)&version=11000006&lang=zh_CN&pass_ticket=ppLn0hE06cTM%2FjDtI1Q1CH4Mjok8abOkZQPWLSsQA9aZNLpgnb%2B0D75%2B1Br%2Bpye)

technologies and the transformation of cultural resources into cultural capital have provided the public with more consumption choices.

Consumption has also promoted the level of industrial cultural production, further meeting the needs of the public's social and cultural life. At the same time, mechanical replication technology has broken down the small circle of elite culture and brought it onto the stage of mass culture.

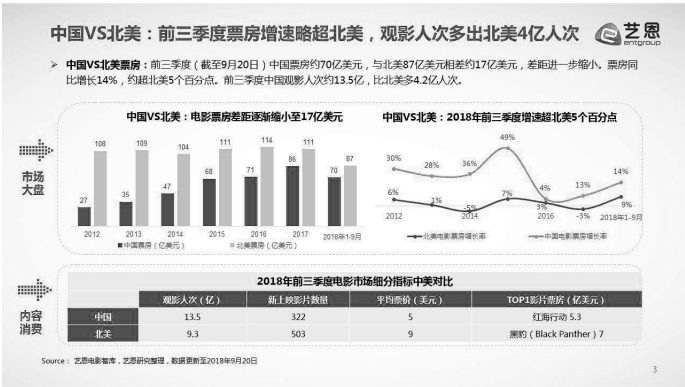


Figure 8. Comparison of Box Office Revenue between China and North America in the First Three Quarters of 2018 (Image source: EntGroup Data [Data source: Ibid.]

Judging from the global box office rankings of movies up to 2016 (Figure 9), apart from *Furious 7** ranked fifth and *Titanic** ranked second, the remaining 18 movies are, to varying degrees, mainly themed around fantasy, mythology, and science fiction. Looking at the box office of Chinese movies based on mythological themes (Figure 10), similar to the global rankings, movies with mythological story themes also account for a large proportion of the total box office and are relatively high in the rankings. Among them, *Monster Hunt*, which makes extensive use of elements from traditional Chinese supernatural themes, tops the list. There are three movies based on the supernatural novel *Journey to the West*, ranking 11th, 15th, and 17th respectively. It can be seen that in the industrial context, the development of Chinese commercial movies is gradually based on the creation of traditional mythological story elements, which serve as a relatively important support for the industry.

序号	片名	票房 (单位:百万美元)	序号	片名	票房 (单位:百万美元)
1	阿凡达	2 788.0	11	小黄人大眼萌	1 157.3
2	泰坦尼克号	2 186.8	12	变形金刚 3:月黑之时	1 123.8
3	侏罗纪世界	1 669.4	13	指环王:王者归来	1 119.9
4	复仇者联盟	1 519.6	14	007:天幕危机	1 108.6
5	速度与激情 7	1 515.0	15	变形金刚 4:绝迹重生	1 104.1
6	星球大战:原力的觉醒	1 512.7	16	蝙蝠侠:黑暗骑士崛起	1 084.9
7	复仇者联盟 2:奥创纪元	1 405.0	17	加勒比海盗:聚魂棺	1 066.2
8	哈利波特与死亡圣器(下)	1 341.5	18	玩具总动员 3	1 063.2
9	冰雪奇缘	1 276.5	19	加勒比海盗:惊涛怪浪	1 045.7
10	钢铁侠 3	1 215.4	20	侏罗纪公园	1 029.2

Figure 9. Top 20 Global Box Office Movies (as of January 6, 2016) (Data source: Liu Fan, "Research on Contemporary Chinese Magic Martial Arts Films: Mythological Resources, Cultural Traditions and Secular Tastes", published in *Journal of Southwest University*, 2016, Volume 42, Issue 2, p. 130.)

However, it can also be seen that when it comes to movies with mythological and supernatural themes, Western fantasy blockbusters led by Hollywood still dominate in terms of popularity among the public. When the public engages in cultural consumption, apart from being attracted by the themes of products, they also value the plot content of the products themselves.

Taking the film industry as an example, compared with the novel, exciting, and conflict - filled plot designs in Hollywood movies, Chinese story content is relatively lacking in innovation. Most of them simply apply the original story with a little glamorous modification, lacking the kind of story experiences that can excite the public or offer "unexpected" twists. Blindly using Western story - telling techniques, such as the character design in Chen Kaige's *The Promise*, which was influenced by the Greek *Oedipus Rex*, although it drew on both Eastern and Western myths, led to an over - saturated and collapsed narrative effect. However, analyzing the box - office data of domestic myth - themed fantasy movies in China over the past decade (Figure 11), *Monster Hunt*, which ranked first in the domestic box - office as of 2016 and was based on the stories in *Shan Hai Jing* and *Zhai Yao*, and the *Painted Skin* series and *Painted Wall* in 2008

and 2012, which were based on **Strange Tales from a Lonely Studio**, show that the public still has high hopes for Chinese traditional "mythological stories". However, the less - than - optimistic ratings clearly indicate that the story content has not yet met the public's expectations. "The story" plays a crucial role in the development of today's cultural industry. This topic will be explained in the next chapter and will not be elaborated further here.

近十年中国奇幻电影票房过亿排序（票房数据截止2018年8月19日）

排序	影片名	票房（亿）	上映日期	类型	豆瓣评分
1	美人鱼	33.36	2016/2/8	喜剧、奇幻	6.7
2	捉妖记	24.4	2015/7/16	喜剧、奇幻、古装	6.7
3	捉妖记2	22.37	2015/12/18	喜剧、奇幻、古装	5
4	羞羞的铁拳	22.13	2017/9/30	喜剧、奇幻	6.9
5	寻龙诀	16.79	2015/12/18	动作、奇幻、冒险	7.5
6	西游伏魔篇	16.52	2017/1/28	喜剧、奇幻、动作	5.6
7	西游降魔篇	12.46	2013/2/10	喜剧、奇幻、冒险	7.1
8	西游记之打白骨精	11.98	2016/2/8	喜剧、奇幻、动作	5.6
9	长城	11.73	2016/12/16	奇幻、冒险	4.9
10	西游记之大闹天宫	10.44	2014/1/31	奇幻、动作	4.1
11	盗墓笔记	10.02	2016/8/5	惊悚、悬疑、奇幻	4.7
12	西游记之大圣归来	9.56	2015/7/10	动画、动作、奇幻	8.2
13	小时代同居	8.99	2018/5/18	喜剧、爱情、奇幻	6.9
14	西游记女儿国	7.27	2018/2/16	喜剧、爱情、奇幻	4.4
15	画皮2	7.02	2012/6/28	爱情、动作、奇幻	5.9
16	借尸还魂	6.96	2017/7/13	动作、奇幻	5.1
17	狄仁杰之四大天王	5.99	2018/7/27	动作、悬疑、奇幻	6.5
18	大鱼海棠	5.64	2016/7/8	动画、奇幻	6.6
19	三生三世十里桃花	5.34	2017/8/3	爱情、奇幻	3.9
20	妖猫传	5.3	2017/12/22	爱情、奇幻	6.9
21	钟馗伏魔：雪妖魔灵	4.04	2015/2/19	爱情、奇幻、动作	4.2
22	通灵下山	4	2015/7/3	喜剧、冒险、奇幻	5.4
23	白发魔女传之明月天国	3.39	2014/7/31	爱情、奇幻、武侠	3.7
24	爵迹	3.32	2016/9/30	奇幻、动作	3.8
25	大话西游3	3.65	2016/9/14	喜剧、爱情、奇幻	3.6
26	重返20岁	3.65	2015/1/8	喜剧、爱情、奇幻	7.2
27	万万没想到	3.22	2015/12/18	喜剧、奇幻	5.5
28	奇门遁甲	2.99	2017/12/14	喜剧、动作、奇幻	4.4
29	二代妖精之今生有幸	2.92	2017/12/29	喜剧、爱情、奇幻	5.5
30	轩辕剑奇	2.83	2016/7/29	动作、奇幻	2.9
31	画皮	2.32	2008/9/26	动作、惊悚、奇幻	6.5
32	解忧杂货店	2.23	2017/12/29	奇幻	5.1
33	长江七号	2.03	2008/1/30	喜剧、奇幻	6.4
34	白蛇传说	1.8	2011/9/28	爱情、动作、奇幻	4.7
35	大魔术师	1.73	2011/11/22	喜剧、爱情、奇幻	6.6
36	画壁	1.49	2011/9/29	奇幻、爱情、动作	4.5
37	冰封：重生之门	1.42	2014/4/25	喜剧、动作、奇幻	3.6
38	倩女幽魂	1.4	2011/4/19	奇幻、惊悚	5.3
39	十万个冷笑话2	1.33	2017/8/18	喜剧、动画、奇幻	7.2
40	镇魂圣盒	1.3	2010/3/18	喜剧、奇幻	5.2
41	28岁未成年	1.29	2016/12/9	喜剧、爱情、奇幻	5.6
42	快把我哥带走	1.28	2018/8/17	喜剧、奇幻	7.2
43	十万个冷笑话	1.19	2014/12/31	喜剧、动画、奇幻	6.3
44	影	1.13	2017/8/11	喜剧、动作、奇幻	4.3
45	凤鸣咒	1.11	2018/8/3	动画、冒险、奇幻	7

Figure 11. Box Office Rankings and Ratings Statistics of Fantasy Movies in China over the Past Decade

(Data source: China Box Office Bar [Data

source:

Looking closely at the box - office indices of domestic Chinese myth - themed fantasy movies in recent years (Figure 12), it can be seen from the following domestic fantasy films that almost every movie has box - office earnings of over 100 million yuan. It is not difficult to conclude that the public has

a strong consumption desire for film and television creations based on mythological themes. When telling stories with myths, China can more or less reflect its local cultural styles. For example, in the description of the images of gods, it is generally like what is depicted in the Taoist classic **Xiaoyao You**: "Their skin is as white as snow, and they are as graceful as virgins. They do not eat the five grains but live on air and dew. They ride the clouds, control flying dragons, and travel beyond the four seas." [Chen Yinchu. **A Close Reading of Zhuangzi**, Fudan University Press, May 1, 2005, p. 54.] There is an air of "floating like a meteor." In terms of story settings, they also inherit the plot elements such as "transformation," "soul - leaving - the - body," and "objects turning into demons to charm people" that often appear in Chinese supernatural myth stories, like in **Strange Tales from a Lonely Studio: Painted Skin**. They follow the setting that gods appear to educate people, and the plot 预置 is permeated with Confucian ideas such as the binary opposition of right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, or the unity of man and nature, and the five virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faith, thus spreading traditional culture. As Lévi - Strauss said, "All myths have a binary opposition relationship. Mythical thinking always operates in an analogical way, placing natural objects in a binary - opposition structural framework, thereby constructing an image of the world and ultimately achieving an interpretation of the world." [Shi Keyang. **Methodology of Film and Television Criticism**, Guangzhou: Sun Yat - sen University Press, 2009, p. 95.] These fantasy myth - themed movies not only dissolve the absoluteness of the binary opposition in the myth structure. In the context of the public's "spectacularization"¹ consumption, which mainly involves the superimposition of visual scenes and image paradigms, they also bring new levels of visual experience to the audience. In the stories, through the transformation of character images, the opposition and integration of good and evil are revealed. In story narration, "mythical thinking always develops from

¹ Spectacularization: It refers to a narrative form that uses images as a medium and is related to the public through narrative displacement. It is also a landscape and a novel and fantastic visual landscape presented to the public in the form of images.

being aware of the opposition to resolving these oppositions." ¹The way to resolve this is to introduce a third "intermediate mediator" [Intermediate mediator: An intermediate transformation medium proposed by Lévi - Strauss in "The Structural Study of Myth" to mediate binary opposition.] that can reconcile the binary opposition to continuously resolve the conflicts between the two opposing sides.

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¹ Lévi - Strauss, translated by Hu Xiaohui. "The Structural Study of Myth."

² Chen Yinchu. **A Close Reading of Zhuangzi**, Fudan University Press, May 1, 2005, p. 54.

achieving an interpretation of the world." ¹ These fantasy myth - themed movies not only dissolve the absoluteness of the binary opposition in the myth structure. In the context of the public's "spectacularization" [Spectacularization: It refers to a narrative form that uses images as a medium and is related to the public through narrative displacement. It is also a landscape and a novel and fantastic visual landscape presented to the public in the form of images.] consumption, which mainly involves the superimposition of visual scenes and image paradigms, they also bring new levels of visual experience to the audience. In the stories, through the transformation of character images, the opposition and integration of good and evil are revealed. In story narration, "mythical thinking always develops from being aware of the opposition to resolving these oppositions." ² The way to resolve this is to introduce a third "intermediate mediator"³ that can reconcile the binary opposition to continuously resolve the conflicts between the two opposing sides.

上映年份	电影	导演	票房(内地)
2001年	《蜀山传》	徐克	2000万元
2005年	《无极》	陈凯歌	1.75亿元
2005年	《情癫大圣》	刘镇伟	5000万元
2008年	《画皮》	陈嘉上	2.04亿元
2010年	《越光宝盒》	刘镇伟	1.31亿元
2010年	《狄仁杰之通天帝国》	徐克	2.86亿元
2011年	《倩女幽魂》	叶伟信	1.41亿元
2011年	《白蛇传说》	程小东	1.8亿元
2011年	《画壁》	陈嘉上	1.5亿元
2012年	《画皮II》	乌尔善	7亿元
2013年	《西游·降魔篇》	周星驰、郭子健	12.4亿元
2013年	《狄仁杰之神都龙王》	徐克	6亿元
2013年	《白狐》	牛朝阳	3154万元
2014年	《西游记之大闹天宫》	郑保瑞	10.4亿元
2015年	《钟馗伏魔：雪妖魔发》	鲍德熹、赵天宇	4.09亿元
2015年	《寻龙诀》	乌尔善	16.8亿元
2015年	《捉妖记》	许诚毅	24.4亿元
2015年	《九层妖塔》	陆川	9.8亿元
2016年	《西游记之三打白骨精》	郑保瑞	12.4亿元
2016年	《大话西游3》	刘镇伟	3.65亿元
2016年	《封神传奇》	许安	2.84亿元
2016年	《长城》	张艺谋	11.7亿元
2017年	《西游·伏妖篇》	徐克	16.5亿元
2017年	《悟空传》	黄建新、郭子健	6.94亿元
2017年	《鲛珠传》	陈嘉上、杨磊	1.14亿元
2017年	《妖猫传》	陈凯歌	5.3亿元
2018年	《捉妖记2》	许诚毅	22.19亿元

票房来源：艺恩电影智能库 货币单位：人民币

Figure 12. Box Office Indices of Domestic Chinese Fantasy Movies

(Data source: Cheng Bo. *The Force Awakens in Chinese Stories*, published in *Hotspot Reviews*, 2018, Issue 2, p. 20.)

1 Shi Keyang. **Methodology of Film and Television Criticism**, Guangzhou: Sun Yat - sen University Press, 2009, p. 95.

2 Lévi - Strauss, translated by Hu Xiaohui. "The Structural Study of Myth."

3 Intermediate mediator: An intermediate transformation medium proposed by Lévi - Strauss in "The Structural Study of Myth" to mediate binary opposition.

In summary, based on the above materials, mythological and legendary stories, as China's local cultural resources, in the commercial operation under industrial mechanical replication, have shed their divine "aura" and transformed into cultural capital, playing an economic role in the industry and further infiltrating into the consumption of mass culture. From the perspective of film and television, it can be reflected that myths play an important role in mass cultural consumption. In the era where images serve as a language code for storytelling, myths can also become the "punctum" of stories that trigger people's pursuit of novelty and uniqueness in consumption within the "stadium" (the overall context of image-based storytelling). In this way, it can promote the film industry to ink and cooperate with other peripheral industries (such as animation, games, etc.), driving the expansion and development of the entire cultural and creative sector.

Section 3.2: The Era of Digital Replication: Trends in Value

Transformation William Morris, the initiator of the British "Arts and Crafts Movement", opposed the separation of product design and production under mechanical industrial production, which led to the rough craftsmanship of products and the design phenomenon of making products merely for practical use. As a result, he put forward the concept of "combining art with technology", advocating the organic unity of aesthetics and function to bridge the gap between them. Although advocating only traditional handicraft technology had a somewhat utopian color, it opened the door to "modern art design" and laid the foundation for the creative concept of "aestheticization of daily life".

With the changes of the times, replication technology has also developed with the progress of science and technology. People's consumption and cultural cognition have transformed from the influence of mechanical replication technology on traditional culture, transitioning to modern cultural technologies, and then to various forms of cultural exchanges and productions of new media

and technologies with characteristics such as experience, interaction, and digitization in the digital process. At the same time, with the improvement of social life, the public's demand for culture is gradually increasing, and the economic value of products and the cultural value of art are beginning to combine, gradually transforming from the inherent use value of commodities to experience value.

Since then, under the booming development trend of modern cultural industries, the influence of culture in commodities has gradually increased. After people's material needs for commodities are saturated through the consumption process, they turn to the satisfaction and needs of spiritual life. The "aura" of art and mythology dissipates as the development of the cultural industry and the application of the Internet gradually blur and integrate the boundaries between cultural production and consumption. Moreover, with the arrival of the great aesthetic economy, against the backdrop of the integration of art and technology, the gap between the public and cultural art has also been filled. People's expectations for cultural experiences during consumption gradually overshadow the satisfaction of practical use efficiency. The "aura" of art is integrated into commodities, and at the same time, it also upgrades the value of art from the initial worship and display value to the experiential economic value that has always existed but has never been expressed.

In the book **The Experience Economy**, James Gilmore divides economic offerings into four models: products, goods, services, and experiences [B. Joseph Pine, James H. Gilmore. **The Experience Economy**. Translated by Xia Yeliang, etc. Machinery Industry Press, April 2002, pp. 9-10]. And the value of these four models shows a gradually ascending trend. With the innovation of science, technology, and information media in the era, culture, as their carrier and an essential element and driving force of the economy, the "force" and "beauty"

presented by the two continuously promote the development of the cultural industry.

As a result, the experience model in the cultural industry plays an increasingly dominant role in the two-way integration and upgrading of cultural products and services, becoming the core force for exerting the effectiveness of the market economy, and the public's consumption model has also been updated with the advancement of science, technology, and culture. From the "aura worship" of cultural consumption in the past to the current satisfaction of spiritual needs, and then to the "sympathetic" experience consumption of cultural entertainment through the contact of the five senses of the human body, it fully demonstrates that the public's demands for consumption experiences in the cultural industry are constantly changing. According to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of "field", "A field can be defined as a network of objective relations existing between various positions, or a configuration." ¹ The field is an internal force, a mediator constructed by workers from all walks of life participating in social and economic activities, and it is an autonomous small world generated by the differentiation of the social world.

At the same time, the field is also an open concept. The small world only functions when it is subsumed within a relational system, and its boundaries end where the effects of the field no longer have an impact, having the characteristic of dynamic fuzziness. Due to different types of capital, fields can be divided into many kinds, such as academic fields, artistic fields, economic fields, legal fields, power fields, etc. Bourdieu divides capital into economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. Capital is the link connecting the scattered elements in each field, and different types of capital in each field will play different roles in that field. The nature of the field also varies according to the proportion of

1 Bai Xiaoqing. Cited from *The Multi-field Development Strategy of IP in Comic Adapted Films—Taking the Marvel Superhero Series Films as an Example*, published in *Contemporary Cinema*, pp. 151-153

various types of capital within it. The field is like a game. Participants in it can maintain the rules of the game, or they can participate in the game, change the relative value of different chips in their hands, alter the relative proportion between different types of capital, compete with opponents in the game field, and suppress the value of the capital in the opponents' hands to change the rules of the game.¹ In this "game field" where various capitals compete, Brian Moore proposed the concept of the "affordance field" based on the theory of "field". Among them, "affordance" or "functional affordance" is a concept in ecological psychology proposed by the American psychologist James J. Gibson in 1997. It means that humans or organisms can directly perceive (direct perception) the relationship between the perceivable information scales in the environment through their own perceptibility. "The 'affordance field' emphasizes the interactive experience between the subject and the object... The affordance loop contains elements such as technical materials, social elements, economic elements, time elements, space elements, and representative elements. In the context of the cultural industry, different elements form a loop, and starting from any one element can form the same channels, cycles, connections, or attributes. This loop or set constructs an actor network."² In the experiential economic field of the cultural industry, the "technology-material" affordance is reflected in the public's consumption process through aspects such as interaction with technical media under new media, immersive space experiences, and the application of designed products with perceptual affordance.

At the same time, it allows consumers to achieve internal spiritual resonance through the external contact of their bodies with things during the experience consumption process, and thus complete the embodied cognition of themselves after a whole consumption process.³ The "affordance" theory is usually applied

1 (France) Pierre Bourdieu, Loïc Wacquant. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Translated by Li Meng, Li Kang. Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 1998, pp. 137-13

2 Xiang Yong, Bai Xiaoqing. *Field Resonance: The Cross-border Development Strategy of the Value of Online Literature IP*, published in *Modern Communication*, August 2016, pp. 110-112

3 Embodied cognition: The interactive relationship between the direct behavioral experience of the body and

in product design, interaction design, psychology, etc., by studying organisms and the environment, but it is also applicable to economic life. In the cultural and creative industry, to make the experiential value of products fully exert their affordance for consumers, producers need to analyze and rely on their composition. When consumers experience commodities, they are receivers of commodity information. Each receiver has different cultural and educational backgrounds, life values, social activity experiences, emotional "pain points", etc. Therefore, to trigger the hidden "punctum" in each person's consumption experience, producers must relate their own conditions to the external environment.

At the same time, by using the human ability of "action-psychology" mutual care in embodied cognition, combining the two and providing overall care, they can accurately grasp the common emotions of the public and make them participate in the activities of the cultural and creative industry. As a powerful cultural resource for media dissemination today, mythology has undergone a leapfrog value transformation across time and space, from being an ideological belief with only worship value at the beginning, to becoming a display value that plays an important role in cultural consumption in culture and art, and then to becoming a full-fledged experiential value generated for the public through digital technology when consuming products. As cultural capital, mythology plays an important active role in the field of experiential economy. In the understanding of a thing, since John Locke [John Locke (August 29, 1632 – October 28, 1704), a British philosopher], this understanding has been divided into the "primary qualities" of things, which have stability and repeatability, such as the rational and stable characteristics in mathematics like points, lines, planes, and proportions, and the "secondary qualities" that are mainly dominated by subjective cognition, such as the hue, touch, taste, and sound of objective objects, which may change according to the perception of different people and have the characteristic of

the psychological perception state

instability. [Zhang Yao. *The Metaphorical Body*. Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, July 2006, p. 124] And this "secondary quality" is exactly an important existence that directly relates to people's bodies and emotions. It is also the starting point for the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty to propose the concept of "body schema" in his study of the sensory experience of the body's perception of the outside world. The body schema, from the actions of people's unconscious self-adjustment in interacting with things in the objective world, reflects the entire "perceptual-motor" ability of people's lifestyle and personal attitude towards understanding the world, illustrating "the holistic characteristics of the body in perceptual experience". It has an image rather than an objective spatiality in the situation of implementing or achieving a certain goal and exists in time. When people come into contact with the outside world through their limbs, they can understand their surrounding situation, gain experience, and be emotionally touched psychologically, but all of this is also based on people's past historical experiences. Therefore, in the development of the experience model in the cultural industry, it is necessary to understand the emotional tendencies, preferences of consumers, or the common experiences and cultural tacit knowledge generated by the public in a specific environment. Then, through the embodiment generated by the connection of the five senses of touch, vision, taste, hearing, and smell between the experience situation or product and the body, it can be realized. Only in this way can consumers obtain cultural awareness while consuming commodities, achieve resonance between physical experience and emotion, immerse themselves in it, and enable products to achieve the maximum benefit effect in the cultural industry. The transformation of the cultural value of mythology requires the emotional consciousness generated through the body schema system to complete. At the same time, digital media of communication also have an important impact on the public's preferences in consumption. From the products and network media for public communication and interaction in daily life to various experiences in daily life and entertainment

activities in space, when interacting with these external digital media entities, the public will also have different experience feelings based on their usage.

Therefore, in the field of experiential economy, the combination of cultural capital and technical media is essential, and it is also closely related to the commodity affordance that consumers can feel during the experience process and the embodiment generated by their own actions and perceptions under the body schema system. In today's era of the development of digital media technology, digital media is gradually penetrating into people's daily entertainment lifestyles and integrating with various fields of art and technology such as the Internet, games, art, and film and television. Based on the scientific and technological communication media such as photography, printing, broadcasting, and television that developed in the 19th century, digital media has once again narrowed the distance between people and these audio-visual media. By matching and connecting with people's body movements, a new consumption model of human-computer interaction or spatial immersive experience has been established. In a sense, the emergence of this interactive technology, as described by William Gibson in **Neuromancer**, has dissolved the binary opposition between humans and nature, and between reality and virtuality, and has become the cyberspace in post-human society where things can be perceived through digital technology¹.

The application of digital replication technology provides the "technology-material" affordance in the field of the mythology industry, which takes intangible cultural resources of mythology as the basis, commodity exchange as the dominant factor, and intangible cultural capital online as the link. As an intangible cultural resource, mythology, "under the guidance of the commodity laws of the market economy", is transformed into intangible cultural

1 Zhao Zhan. **Research on the Narrative Language of New Media**. Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, March 2012, p. 10

capital and interacts and circulates with economic capital and social capital in the field, opening up the development dimensions of the cultural and creative industry.

Taking the cultural and creative products of the Dunhuang Academy as an example, since it was designated as one of the first batch of national cultural relic units for the development of cultural and creative products in 2016, based on the aim of "telling Chinese stories well", it has begun to use digital cultural technology and the Internet and other media to establish a story brand for the cultural and creative industry. In 2017, Tencent, together with Bloomage Cultural and Creative, a cultural and creative team that created the popular "teamLab Dance Art Exhibition & Future Amusement Park" holographic image lighting art space immersive experience, and the Dunhuang Academy, created the immersive museum experience exhibition "Mysterious Dunhuang". By integrating digital multimedia lighting technology with Dunhuang cultural relics, mural images, and the mythological stories of gods and Buddhas in the images, it has become an immersive experience space. For example, the animated story of the *Nine-Colored Deer* drawn according to the Buddhist mythological story of Cave 297 of the Mogao Grottoes in the Northern Wei Dynasty (from 386 AD to 534 AD), the dynamic image "Domed Sky" projected onto the dome using digital technology (Figure 12B), and the multimedia introduction of the entire exhibition covered by AR technology through Tencent's "Museum Officer" and "Digital Dunhuang".



Figure 12. The Dynamic Image of "Domed Sky" on the Top of the Third Floor of the Museum (Image source: Sohu website)

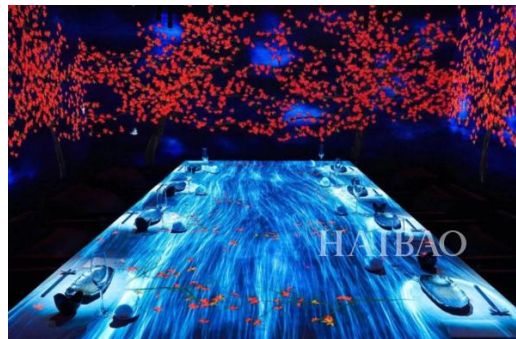


Figure 13. Light and Shadow Immersion Experience (Image source: Ibid.)

In terms of interactive applications, the Dunhuang Academy has utilized virtual simulation technology to provide an online virtual tour of the grotto scenic spots. When visitors interact with the mural images on the screen in the exhibition space, they can perceive the colorful changes and fading of the mural images from different periods, evoking emotions of amazement or pity. Taking the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang as an example, the "Digital Dunhuang" exhibition held in Lanzhou in 2014, supported by digital technology, displayed high-definition mural images obtained through the digital acquisition of cloud murals via network computers.

By interacting with visitors through the mythological stories in the murals and leveraging the experience technology that combines movement and stillness, as well as the interplay between the virtual and the real, it has triggered emotional

fluctuations in consumers, thus completing their psychological schemas. The Dunhuang tourism industry, which combines cultural and digital media for interactive innovation, set a record during the National Day Golden Week in 2012, with the daily number of visitors to the Mogao Grottoes exceeding the carrying capacity by six times .¹ Technology has driven the economic development of the tourism industry. As a resource-based tourism industry, Dunhuang, by leveraging its mythological story image resources and combining them with digital technology, has witnessed the development of its cultural tourism industry rising year by year since 2000 (except for a decline in 2003 due to the impact of SARS) (Figure 14, 15).

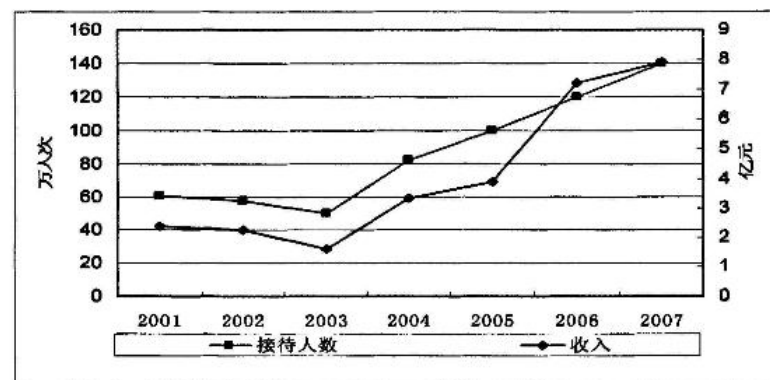


Figure 14. The Number of Tourists Received and Tourism Revenue in Dunhuang

(Data source: Zhou Jiang. Research on the Development of Tourism Industry Clusters in Resource-based Tourist Destinations—Taking Dunhuang City, Gansu Province, China, as an Example, Lanzhou University, p. 30.)

¹ Dunhuang Academy, Getty Conservation Institute: *Research on the Visitor Carrying Capacity of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang*, Outline of the Development Plan for the Construction of Dunhuang as a National Cultural and Tourism City, Dunhuang, October 2013, p. 28

年份	甘肃省		敦煌市		敦煌市旅游区位熵
	总 GDP (亿元)	旅游收入 (亿元)	总 GDP (亿元)	旅游收入	
2002	1073	28.6	14.95	2.39	5.9978
2003	1161	26.83	16.76	2.2365	5.7744
2004	1293	55.25	19.1006	3.3429	4.0958
2005	1301.06	62.56	20.8961	3.91	3.8915
2006	2275	80.2	24	7.236	8.55252
2007	2703.98	115.91	29.09	8.06	6.4635
2008	3176.11	137.5	34.62	4.9575	3.3077
2009	3380	192.77	39	7	3.1471

数据来源：甘肃年鉴（2003—2010）

Figure 15. The Tourism Reception Revenue in Dunhuang

(Data source: Ibid., p. 31.)

In October 2018, it collaborated with Tencent Charity and the "Digital Donor Program" public welfare activity project developed by its affiliated game company. An H5 online mini-game was launched, which allows people to recolour the faded mural patterns of Dunhuang and obtain mural images with their own color style combinations. Experiencers interact in real-time with this online virtual program through terminal mobile electronic devices. In the form of a game, it spreads the concepts of cultural relic protection and innovation, and expands the development model of Dunhuang culture in the creative industry.

In the game, through the manipulation of images, people generate a two-way and close interaction mode between humans and machines through a visual narrative of "a series of development, circulation, and promotion 'continuation' processes from form, style, image, concept to culture"¹, and receive feedback.

1 Arthur Danto (USA). *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art*. Translated by Wang Chunchen. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2007, p. 88

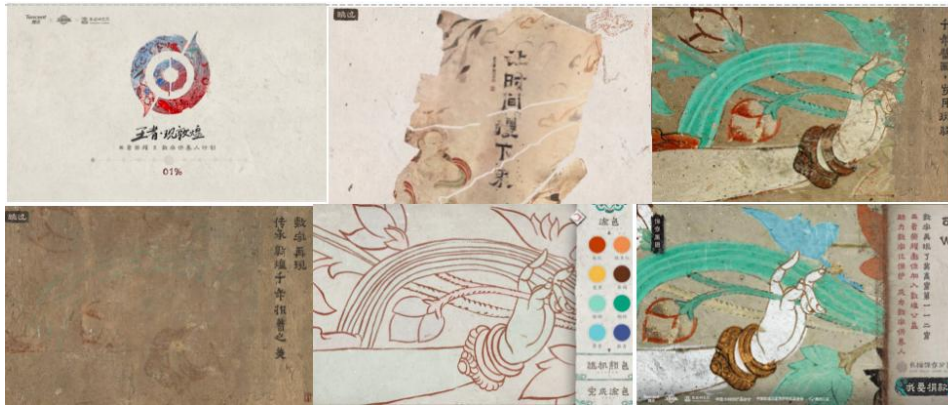


Figure 16. The Game Interface of the Digital Donor Program (Image source: Screenshot of the H5 interactive game)

Dunhuang cultural and creative products extend through multiple touchpoints. With its own cultural capital at the core, within the field of cultural and creative industries, it timely utilizes the mythological stories, images of flying apsaras, and various Buddhist classic stories that can arouse the public's interest, combining with the image narrative methods of new media technology. This enables the public to have a more vivid consumption experience through touch and physical immersion during cultural experience consumption. As a result, it drives a positive development trend of mutual conversion, mutual promotion, and mutual benefit among cultural capital, economic capital, and social capital within the field of cultural and creative industries. Thus, under the impetus of cultural and creative industries, the cultural resources of Dunhuang are transformed.

Within the entire loop of the affordance field, by leveraging the power of each affordance element, it connects and interweaves among various industries such as museums, tourism, games, and animation, gradually creating a Dunhuang cultural and creative brand that can "tell Chinese stories".

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Section 3.3 The Development Trend of the Aura of Mythology in the Cultural

Industry Mythology, as a cultural resource, intervenes and interacts between elite culture and mass culture through various forms of existence, and undergoes transformation in the process. During this transformation, the two cultures promote each other, contributing to the prosperous development of the cultural and creative industry. As elite culture, mythology has a profound historical accumulation, providing scholars with rich resources for researching culture and

art. It supplies energy for aspects such as education guidance and academic research. At the same time, it also serves as a practice for applying mythology in mass culture, guiding and inspiring mass aesthetic consumption, and offering high-quality innovative strategies for the cultural resources it contains. In mass culture, mythology, as a popular cultural resource that can fully arouse the public's curiosity and desire for exploration, and as the main trend in the development of the creative industry, can promptly grasp the public's preferences and analyze the public's interests in industries related to mythology. It thus becomes the guiding direction for elite culture to serve the cultural and creative industry. For example, regarding the education of teenagers, overly dogmatic oral cultivation of moral qualities and cultural instruction may encounter resistance. However, if we use entertainment industries such as games, films and television, literature, and comics that are based on creativity and have educational significance and are favored by the corresponding age groups as a guide, it can achieve twice the result with half the effort. Therefore, mythological stories with a fictional theme play a role here. Culture in people's social life is divided into three levels (Figure 17). Expanding from the inside out, they are the core layer mainly composed of inherited customs, morals, etc., the middle layer of laws, systems, etc. based on this foundation, and the outer layer of entertainment and fashion that is closest to the public's daily life.¹ Although mythology appears in the form of historical and cultural accumulation in aspects such as cultural inheritance and the continuation of customs, and becomes a very stable civilization with little possibility of change in the core layer. However, in the cultural and creative industry, mythological resources that integrate creativity, art, and cultural life are most closely related to the outer layer of the cultural structure.

1 Chen Shaofeng, Zhang Libo. **Business Models of the Cultural Industry**. Beijing: Peking University Press, August 2011, p. 19.] [Chen Shaofeng, Zhang Libo. **Business Models of the Cultural Industry**. Beijing: Peking University Press, August 2011, p. 19.

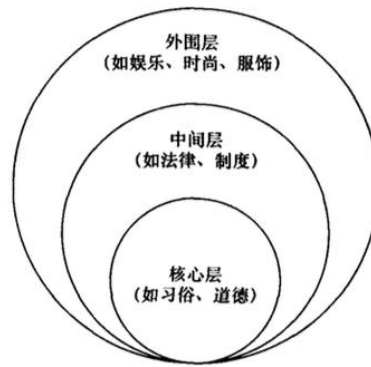


Figure 17. Schematic Diagram of the Cultural Structure (Image source: Chen Shaofeng, Zhang Libo.

Business Models of the Cultural Industry. Beijing: Peking University Press, August 2011, p. 20.)

From the perspective of creativity, to develop the cultural and creative industry using mythological stories, what is precisely needed is the special culture that emerges after removing the old and obscure veil. This culture is novel, in line with the current public consumption interests, and satisfies the public's entertainment spirit. By combining creativity and innovation, elite human resources from different fields, and the economic and technological foundation, a series of cultural and creative industry chains can be expanded to explore business opportunities. For example, there are story-based industry chains derived from internal content IP, collaborative industry chains where various industries develop in a mutually supportive manner, or integrated industry chains that require the cooperation of multiple elements (such as talents, funds, and capital) within the industry on the basis of collaboration. ¹The resource strength required in each field also varies.

As a language through which people convey information, mythology has the characteristic of the coexistence of reversibility and irreversibility in time. Mythology is an ancient cultural accumulation passed down through history, and in terms of use value, it exists in our past, present, and future, not restricted by time. ² It is also the "archetype" theory of Northrop Frye, a Canadian literary

¹ Ibid., p. 47

² Claude Lévi-Strauss. "The Structural Study of Myth", excerpted from *Structural Anthropology*, Volume 1, Part 3, Chapter 11, originally published in *Journal of American Folklore*, 1955, Vol. 78, pp.

critic in the 20th century.¹ This theory makes the public aware that the so-called "harmony between man and nature" concept corresponding to the small sun god on earth (from the image of "emperor" to the concept of "son of heaven" and then to the revolutionary leader) and the great sun god in the sky (the archetype) is a continuation, transformation, or rewriting of the farming myth concept that originated in the Neolithic Age more than ten thousand years ago.² When the public engages in cultural consumption such as daily entertainment, they can feel the existence of mythology through brands, cultural traditions, and story content when purchasing goods and come into contact with it. At this time, the invariability of mythology in time is eliminated, and it flashes into people's lives through various carriers. Therefore, with this unique temporal nature, the development of mythology in the cultural and creative industry also gives rise to a "duality" within itself. The first aspect is the "original story" power inherent in mythology itself, that is, the original classic stories passed down through historical evolution, which carry the significance of national historical memories and express human perception of the universe and thinking and understanding of society and nature. The second aspect is that after creative processing, the mythological archetypes are recoded and combined in various forms such as literature, film and television, games, and brands, becoming symbols with entertainment value and spiritual influence that can be retold in brand story content, stimulating social and economic prosperity and reflecting social ideology in culture.

Therefore, in the cultural and creative industry, mythology becomes a creative resource for designing economic consumption content. Since the 20th century, a worldwide upsurge of myth retelling has led to the rise of the "new mythicism trend". The "aura" of mythology has also reappeared in life in new language forms

428-444.

1 [Archetype: Frye believed that mythology is the origin of all literature, containing all literary forms and themes, enabling it to still have the power of dissemination despite the changes in ideology over thousands of years. Cited from Baidu Encyclopedia. <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%8E%9F%E5%9E%8B%E6%89%B9%E8%AF%84/5262205>]

2 Ye Shuxian. "How to Retell Myths", Journal of Yangtze University, Vol. 29, No. 1, February 2006, p. 17

with the recoding and reconstruction of mythology and the transformation of media methods in the digital age. The leapfrog progress of digital media technology and the Internet, combined with the cultural and creative industry, is subtly changing the public's lifestyle and ideology. As a powerful content driver, the "myth retelling" that began to rise globally in 2005, although limited to the commercialization of literary creation, still indicates that being swept along by the economy and the market, mythology has entered the consumption era and become a symbol in mass culture. When mythology is divided into a "duality", its aura, which was buried in mass culture, also begins to revive and become the two wings of its development. On one hand, it is still attached to the elite culture accumulated in history, distantly connected to people; on the other hand, it infiltrates into the public's daily consumption, with stories as the content, and integrates into the brand culture that consumers admire.

Chapter 4: The Reconstruction of Aura: Industrial Innovation in Myth Retelling

Section 4.1 The Industrial Integration of Mythological Stories in Cultural and Creative Scenarios

Driven by the cultural and creative industry, the operation of the social economy is increasingly inclined towards a creative economic model that combines scenario economy and cultural economy for development. Stories have become a driving factor in the development of the cultural and creative industry. In addition to relying on technical quality, the operation of product brands also takes into account the cultural value content they contain, which is an important factor that the public pays attention to during consumption. The diversified needs and consumption experiences of consumers for products, as well as the changing situation where numerous communication and media platforms have become the main communication platforms for users, have prompted the content

technology of the creative industry to be enriched and upgraded accordingly. Stories are the driving force behind cultural and creative production, and they also serve as a strong content IP (abbreviation for "Intellectual Property") that can iterate products and stack brand levels, laying the foundation for capital production.

Content power is the starting point for the expansion and development of the creative industry where original power and production mechanisms can ferment and grow on their own after the accumulation of high - quality brand cultural completion under perfect conditions.¹As a cultural resource, mythology is the source of inspiration for content creativity in the "IP - ization" process of the cultural industry. As shown in Figure 18, the process of transforming content resources into product industries is different from the immediate production and consumption of consumable items. It is a closed - loop link of self - circular operation.²The development and integration of cultural resources is the most preliminary stage in the entire process and also the first step in enabling mythology to be integrated into the cultural and creative market as capital.

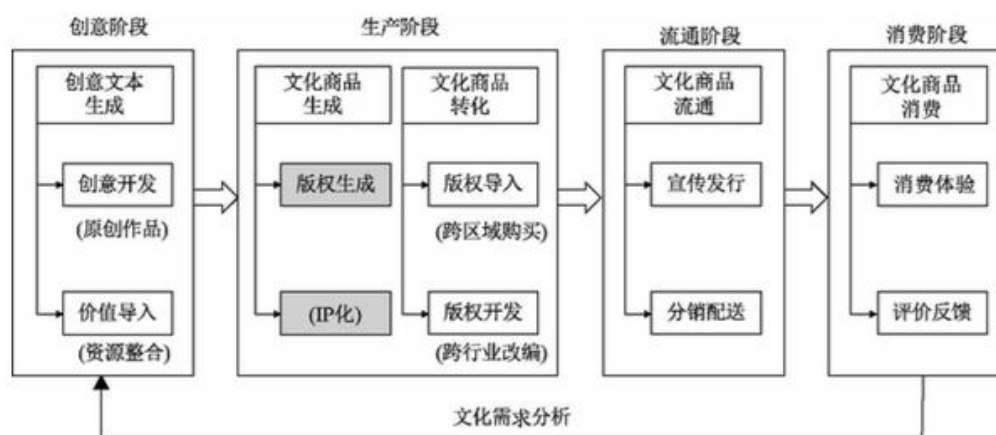


Figure 18. The Transformation Process from Cultural Resources to Cultural Products (Image source:

Xiang Yong, Bai Xiaoqing. "Audience Positioning and Value Evolution of Cultural Industry IP

1 Wu Sheng. *Super IP*. Beijing: CITIC Press, July 2016, p. 8

2 Xiang Yong, Bai Xiaoqing. "Audience Positioning and Value Evolution of Cultural Industry IP Development under the New Normal", *Journal of Peking University*, January 2017, Vol. 54, No. 1, p. 124

In the social context intertwined with network and mobile cloud technologies, an era of scenario-based consumption has been constructed. This scenario breaks through the limitations of time and space. Using technical media as a connection, through big data analysis of the public's consumption preferences, characteristics, and emotional needs, and taking story content as the basis, it creates and designs "tailor-made" personalized demand services that are more precisely targeted for each consumer. It also conducts property rights development and generates the circulation and distribution of cultural commodities. Scenario economy, based on the cross-border integration of various new technologies and models, is a new ecological resource that promotes industrial growth, an incubator for innovative applications, and an experimental space for enterprises to provide the public with more lifestyle choices in creative production.¹

When consumers have a combined online and offline consumption experience of commodity content, they share stories through social media to achieve emotional resonance. After establishing connections with each other and forming a cluster, they provide information feedback on their experience of the commodities, supplying data for the development of new creative content. This enables the content industry to carry out more complete industrial incubation and exploration. Through such a cyclical process, the scenario economy is gradually optimized and upgraded. As the prototype of content stories in the scenario economy, mythology, under the application of the cultural and creative industry, is retold and reconstructed in combination with the current era background to meet the public's aesthetic and emotional needs in daily life, as well as their

¹ Mo Zhenzhen, Wang Jian. "Scenario: The Generator of New Economic Innovation", published in *Economy and Management*, 2018, 32(06), pp. 51-55.

actual interest demands. The mythology generated in response to these demands has a certain degree of publicity during the dissemination process. It gathers information dissemination and the co-presence of virtual and real spaces, transforms into commodities, and has an interactive and entertaining nature based on senses and emotions with the receiving subjects.¹

With the optimization of audio-visual media tools, ancient mythological themes stimulate consumers' aesthetic consciousness of seeking novelty and fantasy through rich sensory language. In the consumer society, the cultural texts of mythological stories, after "N-level coding" [N-level coding: After Ye Shuxian redefined the "great tradition" (the civilization that uses images, oral traditions, and artifacts to narrate before the expression of civilization in writing) and the "small tradition" (the civilization recorded in writing after the emergence of writing), it is a set of "coding systems" that arranges the expressions of texts, images, and artifacts in chronological order. "In a dynamic historical perspective, the cultural text coding of the 'great tradition' is the first-level coding; the 'small tradition' with the emergence of writing is the second-level coding; the early classics written in text are the third-level coding; all rewritten texts after the classic period are uniformly classified as the third-level coding." ,² become symbolic commodities. Under the symbolic consumption of the public in the cultural and creative industry, a new "aura" of mythology is re-established in brands and the experience economy.

For example, product brands established with Greek mythology as the story prototype encode the cultural connotations expressed in the stories and use them to establish the cultural image and brand purpose of the brands, thus

¹Yan Xianglin. "Contemporary Mythology and Its Aesthetic Consciousness", published in Social Sciences in China, 2009, No. 3, p. 174.

² Ye Shuxian. "The N-level Coding Theory of Cultural Texts—The Overall Interpretation Strategy from the 'Great Tradition' to the 'Small Tradition'", published in Journal of Baise University, 2013, 26(1), pp. 2-3.

enabling consumers to have a more comfortable consumption experience. Examples include "Sisyphus Bookstore" and "Starbucks".

The experiential consumption of mythology is the desire for material or spiritual things generated by people's physical behavior to understand the depth of space and the combination of subconscious emotional experiences. The story content of mythology covers all aspects of the public's life. It is like an adhesive that creates a common value, enabling people to gather and connect through it. John Gardner, an American modernist novelist, once said, "True art can create a myth that enables society to exist rather than wither."¹ Mythology is born from people's experiences and is passed on through stories told from mouth to mouth. Each nation and region, despite having different cultural customs, is gathered together by stories. It can reflect the true emotions of the human heart, maintain its timeless nature across time and space, and still be able to tell "the basic structure of human nature and emotional issues" in the language of each nation even after the passage of time, giving full play to the potential of mythology itself. It can be attached to art, economy, and various social forms.

In art, its "aura" attaches to people's visual senses. Using this as a bridge, it transforms into the self, becomes a spiritual perception, and thus reaches the inner spiritual "eye". After the mutual reflection between the self and the object, it becomes an aesthetic in the process of cognition and turns into a metaphor. This metaphor existing in the common consciousness becomes the content of commodities, promotes the establishment of IP, and forms the basic elements for copyright development, thus being incorporated into the application of the scenario economy.

¹ (USA) Jonathan Gottschall. *The Storytelling Animal—How Stories Make Us Human*, translated by Xu Yashu, Li Zongyi. CITIC Publishing Group, April 2017, p. 39.

Section 4.2: Story-driven by Myth as the Prototype

Mythological stories are formed from people's experiences of perceiving the world. As mentioned above, as a cultural resource, mythology combines with the economy in the cultural and creative industry and transforms into cultural capital, serving as the story driver that forms the basis for IP evolution in the process of commodity circulation. The differences in the development of mythology and the perception of similar things between the East and the West depend on the fundamental differences in their development sources. Since mythology is the product of the initial cognitive experiences of the ancestors, it has been passed down to this day with the folk customs of the public.

This has also led to cultural differences between regions and differences in the common memories carried in the narration of stories. Take, for example, the supernatural mythological stories in the East and the West, which are similar in content but slightly different in narrative person techniques and the ideological connotations of understanding the world. Compare the novel *The Coffee Pot* by the French supernatural writer Théophile Gautier and *The Painted Wall* in *Strange Tales from a Lonely Studio* by Pu Songling. Both stories tell about the protagonist's encounter with a woman resurrected from a painting.

The difference is that *The Coffee Pot* is narrated from the first-person perspective, and its view of love is related to the spiritual level. The story symbolically expresses the opposition between the protagonist's real world and the dream world, which is a romantic world yearned for and praised.

However, *The Painted Wall* is retold in the third-person way. The story of the protagonist and the fairy in the painting is related to appearance. As described in the text of *The Painted Wall*, "On the east wall were painted celestial maidens

scattering flowers. Among them was a girl with hanging hair, smiling and holding a flower, her cherry lips about to move, and her eyes full of charm... Zhu stared for a long time and unconsciously became entranced... Gradually, it became indecent, and the fragrance of orchid and musk filled the heart..." [Pu Songling (Qing Dynasty, from 317 AD to 420 AD). *The Complete Newly Annotated Strange Tales from a Lonely Studio*, edited by Zhu Qikai. People's Literature Publishing House, September 1989, p. 9 in total]. The fantasy world that the protagonist enters is a world of disrespect presented by the indulgence of the heart in Buddhism, with a certain critical color. ¹

Section 4.3: The Symbolic Consumption of Mythology

When the public consumes cultural life, they are also in a cycle of "communication-reception" of information. They are both consumers and producers of cultural commodities. With the optimization and progress of digital media technology, the presentation of rich media [Rich media: A combination of multiple programming languages for the dissemination of advertisements] communication forms brings people's reception of information into an embedded and boundary-blurred immersive state. For example, in all daily activities carried out on the Internet, such as games, office work, and communication, people are virtualized into independent codes in this virtual world. Through information dissemination, they are connected and woven in the field constructed by the network and immersed in it. This immersion is different from the tangible and perceptible external scene experience that can touch the human senses in a concrete space. It is a spiritual immersion obtained in a field linked by stories and related to emotional consciousness. Through the media dissemination of science and technology, people can cross the gap of spatial distance and achieve "co-presence" in the digital world, thus enabling communication. In the cultural

¹ Tian Qingsheng. "Gautier's *The Coffee Pot* and Pu Songling's *The Painted Wall*", published in *World Literature Review*, October 31, 2007.

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Technology is changing the way people receive information and also changing the dissemination carriers of stories in the cultural industry. As a type of story theme, mythology is regarded as a meaningful cultural story that can arouse the public's consumption enthusiasm and is incorporated into the system of cultural and creative symbolic consumption. As a story theme passed down through the ages, it has become the crystallization of people's attitudes when they perceive the world and experience similar situations. In this consumption era, as content, mythology combines with the application of means such as "advertising, fashion

1 Rich media: A combination of multiple programming languages for the dissemination of advertisements

systems, and product packaging" in the commodity economy. It fully mobilizes the cultural resources such as cultural meanings, concepts, goals, and values that consumers care about, combines commodities with these cultural resources, and makes commodities become symbolic symbols that can strongly attract consumers' attention and carry cultural meanings.¹

In the present, from the "duality" of mythology mentioned above, in symbolic consumption, in addition to the historical texts left over, modern society is also creating mythology. Based on economic consumption, just like the ancient ancestors, the modern public creates myths of celebrities, IPs, brands, etc. through symbolic consumption, and generates worship and pursuit to meet their sensory, emotional, and environmental atmosphere experience needs, as well as a series of material needs that can show social status and taste. For example, the Italian luxury brand "Versace", established in 1987 and marked by the nine-headed snake beauty in mythological stories.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Mythology, since the beginning of the cognitive revolution, has carried historical experiences, accompanied time, transmitted information to people, and gathered strength. Its aura has become story power in the cultural and creative industry, the cultural connotations experienced by consumers during symbolic consumption, and the emotional and sensory atmosphere generated in space, thus being worshipped in the process of mass consumption. In the creative industry, mythology can be a literary form, an ideology, or the prototype of a creative story. Even the psychological emotions generated by the public's worship of commodities under the consumption consciousness are the discovery and stimulation of the public's collective subconscious.

¹ Xiao Xianjing. "A Symbolic Interpretation of Consumerist Culture", published in *The Journal of Humanities*, January 15, 2004, pp. 170-175.

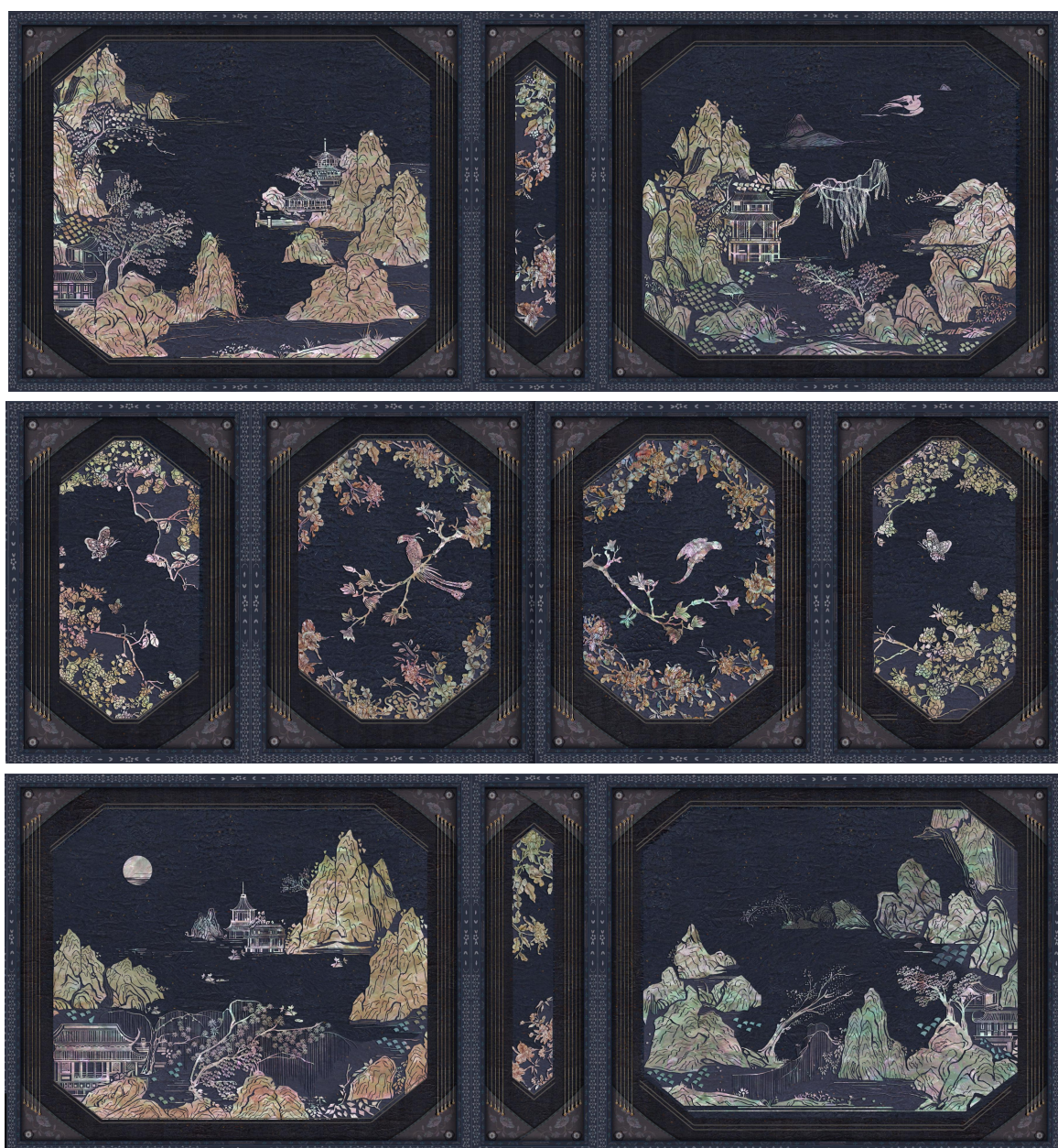
Accompanying people's life and production, in a sense, mythology has never disappeared. From the "great tradition" civilization expressed by objects, oral traditions, and images to the "small tradition" recorded in writing, and until today's continuous coding and re-translation of traditional classics and their application as story prototypes in the commodity culture economy, mythology, in its invisible form, adapts to the scenario changes of each era and brings various different experience and feeling modes to the public. However, in all cases, through its narration, it shows people a colorful and unique world. Especially in the field dominated by spiritual, cultural, and experiential consumption, mythology, through the joint supply mode with various industries and capitals, has expanded the development boundaries of the cultural and creative market. Mythology and its aura, in the changes of era scenarios time and time again, have accompanied people to complete the value transformation from "creation to rebirth to sublimation".

Therefore, since the day humans started learning to understand the world and the environment, they have always been seeking and exploring a way of life that can adapt to the changing environment and fully meet their own needs, rather than choosing to run counter to the world rigidly.

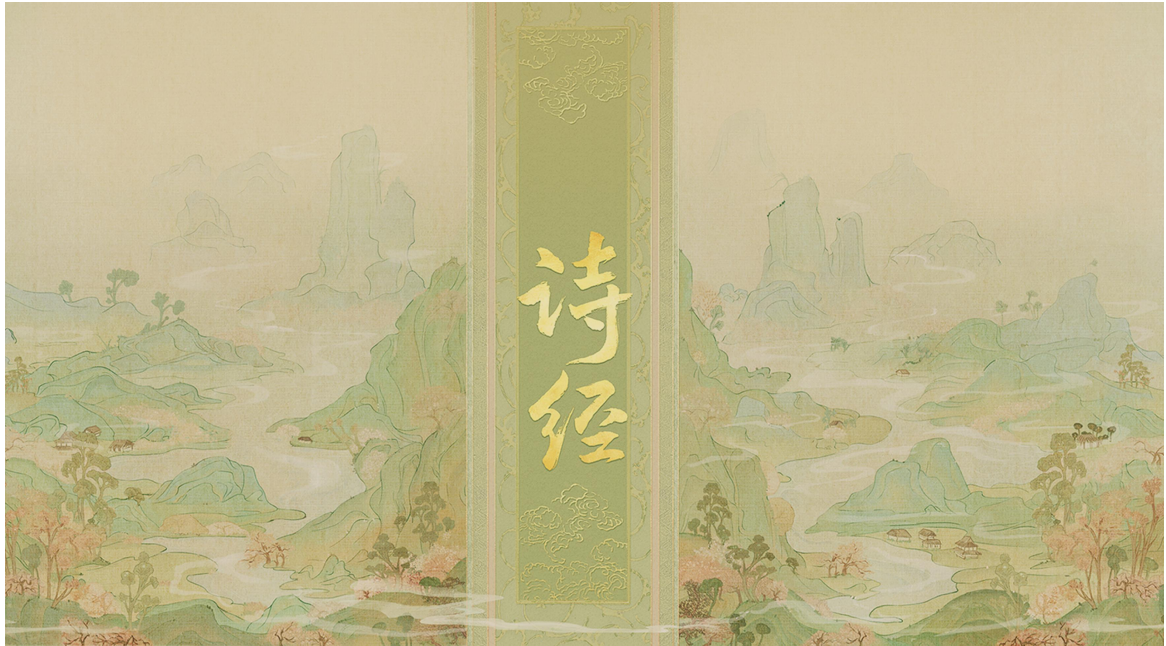
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first - year postgraduate study, I participated in the "Happy Chinese New Year" project. Through the method of "tackling real - world topics in a virtual way", I comprehensively learned the overall application methods of spatial design display and visual symbol design. This experience gave me a deeper understanding of the practice of visual design. I especially want to thank my main supervisor, Professor Wang Qijun. In my academic studies and daily life, Professor Wang has always provided me with meticulous care and guidance. From the urban economy and culture project in the first year to the thesis - writing course in the third year, Professor Wang's rigorous academic attitude, upright character, and passionate dedication to academia have deeply inspired me. During the process of writing my thesis, Professor Wang devoted a great deal of effort. He provided detailed guidance in aspects such as the standardized application of the thesis format, the accurate indexing and annotation of literature, and the final polishing and translation of the thesis results. Especially during the translation process, Professor Wang helped me accurately grasp the differences between Chinese and English expressions to ensure the academic nature and readability of the thesis. His patience and rigor have made me deeply appreciate the rigor and sense of responsibility in academic research, and I have also benefited a great deal from his guidance in thesis writing. In the blink of an eye, this fulfilling and wonderful learning period is about to end. I am grateful to have met these four outstanding supervisors at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Their earnest teachings and selfless help will become precious treasures in my future academic and professional career. Here, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to all the supervisors once again!

individual works



For the visual art design of the "Ode – Huang Zhong Da Lu" 2023 National Music Concert, "Huang Zhong Da Lu" refers to the first two tones among the twelve musical scales in ancient Chinese music. The concert takes the names of the twelve musical scales as its theme and showcases the beauty of Chinese traditional folk music through cross – border performances. In terms of the visual design for the folk music ensemble performance of *The Moon over the River on a Spring Night*, the texture of the ancient intangible cultural heritage traditional craftsmanship, lacquer inlay with mother – of – pearl, is employed to present the scenes, depicting the resplendent pavilions and towers in the night of the prosperous Tang Dynasty. The visual packaging uses patterns from the Tang Dynasty and incorporates the feature of the pipa as the main musical instrument, decorated with strings.



This picture introduces the brand design related to *China in Classics*. *China in Classics* was broadcast on CCTV-1 in 2023. It tells the story of Mao Heng writing *The Ancient Explanation and Transmission* for *The Book of Songs* and then passing *The Book of Songs* on to Mao Chang. *The Book of Songs*, as a collection of poems from the Pre-Qin period, reflects simple folk customs and features romantic and plain verses. Therefore, the main visual design

draws inspiration from the style of ancient paintings like *Nymph of the Luo River* from the Wei and Jin Dynasties, focusing on landscapes with elegant and soft lines.



This picture is still an introduction to the brand design related to *China in Classics*. It mentions that *Commentaries on the Waterways Classic* is a famous ancient Chinese geographical work, consisting of forty volumes, written by Li Daoyuan in the late Northern Wei Dynasty. The related design and creation are based on the script and the main connotations of *Commentaries on the Waterways Classic*, mainly focusing on the drawing of waterway maps, presenting the texture of ancient paintings.





Creation of illustrations for long scrolls of landscape paintings











