



## JAMES JOYCE'S ARABY IN INTERARTS PERSPECTIVE OF CHINESE CLASSICAL ART THEORIES

*James Joyce's Araby na perspectiva interares das teorias da arte clássica chinesa*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explores the states of Chinese classical art theories in James Joyce's *Araby*, revealing the idea resonance beyond visual and language media. The research method is Ekphrasis, a burgeoning interdisciplinary humanity in the 90s of the 20th century, providing opportunities for interarts researches, not only pictures in the poetry or the poetry in pictures, but multidimensional appreciation methods. James Joyce's *Araby* is analyzed in this paper by enlightenment from calligraphy theories of Cai Yong, an official and scholar of the Eastern Han dynasty, to create interarts appreciation.

**Keywords:** Interarts, Ekphrasis, James Joyce, Araby, Chinese classical art theories, Cai Yong.

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## JAMES JOYCE'S ARABY NA PERSPECTIVA INTERARES DAS TEORIAS DA ARTE CLÁSSICA CHINESA

*James Joyce's Araby in interarts perspective of chinese classical art theories*

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### RESUMO

Este artigo explora os estados das teorias da arte clássica chinesa em Araby de James Joyce, revelando a ressonância da ideia além da mídia visual e da linguagem. O método de pesquisa é o Ekphrasis, uma humanidade interdisciplinar florescente na década de 90 do século 20, proporcionando oportunidades para pesquisas interartes, não apenas quadros na poesia ou a poesia em quadros, mas métodos de apreciação multidimensional. A Araby de James Joyce é analisada neste artigo pelo esclarecimento das teorias de caligrafia de Cai Yong, um oficial e estudioso da dinastia Han oriental, para criar uma apreciação interartes.

**Palavras-chave:** Interarts, Ekphrasis, James Joyce, Araby, Teorias da arte clássica chinesa, Cai Yong.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces Cai Yong's Chinese calligraphy theories in connection with James Joyce's *Araby* by case studies of embodiment of eastern calligraphy wisdom in western English literature. The innovative study can help better understand English literature with enlightenment from visual arts.

Chinese classical art theories include theories on paintings, calligraphy, seals, art crafts, music and dramas. The foundation is the combination of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, encompassing the elements of beauty and ugliness, elegance and vulgarity, emotion and will, form and spirit, literary grace and essence, deficiency and excess, mental state, indoctrination, pleasing functionality and artistic conceptions to perfect and systemize the theories. Chinese classical art theories span five stages: Pre-Qin and Han Dynasties, Six Dynasties, Tang Dynasty and Five Dynasties, Song and Yuan Dynasties and Ming and Qing Dynasties, which include Lao Tzu's "Iridescent colors causing blindness", Gukaizhi's *Painting Thesis*, Xie He's "Six Techniques of Painting", etc. (Zhou Jiyin, Chen Shining, 2010)

## 1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Chinese classical arts, like all arts, are the soul of China. The interarts study began early with Feng Zikai in 1920's. He published on journals articles on connection of Chinese painting and Chinese literature, like the expression of space, subjective and objective observation, and complementary coexistence of visual and literary elements (Feng Zikai, 2015). In 2007, Kuang Haoyuan comparatively studied Su Shi's theories of literature, painting and calligraphy (KuangHaoyuan, 2007). In 2010, Liu Fengxia explored the relationship between art and literary theories in Six Dynasties (Liu Fengxia, 2010). In 2013, She Zhenhua analyzed French Chinese-born author Cheng Baoyi's Chinese painting theories by his literary works (She Zhenhua, 2013). In these studies, Chinese literary works are associated with Chinese classical art theories. In this paper, Chinese classical art theories will enlighten English literature. This is the difference between this paper and the former researches.

The research method is ekphrasis. Ekphrasis in poetry has been used in the eighth century B.C. In Homer's epic *The Iliad*, ekphrasis, has been used to describe the shield borne by the hero Achilles as a rhetorical technique. It depicts matters coming before court of law in a peaceful city and battling Troy, the home of a King, dancing young men and women, field, vineyard, sheep farm, a herd of cattle, and the earth, sea, sky, the moon and the cosmos (Heffernan, 2004). The past coexists with the future in the painting in a circle on the shield. Ekphrasis is not just rhetorical technique but a vital literary tradition related to visual arts, which perfects the aesthetic experience of perceiving the world in multidimensional perspective.

The interdisciplinary research into visual and verbal arts, ekphrasis, became a burgeoning interdisciplinary humanity in the 90s of the 20th century, exploring art of painting in language arts. Like other literary genres, ekphrasis entered postmodern times after classical, neoclassical, Romantic, Modern times. (Tan Qionglin, 2010)

A Song Handscroll *Streams and Mountains Without End* and Gary Snyder's Ekphrastic Poem "Endless Streams and Mountains": Perspectives on GuoXi's *Essays on Landscape and its Embodiment in Modern American Painter Poems* by Tan Qionglin in 2010 analyzed American oriental ekphrasis which means American poems depict ancient Chinese landscape paintings with the form of Chinese classical poetry and Japanese haiku. Tan Qionglin put forward the term American oriental ekphrasis for the first time and developed modern ekphrasis. (Tan Qionglin, 2010)

Western authors have explored in interdisciplinarity since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Pictures of Romance: Form Against Context in Painting and Literature* was written by Wendy Steiner in 1991. It was discovered that literary romance had unrealistic suspense outside of time because Renaissance and post-Renaissance paintings depicted suspended moment of perception with extraordinary clarity and condensed meaning, both of which departed from reality. The difference is that painting is the art of space while literature the art of time. The conclusion was arrived through analyses of works of Keats, Hawthorne, Joyce, and Picasso, while a return to conventions appeared later in 20<sup>th</sup> century both in painting and literary works (Wendy Steiner, 1991). Interconnection between literature and the visual arts is discovered in this book by Wendy Steiner.

Stephen Cheeke conducted the first study to offer a useful general survey of the larger philosophical and theoretical questions arising from the encounter of literary texts and artworks. (Stephen Cheeke, 2011)

The latest studies of Ekphrasis are as follows. In *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, Ruth Webb enables listeners and readers see in their imagination through words alone. The author emphasizes the importance of the visual imagination in ancient responses to rhetoric, poetry and historiography. This study includes a full analysis of the ancient technical sources. (Ruth Webb, 2016)

*Fictional Artworks: Literary Ekphrasis and the Invention of Images* compiled by Valeria Cammarata studies images in painting, photography and cinema invented by literature, the relationship between text and image, between verbal and visual in modern and contemporary literature from the point of view of aesthetics, visual culture and literary theory, trying to build a map of the notional ekphrasis. (Valeria Cammarata, Valentina Mignano, 2017)

Visual experience alone is not sufficient for the synthesis or the communication of meaning, but that a verbal answer that in turn sparks your vision. Art is not isolated but an amalgamation of varied media. (Claire Barbetti, 2011) Ekphrasis also sheds light on pictographic Chinese calligraphy.

### 1.1 Chinese calligraphy origin and theories

Cangjie, the inventor of Chinese characters, is an official historian of the Yellow Emperor. He has four eyes and four pupils, exceptional insight into the essence of everything. His invention of Chinese characters brings forth immortal wisdom, because of which ghosts cry and the sky rains millet. Cangjie observes characteristics of all things, including the sun, the moon, stars, clouds, lakes, oceans, manners of birds and beasts, as well as he himself to create pictographic Chinese characters. The outside and the inside cosmic worlds correlate. Thus visual and verbal arts are interlinked.

Chinese calligraphy theories emerge in the period of two Han Dynasties after the existence of Chinese calligraphy. The period of two Han Dynasties is between the pre-Qin period and Wei-Jin period, prospering in seal script, clerical script, semi-cursive script and cursive script, as well as calligraphy theories by Cai Yong, Wang Xizhi and Wei Shuo, etc. The shape, size, stretch, and type of hair in the brush, the color and density of the ink, speed and surface texture of the paper are the main physical elements; while the connection of universe and calligraphy is revealed.

## 2 CAI YONG'S CALLIGRAPHY THEORIES

Cai Yong, an official and scholar of the Eastern Han Dynasty was a master in calligraphy, music, mathematics and astronomy. One of his daughters, Cai Yan, was also a famous poet and musician.

In his *The Theory of Writing Brush*, because of the correlation of the outside and the inside cosmic worlds, one should follow the natural law. Before practicing calligraphy, one should abandon all the distractions, free from mundane affairs, concentrating. Forced to do so, one cannot practice well even with the best brush. Filled with awe and silence, sit still and contemplate as if facing the supremacy. One does not talk improperly or pant fiercely. That is the way to practice calligraphy.

In *Calligraphy Nine Potential*, calligraphy also follows the law of nature with Yin and Yang, which forms the motion of the brush.

The trace of the beginning and ending of the brush should be hidden in the character. With or without the brush on the surface of the paper, the tension and power stays within the character and the appearance is formed outside. When the force comes, it cannot be stopped; when the force is gone, it cannot be restrained. The softness of the brush decides the various changes. The upper and the lower part of the character should support each other.

There are nine ways to construct Chinese characters.

- (1) Turning of the brush should be connected and disconnected; the disconnected part should not be isolated.
- (2) The movement of the tip of the brush should be the opposite before start writing.

- (3) When the stroke starts, the middle of the brush stays right in the middle of the stroke.
- (4) The tip of brush should be hidden within the stroke when the stroke ends.
- (5) Short and quick movements of the brush are adopted to form the rhythm of series of strokes.
- (6) Contraction and release are used in the process of movement.
- (7) Resistance coexists with dynamic advances.
- (8) Horizontal strokes look like fish scales.
- (9) Vertical strokes look like reining in the horse. (Zhou Jiying, Chen Shining, 2010)

**Figure 1: Cai Yong Xiping Classics Inscription**



With the guidance of nature, the art of calligraphy can reach transcendent state.

### 3 EKPHRASIS ANALYSIS OF ARABY

James Joyce is an Irish novelist, short story writer, and poet, one of the most influential and important authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a self-imposed exile, Joyce's psychological and fictional world is always in Dublin, the city which provides the settings for all his fictions.

James Joyce's *Dubliners*, a collection of fifteen short stories, deals successively with events of childhood, youth and adulthood. All of the short stories are set in Dublin, Ireland on the themes of death, disease, and paralysis, interconnected by symbols and moods, exploring the subtleties of experiences that are common to all. All the characters in the stories struggle in minor, yet meaningful, events in everyday life with morality, personal frustrations, or restless desires. These stories contain no melodramatic conflict but those quiet moments in the characters' lives when they come to a sudden realization of the meaning of their existence (an epiphany).

The Epiphany is primarily associated with the birth of Jesus and the visit of the magi; in literature it is a sudden revelation of spiritual or moral meaning, an intellectual illumination of the nature of a thing.

Dublin is the living, symbolic backdrop of *Araby*. The gloomy atmosphere of North Richmond Street that actually sets the scene at the start of the story is an anticipation of what lies ahead for the little boy in the bazaar of *Araby*. The first sentence of the story begins with "being blind" and in the last sentence, the boy "saw" himself.

*Araby* is a story about a boy who wants to buy something for a girl on whom he has a crush. He looks forward to going to the bazaar. Unfortunately he misses the time for lack of money. He stands in the dark hall when he suddenly realizes that he himself is only a pitiful creature, an Epiphanic moment in the end. The story can be illustrated by Cai Yong's calligraphy theories.

### 3.1 Dualism of Yin and Yang

In Cai Yong's Calligraphy Nine Potential, because of the correlation of the outside and the inside cosmic worlds, one should follow the natural law. In Chinese characters, Yin and Yang coexist. So does Araby.

Figure 2: Yin and Yang<sup>1</sup>



Dualism of Yin and Yang can be found in the first love story Araby.

Araby is a romantic term for the Middle East, but there is no such place. The word is used to express the romantic view of the east that had been popular since Napoleon's triumph over Egypt throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And, of course, it is a romantic irony.

The beginning and the ending of the story also present the changes of Yin and Yang. The story begins with a blind street, which describes the condition of the boy's relation to reality. It is also Joyce's presentation of the Irish soul, uninhabited and detached with hopeless and discouraged color brown. In the end of the story, the boy sees himself as the reader has seen him for some time, and he realizes that there is no Araby in Ireland.

The contrast of light and darkness is used to describe the boy's encounter of the girl and his inner world. The people of Dublin seem to be living ghosts; the boys, who are very much alive, are surrounded by shades of people. And the girl's basking in a halo is but an illusion. All the boy's unrestrained lusts are released at night.

These arrangements in the story are just like the construction of Chinese characters which are invented by observing Yin and Yang in nature.

### 3.2 Hidden Forces

In Cai Yong's Calligraphy Nine Potential, the tip of the brush is hidden within the stroke when the stroke ends. As for James Joyce's Araby, the symbolic details are made for Joyce's convenience, lying around in the streets of Dublin waiting for him to pick them up.

The opening paragraph has prepared us both for a story as well as for an allegory, the priest as the former tenant of the house, carries several messages, which implies that the religion is dead. The three books found in the house are not simply books. The contents of the books insinuate the boy's confusion of romantic love, religious love and materialist love. As the story proceeds, we find that he deceives himself about the sexual, spiritual, and the financial realities.

Modernist technique of showing but not telling is also applied to describe the conversation between the boy and the girl. The boy's words are fragmented to imply that he has lost his self when facing the girl, stunned and confounded. According to the boy's answer, he can hardly tell the overtones of envy and bitterness in the girl's expression, so wrapped up in his own fantasy.

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved May 29, 2019 from [https://www.ancient.eu/Yin\\_and\\_Yang/](https://www.ancient.eu/Yin_and_Yang/)

The boy promises to go to Araby and to bring something for the girl. It is not just a promise but a vow which he will be unable to fulfill in the mundane world just like other wishful thinking. All the hidden parts in the story are just like the hidden power within strokes of Chinese strokes.

### 3.3 Tranquility and Wisdom

In Cai Yong's *The Theory of Writing Brush*, before practicing calligraphy, one should abandon all the distractions, free from mundane affairs, concentrating. In tranquility, answers to all the questions can be seen clearly, just like a clean mirror reflecting clearly the world.

The moment of truth appears at the end of the story. Joyce used epiphany as a literary device within each short story of his collection *Dubliners* (1914) as his protagonists come to sudden revelation that changes their view of themselves or of their social condition.

In *Araby*, after listening to a seemingly ordinary scrap of conversation, the boy is left alone in the hall, gazing up into the darkness. The boy is totally defeated: his quest has failed and he has not achieved his aim, which was to buy a present for the girl. This is a moment of tranquility, the Joycean epiphany, no distraction from the girl and the outside world. And he suddenly realizes his irony of romantic love, religious love and materialist love, his own worthlessness, his own foolishness, his unprofitable use of time and money, and the illusive opinion he has of himself.

Just like the art of Chinese calligraphy is created in tranquility.

## CONCLUSION

The wisdom from Chinese classical art theories will be a treasure-house to interpret English literature.

Various art forms are governed by universal human moral codes, which are not decided by mankind but rather the rules of the universe, such as kindness, honesty, agreement of thoughts and behaviors. When in tune with nature, human beings' wisdom will be discovered again in all arts.

In the *Republic*, Book X, Plato discusses artistic forms adopted by carpenters and painters to represent the epitome of bedness by God. There are three artists: God, the maker of the bed and the painter; the latter two are creator and imitator of the appearance. This sheds light on ekphrasis. No matter which art form has been adopted, the essence created by God is beyond the apparent art form.

Considering ekphrasis, the bond of visual arts and language arts, more teaching practices of literature or painting should be conducted in a new way.

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