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Seeing Isn't Always Believing: Case Studies of Pictorial Metaphors in Cross-Cultural Communication

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Abstract

In the age of images, people are constantly bombarded with visual stimuli, leading to instances of deception. This article examines three pictorial metaphors through the lenses of semiotics and cognitive psychology. First, it provides a redefinition and recategorization of pictorial metaphors. Second, it delves into the mechanism of pictorial metaphors: association, which consists of relativity, similarity and proximity. Finally, it presents three key takeaways: First, it's necessary for us to possess a visual literacy to adapt to the image-saturated era. Second, pictorial metaphor is a means to transfer emotions and attain emotional value. Third, it is crucial for us to maintain a critical awareness of visual narratives.

Keywords

pictorial metaphor, mechanism, emotional transfer, visual narratives, association

1. Introduction

In 1902, Liang Qichao (1873-1929), a leading intellectual and statesman of the Late Qing Dynasty, introduced the British Romantic poet George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) to Chinese readers in the second issue of "New Novels". This introduction was accompanied by a portrait of Byron, which played a crucial role in shaping Chinese readers' perception of him as a "great hero". This case exemplifies how visual images and textual narratives can interact to create powerful pictorial metaphors that transcend cultural boundaries.

The portrait of Byron, in particular, served as a visual metaphor that reinforced Liang's textual portrayal. It was not merely an illustration but a strategic tool that helped convey a specific image of

Byron—one that resonated deeply with the revolutionary and nationalist sentiments of the time. This use of visual imagery to enhance and shape textual meaning is a classic example of pictorial metaphor in cross-cultural communication.

However, this portrayal raises intriguing questions about the nature of pictorial metaphors and their impact on audience perception. Why did Liang choose to present Byron in this way, and how did Chinese readers, especially intellectuals, readily accept his depiction? These questions are not only historical but also relevant to contemporary discussions on the role of visual imagery in shaping public opinion and cultural understanding.

In the context of modern cross-cultural communication, where visual images often carry implicit meanings and narratives, understanding the mechanisms behind pictorial metaphors is crucial. This paper aims to explore these questions by focusing on two key aspects: First, the reclassification of pictorial metaphors in the context of cross-cultural communication; and second, the mechanism by which pictorial metaphors are generated and received. Understanding this mechanism is crucial for navigating the complexities of visual communication in the “Image Age”, where images often carry implicit meanings and narratives.

2. Past and Present Research of Pictorial Metaphors

Verbal and pictorial patterns have been integral to cross-cultural communication since ancient times. While verbal communication has been prevalent and universal, pictorials have often been employed to record or convey significant information, especially in the past when ideographic systems were not as evolved as they are today. Archaeological discoveries of historical murals and petroglyphs, such as the Chongoni Rock-Art Area in Africa, the Tanbaly archaeological site of Kazakhstan, and the Zuojiang Huashan Rock Art Cultural Landscape of China, have revealed tribal events and are crucial for understanding ancient civilizations. These discoveries underscore the essential role of pictorials in cross-cultural communication. The evolution of pictorial patterns, from simple strokes in primitive times to complex medium systems in modern times, reflects the growth of civilization and culture and the increasing frequency of the communication. In cases where linguistic barriers exist, pictorials or gestures can facilitate communication. This evolution has led to the emergence of Image Communication as an independent discipline, indicating the rapid development of communication studies and visual communication in the “icon times” as noted by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). But, the study of pictorial metaphors in the communication is a multidisciplinary field that intersects linguistics, semiotics, psychology, and cultural studies. It explores how visual symbols, signs, or pictorial metaphors convey meaning across cultures and how these meanings vary due to cultural differences. In the last years scholars have contributed to this field in various ways:

First, theoretical frameworks. Saussure’s (2011, pp. 32-38) semiology provides a foundational framework for understanding pictorial metaphors by distinguishing between the signifier (the image)

and the signified (the concept). Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006, pp. 16-113) have also expanded this aspect, introducing multimodality, which considers how images work with text to create meaning. Roland Barthes (1977, pp. 15-50) has further discussed the relationship between image and text, emphasizing the role of context in shaping interpretation.

Second, cultural evolution and dimensions. E. H. Gombrich (2000, 392-403) traced the evolution of pictorial metaphors from ancient art to modern media, focusing on their enduring role in communication, primarily within the arts. Geert Hofstede (1980, pp. 15-33) introduced cultural dimensions, which are crucial for understanding how cultural values influence the interpretation of pictorial metaphors.

Third, cognitive processing. Cognitive psychology research provides insights into how the brain processes pictorial metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 12-14) proposed that metaphors are rooted in the way we conceptualize the world, which is supported by neuroimaging studies such as theories, held by Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (1994, pp. 208-260) American psychologist.

Today, the study faces challenges and misunderstandings due to the complexity of interpreting them across cultures, nations, languages, and disciplines. The potential for misunderstandings is underscored by the inconsistency in definition, division and mechanism of pictorial metaphors and by the lack of consensus among scholars regarding the processes and motivations involved in interpreting the metaphor. Deborah Tannen (1991, pp. 9-59), American linguist, has discussed the role of schema in communication, arguing that different cultural schemas lead to misinterpretations of visual symbols. Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen (2003, pp. 21-32), American psychologists, have proved that some facial expressions are universally recognized, while others are culture-specific, highlighting the nuances of non-verbal communication, proving that there are different explanations on visual communications across cultures and nations.

3. Cases Analysis of Pictorial Metaphors

3.1 Case 1: Portrait of G.G.Byron

As mentioned in Introduction, “The portrait reinforced Liang’s narrative, acting as a catalyst for Chinese readers’ belief in Byron’s heroic status”. There is one reason to explain the event, that is Liang’s huge impact in China at the time, Liang’s influence will absolutely convince a vast readership of the introduction and illustration; but there is another ingenuity which is deliberated by Liang, that is Liang’s chosen portrait of Byron to convince his readers. We believe it is the portrait instead of other one which can facilitate the event. Chinese intellectuals assumed that Byron is a hero or a swordman. The following explorations probably explain it to some extent. First, the portrait embodies an image of a warrior, a swordman or a chivalrous hero, imagined by Chinese, especially by the kind of intellectual class. Byron’s image depicts a male figure dressed in resplendent attire. He is wearing a hat adorned with feathers, and it appears to be tied with a ribbon or a turban. His facial expression exudes

confidence and determination, complemented by a mustache and long hair that were fashionable at the time. He is clad in an elaborately decorated coat with intricate patterns and folds, signifying his status. Over his right shoulder, he has draped a fringed shawl or scarf, which adds to his majestic presence. His right hand rests lightly on the hilt of a sword at his waist, just a kind of image of swordman, the scabbard of which also appears to be exquisite, likely symbolizing his status. Overall, the portrait gives off a classical and elegant vibe, with the character's attire and posture revealing an air of nobility. Second, the denotation and connotation, conveyed by the portrait, with poetry and sacrifice, have mapped the similar dimensions to Chinese's imagination. Basically, what the portrait has conveyed, especially to Chinese intellectuals, are three folds. In the first, it has sort of rebellious spirit. According to Liang's introduction and Byron's works, readers have known that they are filled with the pursuit of freedom, equality, and justice, and Byron himself participated in the Greek War of Independence. His spirit of resisting foreign oppression and seeking freedom echoes with the image of a warrior or a swordman from traditional Chinese culture perspective. Besides, with a sword at his side and exotic attire, Byron's appearance just met the requirements which Chinese imagination about a distant exotic swordman needs. In the second, it is a kind of heroic image. Though the portrait depicts Byron as a handsome alien, the introduction told us he is No.1 poet of modern Britain, a great hero, who died of the Greek War of Independence at his age of 37. What's more, he was dedicated his life to the Greek people. All the deeds were satisfied with the imagination of Chinese readers about heroes, warriors or swordmen. Generally, Chinese, especially intellectuals, tend to identify with and respect a swordman or a hero. In Chinese' eyes, heroes, or the like, are full of loyalty and patriotism. In traditional culture, swordmen or heroes are seen as symbols of national spirit, willing to sacrifice their lives and happiness for the interests of the country and nation. For example, swordmen during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, renowned for loyalty and dedicated to the country, demonstrated the loyalty and patriotic feelings; they are morally excellent. Swordmen, like JingKe, who would rather die to assassinate the King of Qin, and heroes like Wen Tianxiang, would never surrender to the army of the Yuan Dynasty until his death, they both exemplify patriotism, moral standards and integrity, leading by loyalty and uprightness (Note 1). Besides. They are filled with benevolence and care and love. Swordmen or heroes from the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, and ancient intellectuals, cared for the welfare of the people and were willing to be custodians of Chinese people. They often stand up to resist foreign invasions for the interests of the their country and nation. The characteristics, which Chinese swordmen or heroes have, can be found or mirrored in Byron too, according to Chinese imagination.



Picture 1. G. G. Byron

Additionally, the literary influence of Liang and Byron is another reason for Chinese to trust Byron. There are two folds to explain it. One is Liang was a great man with immense influence, a supporter and promoter of the Reform Movement of 1898, his revolutionary works made waves and were very popular in China. And what he has done surely have influence and response among Chinese. On the other hand, Byron's poetry resonates with Chinese people. Liang brought Byron's poetry and stories, excerpts of *Giaour* and *Don Juan* to China (Liang, 2008, pp. 80-85). Byron's works and ideas, describing the foreign invasion and oppression against Greek people, so, they appealed the sympathy in China because the invasion by imperialist powers, resulted in losing its political independence and being reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, with its economy and people's livelihood severely impacted, understandably, Chinese people could easily share a deep empathy for the suffering caused by aggression with Greek people. Interestingly, after Liang's translation of Byron, Byron was widely translated by other scholars, such as Ma Junwu, Su Manshu, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, and Liang Shiqiu, Xu Zhimo, Wang Tongzhao, Shen Yanbing, Jiang Guangci, Liu Bannong and Zheng Zhenduo throughout the May 4th Movement; and a gust of Byron fever swept through the nation for a time (Song, 2011, pp. 59-178). And he had a profound impact on modern Chinese literature, which gave Byron's image special significance among Chinese intellectuals.

3.2 Case 2: Water Crisis

The next case to be analyzed is Picture 2-Water Crisis. Picture 2, actually, was a poster, issued by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (initiated as UNICEF) in 2007, which is part and parcel of a charity campaign for publicity to raise awareness of the consequences of water pollution over the world (Note 2). The campaign of water protection is one of series of environmental protection activities organized by UNICEF.



Picture 2. Water Crisis

We hold that Picture 2 is a kind of typical pictorial metaphor as for the following four points. First, what the picture has conveyed is a mushroom-cloud shaped by the explosion of an atomic bomb. As a modern man, especially those who have known something about the atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which has led to 210,000 deaths in a short time, so nuclear explosion is extremely horrible. It's no wonder that some nation is accustomed to threatening others with atomic bombs; it's likely a common sense that such an explosion will result in thousands of deaths in a short moment. At the same time, in addition to comparing the mushroom-shaped cloud to the one at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, other catastrophic consequences of the tragedy will also occur to viewers' mind of the picture immediately, such as health, thermal radiation, climate and ecological, social and psychological impact, political impact or other potential dangers in a longer term. Third, the legend "1.5 MILLION CHILDREN DIE EVERY YEAR FROM DRINKING POLLUTED WATER" provides a clear context to understand the poster. It helps us understand that the cloud depicted is made of polluted water rather than a physical nuclear explosion. By integrating the legend with the mushroom-shaped cloud, viewers of the picture can grasp the deeper connotations implied. Last but not least, the gloomy atmosphere of black and white has just added a touch of despair and horror to Picture 2. In short, all the points put together have communicated us a strong message: Polluted water is extremely harmful and fatal like atomic explosions. Herein, the purpose, which the picture has undertaken to evoke the awareness to protect drinking water from the viewers, has achieved. By transferring the consequences of atomic explosion to the polluted drinking water, the picture serves as a pictorial metaphor.

In addition to the points mentioned above, Picture 2 also serves as a catalyst for emotional and behavioral responses from the audience. It challenges viewers to confront their own complicity in environmental degradation and inspires action towards change. The image not only resonates with the horrors of nuclear warfare, but also draws parallels with other man-made disasters, such as chemical spills and industrial pollution, highlighting the shared consequences on human society.

Furthermore, Picture 2 exemplifies the power of art in driving social change. It is a testament to the ability of visual metaphors to stir public consciousness and potentially influence policy shifts. By invoking such strong imagery, artist encourages viewers to consider the urgency of addressing water pollution, to take proactive steps in their own communities. To bolster the message, we can turn to professional opinions and recent studies that underscore the severity of water pollution and its detrimental effects on health and environment. Globally, the issue of water contamination varies in scale and impact, necessitating a coordinated international response to safeguard this vital resource.

In brief, the pictorial metaphor in Picture 2 transcends mere artistic expression; it emerges as a potent vehicle for communication and a catalyst for change. This compelling imagery not only captures our attention but also serves as a clarion call to action, urging us to confront the current state of our world and the urgent measures we must adopt to preserve our most vital resource—clean water. The visual narrative encapsulated within the poster prompts us to introspect on our individual and collective roles in safeguarding the environment. It is a stark reminder of our shared duty to ensure the sustainability of our planet for the benefit of future generations, emphasizing the need for immediate and concerted efforts to protect and conserve natural resources.

3.3 Case 3-Picture 3: *The Backbone*

Case 3-Picture 3 given below, entitled with *The Backbone*, was a cartoon created by Steve Bell (1951-), a British political cartoonist, with a kind of response against the message sent by David Cameron (1966-), former prime minister of UK, to his members of Conservative Party. It was first released from Cameron's account on Twitter in May 2013. As a comment on the message, Bell published the picture on *The Guardian* online on May 22, 2013. Being both real and funny, Picture 3 is a pictorial metaphor, especially in the eyes of Chinese intellectuals.

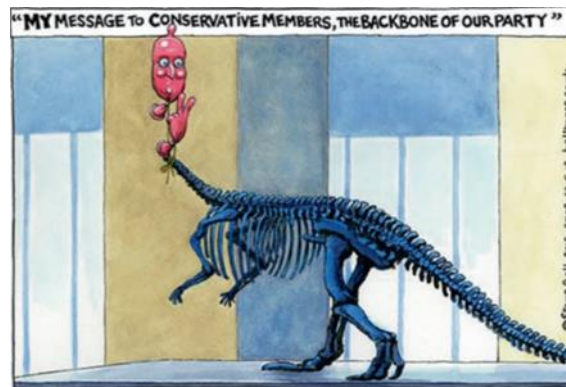
To better understand the context of Picture 3, it's necessary to briefly explain the background. Before the cartoon was released to the public, Cameron had posted a tweet, which serves as the caption in the cartoon, reading, "MY MESSAGE TO CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS, THE BACKBONE OF OUR PARTY". As the leader of the Conservative Party, what Cameron said to the party is nothing unusual; it is a common practice of "political correctness". From the picture, we can get the following message.

First, Cameron's appreciation for Conservative members. Cameron refers to the members as "the backbone of our party", indicating that he highly values their supports and contributions, considering them the solid foundation and source of strength for the party.

Second, the emphasis on unity and collective efforts. By directly addressing Conservative members, Cameron emphasizes the importance of unity. He recognizes that the party's success depends on the joint efforts and dedication of its members.

Third, his commitment to the party's future and direction. The cartoon shows that Cameron has specific message or plan to share regarding the party's future directions and policies. Perhaps he is seeking supports of the members to achieve the party's goals and vision.

Last, value on intra-party democracy and members' participation. The picture may also imply his emphasis on intra-party democracy and members' participation, which corresponds with his emphasis on members being the backbone of the party. He may be encouraging more members to involve into the party and contribute to party policies.



Picture 3. The Backbone

However, what was embarrassing for Cameron was that UK was facing high inflation, fiscal deficits, low employment, sluggish exports, worsening political divides, and health problems such as obesity, among other issues (Wang, 2013, p. 12). Such a shabby situation of UK would ignite public discontents and outrages. And large fraction of population even expressed the idea of leaving the European Union. As a result, Cameron agreed to hold a referendum on EU exit, which UK made it in 2020. Probably, that is why Steve Bell issued the cartoon as a political satire, which was an embodiment of public voices.

The cartoon, using humor and satire, conveys multiple layers of meanings about the Conservative and its members to viewers through the dinosaur and condom. Here are what they imply: First, outdatedness. The dinosaur means Cameron's message is outdated, extinct, or no longer relevant, just a sort of political clichés. In the context of the Conservative Party, it suggests that the party is seen as old-fashioned or out of touch with modern times. The Party is compared to a dinosaur skeleton, no flesh and blood, it indicates that the Party is dead. The image can be associated with the Party immediately by the audience. And the Party's status or influence is waning in contemporary society. Second, protection, prevention or control. The red character, made of a condom, looked like Cameron, can signify protection, prevention, or control over the spread of some kind of "contamination" or "diffusion". In a political context, this image suggests Conservative is trying to control the spread of certain ideas, policies, or social trends. Additionally, sexual connotation of the condom could be used to mock or criticize Cameron's personal image or public policies, implying that he is related to sex or his policies inappropriate. Third, Fragility. It is implied by both the skeleton and the condom. The skeleton, easy to be broken, could denote the fragility of Cameron's power. The vulnerability of a condom, which can be easily ruptured due to its super-thinness, can be used as a metaphor for the fragility of

Cameron's power, suggesting that his leadership position could be as susceptible to destruction as a condom. Fourth, being tied-off, preventing and binding. The tied-off condom can represent that members of Conservative or the leadership feel their opinions and actions are being constrained, or it might suggest that the Conservative is trying to control the outflow of message. As to the condoms, they are typically used to prevent "contamination" during sexual intercourse, that is, contraception and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. In a political context, it symbolizes the Party's attempts to control the spread of certain influences or ideas. Last, the cartoon is of humor and satire. The cartoon meant to be humorous and satirical, poking fun at Conservative leadership and its relationship with its members. It could be commenting on the party's perceived inability to adapt to changes or the disconnect between the party's leadership and its membership. Besides these implications listed, the legend, placed above the cartoon, conveying to the party members, who are being praised as the "backbone" of the party, satirized the Party sharply, the images, the condom and the skeleton might imply that this message is hollow or that the party's foundation is as fragile as a dinosaur's skeleton. Cameron thought he could have impacts upon the Conservative, yet he was becoming a backbencher. So the backbone is absolutely an irony against the Party and Cameron. Even though Chinese university students were asked to discuss the cartoon, a big majority of them can feel sarcastic about it. There is no culture barrier to understand the denotations and connotations communicated by Picture 3, because English and Chinese share at least three similar understandings about the expression "the backbone", such as: 1) pillar: it refers to the main supporting force of an organization, country, or system. E.g., Education is the backbone of national development; 2) Courage: it refers to firm determination and courage. E.g., He has a strong will and an unyielding backbone. 3) Core, foundation: it refers to the central or foundational part of something (Clara, 2025).

In short, this cartoon uses the dinosaur and condom, two items with strong symbolic significance, to convey criticism and satire of Cameron and Conservative Party. Such pictorial metaphors are commonly used in political cartoon to emphasize author's viewpoint while providing audience with humorous yet profound social commentary.

4. Definition and Division of Pictorial Metaphors

4.1 Definition of Pictorial Metaphors

Having examined the three cases presented above, we have gained a deeper understanding of pictorial metaphors. Now, we attempt to define the concept of pictorial metaphors with a more nuanced understanding. However, before defining, it is essential to review the existing definitions of the concept. Currently, there is one idea regarding pictorial metaphors as a subset of visual metaphors. In Chinese academic world, Guo Wei is a representative of this idea, with his book "Research On Visual Metaphor" being a contribution to the studies. According to the book, a visual metaphor refers to images generated through fusion or aggregation, treating sensory imageries as units, according to a

specific intent, and possessing a synthetic structure (Guo, 2018, p. 11).

Among foreign scholars, Virgil C. Aldrich is considered a master of visual metaphor studies. His work “Visual Metaphor” is a foundation of the studies because he is the first scholar to define visual metaphor in academia. Aldrich (1968, pp. 73-85) posits that a visual metaphor is a complex perceptual phenomenon involving the interplay between material, content, and subject matter, realized and expressed through the creative process of artist in visual arts. It is not simply a direct comparison between material and subject matter but a deep-level metaphorical expression involving perception and experience.

Conversely, there are other scholars like Charles Forceville, who rigorously distinguish pictorial metaphors from visual ones. His book “Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising” has gained acclaim in academic circles. Forceville (2002, pp. 108-162) argues that pictorial metaphor is a cognitive and communicative strategy employing visual elements to convey abstract concepts by mapping characteristics from a source domain onto a target domain. This metaphorical mapping is dynamic and shaped by context, the creator’s objectives, and the cultural significance of the visual symbols involved. The source domain provides a lens through which the target domain is perceived, potentially transforming our understanding of it. In pictorial metaphors, the concrete depiction of domains with specific forms, textures, and colors plays a crucial role in the interpretation process. The visual aspects, along with the medium and style of representation, can significantly influence how the metaphor is constructed and perceived. Pictorial metaphors are a testament to human creativity, allowing for the expression of complex ideas and emotions across various media, highlighting the intricate interplay between vision and cognition in communication.

Niu Hongbao, a professor at Renmin University of China, advocates in his article “Pictorial Metaphor and Its Mechanism” that pictorial metaphors are distinct from other forms of metaphors. According to Niu, a pictorial metaphor, as a form of metaphor conveyed through visual media, is akin to verbal metaphor and is a key means by which meaning is constructed within the language-symbol system. Its core mechanism involves transferring the attributes or characteristics of one object to another, or mapping the meaning of one term onto another entity, thereby establishing a pictorial relationship based on analogy, interaction, or cross-domain integration between different things, in order to engender new dimensions of meaning. The constituents of pictorial metaphor encompass three fundamental dimensions: First, the process of transformation or transference, which is the migration of meaning; second, the quality of crossing boundaries and domains, emphasizing the metaphor’s characteristic of transcending different symbolic realms; and last, the interaction or pictorial fusion between things or terms from different domains, a process that involves the negotiation and reconstruction of meaning. These elements interplay, rendering pictorial metaphor not just a linguistic phenomenon but a profound cultural and cognitive activity, revealing how humans engage in complex thought and emotional expression through visual symbols (Niu, 2022, pp. 5-22).

After examining the existing definitions and interpretations of pictorial metaphor, we think each of them has captured some essence of pictorial metaphors. They have paved the way for the research. Yet, there is some room for further deepening and improvement among them, such as vague definitions, neglect of cultural differences, insufficient dynamism and context dependency, non-specific role of imagery elements, lack of interdisciplinary perspective. And we try to define pictorial metaphors, we don't regard pictorial metaphor as a visual metaphor. Here is the definition, which reads:

A pictorial metaphor is a visual rhetorical device that conveys a message to viewers through the use of imagery, photo, picture or sign, something visual. It utilizes techniques such as comparison, analogy and transformation to convey message to viewers.

Compared with the previous definitions, this one is characterized by clarity, functional emphasis and technical explanation.

4.2 Division of Pictorial Metaphors

Currently, there are all kinds of divisions of pictorial metaphors in academy. Roughly speaking, they are represented by Charles Forceville in foreign studies and by Niu Hongbao in China. Here are Forceville's divisions about pictorial metaphors.

- 1) Only source domain or target domain is present, the other is missing: In this type of pictorial metaphor, one of the source domain or target one is represented in an image, while the other does not directly appear, requiring viewers to infer, imagine through context or other information.
- 2) Merged type. It refers to source domain and target one merge into one. In this type, the source domain and target one are combined in the image to form a unified visual representation, blurring the boundaries between the two.
- 3) Juxtaposed type. It means source domain and target one are juxtaposed. In this type, the source domain and target one are placed side by side, establishing a metaphorical relationship through their spatial juxtaposition.
- 4) Text-image metaphor. This type involves the combination of images and text, with text and images working together to construct the metaphorical meaning.

Forceville's divisions benefit us to further explore pictorial metaphors because they are comprehensive. His divisions cover different manifestations of the metaphors, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding and analyzing pictorial metaphors. They are a kind of creative cognitive framework. The divisions are based on cognitive linguistics, emphasizing the cognitive mechanisms of metaphor understanding and processing. Besides, Forceville claims metaphors are multimodal. His divisions consider the multimodal nature of pictorial metaphors, i.e., the combination of different modalities such as visual and textual, which show he is predictive and directional in the studies.

Let's see Niu's classifications of pictorial metaphors.

- 1) Identification metaphor. Among this type of pictorial metaphors, it is clear to distinguish between the dominant vehicle and tenor, as well as the source domain and target domain, and the cross-domain

interactions or integrations between the dominant tenors and vehicles, source domains, and target domains.

2) Difference metaphor. This type is similar to identification metaphor, it also allows for a clear distinction between the vehicle and tenor, and the relationships between the source domain and target one.

3) Multiple elements interacting metaphor. Among this kind of pictorial metaphor, it is not possible to clearly distinguish between the dominant vehicle and tenor, or the source domain and target one. Instead, it is a collection of metaphors formed by juxtaposition or superposition, and interaction of multiple schematized images.

Niu's classifications have the following advantages. First, they are comprehensive like Forceville, including different aspects of the metaphors, providing a big framework for understanding and analyzing them. Second, they are theoretical. Based on an in-depth understanding of the differences between pictorial metaphors and verbal ones, they offer a more nuanced classifications. Last, they are of practical guidances. The classifications are conducive to creation and interpretation such as art and advertising.

However, both Forceville's and Niu's divisions could be improved to some extent. First, they are complex. In practice, some pictorial metaphors are difficult to be categorized into one of the above-mentioned types because they have various elements and features. Second, they are culturally dependent. The understanding and interpretation of pictorial metaphors often depend on specific cultural backgrounds and viewers' experiences, aesthetic traditions, which reduce its universality of the divisions. For example, we regard it is ridiculous to have discipline classification based on region or nation as the case of Translation Studies in China; some scholars claim that they have Translation Studies with Chinese characteristics because Chinese is far more different from foreign languages like English. If so, every discipline of different nations is supposed to be independent and single. So, there is no universally accepted discipline over the world. Obviously, it is not the case at all. Last, they are subjective. Due to the polysemy and openness of the metaphors, different viewers may have different interpretations about the same pictorial metaphor, which increase the subjectivity of the divisions and interpretations.

As there are shortcomings in the existing divisions, we attempt to present our own divisions to the academic world. Our first category is realist pictorial metaphors, which refers to elements of source domain or target domain derived from "the living world" (Edmund Husserl), something truly existed in the world, rather fictional. We don't care whether the source domain or target domain is present or not in the picture discussed. For instance, Picture 1 discussed above falls into the realist one. The second category is fictitious imagery metaphor. This type refers to elements of source domain or target domain is invented, it can be mythical, imagined or speculative. According to this one, Picture 2 is a fictitious pictorial metaphor because the mushroom shape of polluted water is totally imagined, and the

catastrophic consequences are speculated as well, the terrified mood of black and white is also fabricated. In a word, Picture 2 is fictitious. The third one is hybrid pictorial metaphors, which combines both realist and fictitious elements mixed together in one picture. Picture 3 is an example of this type, as it features a fictitious head and a real body of skeleton of dinosaur; the head in the picture is modeled after Cameron, and is made of pink condoms. Compared to the previous divisions, this one is more concise and clear, practical. It has kind of universal applicability, for it avoids focusing on specific differences and characteristics of images.

5. Mechanism of Pictorial Metaphors

Based on the cases analysis of Picture 1, 2 and 3, we can get a mechanism of pictorial metaphors. Just like verbal metaphors, a pictorial metaphor also comprises target domain and source domain; relative theory is a general guideline to the mechanism. It follows the mechanism of verbal metaphors as well (Forceville, 2019, pp. 1-12). In the mechanism of verbal metaphors, it has three most fundamental concepts of all: conceptual mapping, cognitive framing and linguistic structure. Conceptual mapping lies at the heart of the working mechanism of verbal metaphors. It involves transferring the characteristics and structures of one conceptual domain (the source domain) to another different conceptual domain (the target domain). This mapping is based on the similarities or correlations between the two domains, allowing abstract or complex concepts to be understood and expressed through more concrete and familiar concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 12-30). For example, comparing love to war (“love is a battlefield”) maps the struggle and strategic characteristics of war onto romantic relationships, it helps audiences understand the complexities and challenges in love. Cognitive framing refers to the mental structures in our brains that are used to organize and interpret experiences. Verbal metaphors influence our perception and understanding of things by activating specific cognitive frames. These frames not only help us construct knowledge but also guide our emotional responses and behaviors. For instance, describing political struggle as “warfare” activates our cognitive frame related to war and conflict, thereby affecting our views and feelings about the political process. The linguistic structure of verbal metaphors is the foundation of their expression. These structures can be simple comparisons, such as “is”, or more complex idioms or phrases. The linguistic structure determines the degree of obviousness and the difficulty of interpretation of the metaphor. For example, the metaphor “he is a lion at the battlefield” clearly indicates similarity with a lion regarding bravery, while “time is money” equates the two concepts directly with the word “is”, allowing the meaning of the metaphor to be conveyed and understood. Though pictorial metaphors don’t use “is”, or the kind of words, they denote or evoke the similarities or sameness between source domain and target domain. Any connotation from cognitive frames of source domain tends to fall into target domain. Viewers tend to map or project the characteristics of the source domain onto the target domain, regardless of whether there is a true one-to-one correspondence or not between them.

But when pictorial metaphors are adopted in cross-cultural communication, the mapping is achieved through the symbolic meanings and associations of visual elements. Symbolic meanings, i.e., symbolism, involve elements in pictorial metaphors that represent other things or concepts. They connect to the target domain through cultural consensus, personal experiences or aesthetic traditions about the source domain. Associations are realized by transferring attributes from the source domain to the target domain. Herein, there are two common unconscious biases: First, if viewers think highly of the target domain, the attributes transferred from the source domain to the target domain become commendatory and positive, like Picture 1-G.G.Byron, Chinese, particularly intellectuals, have completely recognized Byron as a hero, so all positive qualities are ascribed to him, which creates a halo effect. Second, if we find the target domain negative, all attributes transferred from the source domain to the target domain are assumed to be derogatory and bad. In the course of these transferred associations, viewers often neglect to make moral judgments or verifications about the source domain. Specifically, Case 1-Picture 1 is a good case in point to demonstrate, actually Byron was not as noble as Chinese intellectuals thought. He was a romantic poet who aroused controversies among his readers and fans in UK. His contributions are widely discussed both domestically and internationally, so we won't discuss them again here and instead will focus on more infamous aspects of Byron. Byron's negative image was primarily derived from the controversies in his life and from the conflicts with societal norms of his time. The controversies are centered on subsequent aspects (OL, 2025). 1) Chaotic private life, marital breakdown, and misconduct: Byron's private life was considered chaotic and indulgent, including multiple extramarital affairs and improper relationships, which caused the controversies in the context of society at that time. Marital breakdown refers to Byron's unhappy marital life and the breakdown of his relationship with his wife, Anna Wilmot Byron, ultimately leading to a divorce, which was extremely rare and scandalous at the time. Misconduct implies he was accused of unethical behavior, including an incestuous relationship with his half-sister Augusta Leigh, although the authenticity of these allegations has always been contentious. 2) Social debauchery: Byron's behavior in social settings was seen as debauched and unrestrained; he often engaged in gambling, drinking, and other activities that contradicted the moral standards of the British upper class at the time. 3) Political radicalism: Byron's political views were considered radical and revolutionary; he supported revolution and reform, which caused dissatisfaction and opposition in the conservative society of his time. Additionally, there are accusations of moral degradation, emotional instability, and excessive self-centeredness against him. He was not respectful towards women and neglected family responsibilities. His emotions were considered unstable; he sometimes exhibited tendencies towards melancholy and irritability, which affected his interpersonal relationships. Byron was subjected to social exclusion and defamation during his lifetime, especially after he left England.

Yet, in the Late Qing Dynasty, communication and media were not as advanced as today, and the vast majority of Chinese didn't know much about Byron beyond what Liang had introduced. In order to

gain liberty and sovereignty, what Chinese needed was a hero to lead them to fight against foreign oppressions, invasions, and hegemonies. Chinese intellectuals were very eager to introduce new ideas, thoughts, or sciences, actually anything to achieve their goal of enlightening the public. Byron's revolutionary spirit and heroic attributes constituted the image expected by Chinese, especially intellectuals. They mapped all the good characteristics of swordsmen, righteous men, and heroes onto Byron. In their eyes, Byron was the ideal swordsman, a righteous man, and a hero to save them because Chinese common folks regard swordsmen, righteous men, and heroes as fearless and sacrificial, righteous and upright. Psychologically, especially from a cognitive and aesthetic perspective, Byron's attributes perfectly matched and met the imaginations and vaues of emotion, aspirations of Chinese, which can be classified into the expected horizons of Chinese at the time.

Next, let's see what mechanisms underlie Case 2: Picture 2 Water Crisis. We think that Picture 2 makes good use of the principle of emotional resonance. However, Picture 2 is a little bit different from Picture 1; the former refers to using the negative dimensions of emotions; the latter, Picture 1, apparently, transferring the positive ones from source domain to target one. Picture 2, by mimicking the shape of a mushroom-shaped cloud produced by a nuclear explosion, triggers the viewers' memories of historical nuclear explosions, especially the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or similar events. The strong visual impact and historical association can stimulate emotional responses in the viewers, including shock, fear, and anxiety, which are the negative contents of emotions, as well as concern and compassion, herein they are emotional drivers that prompt the viewers to take action in daily life. The ultimate aim of the pictorial metaphor is to prompt viewers to take action against water pollution. So, herein, by association, the key process of the mechanism is transferring the characteristics of the source domain to the target domain. This evokes a sense of empathy derived from the viewers, with a stronger focus on negative emotions, which motivates the viewers to take action. Besides, Picture 2 has also perfectly adopted black and white background to create an atmosphere of horror and terror. This is likely to lead to nausea and dizziness, especially for those who have had similar experiences. Although the background is not foregrounded and highlighted, it has magnified the catastrophic consequences of the water crisis and has heightened the atmosphere of disaster and terror. The background corresponds well with the source domain. Additionally, the legend not only provides the significant detail that makes the whole complete, but also clarifies the theme of the pictorial metaphor.

A third analysis is the discussion of what process has worked through Picture 3. As mentioned above, the principle of emotional resonance is also applied in the case, i.e., the association mechanism; Relative Theory is the guide to the application. In Picture 3, the source domain consists of the condom and the skeleton of a dinosaur. The condom is shaped after Cameron's appearance, highlighting his facial features; the skeleton is used as the trunk bones. The skeleton brings us feelings of being outdated, backward, conventional, and vulnerable, with no vitality, life or strength. The two parts

integrated together form a comic creature, a human-like head, with its limbs and torso resembling those of a dinosaur. Being vulnerable, scratch-sensitive, and easy to break, residual semen, the condom evokes the viewers' associations with sexual intercourse, or even some immorally vulgar behaviors. As a whole, the picture is comic, exaggerated, humorous and ironic; the V-shaped fingers and the legend add the effect to the cartoon. All the associations from the visual elements of the cartoon are mapped to Conservatives.

6. Conclusive Remarks

Based on the above-discussed explorations about pictorial metaphors, we believe that pictorial metaphors are extensively used in cross-cultural communication, publicity and political affairs. The image has deviated from original or realistic facts, but viewers and participants have accepted the displaced images, and are easily misled by the images in the activities because they fail to scrutinize the purposes of the activities or the images from a moral perspective, or they are unable to do so. However, we are living in an image era, so it is impossible for us to avoid pictures surrounding our lives, if we are just satisfied with the pleasure that pictorial metaphors bring us, not only are we being cheated, but we are also becoming tools and toys for those with evil intentions. What we gain is just a moment of emotional release, and it is of no value to us. Hence, we have to acquire some visual literacy, especially for college students. This literacy does not necessarily mean professional painting, but rather an understanding of the mechanics of pictures in cross-cultural communication, publicity, or political affairs and activities. Second, we have to be clear that pictorial metaphors are a medium that transfers emotions and creates a shared emotional resonance through psychological associations. Third, we should remember that all pictures which help verbal expressions are visual narrations, and they could be fabricated to convince audiences. If readers are conscious of judging texts critically, you should be equally critical when looking at pictures to distinguish false parts or political ideologies hidden behind from them to avoid falling into traps.

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Notes

Note 1. Jing Ke refers to 荆轲 in Chinese; and Wen Tianxiang 文天祥.

Note 2. Dicerto, Sara. (2018). *Multimodal Pragmatics and Translation: A New Model for Source Text Analysis*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, p.139.

Note 3. Ibid., p.105.