

Original Paper

Weaving History: A New Historicist Dialogue on Power, Anxiety, and Spider Imagery in Whitman and Yuan Mei

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the spider imagery in Walt Whitman's and Yuan Mei's poetry through a New Historicist lens. It reveals the role this imagery plays in a cross-cultural dialogue on power and anxiety. By integrating Foucault's "power discourse", Greenblatt's "cultural negotiation" and Althusser's "symptomatic reading", the analysis proceeds from imagistic essence to strategic deployment and finally to structural metaphor. At the level of imagistic essence, Whitman's spider condenses the spiritual symbol of an expansive, foundational self in early America, while Yuan Mei's spider, through its operation of a "selective web", reveals the pragmatic, calculating nature of power within the peak of Qing Dynasty. At the level of textual dialogue, Whitman's constructive poetics actively participates in shaping an emerging national mythology, whereas Yuan Mei's deconstructive irony deftly punctures the latent rules and unspoken compromises of the proclaimed prosperous age. At the level of power structure, the "radially expansive" power metaphor embodied by Whitman's spider reflects a distinct modern "anxiety of blankness", while the "centripetally selective" power mapped by Yuan Mei's spider corresponds to the late imperial "anxiety of density". Together, they demonstrate how poetic imagery, by engaging in the negotiation and articulation of contemporary power discourses, vividly substantiates the core New Historicist claim that "the text is a historical presence", acting not as a mirror but as an agent within the force field of history.

Keywords

New Historicism, spider imagery, power discourse, cultural circulation, modernity anxiety

1. Introduction

The first contribution of New Historicism is that it no longer believes in the traditional idea of “literary autonomy”; instead, it thinks that “the historicity of texts” and “the textuality of history” are two sides of the same coin (Montrose, 1989). The two contradictories hold that texts are inseparable from the material conditions, power relations and ideological systems in which they are created; at the same time, they agree that our own “history” of knowledge has always been mediated by textual traces and narratives. Hayden White (1973) supplies the epistemological foundation for this latter claim by demonstrating that historical interpretation operates through narrative devices—emplotment, metaphor, and metonymy—that are traditionally associated with literary fiction. For White, a historical account does not simply mirror past events but organizes them into a coherent story whose meaning is contingent on its narrative form. This implies that historiography and poetic composition are not radically separate enterprises but share a common ground: both construct intelligible worlds through the selective arrangement of events and the deployment of tropes. Such a perspective is particularly pertinent to the present study: it allows the spider imagery of Walt Whitman and Yuan Mei to be read not as ornamental metaphor but as an active participant in the very structuring of historical consciousness. By weaving a web, these poets are not merely depicting nature; they are performing an act of narrative configuration that parallels the historian’s task of organizing raw events into meaningful order. Walt Whitman and Yuan Mei have used spider imagery to express their views on this issue in different ways. It has two functions: firstly, it is a “textual representation” or encoding of the different power structures and epistemic norms in 19th-century America and mid-Qing China; secondly, it is an active “cultural practice” that intervenes in, negotiates with, and may alter the historical understanding and subjective experience of the contemporary audience. The whole framework indicates that the spider image can be a symbol of power, a place for cultural exchange, and also a sign of hidden historical problems. All the above theories together form a complete three-dimensional system of analysis for the symbolic, strategic and structural attributes of a poetic image.

Existing scholarship on either the poet or on comparative imagistic studies generally falls into one of two categories. The first is an aesthetic or formalist reading of the poetic image; it values lyrical beauty or metaphysical suggestion and pays little attention to history. Only the second one lists New Historicism as an idea or general background and does not conduct the specific “thick description” analysis that actually integrates theoretical tools, close reading and rich historical context. The first problem is that there is no steady and profound analytical thread in the “power discourse” to explore all the many functions of an image; this includes its use as a symbol of social forces, its function as conscious or unconscious poetic techniques, and, finally, its capacity to serve as a metaphor for civilisation or knowledge. This gap often results in a disconnect between the theoretical proposition and the textual explanation, thus failing to achieve the particular critical spirit of New Historicism; that is to say, we cannot “reconstruct history in the very texture of the text” and therefore overlook the

large-scale patterns of power in micro-practices of representation.

To address the above systematic deficiency in the analysis of power discourse, this paper will employ a gradual analysis method and move from micro-imagery to meso-strategy and finally to macro-structure. The above architecture will be used to integrate the three elements of theory, text and history more deeply. The main content of the thesis will be introduced in the following order.

First, the part called “The Historical Essence of Imagery” traces the history of the spider as a symbol of power and determines its basic constructive function in Whitman’s work and its deconstructive function in Yuan Mei’s work. Second, in “The Historical Dialogue of Texts”, poetic agency is examined to see how different poets have used the image of a spider to participate in and alter the dominant discourse of their times, distinguishing between constructive negotiation and deconstructive negotiation. Finally, the “Metaphorical Power Structure” is elevated to the level of civilisation, and it shows how even the very structure of power, as metaphorised by the two spiders, reflects deep-seated structural anxieties caused by contact with modernity—the “anxiety of blankness” and the “anxiety of density”. All sections are based on the foundation of New Historicist theory, supported by precise and reasonable close readings of primary materials, and firmly situated in a specific historical period. In short, the goal is to provide people with a clear, convincing but subtle reason to believe that spider images in this context are a “miniature theatre of civilizational anxiety” and carry various stories of power, identity, historical change, etc., in an intimate and observable manner.

2. Method

2.1 Power Discourse and Symbolic Representation

Foucault’s (1977) new idea of power is the basis for this paper. He does not believe that power is mainly a repressive force under the control of rulers, but rather an extensive, diffuse mode of operation through networks of discourse, systems of knowledge, institutional arrangements and symbols in daily life. It works to shape the subjects of who we can be, to establish norms that determine what is right or wrong, and to create social and conceptual spaces. A very good natural metaphor for this is the spider’s original behaviour of building a web. The act of spinning a web is a way to create rules for living in a certain place. The Web’s structure is to create a space and then enclose one’s own. The selectivity of the sticky thread is to filter out some things and let others go. Therefore, the Web can be considered an actualised symbol of power discourse and an observable system of rules and relations. Yuan Mei’s idea of a “selective web” further shows the difference in strategies and the unabashedly pragmatic core of much power operation; it does not seek the universal application of law but rather intends to apply it selectively for particular purposes.

2.2 Textual Negotiation and Historical Construction

Stephen Greenblatt (1988) was one of the first to advocate for New Historicism and believes that literary works are not passive reflections of society but dynamic spaces where social forces are

scattered and opposed. Texts are nodes in the network of cultural production, and they are constantly interacting with other current discourses in law, religion, politics and economics. They are not just the “background” of history; rather, they actively engage in the contestation, shaping and constructing the meaning of history. As Jin (2019) observes, New Historicism transforms the purely internal intertextuality of formalist criticism into a “cross-genre intertextuality” between historical and literary texts within a cultural totality, thereby expanding the scope of negotiation beyond literary conventions to social mechanisms and practices. This cross-generic perspective allows the spider image to function not as a closed poetic trope but as a discursive node where literary expression intersects with legal, moral, and institutional forces. Text can be used to create an attractive and touching cultural symbol, as did Whitman in “Spider”, and thus instill a sense of national identity and purpose in people’s hearts. At the same time, a text can be used as a centrifugal force to reveal the cracks, hypocrisy and latent violence of official power through irony, parody or strategic indirection; Yuan Mei did so with a smile. Both the hymnal and the satirical mode are valid and powerful forms of “textual intervention in history”, and literature has agency in the cultural-political field.

2.3 Symptomatic Reading and Latent History

Louis Althusser, the Marxist philosopher, has provided a method for the New Historicists to work through his idea of “symptomatic reading”. Therefore, a critic should not be limited to analysing the obvious, logical “speech” of a work, but rather pay attention to what is left out, how it contradicts itself, and where it breaks its own rules. These textual “symptoms” are not deficiencies but serious signs that the social conditions, historical pressures or ideological conflicts at that time want to suppress, control or ignore through the dominant discourse (Althusser, Balibar & Establet, 2016). Yuan Mei’s “wordless smile” and his spider’s fastidious distinction between moths and bees in the poetry at hand are not merely charming details; they are serious symptoms of a power system that publicly preaches benevolence but privately practices calculation. In the same way, the deep “isolation” of Whitman’s spider in the “measureless oceans of space” and its “ceaseless” activity are all expressions of the basic anxiety of building a new nation from scratch. Therefore, symptomatic reading can help us uncover not only the obvious content of the poems but also their hidden meanings and the deep structures and collective psychic burdens of the era they were written in.

3. Result

3.1 The Spider as Historical Symbol: Power Embodied

3.1.1 Whitman: Constructing the Expansive American Self

Walt Whitman’s spider appears in a particular American episteme (Foucault, 1977) in the mid-19th century, and this is a “grid” of perception organised by the combined demands of “individual self-establishment” and “national identity construction”. The main American world view in the mid-19th century was based on the joint goals of “self-realisation” and “nation-building”. This was the

era of Emersonian self-reliance, democratic individualism and the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Greenblatt's theory of "self-fashioning" also shows that people and groups create their own identities by using the symbols that are already available in culture (Greenblatt, 1980).

Whitman's Spider is obviously the result of the call for this cognitive and cultural system. The creature is shown to be "alone", and the filament is emitted "out of itself" into the "vast empty space" (Nathanson, 1992). The "vacant vastness" is polysemous; it is the physical boundary of the American continent, and more profoundly, it is what Foucault would refer to as an "epistemic blankness". As a new republic deliberately breaking away from European tradition, America did not have ready-made myths and symbols for national identity. A spider, spreading out from a sovereign, self-contained centre, is a fine example of the idea of "self-fashioning" in this period (Greenblatt, 1980). It has many attractive qualities: it is in line with the Protestant work ethic (labour creates meaning), it aligns with Transcendentalist ideas (the individual soul seeks unity with nature), and it conforms to the spatial-expansionist logic of westward expansion. Thus, the spider is not an unusual natural phenomenon. Greenblatt believes that it is a culturally productive symbol which provides a basic, reproducible emblem for the next narratives of the American national spirit; it is active, exploratory, self-reliant, and is destined to fill a void. Whitman's democratic ideas celebrate "the broad masses of common people" and advocate for "freedom, equality, fraternity", so his spider is a metaphor for the collective labour and aspirations of the people who are "the true masters of the United States". The two symbols work together to promote the spirit of democracy among the people.

3.1.2 Yuan Mei: Deconstructing the Selective Rule in High Qing Society

Yuan Mei's insistence on "native sensibility" (xingqing) and his axiom that "apart from native sensibility there is no poetry" (Zhang, 2007, p. 14) underpins his poetic practice, which privileges authentic feeling over orthodox morality. This is why his spider, through its selective web, exposes the gap between official rhetoric and practical power. Yuan Mei's spider is a deconstructive symbol that runs counter to the constructive motivation of Whitman. Foucault's (1977) analysis of modern and by extension, late imperial power is again relevant here; power often does not take the form of conspicuous repression but rather operates through the detailed regulation of daily life, classification and management of individuals to foster a disciplined, productive society. The first line of Yuan Mei's quatrain (Yuan, 1988, p. 668), "Why does the spider weave its web with such care?", is a powerful metaphor for this "spatialisation of power", and Yuan directly observed and commented on it in his own literary works. As shown in his famous but controversial 1788 collection of ghost stories *Censored by Confucius*, Yuan lived during the Qing Dynasty, a period that promoted "political and moral conservatism by stifling Confucian orthodoxy", and although the government claimed to be universally just, the "dense web" of discipline established in practice based on Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism and enforced through rituals, examinations and legal institutions was not very fair (Louie & Edwards, 1996). As shown repeatedly in Yuan's ghost stories, this web always targets the weak, such as prostitutes and

impoverished scholars, and ignores the powerful; this trend can be seen in the line, “To trap the moth, but the bee passes by fairly?”(Yuan, 1988, p. 668)

Althusser’s idea of “symptomatic reading” (Althusser et al., 2016) has led us to notice a small but significant detail: the moth is benign and beautiful, thus politically docile or harmless; on the other hand, the bee is diligent and has the power to “sting” for criticism, resistance, or even direct opposition, yet it is still allowed to pass. This is not an omission but an expression: the spider, as an instrument of power, is deliberately selective. Louie and Edwards (1996) think that based on his own experience of judicial injustice while serving as an official (1743-1749), there is a mismatch; that is, the imperial ideal of “benevolent governance” is not genuine but rather a disguise, and the true reason is strategic risk management—the desire for security, the avoidance of disorder, and the consolidation of power by marginalising potential rebels. Yuan, therefore, makes a good symptomatic study of what appears to be an ordinary secular painting (Shi, 2025) and reveals the hidden power relations under the splendor of the Qing Dynasty in concrete terms. His spider is not only a poetic metaphor but also an abbreviated critique of the power discourse he addressed in his later banned book.

3.1.3 Synthesis: The Spider as Both Foundational Symbol and Critical Symptom

Based on the theories of Foucault and Althusser, this chapter has analyzed the historical nature of the spider as a symbol of power in the two different cultural contexts and revealed the close connection between poetic imagery and the epistemic system of that time. Whitman’s spider is a representative constructive symbol, and its “radially expansive” posture is not only a poetic device but also the materialisation of 19th-century America’s epistemological aspiration. Given that China had been cut off from European culture and faced a “blank” continent and symbolic frontier, the tireless web-spinning of this spider reflects the two main demands of that time: to build a strong, self-reliant “individual subject” based on Transcendentalist idealism and to imagine a united “national body” in the vast unknown. It is the symbol of the foundation that unites the Protestant work ethic, democratic individualism and Manifest Destiny in a single system of symbols to actively create the cultural logic that would justify America’s expansionist project.

Yuan Mei’s spider, on the other hand, is a very deconstructive symptom, and its “centripetally selective” behaviour is a small-scale manifestation of the practical calculation of power in the late imperial period. Where Whitman’s spider wanders in a void, Yuan’s is caught in a tight web of Confucian orthodoxy, bureaucratic ritual and ideological surveillance; Foucault believed that this was a “disciplinary society” of close observation. As shown in the symptomatic reading by Althusser, the seemingly minor detail “To trap the moth, but the bee passes by” is actually an unstated logic of power, not universal justice, but strategic risk management. The spider points out that the imperial idea of “benevolent governance” does not match the reality of power, and it is avoiding people who could cause trouble. It is a symbol of dissent; from an ordinary observation of nature, something critical has sprung up to expose the hypocrisy of the Qing Dynasty and the unequal distribution of wealth.

Although the spider has long been regarded as an emblem of power and is thus constructive in Whitman's work, Yuan Mei has used it to challenge this notion in his own ways according to the times.

3.2 *Strategies of Negotiation: Poetic Intervention in Historical Discourse*

3.2.1 Whitman's Construction Strategy: Weaving the National Myth

Whitman believed that poets should be "proponents of American democracy" who "celebrate the spiritual independence of the new nation", so he undertook grand construction. His poetic work, particularly *Leaves of Grass*, has been a long-lasting positive cultural force in the nascent "national mythology" of 19th-century America. Greenblatt's (1988) idea of negotiation is relevant here; literary works do not just appear in history but also interact with it, negotiating over existing cultural materials, conventions and anxieties to create new forms of understanding and collective emotion. The spider in *A Noiseless Patient Spider* is a typical example of this. The traits of a spider are also regarded as virtues, such as being quiet, diligent and tenacious. They are a poetic representation and symbolic transformation of the typical pioneer spirit associated with the westward movement. Whitman was able to elevate the real, and often harsh, conditions of life for the frontier people into a sublime tale of national will. The individual soul or spider, alone in the universe, becomes every pioneer, and the struggle of every pioneer is the nation's spiritual journey (Nathanson, 1992).

Greenblatt later proposed that the mechanism of sublimation and collective identification can be understood in terms of "wonder" and "resonance" (Greenblatt, 1990). First of all, a strong central image is used to evoke an emotional response in readers. Whitman then links this deep sense of self to the practical goals of American nation-building and evokes "wonder". Poetic alchemy has elevated the spider from a zoological object to a literary one. It "circulates" as a powerful cultural symbol in the economy of American social energy, and it is also a place where the values of rugged individualism, relentless labour and a quasi-religious belief in Manifest Destiny are strongly concentrated and spread. As Liu (2016) pointed out, in this way of writing, a "textbook for national thought" was effectively created, and the historical connotations of American identity were actively produced rather than just presented.

3.2.2 Yuan Mei's Deconstruction Strategy: Unraveling the Rules of Prosperity

Yuan Mei, writing in the spirit of the Qianlong era, often called it the high point of the Qing Dynasty, took the opposite approach of cultural negotiation. His seemingly casual, almost offhand "Wordless, I laugh to the east wind, clear and bright" is actually a very deliberate act of "deconstructive negotiation" with the traditional, self-congratulatory discourse of Qing prosperity (Yuan, 1988, p. 668). Greenblatt (1988) thinks that writers can use humour, distance or an air of innocence to create irony, thus taking a critical distance from the main ideas of the era and showing the flaws in them. Yuan Mei's *smile* shows a kind of distance from the strictness of official Confucianism. He notices that spiders have a particular choice, and out of curiosity, he begins to doubt the official words of "universal fairness" and "impartial rule", seeking to uncover the real reasons behind such decisions.

The readers, having shared this knowledge of a “smile”, are led to notice the distance between the great imperial story and the reality of daily power. This is in line with the New Historicist idea of “the textuality of history”. According to this idea, the history we can learn about is never an unvarnished reflection of the past; rather, it is a textual system formed by particular selections, arrangements and interpretations, and is thus open to many different, even conflicting, readings. In this way, Yuan Mei’s poem is a type of alternative historical text; it does not deny the actual existence of material prosperity but rather aims to dismantle the official narrative’s exclusive claim to be the sole truth of that time. He is not interested in the whole picture of great stories; rather, his attention is drawn to a specific, small scene in daily life—a spider’s web, where the spider catches a moth but lets a bee go by unharmed. This line indicates that the rhetoric of “universal impartiality” in the official story does not match the practical logic of power. The division of moths and bees by nature is not random; it is an optimal allocation of power: the moth is harmless and easily captured, so it is a suitable object for discipline; the bee is diligent and hardworking, but it also carries a sting—potential criticism, resistance or subversion—and is thus allowed to pass with caution. Official “impartiality” is actually a particular way of governing, and official “unbiasedness” is, in fact, a strategic choice. Yuan Mei’s deconstruction therefore has a special effect: it does not need to be loudly proclaimed or passionately advocated; a knowing smile and a web-spinning spider are all required to reveal an irreparable flaw in the grand narrative of the Qing Dynasty. This crack is precisely the space he opens up for a skeptical readership; here, history is no longer considered a single, official answer but is instead revealed to have many diverse options.

3.2.3 Synthesis: The Janus-Face of Poetic Agency

Based on Greenblatt’s ideas of negotiation and circulation, this chapter will explore the particular poetic techniques used by Whitman and Yuan Mei in their poems to connect with the spirit of the times. Whitman advanced the idea of constructive participation and added the spider symbol to the mythology of the New America; through the emotional forces of “wonder and resonance”, he built a collective identity and affirmed an optimistic, progressive historical goal. Yuan Mei uses a spider and deconstruction to apply irony in his work and challenge the traditional history. Diagnosis will be in the form of symptomatic reading to show that there are contradictions and inconsistencies in traditional historical narration, thus exposing the underlying rules of the system. The two contrasting ways of engaging with the text show that literary art in history has a Janus face: it can be a strong producer of unifying cultural ideas and collective identity, and at the same time, it is also an extremely powerful interrogator, destabiliser, and critic of those very ideas.

4. Discussion

4.1 *Metaphors of Modernity: Civilizational Anxieties Embodied*

Previous studies have investigated the function of the spider as a symbol of power in history and how it has been used in various strategies for poetic negotiation. To take this idea further, we can realize that the very structure of power shown in the two spiders also reveals an even more basic level of historical experience: the different forms of structural anxiety felt by two civilizations at crucial moments in their contact with what we might call “modernity”.

4.1.1 Anxiety of Blankness: Whitman’s Spider and the Expansive Imperative

Whitman is anxious about the lack of meaning in modern society, living in a world devoid of traditional values and moral guidance, as shown in the famous metaphor of the spider and the anxiety of blankness. Greenblatt (1988) believes this is the main problem of the early American period; there are no “self-coordinates” and people live in a historical and cultural void. Both the “loneliness” of the spider in the “measureless oceans of space” and its “unraveling” behaviour are kinds of this anxiety in poetry. The founding act here is not reform or revolution of the existing system, but creation out of nothing. Whether the subject is a person or the whole country, it is facing a double void: the physical desolation of the continent and a lack of purpose in the new national spirit. The will to live is to create one’s own circumstances and build a network of values and relationships through firm will.

In short, the first act is an exercise of “radially expansive” power. Foucault’s spatialisation of modern power (1977) extends to regulate life and space, and this is well shown in the act of spinning a spider’s web. Power comes from an almighty, supreme self, such as a person or a country, and is shown in the continuous exploration, mapping, connecting and assimilating of the outside world. Each new filament is an act of cognitive and material appropriation, and in turn, is also the existence, potentiality and legitimacy of the centre from which it originated. Therefore, in Whitman’s view, the spider’s gossamer thread is both the path of the soul’s metaphysical search and the poetic expression of national sovereignty and the domain of civilisation. It is based on the belief in an independent, world-creating self, and thus, anxiety is transformed into the motivation for continuous development of territory and economy.

4.1.2 The Anxiety of Density: Yuan Mei’s Spider and the Selective Imperative

Yuan Mei’s structure metaphor of a spider is “dense and widespread”, but its effect is “selective and swift”; therefore, it does not have the modernity anxiety of the late imperial period but rather an “anxiety of density”. This is in line with what some historians have called an “involutionary context” (Li, 2022), rooted in the New Historicist idea of “containment” and negotiated order. Here, the main historical tension is not the lack of structure but its excessive abundance; rather, it is the conflict arising from intensified competition over limited social, economic and political resources and a rigidified system of rules, norms and social hierarchy. The spider’s web is not in a vacuum but in a highly populated and organised social world that already exists. Therefore, the main goal of power has

changed from extending outward to regulating inward. The Logic is “centripetally selective”. Foucault’s concept of the “disciplinary power” points out that there are many observations, hierarchical classifications, different levels of treatment, and various standards for behaviour that are employed to enhance efficiency and control within a closed system (Foucault, 1977). “Spreads its web densely” refers to the whole system of late imperial institutions and social norms, such as the civil service examination system and kinship ties, and “only the moth, not the bee” indicates that disciplinary action is particular, selective, and directed at a specific object rather than being applied ubiquitously. The Power is weak and traditional. It aims to maintain the stability of the system by promoting the good behaviour of people through rewards and discouraging bad behaviour through punishments. The first kind of anxiety stems from the fundamental problems of involution and overcrowding in modern society; namely, how to participate in the stock market in a stagnant economic environment. The goal is not to achieve conquest or all-round development, but to maintain stability through non-violent, small-scale discipline, screening and balancing; it is an endless, anxious effort for the preservation of the system (Shi, 2025).

4.1.3 Conclusion: Two Archetypes of Modern Power

Finally, the spider image in this section has been offered as an illustrative “micro-theatre of anxiety about modern civilisation”. Whitman’s spider faces an empty “blankness” and displays a “foundational anxiety” of a New World civilisation, one that is overcome by external expansion to establish sovereign subjectivity and defeat existential solitude through the method of radiation and continuous filament-like connection. It is economically productive, has the spirit of individual heroism, and its road to modernity is an outward-looking frontier exploration. Yuan Mei’s spider, on the other hand, lives in an already-woven, crowded “net”, and through centripetal, calculating selection, it refracts the “stability-maintenance anxiety” of an old empire; that is to say, in a system of limited resources and complex human relations, dynamic equilibrium is achieved by strengthening internal governance and strategic leniency. It has a limited power, is ironic in its wisdom, and its path to modernity is an involutionary inward adjustment. The former is self-realisation by extension; the latter is the disarmament of power through perception. The two are quite different, and they reflect the different ways that Chinese and American civilizations have imagined space and organised power in their modern development.

4.2 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

Whitman and Yuan Mei both use spider imagery as a kind of “micro-theatre of history” to explore and critique the ideas of civilisation and power. Therefore, all the above analyses support the main idea of New Historicism: literary imagery is both a product of its historical context and an agent in history, carrying civilizational power and anxiety by constructing or deconstructing dominant discourses. Some comparison sections and theoretical references have been added to present an original model for New Historicist analysis of cross-cultural images in this paper. The main way of using theory is not to name

things but to explore the history and political connotations of details in texts, and at the same time, these details are also the primary locations for testing and refining theoretical ideas. Only in this case will the cultural-political implications of the picture be revealed. In line with the general rules of good scholarship, this study will be presented here and discussed in sequence, reflecting the method of New Historicist criticism.

4.3 Limitations and Directions for Further Research

The main deficiency of this study is that it only focuses on one picture; although there is depth, there is little width. In the future, more power-related images from all parts of a poet's work can be added to the comparison, and thus a richer map of their symbolism for power and history can be obtained.

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Notes

Note 1. This academic paper is the periodical research result of the course of Special Studies of Comparative Literature in view of cultivating the talent.