

文：鲁大东

文生图，横著写，左读也可以，图生文。顾名思义，望文生义，因文生图，以图生文，因文字而生发图像，因图像而激发文字。与现在AI无关，与未来AI有关。

是文生图，非文生图，即说文生图。

杨晓能的专著Reflections of Early China，把之前被叫做饕餮纹之类的青铜纹饰叫做Decor、之前被叫做族徽的文字叫做Pictographs和Pictorial Inscriptions，铭文与图像一并讨论，不分开。所以中译本叫《另一种古史》。

秦兼并六国，书同文，有八体，其中大篆、小篆、隶书是正体字，还有刻符、虫书、摹印、署书、殳书五种应用字体，现在的标准，都可以叫美术字。

王莽时有六书，篆书和左书（隶书）是正经字，缪篆和鸟虫书是应用体。更早的古文和奇字，后来外号叫蝌蚪文。

铜器、兵器、印章、铜镜、幡信，种种器物，文字离开图像之后再次图像化。

然后就是上层士人竞相展示恶趣味的几个世纪，从蔡邕、韦诞，到二王领衔的王谢家族，少年崇仿，家藏纸贵。写绘在装饰繁丽屏风上的花体，从王愔《文字志》上的三十六种，到南齐萧子良《古今篆隶文体》五十二种，南齐末王融《图古今杂体》六十四种，到梁庾元威《论书》已经凑到一百种。

屏风上如此，匾额上如此，志墓石上如此，寺庙山崖上也如此。

不仅是书写，还要彩绘，还要贴金错银，还要放大浮雕。

文字产生两千年才有纸，纸是降维材质。

唐孙过庭《书谱》，说这些杂体“巧涉丹青，工亏翰墨”，不是泼凉水，只是说赛道不同。

从氏族到文人，口味也在转变。

精巧华贵的东西不易存久，即使是金石也不会不朽。现代人书法史的叙事，面对缺乏图像只剩骈俪文辞的中古士族文化游戏，口气中满是鄙夷。

这些年我读书不多，看图不少，喜欢望图生文，看现在的文生图，书法部分投餵不行，也暗自著急，于是借助空间站，试图搅浑图文之水。

图文互生，将俟来日。

The phrase can be read both ways—Words Become Images, or Images Become Words. By its very name, it implies reciprocity: meaning arises from language, images emerge from words, and words are regenerated through images. This project bears no direct relation to today's artificial intelligence, but it speaks to the horizons that AI might open for the future of visual and linguistic creation. It is when words become images—and yet, not merely that; it is a meditation on the very discourse of when words become images.

In his seminal monograph *Reflections of Early China*, art historian Yang Xiaoneng reinterprets the visual language of ancient China. What were once classified as taotie motifs on ritual bronzes he terms Decor, and what earlier scholars understood as clan emblems he redefines as Pictographs or Pictorial Inscriptions. In his analysis, inscription and image belong to a single semiotic field, inseparable in origin and function. The Chinese edition of his book is thus aptly titled *Another Kind of Ancient History* (《另一種古史》).

After Qin unified the Six States and decreed the standardization of script, eight types of writing were said to exist. Among them, Great Seal Script (大篆), Small Seal Script (小篆), and Clerical Script (隸書) were considered formal hands. The remaining five—Tally Script (刻符), Bird-and-Insect Script (蟲書), Seal-Imitation Script (摹印), Official Script (署書), and Halberd Script (殳書)—were functional or decorative, what we might now call artistic lettering.

During Wang Mang's reign, the sixfold classification of script distinguished Seal Script and Left Script (another form of Clerical Script) as normative, while Variant Seal and Bird-and-Insect Scripts served decorative purposes. Still earlier forms—Ancient Script and Strange Characters—were later nicknamed Tadpole Script for their curvilinear shapes.

On bronzes, weapons, seals, mirrors, and ritual banners, writing—once liberated from imagery—became pictorial once again.

What followed were centuries of cultivated excess among the elite. From Cai Yong and Wei Dan to the aristocratic Wang and Xie families, literati competed in displays of refined eccentricity. Young scholars emulated the fashion, and fine paper grew scarce. Their ornate calligraphy, painted on luxurious screens, was meticulously classified: from Wang Yin's *Treatise on Script* (《文字志》) listing thirty-six styles, to Xiao Ziliang's *Ancient and Modern Seal and Clerical Styles* (《古今篆隸文體》) listing fifty-two, to Wang Rong's *Illustrated Miscellaneous Scripts Ancient and Modern* (《圖古今雜體》) with sixty-four. By the time of Yu Yuanwei's *On Calligraphy* (《論書》) in the Liang dynasty, the number had reached one hundred. Such proliferation appeared everywhere—on folding screens, plaques, epitaph stones, temple walls, and cliff inscriptions.

These characters were not only written but also painted, gilded, inlaid with silver, and carved in relief.

Paper, that “dimensional reduction” of material support, would not appear until nearly two millennia after the invention of writing. In *Treatise on Calligraphy* (《書譜》), Tang theorist Sun Guoting observed of such ornate scripts: “Their craft approaches painting, yet their brushwork falls short of true calligraphy.” His remark was not a dismissal but a distinction—acknowledging a divergence in artistic path.

From the ritual traditions of clans to the cultivated tastes of the literati, sensibilities shifted. The exquisite and the ornate seldom endure; even bronze and stone decay.

Modern histories of calligraphy, confronted with the fragmentary remnants of medieval aristocratic culture—texts without images, rhetoric without form—often speak with tones of condescension.

In recent years, I have read little but looked much.

I take pleasure in reading images, in letting vision generate language. Confronting today's versions of “when words become images,” I find the calligraphic sensibility lacking, and this fills me with quiet unease.

Thus, through the platform of the Space Station, I seek to stir the once-clear boundary between word and image.

Let them intertwine once more—
for words and images are mutually generative,
and the future will bear witness to their return.