

## Study on Aesthetic Value of Subtitle Translation of *Within and Beyond the Great Wall* From the Perspective of Translation Aesthetics

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### Abstract

With the advancement of cultural diversity and the increasingly frequent communication between the East and the West, more and more high-quality documentaries are presented to the foreigner. Chinese documentaries have become an important carrier for foreign audiences to understand Chinese culture, so the subtitle translation of documentary plays an important role in the spread of documentary. Translation aesthetics theory will help the study on the aesthetic values of subtitle translation and broaden the research scope of documentary subtitle translation. This paper selects the documentary *Homeland Dreamland--Within and Beyond the Great Wall* as research object to analyze the subtitle translation. From the perspective of translation aesthetics, this paper discusses how the aesthetic value of subtitle translation achieve and what translation methods translators use to show the aesthetic effect.

**Key words:** Translation aesthetics; Aesthetic value; Documentary; *Within and Beyond the Great Wall*

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### INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of globalization and improvement of

China's international status, the exchanges between China and the West have become increasingly frequent. More and more domestic film and television works have been spread abroad, which have promoted the exchange and collision of different cultures. Among them, documentary has a unique cultural appeal as a visual expression of real life. There are many documentaries on the Great Wall. It is because the Great Wall represents the splendid Chinese culture, and has very complex and important political, economic and cultural significance. The research object is the subtitle translation of *Homeland Dreamland--Within and Beyond the Great Wall*. This documentary tells the life story of the people along the Great Wall by exploring the relics of the Great Wall. The documentary was launched on September 28, 2015, and was broadcasted on CCTV International Channel, receiving praise from viewers at home and abroad. "Aesthetic activities should run through the entire process of translation" (Mao, 2003). By combining translation aesthetics with documentary subtitle translation, it is possible to study the aesthetic object and subject, and explore the embodiment of aesthetic value and translation methods in the translation process. In subtitle translation, translators should also consider the aesthetic value of the subtitle translation, such as delightfulness, instructiveness, refinement and naturalness. Based on the theoretical framework of translation aesthetics, this paper studies the aesthetic value to show the aesthetic effect of English subtitle translation. This paper also puts forward some suggestions for documentary subtitle translation.

## 1. TRANSLATION AESTHETICS AND SUBTITLE TRANSLATION

### 1.1 A Brief Introduction to Translation Aesthetics

Translation aesthetics is the combination of aesthetics and translation, and the perception of the aesthetic object

of the aesthetic subject. Liu Miqing (2005) reveals the aesthetic origin of translation studies and explores the special significance of aesthetics to Chinese translation studies. Based on the basic principles of modern aesthetics, he looks into the operation mechanism of translation and constructs the basic framework of modern translation aesthetics.

The task of translation aesthetics theory is to apply the basic principles of aesthetics to analyze, explain, and solve aesthetic problems in interlingual conversion. The process includes the study of aesthetic objects, aesthetic subjects, and aesthetic relationships in translation, the study of general laws of aesthetic experience in translation, and the exploration of aesthetic representation methods in translation (Liu, 1986). Whether the language beauty in the original language can be successfully reflected in the target language is actually limited by human aesthetic values. Liu Miqing (2012) points out that the aesthetic object refers to a person's aesthetic behavior and the objective things they touch. In objective reality, not everything is the aesthetic object. The so-called aesthetic object must be an objective thing that is opposite to the aesthetic subject. Then, Liu Miqing (2012) further summarizes that the aesthetic object of translation generally refers to the original text that the translator wants to translate and process. Translation aesthetic object refers to an aesthetic object that has aesthetic value because it can meet a certain human need. The aesthetic subject refers to the person who performs aesthetic activities on the aesthetic object, and the aesthetic subject of translation is the translator (Liu, 2012). The aesthetic activity of the aesthetic subject has a dual task, which is understanding the beauty and appreciating the representation and creation of beauty between languages. In aesthetics, the aesthetic subject and the aesthetic object are two inseparable concepts and categories, and there is a dialectical relationship of interdependence between them. In translation aesthetics, the translator and the original text, translator and translation practice are inseparable.

Liu Miqing and Zhang Yan (2016) propose that aesthetic criteria are yardsticks or norms that evaluate the aesthetic value of an object, and are generally relatively stable. Aesthetic criteria reflect aesthetic values, namely the aesthetic demands, aesthetic significance, and psychological efficacy of things (aesthetic objects) towards people (aesthetic subjects). Aesthetic value is different from practical value and scientific value. The aesthetic value depends on the functional relationship between the aesthetic characteristics of things and human practical needs, spiritual needs, and aesthetic emotional needs. It can be seen that aesthetic value is the result of the interaction between the aesthetic object and the aesthetic subject, and the interplay between them. It is the unity of the subject and object, the unity of regularity and purposiveness (Liu and Zhang, 2016). Liu Miqing (2016) believes the value of translation must be reflected in the

process of translation. The multi-dimensional expression of translation aesthetic value can be indicated by the aesthetic form of writing proposed by traditional Chinese literary theory, and they are delightfulness, instructiveness, refinement and naturalness.

## 1.2 A Brief Introduction to Subtitle Translation

Subtitle translation is covered in multimedia translation, also known as audiovisual translation (AVT). Subtitle translation is one of the most common models in the field of audiovisual translation. Subtitle translation is an important component of audiovisual translation. There are two types of subtitles, intralingual subtitles and interlingual subtitles. Interlingual subtitles are commonly referred to as subtitle translation, which involves translating the source language into text that appears below the screen in the target language while retaining the original sound of the film and television (Li Yunxing, 2001). The English translation of documentary subtitles is the process of translating Chinese into English and appearing at the bottom of the screen while retaining the original sound of the film and television in Chinese.

Qian Shaochang (2000) mentions that subtitle translation has five characteristics, namely listening, comprehensiveness, instantaneity, popularity, and lack of annotation. Listening refers to the language of film and television works being heard through the ear. During this process, there may be some ambiguity of homophones. Comprehensiveness means that film and television works are comprehensive art, where the audience can hear the sound while also seeing the performance and experiencing various artistic effects. Instantaneity refers to sound appearing instantly in film and television works. Therefore, the subtitle translation must be smooth and fluent, so that the audience can understand it at a glance. Popularity, which requires the dialogue in film and television to be easy to understand, so the language should be both refined and popular to meet the needs of the majority of the audience. Lacking annotation means that translators cannot add subtitles and narration in the translated film. This poses great difficulties for translators and is also the most challenging aspect of film and television translation. The characteristics of film and television works bring some constraints to the translation of subtitles. Translators need to follow the principles of simplicity and economy, synchronous explanation, and ease of understanding (Yao and Cai, 2010). The economic principle of subtitle translation is not the deletion, but the conciseness. Translators rely on their good mastery of the source and target languages, as well as their understanding of the film and television works to achieve conciseness and accuracy. The principle of synchronous explanation requires translators to adjust the grammatical structure of the target text to maintain consistency in the grammatical structure of source text without affecting the transmission of source language information, so that a good situation

of synchronous explanation can be presented. Popularity principle. Film and television works convey information to the audience through subtitles, sound and visuals. The synchronicity of subtitles, sound and visuals also determines the fleeting characteristic of subtitles, so subtitles should be easy to understand to reduce the difficulty and time of audience reading. Subtitle translation should try to avoid using obscure languages or even dialects.

### 1.3 A Brief Introduction to Documentary Subtitle Translation

Documentary is a special form of film and television work, which records the real life in an artistic way and then presents it to the audience. After analyzing its characteristics, Franco (2001) points out that the process of translating the documentary is a special practice, which is different from the general film translation. He systematically studies the documentary translation from diverse aspects, such as the perspective of history, culture and ideology.

Documentary subtitle translation has both the commonalities of subtitle translation and its characteristics. Firstly, the appearance of documentary subtitles has limited time and space on the screen. Sun Jiayan (2019, 5) pointed out that in terms of time, subtitles generally stay for two to seven seconds, and in terms of space, the characters that the screen can accommodate are limited, usually no more than two lines, with each line no more than 20 words. So documentary subtitle translation must be concise, convey as much information as possible in limited time and space, and maintain language coherence to make the audience feel easy to understand. Secondly, multimodal integration. The translation process of traditional texts such as novels is through the translator's analysis and translation of the original text. Translators and readers only come into contact with the original text. But documentary translation requires a combination of sound and video to watch. Thirdly, authenticity, which is also a unique feature of documentaries. Authenticity is meant that documentary subtitle translation emphasizes the accuracy of the content rather than the consistency of the form. documentaries are about the real world and real people, which requires the translator to use translation methods to convey faithful and truthful information. Language information presented by the subtitle is complementary to the picture information provided by the video. In some cases, we can strive for accurate word for word without scientific and technological texts and commercial contracts, but we should also show the original style to the greatest extent, avoid disorderly translation, and choose appropriate translation methods. At the same time, documentary subtitles are also a kind of film and television translation, which should conform to the characteristics and principles of film and television translation while presenting the original style and beauty.

## 2. INTRODUCTION OF *WITHIN AND BEYOND THE GREAT WALL*

*Homeland Dreamland--Within and Beyond the Great Wall* is large series of travel documentary launched by CCTV Chinese international channel. The documentary was launched on September 28, 2015, and was broadcasted on CCTV International Channel, receiving praise from viewers at home and abroad. It has 194 episodes, and each episode is about 45 minutes long. There are also 10 special episodes, which are part of the feature film's introduction to food and customs. The filming sequence of this documentary is based on the location of cities along the Great Wall. This is also the first time that television media has recorded the Great Wall in such a long-distance and large-scale panoramic view. The main content of program is an introduction to the history, existing relics, customs, and culture along the Great Wall. The documentary records the natural and cultural landscape along the way, captures the warm humanity of ordinary people, further explores the forging track of the spiritual backbone of the Chinese nation and its inheritance and development in contemporary China, which vividly and concretely convey the Chinese's courageous and positive spirit to the world (Zhang and Wang, 2014).

The Great Wall is not only a geographical symbol of national significance, but also the specific environment of the people in the vast land. Through the attention to specific people and the description of life events, the audience can understand the stories along the Great Wall. The documentary adopts first-person description, uses plain and vivid language, and chooses geographical location as a clue to narrate. The language of documentary has unique characteristics. The audiences can easily understand by oral dialogue and concise words, and the language is extremely infectious. Firstly, this documentary takes the first person as the narrative subject, and uses the first person to describe the real situation. At the same time, the host will have a lot of interaction with the interviewers, emphasizing more affinity. Secondly, the Great Wall is a witness to the history of the Chinese nation for thousands of years, and a recorder and symbol of Chinese culture. As an art form, documentaries should balance artistic and popular elements. This documentary features a large number of commentary and descriptions of scenery, humanities, and historical information, fully utilizing rhetorical techniques such as metaphor, personification, and parallelism. Thirdly, subtitle translation has the characteristic of instantaneity. The language of this documentary is concise and fluent, with a combination of long and short sentences.

### 3. STUDY ON AESTHETIC VALUE OF SUBTITLE TRANSLATION OF *WITHIN AND BEYOND THE GREAT WALL* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANSLATION AESTHETICS

Combining the language characteristics of documentary and subtitle translation, translators try their best to translate source text to make the audience get the best audiovisual effects and aesthetic experience. Liu Miqing (2016) puts forward that basic characteristics of language beauty are the axiological universals of language beauty, and aesthetic value is the result of the interaction between the aesthetic object and the aesthetic subject. Based on the theoretical framework, this chapter will study the subtitle translation of the documentary *Within and Beyond the Great Wall* from the four multi-dimensional performances of aesthetic value, and then analyze how aesthetic value achieve to convey the aesthetic effect of original text.

#### 3.1 Delightfulness

Delightfulness refers to feeling refreshed by appreciating beautiful things. "Translation" can refer to both the process and the product, so the beauty of translation is multi-dimensional. A holistic embodiment of values of translation aesthetics is delightfulness (please the heart and eyes, as a beautiful sight does). The so-called "holistic embodiment of values" refers to a multi-dimensional embodiment of values of aesthetic values, which can also be explained as cognitive preciseness, perceived pleasantness, emotional content, affective richness, and cultural acquisitiveness.

##### Example 1

**ST (Source Text):** 烙好后的馅饼形如铜锣，外焦里嫩，饼面上油珠闪亮，香味扑鼻。

**TT (Target Text):** The baked pie looks like a gong, crispy outside and tender inside. The pie surface with shiny oil droplets, smells fragrant. **Episode 7 (00:15:16-00:15:24)**

The sentence uses four four-character words to describe the shape and taste, which are in line with the common expression of Chinese. The end tone of the four words can be marked as "形如铜锣 (平)，外焦里嫩 (仄)，油珠闪亮 (仄)，香味扑鼻 (平)" which is tonal harmony, forming a musical beauty of rise and falling. In the translation, it conforms to the characteristics of listening and popularity of subtitle translation. "Crispy" and "tender" has the same tone, and "shiny" and "smells" have the same first syllable "s" and constitute the rhyme to make the whole sentence rhythmical. At the same time, the translation of "铜锣" is gong, which applies the method of onomatopoeia. The TT achieve the value of delightfulness, and the audience can get perceived pleasantness and emotional content from the English translation.

##### Example 2

**ST:** 春催芽，夏膨果，秋着色，冬保墒，一年四季使用的都是生态沼液催肥。

**TT:** Germination is accelerated in spring. Fruits expand in summer and change color in autumn. Soil moisture is preserved in winter. Ecological biogas slurry is used to improve weight throughout the year. **Episode 37 (00:31:52-00:32:02)**

Chinese and English differ greatly in pronunciation and structure, so it is not realistic to make the English translation reflect the Chinese "rhyme", but translation can try to keep the same rhythm as the original text, and convey the aesthetic feeling of "listening" of the documentary through cadence. The four short sentences have the same structure, and three words are used to describe the different ways of grape cultivation throughout the year. In addition to the number of words and structure, the variation of intonation is also musical, "春催芽 (平)，夏膨果 (仄)，秋着色 (仄)，冬保墒 (平)", there is very concise and rich sense of rhythm. In the translation, the same sentence structure is adopted to restore the phonological beauty of the original. The English translation does not carry out the original translation word-for-word, but grasp the main meaning of the original text to express. Amplification is used to make subtitle easy to understand, for example, the subject of the soil in the "冬保墒" does not reflect, but the English translation complements the soil. In addition, because the sentences are concise, they are also more in line with the rhythm of the original Chinese text. The English translation achieve cognitive preciseness and perceived pleasantness, which makes audiences feel the same beauty as the original text.

#### 3.2 Instructiveness

Instructiveness refers to enhancing wisdom, cultivating sentiment, regulating mood, and making one happy. In many cases, people turn to translation not for the sake of "delightfulness", but for the sake of obtaining mental satisfaction, cognitive improvement, and fulfilling career pursuits. Or it can be a satisfying "pleasure" obtained from "increasing emotion". But it is also important to pay attention to the formal beauty of language and to consider the accuracy of semantic compensatory expressions.

##### Example 3

**ST:** 长城在一修筑的时候它就是一个大姑娘，亭亭玉立在山山岭岭，它又是一个壮小伙，向世人展示肌肉。它到成年的时候，就是一个伟大的父亲和母亲，以他博大的胸怀和强壮的身躯为中华民族遮风挡雨，顶天立地。

**TT:** When it was built, the Great Wall was a girl, standing gracefully on mountains and ridges. It was also a strong guy showing people its muscles. In adulthood, it was like a great father and mother who used its broad mind and strong body to shelter wind and rain and stand up straight for the Chinese nation. **Episode 16 (00:17:54-00:18:21)**

The ST use the image of “girl, guy, father and mother” to describe the Great Wall, those are the most representative image in life. We can clearly understand the characteristics of the Great Wall, the sentences vividly give a high praise to the Great Wall by using personification and metaphor. The Great Wall is the backbone of the Chinese nation, “遮风挡雨” and “顶天立地” indicate that the Chinese nation upholds the people like the Great Wall. To achieve the equivalent aesthetic effect, the translator uses the same structure and applies alliteration of “shelter” and “stand up straight”, which is pleasant to readers’ ears and authentic. “Broad mind” and “strong body” not only refers to the grandeur of the Great Wall, but also symbolizes the Chinese nation. In praising the Great Wall, it sublimates to praising and loving the Chinese nation. At the same time, the accuracy of semantic compensatory has been realized. The English translation can evoke emotional resonance among audiences and achieve the value of instructiveness.

#### Example 4

**ST:** 远远望去，赤壁丹霞，如屏如画，非常壮美。寂静的山涧只闻流水潺潺，空气湿润而又清新。

**TT:** Seen from afar, Danxia landform with red cliffs is like a screen or painting, looking particularly magnificent. We can only hear the murmur of running water. The air is moist and fresh. Episode 42 (00:10:41-00:10:51)

The structure of the original Chinese sentence is neat, and the description of the mountain scenery is very detailed. The original text is well balanced, and the translated language has the same structure as the original text. The ST use metaphor to outline the beauty of Danxia landform. In translation, “寂静” is translated as “murmur”, which means a low continuous indistinct sound. “Murmur” corresponds to “running water”, and it depicts artistic conception in the mountains. The method of paradox is used to express the quietness of the mountains and the harmony of the atmosphere. It makes the audience feel like they’re in it and achieves emotional satisfaction.

### 3.3 Refinement

Refinement refers to careful consideration, careful analysis of language and layout, in order to accurately express emotions. The value is reflected in the satisfaction of maximizing the ability to think and express logically. The principle of aesthetic value is reflected in four aspects. Semantic connotations and extensions of the source language(short for SL) and the target language(short for TL) must be repeatedly considered, the sentence structures of the SL and the TL must roughly correspond or make compensatory structural arrangements, and the Level of Speech) of TL must roughly correspond to the writing style of the SL, but acceptance under the constraints of the social and cultural characteristics of the TL should not be ignored.

#### Example 5

**ST:** 白云层里插危台，俯首穷荒亦壮哉。万叠关山

皆向北，九天灵采自东来。风清鼓角龙沙净，光闪旌旗海曙开。仗剑登高霜气肃，欲凭火焰暖霞怀。

**TT:** A towering watchtower stands among clouds, look down and see all the deserted land is also magnificent. Layers of mountains are all running to the north. Clouds in the sky come from the east. Drums and horns sound in wind that blows away sand on the Great Wall. Flags and water flicker in the sunlight. Climb high with a sword to feel frost and solemnness, I want to warm the clouds with fire. Episode 36 (00:23:03-00:23:25)

The poem is called Climbing the Flaming Mountain Tower and written by Wu Lijia who was a Circuit Supervisor in the period of the Wan Li. This section of the Great Wall was originally known as the Jiuyanlou Great Wall, because the Jiuyanlou is the northernmost part of the Jiankou Great Wall, and the terrain is the highest, and the construction scale is the most magnificent, so it is named. Ancient Chinese poetry mainly conveyed ideas and emotions by creating images and artistic conception, and sometimes it is difficult to find corresponding words or phrases in English. So the translator needs to repeatedly think about the true meaning of the original text, perform compensatory transformation, and try to ensure consistency in combination and style. “Running” presents a vivid picture of the mountains rushing north together, and the scene described in the poem springs to life on the page. In the paragraph, the anthropomorphic method is used to highlight the dangerous terrain and important military strategic significance of Jiuyan Lou. The English subtitle use the method of free translation to express the grandeur of the Great Wall and the praise for the Great Wall. The TT keep the same structure and style as the ST as far as possible, which achieve the value of refinement.

#### Example 6

**ST:** 你看这边这个“S”形，包括这一边，如果要是从这里圈一条线的时候，现在就可以看成一个太极图的阴阳鱼。

**TT:** Look the “S” shape here, including this side, if we draw a line from here, now it can be seen as a yin and yang fish of diagram of the universe. Episode 7 (00:23:38-00:23:49)

Yin and Yang fish refers to the middle part of diagram of the universe, which is called “the first picture of China”. The shape of this well-known diagram of the universe is like that of Yin and Yang fish being right together, so it is commonly called “Yin and Yang fish of diagram of the universe”, As for “Yin” and “Yang”, it is difficult to find appropriate English corresponding words, so the Chinese pinyin of the term is directly taken as the translation, preserving the cultural gene. There are two translation methods of Taiji Diagram and diagram of the universe, in the subtitle translation, the latter is chosen, not only to make it easier for foreign readers to understand, but also to rhyme “e” at the end of the four clauses, which makes the sentence read with a sense of rhythm. The translator try his best to think the use of language to

express the beauty of original text, so English translation achieve the value of refinement, keep the characteristics of culture.

### 3.4 Naturalness

Naturalness means words that can make people understand and accept must be truth-telling, and must be strictly avoided affectation. The simplicity and authenticity of language are often the persistent pursuits of literary masters in their later years, which are also the most basic aesthetic values reflected in the translation of news, tourism, advertising, and public sign, which can create a genuine sense of conviction, and accompanied by a strong sense of satisfaction.

#### Example 7

ST: 从长城上俯视, 城堡南北略扁, 东西凸起, 呈椭圆形, 像古时的元宝, 所以当地称作“元宝城”。

TT: Looking down from the Great Wall, we can find the fort is slightly flat in the south and north and sticks out in the east and west. It's elliptical in shape just like a yuanbao (gold or silver ingot) in ancient times. So it's called the "Yuanbao Town" by local people. Episode15 (00:05:56-00:06:06)

The definition of "Yuanbao" is gold or silver ingot similar to Chinese shoes, which is also a name of Chinese ancient coins. The method of literal translation with annotation is adopted in the translation of "元宝". Translation is not only a process of seeking a solution; what's more, it is a process of creating solutions. If there are no annotations, the foreign readers will not understand what the "Yuanbao" was. By attaching annotations to transliterated words, audiences can easily understand the meaning and clearly depict it in their minds. For words with cultural characteristics, the translation use transliteration and annotation to present the most authentic and simple aspect of the language, which also is conducive to introduce the Chinese culture to the world. The English translation realize the value of naturalness.

#### Example 8:

ST: 这个饼好香啊, 这个饼吃起来就和真的和被炸过了一样, 油香油香的都在里面, 而且这个口感非常有嚼劲。它和豆芽这种脆脆的, 又很水灵的口感配在一起, 就是那种很丰富嘴里咬起来, 而且它的味道你说不出那么浓, 就是淡淡的家常味。另外就有豆芽, 这个青椒配合这个饼的韧劲, 口感就很好了。

TT: The pancake shreds are really delicious, they taste as if they had been deep-fried. They have the aroma of oil. And they are very chewy. Together with juicy and crunchy bean sprouts, they have this rich mouth feel. And their flavors are not very strong, but light and homely. Besides, bean sprout and green peppers, coupled with the chewy pancake shreds, tastes particularly good. Episode 136 (00:21:00-00:21:27)

This paragraph is about Tangzhuang pancake shreds produced during the construction of the Great Wall of Wei Dynasty. The description of this paragraph shows the

taste of pancake shreds as "delicious" and "chewy". The reporter uses nearly ten adjectives to describe the delicious taste of pancake shreds by using "the aroma of oil", "chewy", "rich mouthfeel", "homely." Even if audiences look at the text without the video, a dish of pancake shreds with rich taste and fragrant smell will emerge in their mind. The sentences are clean and neat, and the information with image concept is completely translated. The translation strives to be complete, also conveys the two characteristics of "fragrance" and "toughness", not only accurately convey the information, but also show the aesthetic feeling of artistic conception. Although the English translation feels very loose, it fully expresses the meaning of the original text, and the depiction of the pancake is realistic and full of visual sense. Even if the audience doesn't eat the pancakes themselves, there will be a sense of satisfaction.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper analyzes the subtitle translation of *Homeland Dreamland--Within and Beyond the Great Wall* based on the theoretical framework of translation aesthetics proposed by Liu Miqing. This paper concludes that the subtitle translation of the documentary has tried its best to convey the aesthetic effect of the original text to foreign audiences. According to the study on aesthetic value of subtitle translation, the main research results are as follows. Firstly, Through the understanding of the wording, grammar and structure of the original text, the translation shows the multidimensional embodiment of the aesthetic value of translation. Secondly, translators should consider the characteristics of Chinese and English language and different cultures, convey cultural information, and make the translation close to the style of the original text. Thirdly, translators should adopt different translation methods including omission, transliteration annotation, free translation and amplification to achieve the consistency of structure and meaning between ST and TT. This paper focuses more on how aesthetic value achieve and how translators use translation methods to show the aesthetic feeling of the original text. Later studies hope to focus on the aesthetic representation of language based on the framework of formal system and non-formal system.

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