

# Reception of Fyodor Dostoevsky's Works Among Chinese Readers

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**Abstract**—Existing research on the reception of Fyodor Dostoevsky's works in China primarily focuses on the academic reception history, with limited attention paid to ordinary readers on the internet. This study employs the qualitative analysis software NVivo 12 to analyze comments from ordinary readers on Douban. By integrating Stanley Fish's reader-response criticism and Stuart Hall's reception theory, the study identifies three distinct reader reception models and analyzes their influencing factors. Faithful fans, influenced by the Russian classical literature horizon of expectations, offer highly positive evaluations. Rational evaluators exhibit a complex attitude of both criticism and appreciation, driven by their rational stance and cultural aesthetic differences. Critics, encounter frustration in their expectations due to conflicts between their local aesthetic perspectives and the works. This study broadens the scope of audience in the reception research of Dostoevsky's works in China, revealing the diversity and complexity of ordinary readers' reception, and provides important insights for cross-cultural reader studies.

**Index Terms**—Chinese readers, Dostoevsky, reception theory, content analysis, reception model

## I. INTRODUCTION

Fyodor Dostoevsky was one of the literary giants of 19th-century Russian literature. His first novel, *Poor Folk* (1846), received widespread acclaim upon its publication. From 1849 to 1859, Dostoevsky was arrested by the Tsarist government and exiled to Siberia for participating in revolutionary activities. His creative output was interrupted due to imprisonment and military service. It wasn't until 1861, with the consecutive publication of *Humiliated and Insulted* (1860) and *Notes from a Dead House* (1861), that he returned to the public eye. In 1866, his masterpiece *Crime and Punishment* was published, earning him worldwide fame. Subsequently, *The Idiot* (1868), *Demons* (1872), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) were published, cementing his place in literary history.

Dostoevsky's global reputation has long been established, and his dissemination and reception in different countries have become a topic of in-depth academic exploration. Bowers and Holland's (2021) study meticulously outlines the significant trends and key events in Dostoevsky studies in North America over the past five years, providing a valuable perspective for understanding the reception of his works in the region. McCabe (2013), through a comprehensive examination of translation strategies, comparative analysis of adapted works, and the intertextual dialogue between fictional, critical, and philosophical texts, dissects the history of Dostoevsky's dissemination and reception in France. Aiello's (2017) research focuses on the trajectory of Dostoevsky's reception in the United Kingdom, also demonstrating how his works transcend national boundaries to resonate widely within the British literary community. Clarkin's (1960) exhaustive survey of Dostoevsky's reception history in the United States reflects the interpretation and response of American literary circles, academia, and even ordinary readers to his works across different periods. Chinese scholar Ding Shixin has conducted a systematic study of Dostoevsky's reception history in China since 1918. Zhang (2014) provides a detailed overview of the latest progress and trends in Dostoevsky studies in Chinese academia since the new century. Tian and Wang (2006), from a more macro perspective, study the overall evolution of Dostoevsky's reception in China. They point out that with the development of Chinese literature and changes in research methods, Dostoevsky has presented three distinct facets.

Previous studies have often been confined within academic circles, with little attention paid to ordinary readers. However, with the improvement of socio-economic levels and the increasing openness of the cultural environment, Dostoevsky's works have gained wider acceptance and dissemination in China. The advent of the digital age has made e-book platforms, online reading tools, and social media convenient channels for the masses to access these classic works. Not only have authoritative publishing houses actively introduced multi-volume collections, but platforms like iReader and WeChat Reading have also made the works readily accessible. Furthermore, lively discussions on social media platforms such as Baidu Post Bar, Weibo, and Zhihu have further enhanced the influence of Dostoevsky's works in contemporary society. Notably, the massive influx of introduction and interpretation videos on short-video platforms like Bilibili, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu has attracted a large number of young viewers with their intuitive and vivid presentations. Some of these videos have even surpassed 600,000 views.

This study selects reader comments from Douban as the research objects. Douban, launched in 2005, is a community website specializing in movies, music, and books. Among the most popular Dostoevsky works among Chinese readers on this platform are *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*, which, as Dostoevsky's masterpieces, have

long been ranked among the top 250 books on Douban Reading. Among the numerous groups discussing Dostoevsky's works, the "Dostoevsky" group stands out for its vast membership and vibrant discussion atmosphere. By the end of December 2023, it had gathered over 61,219 members and generated 2,739 individual posts. These posts are rich and diverse, ranging from in-depth interpretations of the works to announcements of online and offline events, as well as sharing of e-book resources and answers to reading questions, comprehensively demonstrating readers' enthusiasm and exploration of Dostoevsky's works. It is noteworthy that compared to other Russian literary giants like Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Pushkin, who have groups on Douban with fewer than 8,000 users each, the prosperity of the Dostoevsky group is particularly remarkable. So, why is Dostoevsky still so popular in China today? How do contemporary readers understand and receive Dostoevsky's works?

This paper aims to explore readers' interpretation of Dostoevsky's works in Douban communities and attempt to reveal the underlying logic behind their popularity within the context of Chinese culture. The guiding questions of this study are: 1) How do readers in the Dostoevsky group decode the text? 2) What are the characteristics of each reception mode? 3) What are the factors that influence readers' reception of Dostoevsky and his works?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study and reception of Dostoevsky and his works by Chinese scholars have spanned over a century. During the May Fourth Movement period, he was highly esteemed as a writer striving for the meaning of life, with *Crime and Punishment* becoming a research hotspot, though it also encountered criticism from left-wing literature. Between 1949 and 1979, political factors led to fluctuations in his literary status. In the 1980s, the introduction of Bakhtin's polyphony theory challenged traditional critical frameworks and opened up new research perspectives. In the 1990s, research underwent a turning point, breaking free from the constraints of vulgar sociology, and prospering in various fields such as narratology, psychoanalysis, religious cultural studies, etc. While drawing on international scholarship, Chinese scholars strived to voice their independent opinions. In the 21st century, the study of Dostoevsky has continued to deepen and specialize, with notable achievements in areas such as communication, reception, comparative studies, polyphony theory, and religious sociological criticism (Ding, 2006, 2021, 2023).

Specifically within the realm of reception studies, the reception of Dostoevsky in China can be categorized into three types: translation and dissemination, writers' reception, and history of reception studies. The first category examines the dissemination of Dostoevsky's works in China from the perspectives of publishing and translation. For instance, Li and He's (1988) research identified two key characteristics in translation efforts after 1979: firstly, translations of previously controversial works were supplemented; secondly, national-level publishing houses began systematically introducing Dostoevsky's works, a rare phenomenon in China's translation history. Such studies present extensive data from journal sources but lack specific and detailed analysis.

The second category focuses on the reception of Dostoevsky by Chinese writers, with the most in-depth studies being comparisons between Dostoevsky and Lu Xun. From 1982 to 1996, Li Chunlin published a monograph titled *Lu Xun and Dostoevsky* (1985) and 13 essays. He argues that both Lu Xun and Dostoevsky are great judges of human souls. Due to similar national conditions at the time, Lu Xun's literary creations were influenced by Dostoevsky. Additionally, academia has conducted extensive research on the influence of Dostoevsky on contemporary Chinese writers such as Zhang Xianliang, Tie Ning, and Lu Ling, yielding fruitful results (Xu, 1986; Tan, 2023; Shi, 2006).

The third category of studies concentrates on the genealogical analysis of Chinese scholars' reception of Dostoevsky, with Ding Shixin as a representative scholar. He systematically reviews the Chinese academic community's evaluation of Dostoevsky across different historical periods. His recent research points out that from 1949 to 1979, "Dostoevsky underwent shifts in academic mirroring in China, transitioning from being regarded as a 'realist writer for life' to a 'great writer embodying contradictory qualities of progressiveness and reaction,' and then labeled as a 'reactionary writer,' before once again being recognized as a 'great writer embodying contradictory qualities of progressiveness and reaction'" (Ding, 2023, p. 114).

Current research primarily examines the reception and evaluation of Dostoevsky by Chinese translators, writers, and scholars, with only one master's thesis incorporating ordinary Chinese readers into its research scope. Tao (2013) explored the unique portrayal of Dostoevsky in Baidu Post Bar, adopting a combined quantitative and qualitative approach to classify the content of posts and comparatively analyze the contextual differences between popular and elite cultures. The scope covers 570 topic posts from the "Dostoevsky Bar" on Baidu Post Bar from 2007 to 2011. The researcher concludes that the viewpoints of the masses, to a certain extent, subvert the traditional elite cultural perceptions of Dostoevsky, reflecting the reshaping of elite culture by popular culture. This study focuses on demonstrating the reshaping of elite culture by popular culture but does not provide a detailed analysis of readers' acceptance.

The booming development of the internet has prompted reader groups to converge in cyberspace, sharing and discussing literary works together, and endowing reading with new social value. Many scholars have focused on ordinary readers' online comments, particularly their acceptance of exotic cultural works. Multiple studies have analyzed readers' online comments from various angles and using various technical tools.

E (2017) employed a corpus-based word frequency method to explore the reactions and acceptance of the Chinese image and culture embodied in *The Woman Warrior* among foreign general readers by comparing data from the

Goodreads website and texts of reader reviews. Fu and Wu (2021), through a combination of corpus-assisted keyword-in-context analysis and sentiment quantification, discovered that the translation and introduction of Yu Hua's novels in the United States exhibit characteristics of contradictory unity and multidimensional differentiation. By contrasting the evaluations of professional readers and ordinary readers, they explored the regular patterns in cognitive utility and acceptance levels among different reader groups. Although corpus technology can efficiently process large data, when it comes to statistically analyzing a rich variety of sentiment words, the word frequency method has limitations in fully reflecting emotional tendencies due to the scattered frequency of individual words. Zhang (2019) focused on readers' emotional characteristics and utilized Python sentiment analysis technology to mine online evaluations of *The Three-Body Problem* by overseas readers, analyzing readers' sentiment tendencies from four dimensions: characters, plot, narrative perspective, and translation. However, Python sentiment analysis technology lacks refinement of textual content and may overlook important detailed information due to its over-reliance on numerical representation of text content. White (2023) adopted the method of netnography, delving into platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and blogs, to examine the presentation of Flannery O'Connor and her popular short stories on social media. The study revealed that O'Connor's works have regained popularity but also encountered misunderstandings in the digital environment, emphasizing the unique contributions and influences of online communities on modern literary discourse. Nevertheless, while the netnographic approach can provide in-depth understanding, it still faces challenges in maintaining objective descriptions.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Given the strengths and limitations of the aforementioned studies, this research intends to employ content analysis to explore reader comments in the Dostoevsky group on Douban. Content analysis not only captures keyword frequencies and sentiment tendencies but also delves deeply into the rich information within textual content, thereby overcoming the constraints of single technical methods and providing more profound insights into the cross-cultural reception of literary works.

The researcher utilized Houyi collector to capture all 2,739 data entries from the Dostoevsky group on Douban, excluding meaningless comments that did not address the content of the works and duplicate entries. Stratified sampling by year was applied, with a sampling ratio of 30.4%, resulting in 600 posts selected for content analysis.

This study adopts NVivo 12 for coding short comment texts. As a qualitative analysis software, NVivo effectively assists researchers in extracting information through coding, querying, and other functions. The coding process with NVivo is divided into three stages. Firstly, open coding involves extracting keywords to establish free nodes. For instance, texts such as "be moved" and "tear-jerking" are categorized under the initial code of "emotionally moved." Secondly, axial coding involves grouping initial codes based on their commonalities. For example, the initial code of "emotionally moved" is subsumed under the focused code of "positive experience," ultimately yielding nine focused codes. Lastly, theoretical coding integrates sub-nodes into three reception modes according to Stuart Hall's model. For instance, "positive experience" evaluations are classified under the theoretical code of "dominant reception". This study conducted multiple rounds of coding tests and rule revisions on sample articles. The consistency between two independent coders was verified using Cohen's kappa ( $\kappa > 0.70$ ), and the remaining samples were coded collaboratively, ensuring the reliability, accuracy, and consistency of the coding process.

This research analyzed the diverse stances of readers in interpreting Dostoevsky's works and constructed a reception model for readers using Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model. This model emphasizes the impact of different decoding positions (such as dominant-hegemonic decoding, negotiated decoding, and oppositional decoding) on the reconstruction of work meanings. This study extends the fundamental principles and assumptions of Hall's model to capture readers' decoding and reception patterns of Dostoevsky and his works. Dominant reception implies that readers comprehend the information in the works and interpret them according to the writer's dominant encoding without challenging the works. Readers actively praise the writer and their works. Negotiated reception occurs when readers only understand part of the information in the works, as their comprehension of the writer's intentions is based on their cultural backgrounds and knowledge structures. Readers' interpretations share commonalities with the writer's encoding intentions but also exhibit differences. They adopt a selective acceptance approach, treating the writer's works rationally without strong emotional preferences. Oppositional reception refers to readers who either fail to understand the author's intended meaning or understand it but interpret it in a manner contrary to the encoding intention, presenting an antagonistic stance towards the encoder. To further explore specific factors influencing the reception process, this study draws on Stanley Fish's interpretive communities theory to analyze the interpretation strategies employed by readers within each model. Fish argues that readers are not isolated individuals but emphasizes the importance of the interpretive communities they belong to. "These groups of readers build imaginary communities which may be found through tests and interviews, in their physical gatherings, and nowadays in their internet-based groups and communities" (Farhadipour, 2016, p. 13). This theory underscores that shared interpretation strategies stem from a set of public understandings, including traditional concepts and cultural traditions, which construct and shape readers' consciousness and perceptions. Readers within the same interpretive community share interpretation strategies, resulting in similar textual constructions. In this study, the three reception modes constitute three interpretive

communities, where readers within each community share interpretation strategies, enabling mutual recognition of different readers' responses and converging textual meanings.

#### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Different readers, based on their cultural backgrounds and aesthetic preferences, interpret the same author or work in various ways. Their attitudes of appreciation, neutrality, or resistance during the reception process create different reception models. Readers actively decode the texts, reconstructing their meanings in dynamic ways. Text decoding extends far beyond mere interpretation of the text's meaning, forming complex socio-cultural phenomena (Willis, 2018). Adopting the reader's decoding stance as an analytical framework, this article delves into how members of the Dostoevsky group interpret the works of Dostoevsky. Through coding analysis of the samples, readers are categorized into three reception models: the dominant reception of devout fans, the negotiated reception of rational evaluators, and the oppositional reception of critics. Each category is examined from three perspectives—creation, ideology, and emotional experience—to analyze readers' evaluations.

##### A. Dominant Reception of Devoted Fans

The dominant reception of Dostoevsky's works by devoted fans is reflected in three aspects: 1) Praise for the artistic creation. 2) Inspirational insights gained from the ideas. 3) Strong and active emotional experiences.

Dostoevsky's novels are characterized by their distinctive dialogues. Extensive passages of dialogue are not merely plot-driven but serve as crucial tools for expressing ideas. The conflicts between characters in their dialogues showcase intense ideological clashes. Bakhtin (1988) argues that Dostoevsky's works feature numerous independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses. The true polyphony, composed of voices with significant value, is a fundamental characteristic of Dostoevsky's long novels. Devoted fans express a strong admiration for the protagonists' lengthy discourses, even being completely enthralled by the characters' dialogues. As one participant remarked after reading *The Brothers Karamazov* "extended monologues and ceaseless character dialogues imbue the novel with a hysterical temperament. Yet, amid this frenetic outpouring of language, there is a meticulous and relentless logical spirit, charging forward in tireless debates." Dostoevsky's compelling inner monologues, lengthy dialogues, and oratorical debates evoke resonance in readers, triggering admiration and positive emotional responses.

Devoted readers of Dostoevsky's works shower praise on his psychological portrayals, describing them as "textbook-level," "unmatched," and "terrifyingly captivating." Many readers are drawn to the dramatic psychological struggles, immersing themselves in the protagonist's inner turmoil. These readers can empathize with the characters' psychological states and focus on affirming their complexities. As one reader of *Crime and Punishment* expressed:

Raskolnikov's clumsy return from seeing himself as a great man to recognizing his humanity—though he is a gloomy, radical, and vain criminal, he is also a proud young man. How can he not be lovable? How can he not touch the soul?

When reflecting on *The Brothers Karamazov*, one reader noted "Dmitri's passionate impulses reveal a pure soul, while Ivan's rational detachment carries moral constraints. Katerina's obsessive sacrifices are not for love but for pride, and Grushenka's flamboyant life contains the sincerity of a young girl".

Devoted fans highly praise Dostoevsky's artistic craftsmanship, psychological portrayal, and character development. While they find artistic satisfaction, they are particularly drawn to Dostoevsky's exploration of human nature and his profound philosophical reflections. Dostoevsky's works cover a wide range of fields, including religious theology, philosophy, ethics, morality, and psychology. For these readers, his exploration of human nature addresses topics such as the complexity of humanity, human suffering, and redemption, holding great intellectual value. One reader of *The Brothers Karamazov* commented "Dostoevsky truly deserves the title of master in depicting human nature. This book reveals various aspects of humanity in a real and profound way". Notably, Dostoevsky's religious themes have been well received by readers in the Douban group. They reflect on themselves and share their thoughts on issues of human nature, religious morality, faith, love, and society prompted by the works. One reader noted, "The strong religious undertones in the work deeply moved me and made me feel the conviction of religious figures". Through their reading experiences, readers gain profound insights and revelations from the intellectual collisions presented in Dostoevsky's works. They expand their perspectives, stimulate their thinking, and experience personal growth and spiritual elevation.

Dominant reception readers highly praise Dostoevsky. They praise him as a "soul explorer", "prophet", and "spiritual leader". Readers often use positive feelings such as "shocking", "enjoyable", "exciting", and "resonant" to describe their reading experience. One reader shared his feelings while reading "White Nights": "I really finished it in one breath in the middle of the night, and when I finished, it was just dawn. I felt unusually excited. Few novels can make me read straight through." These comments received a lot of likes, indicating that other readers resonated with this emotion. This type of reader is an active sharer. They share excerpts from the original text of the work or share personal anecdotes in posts to show how Dostoevsky's works have influenced their thoughts and actions. A few readers said that their reading experience has even affected important choices in their real lives. For example, one reader said that because they really like Dostoevsky's works, they plan to learn Russian. Another reader said that because of reading Dostoevsky's works, they have sprouted a belief. In the Douban group, readers actively share their reading experiences. This social interaction not only satisfies readers' social needs and sense of belonging but also further deepens their emotional

connection to Dostoevsky's works. Loyal fans have become an important force driving the dissemination and discussion of works. They are the most active members, actively publish positive reviews, and defend writers and works. Their enthusiasm and loyalty have won more attention and recognition for the works.

TABLE 1  
A RECEPTION MODEL FOR DEVOTED FANS

Node	Sub-node	Number of Reference Points	Reference Point Example
Dominant Reception	Praising the Artistic Creation	345	Dostoevsky's mastery in portraying intricate character portraits and his techniques are truly remarkable. Despite the intricate web of relationships in his books, such as in <i>"The Idiot,"</i> he seamlessly untangles events with a few strokes of his pen.
	Receiving Inspiration on Thought	225	Reading this particular chapter in <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> suddenly made me realize how comical my past self was, akin to Ivan's current predicament. It seems that the absence of religious faith inevitably leads to a terrifying, reckless state.
	Positive Emotional Experience	295	I found myself staying up until dawn, devouring "White Nights" in one sitting. The exhilaration upon finishing it as dawn broke was unparalleled; rarely do novels captivate me to such an extent.

Since the latter half of the 20th century, with the rise of literary movements such as existentialism and modernism, Dostoevsky's works have been reinterpreted from new perspectives, gaining broader recognition globally. In the context of China's comprehensive study and adoption of foreign academic trends since the reform and opening up, Dostoevsky's esteemed reputation and extensive influence have undoubtedly affected Chinese readers' reception of his works. As scholar Yu (2020) notes, "The works of 19th-century Russian writer Dostoevsky have undoubtedly entered the pantheon of classic literature." Dostoevsky's works are considered classics in contemporary China, evoking readers' expectations for classic literature, which is "a familiar expectation" (Jauss, 2022, p. 15). Readers hope to gain philosophical insight, strength, and shock from the works, and Dostoevsky's writings meet their aesthetic, cognitive, and emotional expectations, further reinforcing the classic nature of his works. As reader Li Yuandu remarked: "I read this book (*White Nights*) with great impatience because I wanted to understand why figures like Wang Xiaobo, Lu Xun, and even Allen Woody read and highly praised his works".

Additionally, the dominant reception among devoted fans benefits from their familiarity with Russian culture and history. Douban reader Duke (2023) notes,

understanding the 19th-century Russian historical and cultural background—such as the War of 1812, the Decembrist uprising, the Russian serfdom reform—Russian intellectual currents like Westernism, socialism, anarchism, nihilism, and Slavophilism, and the constant clash of ideas all appear continuously in Dostoevsky's works.

In summary, devoted fans approach Dostoevsky's works with an expectation of "Russian classic literature." They are familiar with the Russian cultural background and approach the foreign works with a positive mindset, thereby achieving a comprehensive satisfaction of their aesthetic, emotional, and cognitive expectations during their reading experience.

#### B. Negotiated Reception by Rational Evaluators

Rational evaluators display a negotiated reception of Dostoevsky's works in three main ways: 1) Critiquing while appreciating the artistry; 2) Interpreting the works through the lens of Chinese culture; 3) Experiencing conflicting and confusing emotions.

Unlike devoted fans, rational evaluators acknowledge that while Dostoevsky's dialogues authentically reflect character personalities, they are often seen as excessively lengthy and verbose, affecting the flow of reading. For example, A reader commented on *The Idiot* by saying, "Although I don't like the lengthy dialogues and had to endure them, I must admit that the Duke and Nastasya are portrayed exceptionally well." Regarding psychological portrayal, rational evaluators appreciate Dostoevsky's deep psychological analysis, finding it nuanced and capable of striking a chord with readers' souls. At the same time, they critique it for being sometimes too lengthy, which limits the readers' imaginative engagement.

In contrast to the admiration expressed by dominant readers, rational evaluators take a more rational and neutral stance toward the characters. For instance, regarding Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, one reader points out, "Even though the protagonist is kind and talented, I cannot ignore the fact that he is a murderer". Concerning Myshkin in *The Idiot*, another reader remarks,

as the book title suggests, this character is an 'idiot'. Although he has a profound Christ-like spirit of salvation, he remains an overly naive and idealized figure, resembling a Christ figure—abstract and pallid, only to be admired.

Evaluations of Nastasya are also mixed; one reader notes, "Nastasya is fine in the first part, somewhat like "Lady Du Angrily Sinks Her Treasure-Chest", but in the later parts, she almost becomes a 'madwoman'... The first part is quite

good, but the latter part is increasingly 'muddy'. Regarding Ivan's internal struggles in *The Brothers Karamazov*, readers both appreciate the authenticity of the character portrayal and find the self-doubt confusing. "When Smerdyakov says Ivan doesn't even believe his own ideas, I was puzzled. As Dostoevsky's representative of human rationality, does Ivan really start doubting himself?".

Due to differences in local aesthetic traditions and Russian cultural backgrounds, these readers often reinterpret the works based on their own experiences. For example, some readers use characters from classical Chinese culture to interpret Dostoevsky's works. One reader compares Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment* to a Chinese knight-errant, suggesting he embodies the knight-errant spirit and should not be burdened with responsibility. Another reader compares Prince Myshkin to Jia Baoyu from *Dream of the Red Chamber*, suggesting that like Jia Baoyu, the Prince Myshkin cannot fit into human society and thus ends up as a "fool," while Jia Baoyu retreats from the mundane world. A reader also interprets *Crime and Punishment* through the lens of Laozi's philosophy, noting, "To some extent, evil can make one appreciate good and justice. Illness can make one value health. Nothing is absolute, as Laozi said, 'Blessing depends on misfortune; misfortune depends on blessing'". This analogy extends to the authors themselves, with one reader suggesting, "Dostoevsky seems to align with Gu Long in terms of bizarre and dark narratives, while Tolstoy and Jin Yong appear to follow a path of grand, righteous storytelling".

Readers with negotiated reception express complex reading experiences, finding both pain and attraction in the works. One reader mentions about *The Brothers Karamazov*, "I'm in my twenties, and it feels heavier the more I read. Each time I read it, I feel so sad, but I can't let go. What should I do? Pain, pain, pain". Another reader notes, "To read *Crime and Punishment*, I endured all the characters' ramblings. All readers must endure it, right? But it's so good, so I just have to endure it while reading". After finishing the works, these readers often have questions about certain content. Common questions include issues regarding character endings, plot design, and details of the works, such as whether Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* really converts to religion, why Smerdyakov commits suicide in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and why Nastasya flees her wedding in *The Idiot*. These confusions relate to the deeper thoughts and religious themes within the works, and readers' existing cognitive frameworks may not fully understand some aspects of the content due to a lack of background knowledge.

TABLE 2  
A RECEPTION MODEL FOR RATIONAL EVALUATORS

Node	Sub-node	Number of Reference Points	Reference Point Example
Negotiated Reception	Both Criticizing and Appreciating the Creation	78	Frankly, while reading " <i>The Idiot</i> ," I found the narrative flow lacking continuity, leaving a disjointed impression. However, what held my attention was the purity of heart and the choices it confronted.
	Interpreting the Work Based on Chinese Culture	124	Regarding Nastasya, her character transitioned from intriguing, reminiscent of Du Shiniang's fiery spirit to almost manic later on. While I adored the first half, the latter part felt somewhat protracted.
	Confused and Contradictory Emotional Experience	31	As for Aglaya's conclusion in <i>The Idiot</i> , her marriage to the pseudo-count, conversion to Catholicism, and rebellion against her family baffles me. I ponder the significance of such an ending and Dostoevsky's intention behind it. What is Aglaya's true role in this narrative?

Rational evaluators maintain a relatively objective and rational attitude towards Dostoevsky's works. Based on their personal reading experiences, they acknowledge the excellence of the works while not hesitating to point out the limitations or shortcomings of the works. They approach the works with moderate expectations, willing to embrace new ideas, perspectives, and emotions presented in the works with an open mind, while also employing critical thinking to understand them. This analytical approach allows them to evaluate the works more objectively, avoiding excessive excitement or disappointment due to personal emotions.

Although rational evaluators acknowledge Dostoevsky's literary achievements, they focus on the realistic portrayal and the impressive character development and psychological analysis in his works. However, the religious consciousness and suffering-related rebellion in Dostoevsky's works, and his probing into issues such as theism vs. atheism, reason vs. spirit, happiness vs. suffering, while interpreted to some extent, fail to gain genuine acceptance from Chinese readers in terms of aesthetic emotions. Dostoevsky's works often convey a sense of confusion, agitation, convulsion, and suffering. His direct confrontation with the dark abyss of the human soul and harsh realities is admirable, but the excessively heavy and oppressive artistic style makes it challenging for Chinese readers to accept. Therefore, readers tend to interpret the works through the lens of Chinese culture. By using local cultural backgrounds as a framework for understanding, readers can more easily bridge cultural gaps and comprehend universal themes related to human nature, social issues, and philosophical reflections present in the works. Differences in cultural aesthetic psychology and the distance from religious thoughts constrain Chinese readers' engagement with Dostoevsky's works (Ding, 2009). Dostoevsky's works are renowned for their profound intellectual content, complex character

relationships, and philosophical exploration, which inherently make them challenging to interpret. With the passage of time, the historical and cultural gaps between readers and the works have further intensified, making the understanding of these works an even more daunting task.

In summary, rational evaluators display a complex attitude of both criticism and admiration when engaging with Dostoevsky's works. They employ a more proactive interpretative strategy, respecting his classic status while incorporating personalized interpretations based on Chinese literary aesthetics. As a result, their expectations from Dostoevsky's works are partially met, yet they also encounter difficulties.

### C. The Oppositional Reception of Critics

The opposing reception of Dostoevsky's works by critics is manifested in three aspects: 1) frustration of expectations at the level of literary creation; 2) rejection and negation of religious thoughts; 3) negative emotional experience.

Critics struggle to appreciate the lengthy sentences and dense dialogues in Dostoevsky's works. They label him as "loquacious" or "verbose", arguing that the dialogues are excessively long and tedious, severely impacting their reading experience. Dostoevsky's language style becomes especially apparent in comparison. One reader noted, "Flaubert's prose is so refined, and then when I started reading *Crime and Punishment*, I felt Dostoevsky's narrative was incredibly dragged out, and the protagonist smirked countless times, which was really tiresome".

Critics also express dissatisfaction with Dostoevsky's character development and portrayal. They perceive most characters in his works as overly eccentric and absurd, akin to being on a chaotic opera stage. Each character is immersed in extreme passion and exaggeration, with behaviors that often exceed conventional understanding, making them difficult to grasp and understand. A reader commented,

I recently read *The Idiot*, and after getting through more than half, I felt mentally exhausted. I couldn't fathom the psychological states of the characters and felt no sense of immersion. I just wondered why everyone was so bizarre, one moment extremely excited, another moment calm, then panic-stricken. I wanted to ask, are you all insane?

When readers attempt to interpret the religious content in Dostoevsky's works from their own value perspectives, they often experience intense ideological conflicts. One reader stated, "In fact, many wars and atrocities are inspired by religion. Conflicts between different religious beliefs, or even different sects within the same religion, are often more bloody". This reader views religion as a root cause of war and violence, which intensifies their aversion to the religious themes in the works. Another reader criticized Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* as representing Dostoevsky's outdated religious ideals, suggesting these ideals no longer fit modern society. Similarly, a reader questioned the transformation and redemption process of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. They found the protagonist's sudden access to unreasonable financial and social support, including the companionship of a kind-hearted prostitute, to be unrealistic. They also dismissed Sonia's greatness and sanctity as mere fantasies of a spiritually weakened individual and showed disinterest in such unrealistic portrayals. This denial of characters reflects their skepticism towards the religious redemption themes in Dostoevsky's works.

Many readers express negative emotions such as "tedious", "obscure", and "disliked" in their posts. For example, one reader, after finishing *The Idiot*, said, "I previously saw someone compare it to being run over by a tank, and that really was my feeling. At least for me, I endured discomfort to finish it". They express confusion, frustration, and disappointment during their reading experience. Dostoevsky's work is often described as opaque, and some readers report complete lack of understanding. For instance, "After finishing *The Idiot*, I was completely bewildered, I could barely understand it, only grasped about 1%". "I often read long speeches and didn't know what was being said, which made me anxious and impatient". Some readers report significant stress from reading Dostoevsky's works, with one expressing their experience: "I just couldn't finish *The Brothers Karamazov* because it stressed me out so much; the book scared me".

TABLE 3  
A RECEPTION MODEL FOR CRITICS

Node	Sub-node	Number of Reference Points	Reference Point Example
Opposite Reception	Frustration in Expectations of Literary Creation	47	Many characters '( <i>The Idiot</i> ) monologues are so lengthy, with so much pleasantries, that it almost drives me mad.
	Rejection and Negation of Religious Ideas	20	The thoughts are superficial, and the world's top ten masterpieces are no more than that. The core idea of <i>Crime and Punishment</i> is about self-redemption, but it is also guided by religious belief. Nowadays, many works of self-redemption based on simple humanity far surpass this book in terms of ideological height.
	Negative Emotional Experience	109	<i>Notes from Underground</i> leaves me perplexed. The protagonist's verbose, cryptic monologues seem to allude to and satirize something profound, yet I struggle to decipher them. My interest waned after a few pages, lost amidst the labyrinthine layers of metaphor and irony.

Critics' expectations are deeply rooted in the rich soil of indigenous literary aesthetics, shaping their pre-reading understanding and aesthetic preferences. When encountering Dostoevsky, a writer from a distinctly different cultural and intellectual tradition, their attempt to interpret his works through a native cultural lens results in unprecedented clashes and challenges to their expectations.

Dostoevsky's novels feature a polyphonic style, where multiple protagonists' voices coexist, each with a complete theoretical framework. These dialogues are not merely linguistic exchanges but represent clashes of thoughts, beliefs, and ideologies. This narrative style contrasts sharply with the Chinese literary tradition, which values "narrative fluency." Traditional Chinese novels emphasize the evolution of the plot, so extensive dialogues and detailed psychological descriptions in Dostoevsky's works are often viewed as redundant and obstructive to plot development. Furthermore, traditional Chinese literature often carries the mark of oral storytelling, where the narrator is expected to reveal everything about the story. As a result, readers accustomed to traditional novelistic narrative modes may find Dostoevsky's dialogues verbose, plots monotonous, and lacking in rhythm, leading to a poor reading experience.

Dostoevsky's deep psychological analysis is another hallmark of his works. He excels in depicting the complexity and contradictions of characters' inner lives, exploring universal spiritual dilemmas through their struggles and growth. This extreme exploration of individual psychological worlds contrasts with the Chinese literary focus on external conflicts and the reflection of societal phenomena through grand narratives and collective destinies. Characters in Dostoevsky's works, who are often portrayed as highly idealized or extreme, may appear to deviate from everyday realism. This perception might be influenced by Confucian aesthetic ideals, leading readers to prefer more balanced and everyday characters. Their pragmatic attitudes make it difficult for them to relate to idealized figures like Prince Myshkin or to appreciate the passionate and unconventional characters like Nastasya. To them, such characters seem detached from reality and fail to resonate with their own life experiences and values.

The religious themes in Dostoevsky's works are also a source of contention. While religion has had some influence in Chinese history, it has not penetrated as deeply into the general psyche as in other cultural contexts. Critics coming from Confucian backgrounds and modern values may use utilitarian and atheistic standards to evaluate religious themes. Whether questioning Raskolnikov's religious conversion or ridiculing Prince Myshkin's idealized character, these criticisms reflect a lack of familiarity, rejection, or even aversion to Dostoevsky's religious ideas among some Chinese readers. Confucian culture's focus on pragmatism and realism makes the transcendental and spiritually aspirational aspects of religion appear incongruous, leading to criticisms of religious ideals as impractical or outdated.

Moreover, Dostoevsky's works are closely tied to the historical changes, political upheavals, and ideological conflicts of Russian society. However, readers who lack knowledge of Russian historical and cultural contexts often struggle to connect the novel's plot, characters, and events with contemporary realities, affecting their understanding of the work's overall significance. This cultural and historical disparity exacerbates the inequality between Dostoevsky and Chinese readers, making the reading process particularly challenging. One reader commented on an e-book of *The Idiot*: "Reading this book often resulted in interruptions and took a long time to finish due to the differences in culture and religious beliefs, which made the reading difficult". This disparity not only hinders understanding but also becomes a significant factor affecting the widespread reception of Dostoevsky's works in China.

In summary, Chinese readers have demonstrated their unique understanding and appreciation of Dostoevsky's works through decoding from various perspectives. This diversity of interpretations not only enriches the dimensions of literary reception but also highlights the cultural exchange and collision between China and Russia. At the same time, it signifies the need for Chinese readers to enhance their cross-cultural understanding capabilities to better appreciate foreign literary works. In the era of digital reading, traditional book reviews are intricately intertwined with the "internet." Online reader comments not only influence readers' reading experiences but also bring about significant transformations in the dissemination and reception of classic authors like Dostoevsky and their works. Dostoevsky's enduring legacy is further transmitted and developed through diversified online reception forms, transcending time and space boundaries and exhibiting unprecedented vitality. Given this, in-depth research on how new media influences literary reception is particularly urgent. Future studies can focus on platform interaction patterns, quantitative analysis using big data, and exploring effective strategies to promote classic works on online platforms while enhancing the public's interest in and literacy of literature.

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper aims to explore the reception of Dostoevsky and his works among readers in the Dostoevsky group on Douban, a Chinese online community. Taking comments from Douban community as research samples, content analysis is adopted with the encoding-decoding model as the theoretical framework. By utilizing NVivo 12 software for coding and analysis, this paper dissects the interpretations and receptions of Dostoevsky and his works from readers with different perspectives, presenting a more comprehensive and detailed picture of reader feedback. The contributions of this paper are primarily reflected in: 1) presenting three modes of reception of Dostoevsky's works by readers; and 2) revealing how different interpretation strategies impact readers' reception of foreign cultural works within the contemporary Chinese context.

This paper illustrates how Chinese readers interpret Dostoevsky's works from multiple perspectives within the Chinese cultural context. Enthusiastic fans, familiar with Russian cultural backgrounds, have classic expectations of

Dostoevsky's works. They attempt to restore the authentic context of the works in their original cultural setting, exhibiting an open and inclusive cultural attitude. In the reading process, Dostoevsky's outstanding creativity and complex thoughts provide them with spiritual shock and meet their expectations. Rational evaluators critically point out both strengths and weaknesses of the works, understanding them through the lens of their own reading experiences with Chinese literature. They express confusion and present a complex reading experience. Critics, based on indigenous cultural strategies, face challenges and express poor reading experiences. Although they do not directly challenge the author's reputation, they criticize various aspects such as language style, character portrayal, and religious themes. This study shows that Chinese readers' reception of Dostoevsky is active and diverse. An unexpected finding of this study is that rational evaluators, while negotiating reception, interpret works through their own cultural or knowledge structures, thereby producing new meanings and becoming code producers of novel significance.

Previous research on Dostoevsky's reception in China mainly used historical approaches, emphasizing the impact of political situations and social environments. This paper shifts focus from academic reception to network community reception, broadening the scope of Dostoevsky's reception studies in China. Tao (2013) examined "The Dostoevsky Bar" on Baidu Tieba from 2007 to 2011, exploring the unique presentation of Dostoevsky and the transformation of mass culture into elite culture. This study extends Tao's research methodology but chooses a different research object. Baidu Tieba, which emphasizes broad interest exchange and community interaction, has gradually declined due to commercialization and user attrition. In contrast, Douban focuses on in-depth discussions and social relationships in the fields of books and media, continuing to develop robustly with its high-quality content and social functions. The advantage of this study lies in its use of reader response criticism and reception theory to analyze the specific viewpoints of the three decoding models and explore the impact of cultural factors on Chinese readers' reception of Dostoevsky.

In terms of research methods and theories, the existing research is limited to the general statement of research materials, lacking a solid theoretical basis, especially the discussion from the perspective of reception theory is insufficient. This study employs Hall's model to classify the reception modes of readers in online communities. By adapting the model to focus on a positive attitude toward evaluating works rather than reflecting ideological positions, it becomes more applicable to literary interpretation contexts. Through Fish's concept of interpretive communities, this study analyzes the differences in reception effects caused by the various interpretation strategies of the three types of interpretive communities. While scholars have the knowledge and understanding to reveal structural patterns and formal features in texts, ordinary readers share reading experiences, exchange information, and help each other understand the implicit content of works. Although there is much casual conversation in the Dostoevsky group, it is undeniable that there are more profound exchanges than expected. Thus, Fish's theory of interpretive communities is also applicable to ordinary readers' receptions.

This paper has not fully considered the reception of the author's works by scholars, writers, offline readers, and readers from other digital media platforms. It is recommended that future research broaden its perspective by incorporating methods such as interviews and surveys to analyze the unique insights of different reader groups, particularly those within digital media, towards Dostoevsky's works.

Lastly, this study analyzes the diverse interpretations of Dostoevsky's works by readers in the cyberspace, effectively filling the gap in previous research that lacked attention to the reception of ordinary readers. In the digital age, the voices and immediate feedback of readers have become a non-negligible driving force in shaping the acceptance and widespread influence of literary works, carrying significant implications for the dissemination and reception of Dostoevsky's works in the new era.

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