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Limited Ressentiment and Indeterminate Desire: The Resonance between "Against the Shivering Cold" IP and the Audience's Feeling Structure

有限的怨恨与未定的欲望：《逆水寒》IP与受众情感结构的共鸣

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Abstract: From novels to TV series to online games, the Chinese wuxia IP *Against the Shivering Cold* has sustained popularity by resonating with audiences' limited resentment and indeterminate desires. Central to this resonance is Gu Xizhao, who has shifted from a symbol of betrayal to a contradictory figure shaped by internal resentment and desire. Unlike Nietzschean creative will, his resentment is bound to utilitarian and emotional impulses. This mirrors broader Chinese social discourses—such as college entrance exam oaths—where eroded idealism and intensified competition leave individuals exhausted yet trapped, turning hatred into self-motivation. This paper examines the IP's affective resonance by analyzing intertextual variations and Gu's characterization, applying Nietzschean theory to interpret resentment, and situating these elements within social contexts that shape contemporary audience feelings.

摘要：从小说到电视剧再到网络游戏，中国武侠IP《逆水寒》凭借对受众有限的怨恨与未定欲望的呼应而保持热度。其核心人物顾熙照从背叛象征转变为由内在怨恨与欲望塑造的矛盾形象。他的怨恨不同于尼采式的创造性意志，而是纠缠于功利与情感冲动之中。这种动力折射出更广泛的中国社会话语——如高考誓词——在理想主义消解与竞争加剧的背景下，个体疲惫却困于其中，将仇恨转化为自我驱动。本文将通过分析文本间的变体与顾熙照的复杂性，运用尼采理论解释怨恨的意义，并结合社会语境揭示其如何塑造当代受众的情感共鸣。

1. Introduction

IP is originally referred to as "Intellectual Property", which is a legal term that refers to "mental creation" [1]. IP in the field of cultural industry is called cultural IP, which is a cultural symbol with high recognition and strong convertibility [2]. As a form of cultural capital in the era of globalisation, it emerged from the industrialised operation in Europe and America. A typical example is

the Disney model, which forms a business closed loop through "film - park - derivatives". In the early days, China mainly imported IPs, but with the iteration of technology and the awakening of cultural self-confidence, local IP innovations have gradually begun: for instance, *Ne Zha 2* reinterprets the "myths" with a film, and *The Black Myth: Wukong* outputs oriental aesthetics with a game. Cultural IPs have attracted a lot of attention due to their strong transformative and regenera-

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tive power and commercial value. At the beginning of the introduction of the concept of cultural IP, related study focused on the discussion of copyright and commercial value; after 2016, the perspective of cultural identity and reflection gradually intervened, and the discussion of value and emotional identity was occasionally seen; at the later stage, the intervention of IP phenomenon from the perspective of emotional identity has formed an independent research (typical examples include Luo Kunjin et al [2024], "Digital Empowerment, Emotional Empowerment, and Character Enhancement of Traditional Cultural IPs", and Li Lingling [2023], "Emotions, Experiences, and Identities: Network Literature IP and the Aesthetic Consumption of Non-legacy"), but it is still relatively rare in the field of China Research.

Against the Shivering Cold is an example of a successful transformation of a cultural IP. The original novel was written by Wen Rui'an, one of the four great masters of Wuxia novels^[1], in 1986, and was first published on the mainland by Beijing Friendship Publishing Company in 1989, and then reprinted and republished by a number of publishers^[2]. In 2004, it was adapted into a TV series, directed by Ju Jueliang and released in mainland China, and has been broadcasted on Hunan TV and other famous platforms, which has received a strong response from the audience. The development of the Internet has propelled its dissemination. Some netizens used the elements of the novels and TV series, compiled and interpreted novels derived from the characters in the series, and published them in BBS^[3]. Nanjing Publishing House chose the best of them and released "The Other Side of the Distance: Against the Shivering Cold Fan Fiction Collection" ^[3] in 2005, and "Against the Shivering Cold" fan fiction continued to be renewed in the online literature world. In 2017, NetEase Thunderfire Technology Co., Ltd. adapted and launched an online game of the same name, which attracted a large number of young audiences and gained high profits, and was classified as the "flagship wuxia product" by NetEase internally^[4]. Since then, related games have been continuously developed and updated. At the same time, several IP communities have gathered. Among them, the official microblog of "Against the Shivering Cold" has 1.316 million followers, far more than similar games.

The popularity and time span of the "Against the Shivering Cold" IP is rare. Admittedly, its vitality cannot be achieved without commercial operations, but this potential for continuous development is also rooted in the internal identity it creates. According to Chen Qiong, the core element of IP is the value and emotional identity hidden behind the story, and the universal recognition's are closely related to human nature (Chen Qiong, p.3.). In the original story, "Against the Shivering Cold" is based on the main line of Jianghu enmity ("Faithfulness-Betrayal" Confrontation), and in the sub-

sequent adaptation, it further portrays the psychology of the characters, then in the game, with the help of the AIGC^[4] technology, it expresses the abstract emotional links through the concrete body image, showing the tendency of the emotional link over the value identity. The tendency of emotional connection overrides value identity^[5], but what kind of value-emotional connection has been established is ambiguous.

Therefore, this paper will describe the transformation of "Against the Shivering Cold" IP around the way of constructing identity as a guide line to explore: how "Against the Shivering Cold" IP resonates with the audience's changing perceptions of life; and aims to combine the social and cultural contexts to make the relevant features of the feeling structure more and more relevant to the audience. In the analysis of this resonance, the features of the feeling structure will be revealed from the hidden to the obvious. Unlike the gathering of warriors in martial arts IPs such as Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils as well as Laughing in the Wind (Jin Yong), Gu Xizhao has received particular attention in "Against the Shivering Cold" from the fans' comments, and he is the one who can arouse the most empathy. In the original novel, he was only a faceted character, but he was gradually fleshed out in the adaptation and received mixed reviews. Thus, the portrayal of Gu is taken as the focus of the discussion.

To answer the above questions, this paper first examines the cross-media form of the Against the Shivering Cold IP and the transformation of Gu's image, focusing on value construction and identity formation. Nietzsche's theory of resentment is then used to interpret Gu's generalized image and explore its evolution, especially in Against the Shivering Cold, where resentment becomes an inner driving force. Through the concept of "feeling structure" by Raymond Williams, the paper investigates how the "resentment infiltrated by frail desire" resonates with audiences' emotions, linking it to the socio-cultural context and shared anxieties about failed desire and involution in China. Nietzsche's resentment, as a repressed yet creative psychological force, helps explain Gu Xizhao's motivations, while "feeling structure" theory reveals how emotions and values are transmitted across generations. Using the unique meaning of "resentment" in Against the Shivering Cold IP as a starting point, this paper examines how the IP aligns with the audience's feeling structure, aiming to offer fresh insights into cultural IPs and reveal subtle, often inexpressible feelings within contemporary experience.

2. Textual Analysis: the Identity Construction of "Against the Shivering Cold" IP and the Change of Gu Xizhao's Image

2.1. Wen Rui'an's Original Wuxia Novel and the "Faithfulness-Betrayal" Confrontation

The original novel was written by the famous wuxia writer Wen Rui'an in 1986^[5], which is regarded as the representative work of Wen's wuxia in the middle of his writing career, and enjoys the reputation of "Against the Water, Cold is Better than Ice, and Warm in the Heart of the Fire". The novel is set in the Southern Song Dynasty and revolves around the story of Qi Shaoshang, a leading figure in the jianghu, who recruits Gu Xizhao to rule Lianyunzhai, but encounters Gu's betrayal and is forced to flee under the joint pursuit of Gu Xizhao and other court officials. Among other things, Gu's identity is set as the righteous son of the treacherous Fu Zongshu, who has been a court henchman since the beginning.

The plot of "Against the Shivering Cold" features dramatic twists and turns, yet follows a relatively simple narrative structure. As Ding Yongqiang notes in reference to Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, martial arts narratives commonly revolve around in martial arts novels along the lines of Propp's Fairy Tale Morphology^[6], it can be seen that the story consists of "vendetta - exile - frustration - (injury - healing -) - comeback [turn into a cycle]". The story consists of several main themes. Among them, "exile" is the main line throughout the story, with "setbacks - comeback" dominantly cycling in the process of exile. (Such as escaping from Lianyunzhai, Thunderbolt Hall and Ruino City without any danger). The reason for the "setback" is either betrayal from within^[7] or the arrival of strong reinforcements from the enemy^[8]. And "comeback" is in the back of "limit situation", relying on the faithful friendship between the partners. The end of the novel is a bit abrupt, by the detector Liu Dufeng's dying, he announced a book written with blood (Qi ShaoShang was hunted due to it) to provide the negotiation strategy, and

make the situation completely reversed - Qi ShaoShang and his entourage to obtain the court shelter and Gu xizhao into the outlaw.

Betrayal triggers a crisis, while faithfulness facilitates a breakout, and the plot moves forward in a repetitive pattern of danger and escape. Characters of all shapes and sizes are added in the process. Qi Shaoshang, on the run, is assisted by his friends at the cost of their lives - revenge for them is the driving force for his exile- and both he and his friends who are portrayed as heroes. The betrayers, represented by Gu Xizhao, are portrayed as woefully treacherous, who invariably fall into a retributive end. The dichotomy of faith and betrayal is the central conflict that contributes to the development of the plot and characterisation. This dichotomy is summarized in **Table 1**, which categorizes characters, values, and outcomes according to moral alignment:

In Against the Shivering Cold, the value dichotomies (see Table 1) shape a plot-driven and functional approach to characterisation, resulting in mostly flat characters defined as either good or evil. Gu Xizhao, though crucial to the plot, is a one-dimensional villain. He begins by betraying his friends and Lianyun group, and throughout the story repeatedly sabotages Qi Shaoshang and his partners through deceit and ambush. Eventually, he is punished and forced to flee. Despite his narrative importance, Gu lacks depth in personality as well as complex relationships. His appearances only serve to create conflict or highlight corruption in official circles. His role is to advance the plot and contrast with Qi, but his inner motivations are undeveloped.

This clear moral division also shapes the novel's view of chivalry. As Gong Pengcheng notes, "chivalry"^[9] is not fixed but a myth constructed in martial arts fiction, shaped by values and historical references across different eras^[6]. It symbolizes the power to restore justice when the social order breaks down, appealing to readers' desire for fairness. Beyond the corrupt court, martial arts fiction creates a separate world, the jianghu, aligned with heavenly justice (ibid.). Here, complex struggles are simplified into a battle between good and

Table 1 | The structure of dichotomies in Against the Shivering Cold

Core values	Faithfulness	Betrayal
Derived values	Loyalty, integrity, selflessness, sacrificing one's life for righteousness, knowing right from wrong: as heroes	Treacherous, cunning, self-interested, fearful of death, aiding and abetting the enemy : as evildoer
Representative Characters	Qi Shaoshang, Xi Hongtian, Lei Roll, Iron Hands, Liu Dufeng mostly positive characters	Gu Xizhao, Gao Fengliang, You Zhimian, Wu Shuangzhu mostly negative characters
Plot	Fighting against the enemy with one heart, helping to escape	Betrayal and rebellion
Character ending	Rehabilitated or sacrificed their lives for justice	Retaliation

evil. The spirit of chivalry is built through the simple presumption that "evil never triumphs over good"^[7].

In this novel, "chivalry" aligns with that myth but takes on a specific meaning: loyalty, righteousness, integrity, and selflessness. Within the tension between faith and betrayal, faith represents the positive side. Those who uphold faith typically show moral clarity, patriotism, and loyalty. To avoid narrowing the idea of chivalry, the story links it with imperial secrets and succession. But in the end, these secrets merely prompt the emperor to compromise, allowing Qi to be vindicated. The effort to elevate chivalry to national righteousness is ultimately dissolved.

Conversely, betrayal fuels a survival-driven need for revenge. This vengefulness often overshadows the moral dimension and becomes the main driving force for Qi Shaoshang and his allies, propelling the plot.

In conclusion, the conflict between faith and betrayal underpins both the plot and characterisation in *Against the Shivering Cold*. This dichotomy, alongside the "evil never triumphs" value system, defines the novel's vision of chivalry. The story relies on a straightforward plot, morally polarized characters, and a clear value structure. Gu Xizhao, as a wholly negative and functional figure, embodies this simplicity.

2.2. TV Adaptation and the Mixing of Love, Reason and Righteousness

In 2004, *Against the Shivering Cold* was adapted into a TV series, which was broadcasted on major TV and online platforms. The main story line is still based on Wen Rui'an's novel, but the adaptation is also very obvious. The first step of the adaptation is to shoot and select the footage, that is, according to the theme of the

film, to select the parts that can best elucidate the essence of life, illustrate the characters and their relationships, and even best express the artist's own feelings, as well as to discard or omit the trivialities that are not important; the second step is to assemble the footage^[8]. Focusing on the TV drama's deletion and reconstruction of the novel's content is an important way to understand the differences in the ways of identification.

In terms of plot, with the help of montage-style camera switching, the single-line mode of pursuit - escape is transformed into multiple lines. Among them, the emotional experiences of Gu Xizhao and Fu Wan Qing also serve as important clues. The cycle of "frustration - comeback" in the main line was partly cut, leaving only the more typical places such as Huinuocheng. Plots and characters that were not in the main story were also omitted, such as Liu Dufeng^[10]'s fight with opponents, which was transformed into Qi Shaoshang's fight with the opponents in the capital, and led directly to the end of Prime Minister Fu's conspiracy being exposed. The plot of the TV series is more focused and compact, with a clearer story line; extraneous characters are also deleted, and the protagonists of Qi Shaoshang, Gu xizhao, and Fu Wanqing are highlighted.

The original dichotomy of faith and betrayal has not been cancelled, but weakened by the parallelism of multiple threads and the construction of Gu Qichao's emotional relationship - faith and betrayal are no longer the intrinsic driving force of plot development and characterisation. The multi-dimensional contradiction between emotions, reason and desire has also become a key element in the plot development and characterisation, see **Table 2** for details.

Table 2 | Rich Value Elements in the TV Series "Against the Wind

Core Values	Faith	Betrayal	Emotion	Reason	Desire
Derivative value	Loyalty, selflessness, knowing right from wrong	Deceitful, self-interested, aiding and abetting the enemy.	Altruistic, self-sacrificing	Selflessness, honesty.	Self-interested, hateful
Representative Characters	Qi Shaoshang, Xi Hongtian, Lei Juan, Iron Hands	Gu Shishang You Zhiwei	Xi Hong Tear (sheltered Chi) Fu WanQing (sheltered Gu and died), Helian Chunshui (sheltered Xi and died)	Qi Shao Shang (vindication of faith) Iron Hands (law and order)	Prime Minister Fu, Golden Lin, Gu Shishang (straying between his love for Evening Qing and his own meritocracy, favouring the latter)
Plot	Fighting with one heart against the enemy and assisting in escaping	Craftiness, deviation and trickery	Protecting the protagonist, assisting in escape	Clarifying right and wrong, firm and stubborn	Competitive, pursuing fame and fortune
Character ending	Vindicated or sacrificing their lives for justice	Self-destruction	Various endings	Vindication	Self-destruction

In the drama adaptation, Gu Xizhao's character gains more complexity beyond his role as an ordinary villain. While he remains an antagonist who drives the plot through betrayal with hatred, the portrayal adds emotional depth and background. His story is ultimately tragic—rising from humble beginnings only to be rejected and erased by both the court and jianghu systems.

Unlike in the novel, where Gu is a stereotypical traitor, the drama presents him as a full character with distinct personality and emotions. He is depicted as a scholar excluded from officialdom due to his inherited family circumstances, mocked despite his efforts (e.g., writing the “Seven Strategies”), and driven by a desire for recognition. These experiences contribute to his later psychological distortion.

Gu differs from both Qi Shaoshang, who upholds justice, and Fu Wanqing, who prioritizes love. His hesitation between self-interest and emotion is reflected in his relationships. The drama emphasizes Gu and Qi's early bond, showing Gu's resentment as mixed with envy, regret, and helpless hostility. The added character of Gu's wife, Fu Wanqing (daughter of the Prime Minister), deepens his tragedy. Their love is distorted by class disparity and ambition—his affection is entangled with inferiority and the desire to rise in power. His reluctance to follow an order to kill Wanqing and his later madness after her death reveal a softer, obsessed side that contrasts his treachery. However, his selfish ambition eventually overpowers love, leading to the continued persecution of Qi, indirectly causing Wanqing's death.

Casting and cinematography further enhance Gu's image. Actor Zhong Hanliang vividly portrays his coolness, ambition, and paranoia. Close-ups and shifting camera angles highlight his emotional changes, especially in scenes like his hidden observation at the inn, where his gaze reflects conflict between hesitation and obsession. The visual storytelling helps reveal his inner world.

Though the drama enriches Gu's character, it doesn't reverse his role as a villain. However, audience response went beyond this framing. Gu attracted more attention than the protagonist Qi, with mixed but generally positive reviews. Some viewers sympathized with his social limitations, praised his persistence, or admired his love for Wanqing. Most comments focused on his three-dimensional portrayal, with moral judgment becoming less prominent.

In summary, the drama streamlines the plot and emphasizes character complexity. It weakens the novel's core dichotomy of faith vs. betrayal, instead presenting Gu as a multifaceted figure shaped by resentment, ambition, and tragic love. Audience reactions show a shift from moral condemnation to emotional and social understanding of his character.

2.3. Other Texts and Emotional Interactions Taking the Game as an Example

Against the Shivering Cold has also been adapted into other textual forms such as online games and online homoeroticism, thus adapting to the booming online medium, which still maintains its popularity to present. These new texts have retained the main lines of plots and most characters from the original book and film, though. However, their overall structure is rather discrete due to their constant innovations. The image of Gu Xizhao has been further moulded on the basis of the original. Taking the game as an example (the game's development team, which basically consists of the audience of the TV series and the same novel^[9]), looking at the typical characteristics of Gu Xizhao's character and his narrative in these texts helps to understand the general trend of the new textual adaptations.

The game version adds more detail to Gu Xizhao's background and personality. For example, it shows him kneeling to a nobleman to protect villagers before joining the minister's household. He is later humiliated after standing up for justice, even dragging the villagers into trouble. These events reveal his early selflessness and moral integrity. His line—“Gu walks alone, unwilling to be lost in the crowd... to leave those who mocked, scorned, and humiliated me with nowhere to hide”—exposes his strong desire to succeed, tinged with resentment and exclusivity. Unlike the decisive betrayal seen in the novel, the game shows him as hesitant and conflicted during the “Betrayal of Lianyunzhai” episode. Instead of acting with clear purpose as in the drama, he struggles internally before gradually adopting the belief that “people's hearts can be used, and any means are justified.” These changes deepen his character and add inner contrast.

Another key feature of the game is its multiple endings, breaking the linear narrative of the original. Gu Xizhao has five possible outcomes, showing his narrative importance. These include tragic endings like “A Life of Regret,” “A Life of Separation,” and “The Pearl Sinks and the Jade Shatters,” as well as a gentler version—“Goodbye in the Jianghu”—in which Gu returns to his hometown with Fu Wanqing. In Meeting Against the Shivering Cold, players can choose to relate to Gu as enemy, friend, lover, or stranger, allowing diverse storylines. This helps compensate for the regret over Gu's fate in other versions and brings players emotionally closer to him.

The chivalric values emphasized in the original novel are weakened in the game, replaced by stronger emotional attraction. While earlier versions embedded values in character relationships, the game allows direct engagement between creators, characters, and players. With AIGC technology, players interact with NPCs in immersive ways. By making choices as a character, the player dissolves their self-identity, adopts the perspec-

tive of another subject, and reconstructs a new self to interact with others. This enables inter-subjective emotional experiences—such as friendship, sorrow, and joy—beyond ordinary self-awareness^[10].

In *Against the Shore*, players' roles are cognitively simple, and interactions rely more on sensory connection—like developing friendship, beginning with admiration and ending in rejection of Gu's betrayal. Meeting *Against the Shore* constructs romantic tension. Overall, emotional engagement replaces traditional value-based identification as the main way to fulfill audience expectations.

In summary, the new version responds to audience interest by improving Gu Xizhao's background and inner world. Through interactive choices and multiple endings, players build direct emotional bonds with him. Instead of reaffirming moral values, the focus shifts to inter-subjective, sensory experiences beyond the self. Gu is no longer a flat character but a complex figure marked by ambition and resentment, foreshadowing his later psychological collapse.

From novel to drama to game, *Against the Shivering Cold* has undergone notable shifts in plot and character design. Gu Xizhao evolves from a one-dimensional function to a fleshed-out figure who provokes empathy and debate. The original dichotomy of faith vs. betrayal is increasingly blurred—first by the drama's mix of love, reason, and desire, then by the game's prioritization of emotional experience. While commercial logic drives IP evolution, its lasting appeal lies in audience value recognition and emotional connection. How *Against the Shivering Cold*, especially the figure of Gu, has sustained its popularity for over thirty years still requires deeper study within relevant theoretical and cultural frameworks.

3. Interpretation of the Phenomenon: Gu Xizhao's "Ressentiment" and the Audience's Feeling Structure

3.1. Gu Xizhao's Ressentiment and Desire

In the TV series and the texts derived from it, the audience's attention is seldom directed to the protagonist Qi Shaoshang, who characterises chivalry and righteousness, but more to the tragic figure Gu Xizhao, who is the villain. A netizen commented, "We should then easily understand Nietzsche's saying: 'He who wrestles with an evil dragon is careful not to become one himself. If you gaze into the abyss for a long time, the abyss is also gazing at you.' A person who has been humiliated and wantonly trampled on his self-respect since he was a child has the optimism to gain grandiosity, which in itself is an unimaginable thing. Compared to the grandiose Qi Shaoshang, Gu Xizhao is more like the shadow of our reality."^[11] Similar comments are not uncommon in the *"Against the Shivering Cold"* commu-

nity. Admittedly, there is no Nietzsche's systematic philosophy and problematic domain in *"Against the Shivering Cold"*, but using Nietzsche's theory of resentment to collide with *"Against the Shivering Cold"* can help to further explore the intrinsic driving force of the *"Against the Shivering Cold"* IP and the uniqueness of the image of Gu Xizhao, and then explain why it can generate widespread popularity among audiences. This will help to further explore the intrinsic driving force of the *"Against the Shivering Cold"* IP and the uniqueness of Gu Xizhao's image, and then explain why it has attracted widespread attention among audiences.

3.1.1. Limited "Ressentiment"

From the perspective of the world setting in *"Against the Shivering Cold"*, the "Martial world" creates a fictional space independent of real-world laws, filled with competing powers driven by the "will to occupy, rule, grow, and become stronger"^[12]. Qi Shaoshang is a heroic leader embodying chivalry, morality, power, and happiness^[13]. In *"Jianghu"*, he represents the noble morality described in *The Genealogy of Morality*^{*}. In contrast, Gu Xizhao reflects Nietzsche's portrayal of the lowly—talented but ignored, accumulating "ressentiment" against the privileged^[14]. Ressentiment arises when powerless people cannot act directly and turn to imagined revenge^[15]. Unlike noble morality based on self-affirmation, slave morality denies the external world. Gu shifts from lamenting injustice to wanting to shame and destroy those who oppress him. He questions whether Qi's chivalry or his own ambition is more valuable, basing his value on the injustice he suffers^[11]. This resentment drives Gu's pursuit of Qi and propels the story forward.

However, in Nietzsche's system, "ressentiment" is dialectical. It is a toxic danger, but becomes "creative and valuable" (Bernstein, 2015, pp.145.) . It counters negative inertia and docility, and makes the human being a truly interesting animal. gains depth in a higher sense (Nietzsche, 2015, pp.64-68). If resentment is allowed to grow, it becomes a harmful insidious poison and leads to a nihilism that will disintegrate all assessments of value. But the condemnation of conscience that arises in self-resentiment is a disease, "but a disease like pregnancy" (G88; 343). Within the crevices of this disease there is also a " great promise " (Bernstein, 2015, pp.148.); Nietzsche has not yet told us what this is, but it is something that will transcend both good and evil, that will be the self-overcoming of resentment (Spinks, 2014, p.167). Through Nietzsche's theory it is clear that this is the will that is preserved in resentment and may be transformed into a powerful will that can both create and transform the kernel of all the "beings" and "realities" we encounter; it can transcend the resentment that is based on resentment. It is capable of transcending the good and the evil based on resentment, and of constructing

the creative force of every level of life above nothingness (Bernstein, 2015, pp.167.).

Unfortunately, Gu's resentment is not entirely an imaginative revenge, let alone the development of a strong will to subvert the value system. On the one hand, he magnifies the humiliation he has suffered into accusations of social evils, in order to maintain his moral high ground of non-conformity, while on the other hand, he seeks to gain fame under the system of social judgement, and uses the "court" to fight the "Martial world". He seems to be in control of power, but in reality, he is still driven by powerful officials, and he looks like a cynic. The subtlety of the story is that although Gu has the psychological foundation for resentment and the negative expression of accusation of injustice, as well as sufficient strength of desire and perseverance, he enters the social evaluation system that he dislikes, and his "resentment", which is supposed to lead to introspection, erupts into violence against chivalry. This is more and more obvious in the transformation of the IP "Against the Shivering Cold". As mentioned above, the novel's concept of chivalry is an ideal order that opposes the injustice of reality, and Gu Xizhao represents the court and submits to its value system. As the concept of chivalry becomes more diluted in the adaptation, love, reason and desire are mixed in, and the emotional connection gradually overtakes the identification with the concept of chivalry. Gu is no longer only a representative of negative morality, but also on the periphery of the imperial order and the antithesis of the Jianghu order. His "resentment" is shifted from resentment of social injustice to chivalry, and the real order that he fights against with his "chivalrous" myths strikes back at him. Gu Xizhao's resentment does not lead to his ideal life, but rather to the support of his own official position and interests.

Gu Xizhao's resentment does not go beyond the existing value system, pointing to the moral concept of rebellion and creative will, but is reduced to the rejection of those who hinder him, and is used as a reverse incentive to realize his ambitions. His "ambition" is also always ambiguous, mixed with the fantasy of changing the order, the desire to match his wife's status, the desire to prove himself and the pursuit of fame and fortune. The "ideals" that support his actions are not defined in essence. The "ideals" that support their actions do not have any definite values as their core, and they are a pretext for the emptiness of values; under the declaration of questioning the injustice of the powerful, they are just the surges of indeterminate desires centred on their own utilitarian interests. This lax desire, however, is condensed into a self-fulfilling appearance of value that supports the character's actions. However, this has helped Gu Xizhao's image to gain further attention from the audience, who either feel aggrieved by him or defend him, or even praise him. The use of "resentment" as a driving force for action does not

evoke a value identity, but it strikes the audience in an emotional way. If it is not the hate that creates new value, but rather the limited hate and disorganised utilitarian desire that interests the audience, then how does it connect with their perceptions.

3.1.2. Generalised Exclusivity and Lack of Desire

It is unrealistic to expect that the popular culture text *Against the Shivering Cold*, which originates from a different context, displays a notion of resentment comparable to Nietzsche's. This IP is only a text of limited exclusivity and disorganised desires. It is unrealistic to expect the popular culture text which comes from a different context, to display the same concept of "resentment" as Nietzsche. *Against the Shivering Cold* only has a similar outline and the same expression of resentment, but it is still far from Nietzsche's moral revolt. What keeps the lack of depth and relevance of the resentment within limits is the weak entry of Gu Xizhao's ambiguous desires. Compared to Nietzsche's original work, a certain commonality can be found in the popularised translation of Nietzsche in China.

In the Chinese translation and reception of Nietzsche, resentment has lost its original dialectical structure, but both elements of that dialectic have been transformed. On one side, resentment has been generalized from a reaction to power oppression into a broader emotional state—characterized by isolation, detachment, and the sense of "fighting alone."^[16] The power dynamic that originally fueled it has been downplayed. For instance, Jia Ming portrays Nietzsche as a solitary, misunderstood figure: "Of all the people living or dead, not one of them makes me feel even a hint of nostalgia". Nietzsche's resentment, Jia argues, was not aimed at individuals but rather at oppressive cultural and social forces. However, he is depicted as battling these forces in solitude, a framing that emphasizes emotion over systemic critique.

This emotional tone corresponds to Liu Xiaofeng's analysis of 1990s affective structures. Liu suggests Nietzsche inspired a kind of "aesthetic individualism"—a pursuit of sensory and aesthetic distinctiveness—that reflects the spiritual crisis of modern individuals. In a money-driven urban culture, rational calculation cannot fully sustain inner life, leading to "floating" mental states such as pride, indifference, isolation, and detachment^[17]. In this context, resentment—as seen in the character Gu Xizhao—aligns more with such floating emotional patterns than with Nietzsche's original structure. It functions alongside rationality, rather than challenging or transforming it.

On the other side of the dialectic, Nietzsche's concept of a creative will—the force that subverts moral norms—is largely erased in translation. Instead, hate becomes a shallow expression of identity, asserting the self through the negation of others without deep introspection. Zhou Guoping observes: "The end is missing, and so each individual must construct their own end.

The liberator liberates himself... by changing 'it has been' into 'I will it so'"[18]. This highlights Nietzsche's emphasis on individual agency, but in translation, the focus often shifts to a vague nothingness or meaninglessness extracted from his critique of Christian morality.

Zhou frequently reinterprets "nothingness" as the existential emptiness of modern life—blending Schopenhauer's pessimism with Nietzsche's affirmation of life despite its meaninglessness[12]. However, this interpretation often stops short of Nietzsche's radical voluntarism. Other scholars similarly flatten his ideas, either aligning "nothingness" with the rejection of tradition[13] or using it to critique modernization[14], without proposing new systems of meaning to replace the old. Nietzsche's Übermensch, too, becomes reduced in Zhou's version to "a real human being with unique personality... a creator of his own value scale"—but only as "a perfect work of art brewing in Nietzsche's mind" (Zhou Guoping, 1986, pp.36). This version emphasizes personal uniqueness over ethical innovation, turning the void of values into a stage for self-display.

Rather than offering a coherent ethical alternative, these interpretations use Nietzsche's work to justify individualist expressions rooted in negation and abstraction. The result is not a systematic rethinking of morality, but a stylized emotional resonance with Nietzsche's ideas. As Zhou himself admits in the preface, his work is intuitive rather than academically rigorous.

Around 1986, when the "Nietzsche craze" was back in China, Zhou's Nietzsche: At the Turning Point of the Century was published and "printed four times in eight months, with a total of 90,000 copies"[19]. In response to the audience's enthusiasm for Nietzsche, more and more Nietzschean abstracts, biographies, and some popular readings with philosophical and aesthetic

colours of life flowed into the market. Through **Table 3**, we can get a glimpse of the characteristics of this popularised Nietzsche translation with the imprint of the feelings and thoughts of the time - the popularised text pays more attention to the audience's perceptions of life, and thus carries a more distinctive imprint of the times:

Combined with Table 3, the author's perception of the times is weakened into the compilation and interpretation, so that Nietzsche's thought is attached to a stronger tendency of floating feeling and consumption preferences. However, the utilitarian nature of the presentation is disguised in the mark of knowledge, emotion, and spirituality, which often achieves its promotional effect out of the grasp of the inner desires of the audience. This same element is also present in Gu Xizhao's desires, which is not a strong will to destroy the moral system, but a key factor in limiting the transformation of his resentment into a creative force. These feelings are thickening with the adaption of texts.

In short, the structure of *Against the Shivering Cold*, especially the figure of Gu Xizhao, has a similarity in framework and expression to Nietzsche's idea of "resentment". Using Nietzsche as a reference, the inner drive of the character is revealed in greater depth. However, there is a clear difference in that Gu has the intensity of resentment and the situation of repression, but lacks its depth and relevance, and does not develop a deep introspection that leads to a creative will beyond morality. What limits his resentment and drives him to act quickly is in fact an intuitive desire for fame. An exploration of this resentment and desire reveals a mixture of the "solitary" state of mind and the kernel-less individual uniqueness. In the popularised translation of Nietzsche, the emptiness of values is generalised into a sense of meaninglessness in life, and individual

Table 3 | Typical expressions and their characteristics in Nietzsche's popularised communication

Title of the book	Date	Presentation	Characteristics
Song Jikai's Book of Philosophical Anecdotes	1988	Superman is the legislator of nature and society, and is not himself bound by any law But on the other hand, his superman often acts as the theoretical embodiment of the ultra-reactionary bourgeoisie[20].	Unrestrained Rebelliousness
Zhao Xifang, Being and Nothingness	1999	Nietzsche neither recognised the existence of a whole beyond the individual, nor did he go towards pessimism. His philosophy of the powerful will showed that he was "overcoming suffering by the power of life itself". What strength and pathos![21]	Individuality and Sensibility
Nietzsche's Philosophy, compiled by Julia Long	2014	The more one lives on the surface of life, the more one's mind is confused and anxious about the lack of meaning We need philosophy more than ever to orientate and direct our lives.[22]	The Lack of a Sense of Meaning and the Valorisation of Philosophy
Philosophising Life to the End by Yuhui Kang	2023	The two poles today are no longer just the rich and the poor, but also the masters of knowledge and the slaves of knowledge And mediating between these two poles are the markets and media channels through which knowledge is disseminated and sold[23].	The difference between market value and cultural capital

uniqueness cannot point to a clear view of life. The fulfilment of desires and emotional identification, are the key to the appeal of these texts. These elements are also blended into the image of Gu Xizhao. In this way, the reason why the "Backwaters Cold" IP - especially the character of Gu Xizhao - has gained the attention of audiences can be centred around this particular sense of "ressentiment" and the amorphous desires that are embedded in it. The answer to this question can be found in the social and cultural context of the audience.

3.2. Burnout and Ressentiment in Socio-Cultural Contexts

In terms of textual structure, the creation and acceptance of TV dramas and their subsequent texts are still ostensibly carried out under the general framework of "evil does not overpower righteousness", but more value elements and sensual components are constantly impacting on the meaning of the concept of chivalry in wuxia novels. Looking deeper into the content of the text, what is injected into the image of Gu xizhao and his narrative is not a real moral resistance, but "ressentiment", which is a combination of the emptiness of values and personal desires. Driven by "ressentiment", the story that unfolds in the pursuit and escape has gained a firm core, which to a certain extent contributes to the successful IP effect of "Against the Shivering Cold". Compared with the positive characters, the "hatred" Gu Xizhao attracts more and more attention, and the lamentations of "the amazing talent of Gu Xizhao" and "there is no Gu Xizhao in the world" are spread among the audience. To a certain extent, value identification can no longer clearly explain how this attraction occurs, and the answer has to be sought in a wider and more hidden place.

Raymond Williams states: "I would like to describe it in terms of a feeling structure: it is solid and definite, as the word "structure" suggests, but it is at work in the subtlest and most inaccessible parts of our activities. In a sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of an age: it is the particular, living result of all the elements of a general organisation."^[24] This deep commonality is active in the imperceptible corners of the culture of the age, scattered among seemingly unrelated texts and phenomena. It both fluxes with the generations and maintains relative stability in the transformation, "the changing organisation is like an organism: the new generation responds in its own way to the unique world it inherited, maintaining continuity in many ways" ^[23]. Analysing feeling structures, on the other hand, involves searching for resonances between different texts in order to discover the shared sense of life embedded in them. In the light of the above, the fact that "Against the Shivering Cold" IP continues to gain audience attention in different media forms not only adapts to the fluctuation of audience's feelings, but also holds on to the internal identity that has always existed. By borrowing

the concept and method of "feeling structure", we can further release this.

Then come to the age and city distributions of the audience of different texts.

Combined with **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**, it can be seen that the audience of both the TV series and the game are mainly young people aged 18-35 years old, which can be deduced that they are mainly college students and people who start to work. Figure 1 shows that the audience is concentrated in first-tier and new first-tier cities where competition is violent. Comparing the two, it can be seen that the audience of the game is more concentrated on urban youth than that of the TV series. A brief review of the spiritual journey and life perception of young people in the corresponding time period is the key to understanding the resonance they find in the "Against the Shivering Cold" IP.

On the one hand, there is the uncertain pursuit of values after the ebb of idealism, and the accompanying feelings of weariness and anxiety. Since the reform and opening up, after the empty cult of "ism" or idol in Mao Zedong's era was broken, every individual was untied from a fixed value orientation and had to face the "vertigo" of rebuilding their own values. In the 1980s, this could still be covered under the exuberance arising from the liberation of individuality, but there was already a dark sentiment of emptiness and confusion growing in the background, and the "Pan Xiao Discussion" was a manifestation of it. Reflecting on the spiritual crisis reflected in the Pan Xiao Discussion, He Zhaotian pointed out that the natural inheritance of idealism was first eroded by a series of social and cultural trends since the 1980s, and then dealt a fatal blow in 1989. All these made the idealism collapse in the 1990s when it was most needed to balance the market ideology and consumerist atmosphere^[25]. All of this made it possible that

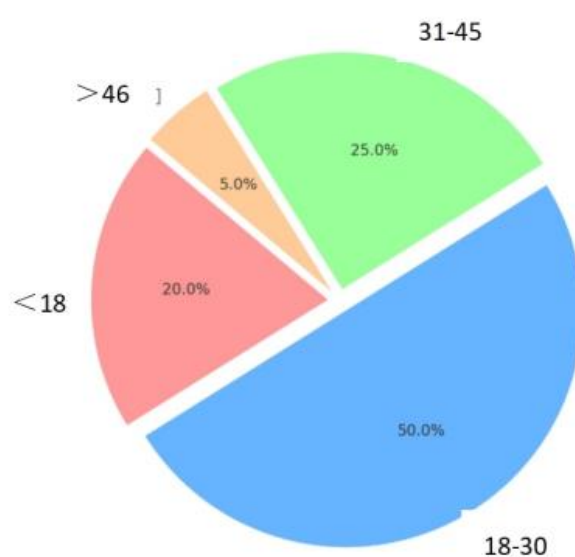


Figure 1 | Age distribution of the audience of the TV series "Against the Wind".^[15]

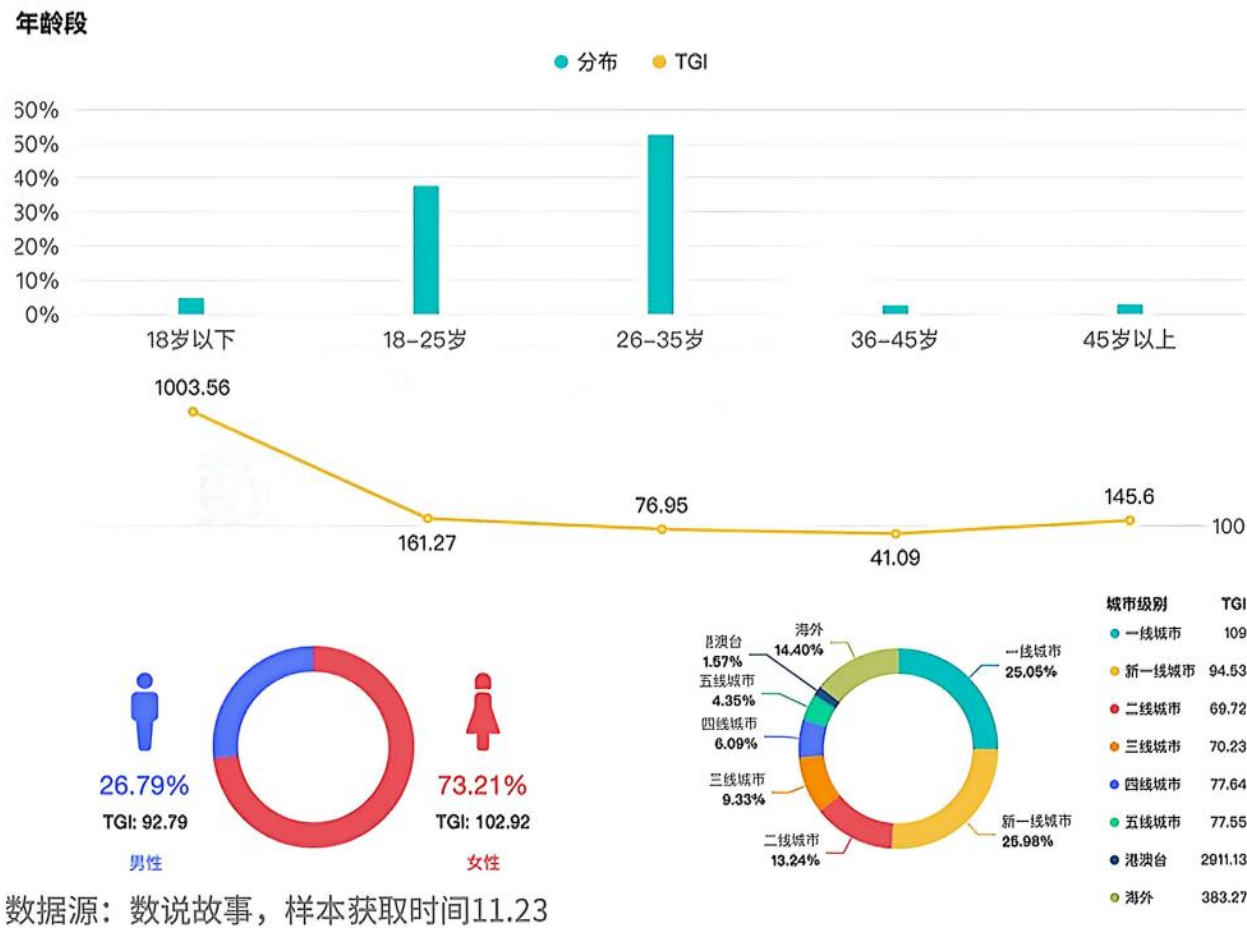


Figure 2 | "Interface News" 2023 "@Backwaters Cold Hand Game" microblog fan portrait [16]

when China moved significantly towards a market economy in 1992, the feeling and logic of the economy not only quickly shaped people's economic behaviours, but also quickly overshadowed and even momentarily shaped people's feelings and imaginations about politics, culture, and daily life. The logic of the market economy can certainly stimulate desire and construct feelings and imagination, but it cannot really close the gap of idealism, and the emptiness of value beliefs creeps into the structure of feelings as an unresolved historical problem. Due to the split between the value factor and the truth factor, the sense of emptiness arising from unbelievability—such as the negation of the value of life, the self-doubt of spiritual concepts, the anxiety and tension of seeking development, and the misgivings arising from the conflict between ideals and realities^[26]..... in the use of fill in the gaps when utilitarianism subsides, come to the surface more and more.

On the other hand, there are the two sides of the same coin of rational calculation and floating moods (e.g. loneliness, burnout) under individualism. The lack of ideals and the proliferation of nihilistic emotions make individuals prone to internalise their own crisis of meaning, and give rise to an individualism that lacks a

sense of social connections and focus on themselves^[24]. Such individuals inherited the resistance against collectivism and mainstream ideology in the 1980s, but gradually turned into aimless antagonism due to the recession of the antagonistic goal. On the one hand, it is centred on self-perception and self-interest, and establishes an appearance of self-worth through the exclusion of the other; on the other hand, it strongly seeks external recognition, and in fact, without regard for its own psycho-subjective condition, it uncritically follows the paths and standards laid down by the dominant external atmosphere ^[24]. The external logic at this time is dominated by the market economy, and the calculation of benefits permeates the individual consciousness.

Liu Xiaofeng points out that the role of the monetary economy in the mentality structure of individual life in big cities is certainly rationalised, but it is also individually emotional In modern life, which has been taken away from traditional kinship relations, everyone appears to be rationalised... ..It is only in the realm of individuality and private relationships that various kinds of floating feelings are revealed^[27]. While people can certainly use rational calculation to deal with social relations, they lack a sense of meaning when confronted

with the self. The consciousness of the subject that occupies the centre is essentially just a holistic construct filled with a vague sense of individuality. One manifestation of this consciousness is the utilitarian pursuit of intuition, and another is the generalised feeling of meaninglessness. Wang Xiaoming explains this further in light of recent changes: he uses the "law of the jungle" as a keyword in contemporary culture, pointing out that the self-deception of talking about good and evil after self-satisfaction still locks us into a narrow focus on utilitarianism^[28]. The tightening of utilitarian constraints also provokes exhaustion and burnout, and the rapid rise in popularity of expressions ranging from "adherent" to "lying down" reflects a willingness to withdraw from the competition and the brutal "inward spiral" of the law of the jungle. The rapid popularity of these expressions reflects a desire to withdraw from competition and the cruel "inward spiral" of the law of the jungle. The mental disorders that began in the 1980s and 1990s, which have not been effectively addressed, are still festering today, shaping the structure of current sensibilities. As Wang puts it: it is certainly different today, because over the past 30 years, this culture has grown day and night, and not only is its face now very clear, but each and every one of us is under its spell ^[27].

On the social level, according to Sun Liping's survey, compared to the 80s, when reforms were accompanied by a marked improvement in social conditions, since the 90s there has been a vague sense of depression - economic growth has not brought about a increase in jobs, the disparity between rich and poor has even widened, and social security has deteriorated.^[29] With the solidification of the social structure and the growing imbalance between supply and demand, more and more people are now aware that they may not win ^[(26)] than their previous generation. However, there is a disconnect between the sense of futility and powerlessness and actual action, and many people does not reconciled to withdraw from the mechanism of competition. The crisis awareness of competition and the feeling of meaninglessness are both blended into the inner world and create some kind of new feelings for the subject. As a result of the resource lack and increased competition, and the young generation that has grown up in an environment of increased competition, it is difficult not to be impregnated by this structure of feeling (and they are main audiences of "Against Shivering Cold"). For them, Pan Xiao's confusion about the lack of meaning has been carried over, but it has been transformed into a kind of negative inertia: on the one hand, she recognises the unequal distribution of resources, and doubts the significance and validity of struggle; on the other hand, she is still limited to the social evaluation system, and chases after the given values. The antagonism that prevailed in the 1980s, in the absence of significance and the continuous depletion of "Involution"^[17], has shrunk into a cynical sense of burnout.

Thus, the narrative of Gu Xizhao being excluded by both the imperial court and the jianghu order, and the failure of his desire for self-realisation, which is futile, can easily arouse sympathy, and the use of psychoanalysis can complement the formation of common sense: Gu's desire to replace Qi as the leader of the jianghu is rejected, and his desire to become a member of the powerful and noble is futile, and his attempt to be whole in his love also fails, and he is excluded from the order, which is an implicit reflection of the inevitable fragmentation of symbolic pursuits. He is a symbol of the inevitable breakdown of the symbolic quest. Not only is his image a detached object that the "I" cannot be, but it also cuts to the heart of the audience's psychological deprivation through the doomed nature of the dashed illusion. According to Laura Mulvey, popular cinema produces two contradictory visual pleasures, voyeurism and narcissism, and the contradiction between the two is reflected in the fact that: "the former suggests the separation of the sexually charged subject from the objects that appear on the screen, while the latter, by fascinating the viewer, makes him or her identify the objects on the screen, which have a resemblance to him or her, with another idealised self^[30]." This conflation of separation and identification is deeply rooted in the mechanism of audience's desire. Focusing on the story of Gu Xizhao, his persistent pursuit of meritocracy implies an extraordinary spirit of aggressiveness, the burnout in another pastime is fascinated by his powerful inner drive (which he himself lacks), and his zero-to-zero failure evokes a vague sense of resemblance. While the intensity of the desire and the power of the action somehow creates a reverse incentive. Imagine a viewer or player who is immersed in the virtual world, tired of the constant competition and unclear about the meaning of life, seeing the fiercely ambitious Gu Xizhao and his history of striving for progress through his every efforts despite the lower classes, it is easy to inspire a kind of idealised self-projection under the contrast. This kind of empathy creates a deep emotional connection between the audience and the characters, and thus the regret of "once viewing Gu xizhao is misguided for life, but not viewing Gu xizhao would regret for life" is circulated among the audience.

These common feelings are revealed in various related texts. The college entrance examination is the culmination of the competition, and this competitive aspect is a crucial common memory for urban youth (the audience subject). It is easier to see the commonality of these feelings by linking them to the oaths of the college entrance exams in the corresponding time periods. Therefore, **Table 4** is presented visually first, and then typical expressions are selected for discourse analysis to reveal the perceptions that emerge from them.

Table 4 shows that there is a certain correlation between Gu Xizhao's lines and the oath of the college entrance examination. This correlation is centred on a strong desire for success and a sense of loneliness and

Table 4 | Comparison between the lines of "Against the Shadow of the Sea" and the oath of the college entrance examination

Lines	Oath	Comparison
To make those who mock at me, scorn me, and humiliate me, ashamed of themselves.	Breaking down the boat, burying my head in the sand; tenacious struggle, united combat; wash away the 08 shame, defending the dignity of the Pearl. (2009)	Wash away the shame of the desire and spiritual victory method
I want to prove to them today shy to do climbing, tomorrow get the power to become a dragon	Hundred days hanging beams, to fulfil the dream of a young man's kunpeng. Three years of searching, make an essay at a glance. (2016)	Expressions of Desire for External Recognition and Desire to Rise and Fall
Gu walked alone all his life because he didn't want to be lost in the crowd (Drama)	The same cold windows and hard studies, bright face and dark lights, why should I be willing to be behind others; the same starry nights and long hours of sleep, why can't I be the one to be first? (2019)	The anxiety of being obliterated and the competitive sense of lonely struggle
You know, when the battle is fought, you die and I live, how can you care.	"A hundred days of oaths, the will to win, six moons of swords, who will fight. (2019)	The exclusivity of competition is shown directly in the lines as a fight to the death, and in the oath as a metaphor for battle.
I have been a book for four years, and I have been bouncing around the border and the capital, hoping to be appreciated, but no one has ever taken more than one look at this book. (Drama)	Ten years of hard work, a hundred days of wind and rain, travelling all over the mountain of books, sailing the final sea of trees, a thousand grinds, iron pestle into a needle, the waves wash the water, sand and gold see. (2023)	Emphasising one's own efforts, the lines are intended to highlight the frustration of futility; the oath presupposes success as a goal to strive for.

resentment of exclusion. The oath masks the fear of failure, while Gu's story openly expresses it. Both use emotional rhetoric, exaggeration, and contrast to intensify this drive—especially in Zhang Guimei's school pledge: "No one is born a straw, no one is destined to be a straw. The same cold windows and hard studies, the same bright surface and dark lights, why are we willing to be behind others; the same stars and moon, the same long hours of sleep, why can't it be me who is the first to do so? We can not succeed, but we absolutely can not regret I was born to be a man rather than grass, I stand on the shoulders of great men to defy the humble coward."^[31] Leaving aside the specific context, it can be uncovered that it shares the same set of hateful discursive logic as Gu's formulation. The "I" in this discourse is a fictitious subject that needs to enter the ideology that one is born superior and the competitive for not willing to be left behind, which would in turn inspires the identification and desire of all the oath-bearers.

This is complemented by a rather emotive expression that awakens tired emotions and lapses in concentration. Specific rhetoric and tone are used to create a sense of sadness and a "lone warrior" atmosphere. Under the disguise of sentimentality, there is a direct utilitarian purpose. This purpose has an intuitive point of view (the candidate's grades, Gu's official position - the so-called "success"); it can be diligently and firmly interpreted, but not to the determined, internalised values. Because of the empty core, it must be motivated

by a strong antagonism: the antagonism (exclusivity) is not directed towards a definite object, but only towards other competitors or vested interests, as imagined by the competitor, in an abstract and generalised way. Just as Gu Xizhao's representation of his ideals is full of contradictions and ambiguities; his desperate desire to gain merit within the established order is interspersed with a generalised resentment at every turn. The fact that these feelings, which are hidden in the feeling structure of the audience, resort to resounding expressions in the lines and oaths explains to some extent why discursive constructions infused with resentment and metaphors of one-upmanship and battle are more likely to penetrate into the audience than didactic guidance.

These discourses resonate because they mirror the audience's structure of feeling^[18], where the collapse of ideals leads to emotional exhaustion and identity built on exclusion. In today's society filled with competition and "Involution", utilitarian desire and resentment become dominant feelings. Thus, popular culture often moves people less through moral messages than through emotionally charged, even hateful expressions. Against the Shivering Cold follows this logic: while commercially entertaining, it embeds this emotional structure in Gu Xizhao's character. His failure reflects the audience's fatigue, and his bitter resentment taps into their own lack of meaning and fierce competitiveness, forming a layered emotional connection.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, from novel to television series to online game and humanities, *Against the Shivering Cold* has successfully constructed an IP, and the heat and time span of its text dissemination are remarkable. The character of Gu Xizhao has attracted a lot of attention and received diverse evaluations. One of the main reasons for the long-term and widespread popularity of the "Against the Shivering Cold" IP is that it echoes the finite "ressentiment" and indeterminate "desire" in the audience's feeling structure:

From the perspective of value structures and identity formation, the original novel uses the conflict between "faithfulness and betrayal" as a core of plots and characters. This binary aligns with the moral presumption that "evil never prevails over good," reinforcing the myth of "chivalry". In the TV adaptation, however, this value framework weakens. Emotion, reason, and desire are introduced, shifting the focus away from chivalric ideals. In newer formats like online games, interaction between creators, audiences, and characters replaces direct value transmission. Emotional engagement becomes the main way of attracting audience. This change reflects a broader cultural trend: since China's reform and opening, idealism has waned, and the pursuit of values has become blurred and sensualized^[19].

With this shift in identification, Gu Xizhao becomes increasingly complex. His behaviors are driven by ambiguous desire and resentment, and portrayed in greater psychological detail. Freed from his former role as a mere representative of betrayal, Gu develops into a contradictory figure. His resentment is not just psychological but rooted in Nietzschean logic: as a marginalized character, his repressed status generates hostility toward the chivalric world. Yet instead of using resentment for self-overcoming, Gu channels it through the power of the imperial court to strike at the martial underworld. It serves the court's values, not Gu's own transformation. His desire becomes utilitarian and exclusive—aimed at gaining status and wealth—rather than achieving any transcendent good^[20].

This portrayal resonates with Nietzsche's translation of resentment into structures of feeling. It also subtly mirrors social phenomena such as the "oath" of the college entrance exam—a promise of self-advancement driven by excluding others and self's anxiety.

In the cultural context where *Against the Shivering Cold* is popular, self-interested individualism and inner meaninglessness go hand in hand. Market logic drives utilitarian calculations in social life, while belief-less senses dominate inside. Burnout and intuitive desire are widespread in a society shaped by resource scarcity and extreme competition. If meaningless competition (i.e. "Involution") leads people to identify themselves with narratives of failure, and hatred becomes a compensatory tool—an exclusive response that affirms one's unique value than others to arouse some passion

among tiredness. The IP absorbs both desire and resentment, channeling them into its narrative and continuing to attract urban youth navigating fierce competition. Gu Xizhao embodies these diffuse feelings. His downfall reflects the audience's burnout; his resentment, mixed with utilitarian desire and generalized hostility, speaks to their inner emptiness. This creates a powerful emotional bond.

Thus, the success of *Against the Shivering Cold* lies in how it adapts value and emotional identification to match the audience's changing structure of feeling in a time of value nihilism. It carefully crafts a character whose contradictions reflect complex, ineffable emotions. While some aspects of its appeal may be kitsch and aligned with commercial logic, it also opens up the possibility of transforming resentment into something more constructive. Whether this transformation is possible remains a question for further research^[21].

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