The Double-edged Sword Impact of Secondary Creation on Literary Appreciation and Corresponding Strategies

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Abstract: This paper examines the dual impact of secondary creative adaptations on classic literature in the digital age and proposes management strategies. While recognizing that such adaptations revitalize classics through innovative formats and broaden accessibility through multimedia platforms, the study warns against their potential drawbacks: fragmented interpretations, distorted meanings, commercialization excesses, and copyright conflicts. Case analyses reveal that although secondary creations lower entry barriers for classic readership, excessive entertainment focus may dilute original works' essence. The paper advocates a balanced approach involving four dimensions: maintaining classic truth-goodness-beauty values while distinguishing entertainment from academic adaptations; establishing copyright-sharing mechanisms; utilizing quality adaptations for educational engagement; and developing sustainable "creation-feedback" industrial ecosystems. Ultimately, it positions secondary creation as a cultural bridge enabling classical texts' creative transformation and innovative development through guided contemporary dialogue.

Keywords: Secondary Creation, Classic Works, Read, Chinese

1. Introduction

As a form of cultural inheritance, secondary creation has always run through the process of human civilization. The digital age has also given secondary creation multiple forms with openness and interactivity. The internet, as a product of technological innovation in the new era, is widely used by people, providing unlimited possibilities but also bringing certain risks. With the rise of secondary creation, classic literature works have also collided with them. Nowadays, the phenomenon of generative artificial intelligence on the classic literature works of secondary creation has been commonplace, and they are in the form and content of the link between the contradictions, both to the secondary creation of space, but also let the secondary creation of controversy; not only to the classic literature works of vivid vitality, but also part of the theme of the contents of the original intent to deviate from the original or even appear distorted. Therefore, is secondary creation desirable or not? To assume where should its boundary and red line be? And how to guide its development in a good direction?

2. Phenomenological Profiling

2.1 What are Secondary Creations and Their Species

2.1.1 The Connotations of Secondary Creations

Secondary creation, also known as transformative use, refers to the user's re-creation of the original material. Here we must deepen our understanding of the concept through the question of whether a translated classic work should be considered the result of a second creation.

There is still a debate on this issue. In favor of the view, there are the following phenomena. Firstly, translation is not a mechanical correspondence, and needs to cross the language barrier and cultural gap. Secondly, translation is difficult to get rid of the translator's subjective factors, which may lead to a shift in emphasis on the content of the text. The unsupportive view, on the other hand, generally focuses on the alteration of the content of the original text and believes that translation should restore the original meaning to the greatest extent possible.

Understanding is diverse, but through the discussion of this issue, we can find that one of the important characteristics of secondary creation is creativity. The second creation of an actor is mentioned in the *Artistic Appraisal* as "An actor who on the basis of skillfully completing the dance language stipulated by the choreographer and director, injects his or her own thoughts and feelings to create a dance image with distinctive personality characteristics". [1] Literature is no exception, and this kind of creativity can neither be completely separated from the original, nor too close to the original meaning. Therefore, "secondary creation is not a direct copy or plagiarism of the original work, nor is it a re-expression of the original work's ideology, but rather, it is a new expression of some elements of the original work (content, form, point of view, etc.) as the material, disintegrating the original system, the vein used to create a new point of view and ideas." [2]

2.1.2 The Integration of Secondary Creations and Original Works

Nowadays, the integration of secondary creations and classic literature works covers the fields of film and animation, games, literature and network creation, visual arts and digital technology, frequently appearing in short videos and social media, and even in classroom teaching. A large number of masterpieces have been filmed as movies, such as *The Dream of Red Mansions* (the 1987 version), which people have enjoyed; modern entertainment has been integrated into creative works, such as *The Sherlock Holmes Mysteries*, which has been transformed into a screenplay; virtual reality (VR) and projection technologies have been used in a large number of restoration documents and textual visualization, such as the Xi'an Museum, which has transformed *The Picture of Wangchuan* drew by Wang Wei into a virtually interactive content, etc. Although there are certain problems, but from these specific cases, we can see that the overall trend is still thriving.

2.2 The Causes of The Phenomenon of Secondary Creation of Classical Works

In terms of external factors, firstly, the abundance of resources in the era has provided a basis for re-creation. Diversified editing software and AI tools have lowered the threshold of creation, and technology has empowered creativity, making it possible to produce high-quality content using mobile phones. Secondly, the culture of encouraging mass creation in the digital era has broken the one-way communication pattern, and the audience has changed from passive receivers to active creators, who take the initiative to create with the help of fellow creators and cross-media adaptations. At the same time, there is also a community culture behind the promotion, the circle of peers, pop-up sites to form a creative culture circle, to stimulate collective creation.

Finally, secondary creation is not only an important way for the young generation to recapture the classics, but also an important way for them to gain recognition in the present by adding cultural elements or bringing the main idea close to the values of the new era; it is also a breakthrough of the traditional text structure, in which the young generation implants contemporary values such as gender equality and rebellion through the perspective and method of modern creation, and completes the creative transformation and innovative development of the culture. This creative phenomenon is essentially a kind of adaptation and development of classical literature in the face of the trend of the times.

From the viewpoint of internal causes, that is, from the viewpoint of the psychology of the creative body and the classical works themselves, the main reasons include the following. In a society with an increasingly high level of culture, and with the tendency of modern civilization and popularization, the people have a strong need for creative expression. A considerable number of people create works to fill in the gaps of the original works, exploring the background of characters or parallel plots that are not covered in the original works, such as fans writing homages to unsatisfactory endings. Some users even express their love or criticism of the original works through re-creation. In addition to this type of work, there is also a popular form of short video narration on the Internet called "To read *the Four Great Masterpieces* in five minutes", which reflects the impatience of the people behind the fast-food style of reading, and so on.

Admittedly, as a classic work, the inclusiveness of the text itself and the re-creation contained in its rich connotation are also indispensable. Its rich connotation and expressive methods become the source of inspiration for creators, and in the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of dialectical negation and abandonment, the classics are able to travel through time and space and dialogue with the contemporary market.

3. The Multiple Effects of Secondary creation from a Reading Perspective

3.1 The Second Creation is a Change in the Content and Form of the Classic Works

3.1.1 The Plurality of Interpretative Dimensions and the Crisis of Fragmentation at The Level of The Main Idea

When creators intervene in the classics with innovative perspectives, they are actually competing for the right to interpret the text. This kind of creation is no longer satisfied with the interpretation of the original text, but combines their own emotional experience and practical thinking, ultimately resulting in a second creation that is both symbiotic and antagonistic to the original work.

The following is an example of a film creation *The Descent of Nezha the Demon Child*. Thematically, although they all point to the glorification of the spirit of rebellion and the pursuit of justice, unlike the traditional myths of sacrifice and filial piety, the film points to the idea of "finding a way together". In terms of characterization, the social groups behind the characters are more subversive. Nezha is transformed from a perfect divine carrier in traditional society into a hero with a rebellious spirit and a defiant destiny. The contradiction between his dark circles under his eyes, his violent character and his childlike innocence expresses the acceptance of "imperfection" and the diverse aesthetics of modern society. Aobing, on the other hand, changes from a villainous character, the prince of the dragon clan, who has been cramped, to a mirrored character who shares the experience of discrimination with the protagonist. Unlike the rebellion against the destiny, he faces a crisis of identity. The hostile relationship is reconfigured into an emotional community that transcends ethnicity, and he embarks on a journey to challenge the world together with Nezha.

At the same time, the secondary creation builds up an interactive interpretation space, where the audience continuously reconstructs the meaning system of the original text and forms multiple interpretations in the process of adapting, commenting and secondary dissemination. This collective thinking deepens the excavation of the text, but also points to the possibility of misinterpretation and misinterpretation. At the level of reading and evaluation, one-sided interpretation and lack of reading of the original will inevitably deviate from the original meaning, and the varying cultural level of the public will also affect the direction of the interpretation of the text. At the level of creation, there is also the risk that the commercialized homoerotic creation will be one-sided and deviate from the main idea of the classic text.

3.1.2 The Question of Trade-offs in the Content of Details

First of all, the second creation will cut or add details that are not in the original. For example, the film adaptation of Camel's Nest deleted some of the vulgar but realistic dialect in the original. Compared with the masterpiece, the second creation has weakened the regional characteristics of *Camel Xiangzi* as a Beijing-style novel, but considering the audience, the film has also taken care of the children's minds and allayed the concerns of parents.

The core of detail selection lies in the balance between the essence of the original work and its innovative expression. Creators need to deeply analyze the core elements of the original work - theme, emotion or image - and strip away redundant details to preserve the cultural connotation. The choice of details should take into account the audience's age and needs, as well as the original work's spiritual connotations. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the boundaries between the red line of copyright and the freedom of creation, and to regenerate classic literature works through creative transformation while respecting the spirit of the original works.

3.1.3 Formal Innovations and Copyright Issues

First of all, the media, as the carrier of secondary communication, mostly using online means, away from the restrictions of the traditional paper media, has the characteristics of fast dissemination speed and wide range of dissemination. Secondly, digital technology has accelerated the process of secondary creation. Through AI reconstruction and other technical means, creators disassemble classic texts into various cultural elements, and then constitute cultural databases. This kind of transformation makes the classics from the closed text for reading only to the open cultural material, and its value will be transferred from the one-way transmission of the original "author-reader" to the continuous proliferation of collective creation, which enhances the re-creation function of the readers.

However, the use of media and technology has also brought about copyright problems. According to the survey, most of the public holds a high degree of agreement that copyright should be protected, but

the knowledge of copyright is relatively weak, and even some people do not have basic knowledge of copyright [3]. The conflict between the copyright system and this secondary creation also reveals the contradiction between the clarity of the law and the ambiguity of cultural production. As the saying goes, "the eternal dilemma of copyright law is to determine the end of the exclusive rights of copyright holders and the beginning of the public's freedom of access to works" [4], the law focuses on the establishment of the "author-work" on the binary relationship, the protection of the author's intellectual achievements and intellectual property rights. Protection of the author's intellectual achievements and intellectual property rights, but the secondary creation just dissolve this certainty - it is not completely independent of the creation, nor is it a simple copy, but in the middle of the independent work and "other versions". The problem is that current laws and technologies, and even human beings, are unable to effectively recognize the difference between "creative transformation" and "altered copying and pasting". This dilemma is particularly acute in the digital age, where cloud storage prevents text carriers from serving as evidence of originality, algorithmic generation blurs the subjectivity of human creativity, and the standards on which traditional copyright monitoring relies are gradually becoming ineffective under the impact of technology. Behind the copyright issue is a fierce struggle between inheritance and innovation. If the copyright system is to avoid becoming a shackle for cultural innovation, it must face an important question: whether cultural inheritance is the faithful guardianship of the original work, or whether it is to insist on the regenerative capacity of the text? If the two combined, where is the boundary? This is worth thinking about.

3.2 The Breadth of Media Influence on the Dissemination of Original Works

The medium of secondary creation is mainly linked to new technologies. From novels rewritten as comics to film and television, from the short video "To read the Four Great Masterpieces in five minutes" to the current various kinds of magical videos, the classics after secondary creation are more inclined to use new media, such as the internet, to spread. Similarly, in terms of breadth, new media has the advantage that traditional media cannot match. The audience is also different.

According to the 2020-2022 Blue Book of Literary Adaptation of Film and Television Works, film and television adaptations will account for 67 % of the ways in which young people will come into contact with the Four Great Masterpieces in 2022. Among the four masterpieces, the spread of Journey to the West deserves attention. The reason for this is that, as Vincent Cai said, "there seems to be a tendency for media evolution to converge, with each collaborating medium having its own extension and replication tasks" [5], and it is a three-tier chain system from the 86th version of the TV series to *The Return of the Great Sage*, and finally to *Black Myths: The Wukong*. *Journey to the West: The Return of the Great Sage* collected 956 million yuan at the box office in the first 62 days of its release. According to the "2024 National Game Sales Annual List" published by the National Game Sales List, during the statistical period (1 January to 31 December 2024), the total sales of *Black Myth: The Wukong* were 28 million copies, and the sales amount was as high as 9 billion RMB. After this case, we can see that, at the level of dissemination breadth, the secondary creation breaks through the media limitations of the original, through diversified carriers, integrates the original into different cultural circles, and with the help of algorithmic recommendation, realizes the dissemination of cross-age and cross-circle. This mode not only reaches potential groups beyond the traditional audience, but also lowers the threshold through fragmented expression, enlarges the audience of classical reading, and gives the under-aged and less educated groups more opportunities to come into contact with classical works.

3.3 How Young People Understand the Classical Masterpieces after the Second Creation from a Creative Point of View

Behind the young people's reading, what is more important is that we should not only see that they are reading secondary works, but also pay attention to the fact that this change is also reflected in their own creations. "How to realize innovation ?" is the key to the thesis of "how young people understand the classical masterpieces after the second creation from the creative point of view". We can see that young people have incorporated modern thinking and concepts into the main ideas of classic literature works in their secondary creations, which shows that they do not accept the thinking mode of classic literature works in its entirety, but rather think dialectically in the light of the times. Contemporary young people have demonstrated their cultural self-awareness through secondary creation, established a dynamic dialogue mechanism, and displayed a distinctive sense of subjectivity in cultural consumption.

However, there is also a tendency of over-commercialization and entertainment in "innovation", which also reflects the overall differences and contradictions of contemporary young people. Some of

them have become clowns, consuming the flow of classic literature works and deliberately creating second-hand works that cause disputes and misinterpretation of the classics. Others are swaying between idealism and pragmatism, searching for a balance between cultural expression and the pressure of survival. When secondary creation slips into the abyss of excessive entertainment, it not only exposes the loss of the original intention of creation, but also reflects the plight of survival under the coercion of capital or the social tragedy of being drowned by the desire for power and money.

4. How To Guide Secondary Creation and Classical Reading Towards Win-win Co-operation

4.1 Universal Dimension

4.1.1 Guiding it to Conform to the Values of Truth, Goodness and Beauty, and Preserving the Spiritual Core of Classical Works

Distinguish between entertainment and academic conversion, and formulate differentiated management policies. It is good to combine classic literature works in the process of entertainment, but we should be careful not to distort history or change the cultural core. For example, the role of Guan Yu will be used in a certain game, and the audience of the game are many minors, and a considerable part of them are primary school students. Under the standard of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* which is a compulsory reading in junior high school in the new curriculum, many children will learn about Guan Yu from the game first, rather than from history or masterpieces. Game designers should increase the design of the background of the story, and the content of the masterpieces have more echo points, to avoid the emergence of the Guan Yu similar to the mention of characters, minors can only think of the skills of the situation.

At the same time, the translation of academic research or classic literature works should be avoided as much as possible to avoid the tendency of entertainment and commercialization.

4.1.2 Establishment of a Reasonable Standardization Mechanism to Release Creative Energy Based on Copyright Reform

Generally speaking, only by clarifying the boundary between secondary creation and plagiarism and establishing a reasonable standardization mechanism, the copyright problem of secondary creation can be solved. The originality standard of secondary creation should be refined, and its identification standard should be judged from multiple aspects, so as to promote innovation on the basis of full protection of intellectual property rights [6]. For example, non-profit re-creators are allowed to use classic intellectual property, while commercial use needs to apply for authorization. It is also necessary to establish a platform for communication between re-creationists and original authors, so as to give a space for communication on copyright issues.

4.1.3 Technology-enabled Deep Transformation

We can use a variety of techniques for secondary creation, not only human thinking, but also the use of AI tools to write outlines and refine details. It is also possible to add virtual technology to enrich the form of secondary creation.

4.2 Educational Level

To build a transformational path of "interest – depth" and to stimulate interest in classical reading by using secondary creation as a "bridge". Here are some suggestions and ideas. For example, the first point can be to incorporate high-quality creative works into the teaching resources, borrowing the classic bridge in films and movies to enhance students' interest. The second point can be to design a "creative reading" task, incorporating secondary creation in the teaching of *The Story of the Nuclear Boat,* and drawing the nuclear boat in the minds of the students after reading. The last point can also be used to establish a graded reading system, for example, the entry level can be a lightweight second creation, similar to popular science or introduction to the short video; the advanced level recommended "original + notes" control learning, so that students in the B station or the network of teaching platforms on their own to find professional interpretation.

4.3 Industry Level

A sustainable business model should be established. Firstly, with regard to the copyright issue

mentioned earlier, the government can examine the market situation and, while respecting the wishes of individuals and commercial companies, give a proportional share to cultural foundations. In addition, enterprises can develop "reading+" derivatives, embedding the purchase of original works into the second creative consumption scene. For example, the purchase of *a Water Margin* themed blind box comes with an e-book redemption code for the corresponding character's original chapter. To unlock the plot line of Su Shi in the game *Wangchuan Fenghua Lu*, it is necessary to complete the online reading task of *Chibi Poetry* and so on.

5. Conclusions

Secondary creation is a product of the development of the times, and is a mode of revitalizing classic texts by combining them with the characteristics of the times. Under the premise of reasonable guidance, it is believed that the integration of secondary creation and classic literature works will continue to thrive, make unique contributions to reading, and reflect the unique charm of innovation in more aspects.

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