

Research on the Deletion and Restoration of Literature Works in Film and Television Drama

Shuyu Zhang^{1,a,*}

¹Wenzhou-Kean University, Wenzhou, Zhejiang, 325060, China

a. 3252677465@qq.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: Film and television adaptation of literature has become the mainstream of current film and television works, but literature and film and television, as two different art forms, the adaptation process is very complicated. This paper deeply discusses the various forms of adaptation of original works and the reasons behind them through case studies and qualitative analysis. At the same time, the article points out that there are significant differences between the original literature and the adaptation of film and television, and analyzes the reasons and techniques of adaptation. Meanwhile, taking the film and television adaptations of the Four Great Classical Novels and Sherlock as examples, it specifically analyzes the content and plot changes presented after the adaptation, and points out that the purpose of film and television adaptation is to improve the viewing quality and satisfy the needs of modern audiences.

Keywords: novel, Film adaptation, Television adaptation, Literary works.

1. Introduction

With the vigorous development of the film and television industries, it has become a common phenomenon to put classic literary works on the screen. However, literature and film and television are two different art forms, and the transformation between them is not a simple copy and paste but involves a complex adaptation process. In the process of adaptation, it is necessary to consider the setting of the background of the story, the fluency of the plot, the possibility of recurring key episodes, the construction of the environmental scene, and the logic of the characters' behavior [1]. Although the current trend of literary adaptation has become a trend in film and television, there are very few works that really leave a deep impression on the audience and resonate with them. Therefore, this paper discusses the various approaches and reasons for film and television adaptations of original works, and analyzes the art and skills of adaptation through the film and television adaptations of the Four Great Classical Novels and the United Kingdom's Sherlock Holmes as specific cases, as well as how to balance the spirit of original works and the expectation of modern audiences.

2. The performance of the adaptation of the original works

2.1. Plot

Film and television adaptations of literature works are usually different from the original text, through the addition and deletion of plots, as well as the modification of the direction of some plots in order

to comply with the needs of film and television for the embodiment of the content. For example, in the 1986 version of *Journey to the West*, an additional scene was added to the episode in which Sun Wukong made a mess of the Five village view, in which Sun Wukong returns to the three star Cave of the oblique moon and asks for Bodhi for help, which was not in the original literary work. Such an adaptation naturally improves the arc of the character and makes the image of Sun Wukong appear more vivid and lifelike [2]. Additionally, in the film and television version of *the Water Margin*, Pang Wanchun's nickname from the literary works of “XiaoYangyouji” to the film and television drama of the “Jiutianfeilong”, as “XiaoYangyouji” derived from the historical allusion, unless there is a certain understanding of history, otherwise it is difficult to understand the actual meaning of this title [3]. While “Jiutianfeilong” has more martial arts and bazaar style, in direct reflection of the features of the character and convenient for the audience to understand at the same time.

2.2. Character

In the British BBC produced “*Sherlock*” TV series, in order to save space, the TV series choose some classic and familiar cases for adaptation as well as modifies the character traits of some characters. At the same time, compared with Conan Doyle's original work, the TV series focuses more on the growth and changes of the protagonists, Sherlock and Watson, rather than simply the two solving crimes. The background about the murderer in the original usually occupies most of the space, including a very detailed description of his birth, love, family, life, and motives for committing the crime [4]. But, in the TV series, killer's backstory was directly omitted as the plot needed to highlight more transformation process of the main characters, Sherlock and Watson, from strangers who first met to friends. Meanwhile, in order to better promote the plot, the role of Mary, Watson's wife, is given a completely different personality and fate in the TV series than in the original novel. In the original novel, Mary was originally an insignificant character, but in the film and TV series, the director gave her the identity of a secret agent and superhuman observation ability, which made a lot of gathering around her. As the plot advances, her death also had a great impact on the progress of the subsequent plot, which caused the relationship between Sherlock and Watson to break and almost fell into the freezing point [5].

Therefore, there are plot changes between the original and the filmed version, and adjustments to the fate of the characters' personalities to suit the plot and the purpose of the plot adaptation.

2.3. Dealing with problems of different times

The authors normally integrated the social background and moral concepts of the time into their works, so the literature usually has a certain sense of age. In the times when the classical masterpieces. With the changes of the times, the moral and ethical values and social backgrounds of the time when the classical masterpieces were created are very different from those of modern people, so many of the plots in the books that were consistent with the social concepts at that time are intolerable from the perspective of modern people.

In *Journey to the West*, Sun Wukong and Zhu Bajie killed the two children of Princess Baihua and Kuimu Wolf. Based on the social norms of the time, it was against women's morals for Princess Baihua to give birth to children with the demon (Kuimu Wolf) who kidnapped her, it is justified and reasonable to kill the product of her violation of women's morals [2]. However, under modern social thinking, the hatred and abhorrence of parents should not be imposed on their innocent children, and the killing of innocent children is even more contrary to human ethics, so this plot has been deleted directly.

In addition, some violent and bloody segments that conformed to the background of the era in which the writings were created were deleted in the process of filming and television adaptation due

to the violation of modern laws, regulations and moral norms, such as Liu An's killing his wife (the Romance of The Three Kingdoms), served Liu Bei with human flesh (the Romance of The Three Kingdoms), Li Kui's killing of Li Gui (the Water Margin), and cutting off a man's thigh to eat (the Water Margin) [3, 6]. Moreover, in the character relationship and emotion part, in order to increase the character behavior logic and emotional transformation of the persuasion, film and television dramatization works will change the narrative of the characters. For example, in the original text of "*Water Margin*", Yun Ge wrote the letter to Wu Dalang to denounce his wife Pan Jinlian and Ximen Qing adultery because Yun Ge failed to ask for benefits from Wang Po who knew about the adulterous relationship between Pan Jinlian and Ximen Qing [7]. However, this plot in the original text is more philistine, but if placed in the film and television drama is easy to affect the image of the characters, so in the movie and television version of the "*Water Margin*", Yun Ge's image has been adjusted. Yun Ge became a brother to Wu Dalang, in order to injustice to Wu Dalang, Yun Ge informed Wu Dalang of the truth about Pan Jinlian's derailment [7].

Conan Doyle's *Sherlock* stories are set in the 17th and 18th centuries. The movie and television versions of *Sherlock* have changed the setting from the 17th and 18th centuries to the modern day based on the needs of filming, and the modus operandi and background of the murderer have changed as well. Therefore, compared with other film and television works, Sherlock obviously has to face more challenges and changes. In the episode the Hound of the Baskervilles, the TV series has more scientific and ethical implications compared to the cloudy and ghostly atmosphere of the original. In comparison to a normal ordinary murder case, the writers added a more high-tech killing method in this episode [4]. And this directly threw out the philosophical question to the audience, that is how to choose between scientific research and ethics and morality in the era of rapid development of technology [8].

2.4. Shooting Requirements

Film and television works should not only consider the dialogue between the characters, but also their movements, expressions, interactions and so on. Among them, the selection and arrangement of shooting environment is also extremely important factor that directly impresses the shooting results. However, in many classical novels, a large number of dialogues occur in a single environmental background, and there is no explicit text in the original novels describing the specific scenes in which they take place. Therefore, film and television producers are required to find or create a suitable scenes for filming based on multiple sources of information.

The scene chosen in the 1994 filming of *the Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, in which Kong Ming is engaged in a verbal debate with a group of scholars, was very suitable [6]. One of the zigzagged seats allowed everyone involved in the debate to see each other, while the empty space in the middle provides the space for Jiangdong scholars and Zhuge Liang. From both in terms of visual effects and historical restoration, it can be agreed that this scene was accomplished excellently.

In addition to the choice of shooting background, the interaction and ecology between the actors are very important. In the original text of *the Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, the interaction and reaction between the Jiangdong scholars are described in a question and answer style [6]. In the filming, actors' performances made the dilemma and failure of the Jiangdong scholars more visualized. In addition, it allowed the audience to feel Kong Ming's wisdom from his brilliant reply, and feel his natural spontaneity from his demeanor and movement.

3. Analysis of the reasons for adaptation of film and television works

The reasons why the crew cut the original plot can be attributed to three categories: plot driving effect, values issues, and difficulty in reproducing scenes. The first type of plot promotion is a common

reason for deletion, usually the part that serves little to promote the storyline will be deleted in the process of adaptation. For example, the plots of Liao, Wang Qing and Tian Hu in the Water Margin were deleted because these plots did not promote the main line of the story much [3]. At the same time, in *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, after Fengyiting, there were a number of battles with Li and Guo Si in the original series, which were deleted because they didn't have much to do with the main story line [6].

The second category is the value problem. Mainly, behaviors in the original novels that are not in line with contemporary values and legal provisions are also deleted. For example, the plot of Li Kui killing a small yar in the Water Margin to force Zhu Tong to go up the mountain has been deleted in the adapted movies and dramas, because this behavior does not conform to the contemporary value of "protecting the young and weak" [7]. The third type refers to scenes that are more difficult to reproduce, so it are presented by simplifying parts or removed. For example, Hu Yanzhuo in "Water Margin" uses serial horses to attack Liangshan [3]. Because of the cost of reproducing the battle scene and the difficulty of shooting serial horses to defeat the enemy, the crew did not explain the battle process in detail, but only showed the defeat of Liangshan by cutting the camera.

4. Adaptation case

4.1. The adaptation of Sherlock

As a detective and mystery film, Sherlock moves detective and mystery reasoning to the 20th century based on the original work, and also retains the core characteristics of Sherlock and Watson, which are the case solving machine and the recorder of case solving. Sherlock in the original book is more like a crime solving machine, while in the adapted version of the play the viewer can see more of his emotional changes, including the guilt of failing to protect Mary when she died, the competitiveness of arguing with his brother, and the surprise of hearing Watson praise his reasoning. All this makes Sherlock a much more vivid character [8]. Similarly, Watson is no longer just the record and foil of Sherlock's case solving as in the original, he has his own temper, life and feelings [8].

In terms of costumes, coats, shirts, suits with modern British symbols constitute the hallmarks of the new era of Sherlock Holmes. And each actor's costume fits their background closely. Among them, the Holmes brothers wear suits most of the time, especially Mycroft when he appears in a full suit. This fits his status as a member of the British government and also his family background. Holmes' family has a very good family educational background, so both of them dress in a very classic British gentleman's manner [9].

4.2. The adaptation of the Three countries

As a "legendary history" novel, *the Romance of The Three Kingdoms* draws on the ideas of Hu Jinqian in the scene design, showing the sense of hierarchy and progression of the scene in a similar way to the stage play [6]. In the scene of the battle between Three Heroes and Lv Bu, because the mainland martial arts system at that time was not yet perfect making the equestrian action design too difficult, so the director adopted the form of stage performance. By having countless riders riding in the duel of a few people outside to form a circle, the audience could visualize the intense scene of three Heroes battle with Lv Bu by watching the scene consisting of the riders.

In terms of costumes, the crew borrowed the costume design of Dunhuang, which is more in line with the Tang and Song dynasties than the historical Han Dynasty costumes, because the armor and clothing of the Tang and Song dynasties are more ornate and more recognizable. As a film and television drama, it is more reasonable to provide a more recognizable character image than the pursuit of the restoration of clothing, so the crew also deliberately focused on this point. By highlighting the unique and gorgeous attributes of the character's clothing, so that it can be

distinguished from the general role so that the audience can better determine the main role in the group.

5. Conclusion

Film and television adaptation is the reproduction of the original content and the inheritance and innovation of the original spirit. Through the adaptation, the original work has been able to cross the boundaries of time and space and create new resonance with contemporary audiences. Although there will inevitably be disputes and challenges in the adaptation process, these continuous attempts and innovations promote the integration and development of literature film, and television.

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