"Speech-Picture" Narrative Principles of Literary Adapted Short Videos: Based on Information Theory*

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Abstract—**Cross-media adaptation is an important means of literature popularization. The literary adapted short video named "A Rapid Reading of Original Works in X min" has a unique "speech-picture" mode, and realizes narrative in special information carrying and dissemination method. From the perspective of information theory, the "picture collage under guidance of speech" narrative shape of adapted short video envelops a narrative core with clear division of information between speech and picture; the "speech-picture" narrative realizes the negative entropy of literary information, reduces audience's cost in receiving information, and improves its acceptance degree. The "speech-picture" narrative of adapted short video provides an information-level operation reference for the cross-media adaptation of literature, and also provides a strategy for the popularization of literature to adapt to the environment of information generalization.**

Keywords: cross-media adaptation, literature, information theory, negative entropy

I. INTRODUCTION

Popularized adaptation is one of the main ways for original literature to reach the masses, and the cross-media adaptation that changes the single modality of literary text is an important means of literary popularization. The cross-media adaptation of literature involves not only the proper conversion of the ideographic form of a text, but also the narrative method to be used for attracting the recipients and allowing them to enter the inner world of the works smoothly. Traditional literary theory "fails to pay attention to and value the existence, composition, morphological type, and artistic aesthetic effect of cross-media literary texts" [1], so that many scholars take different approaches and start researches on cross-media narrative from the perspectives of rhetoric, occurrence, and communication. Bao Yuanfu and Wang Changcheng pointed out that the "speech-picture" hybrid narrative is essentially the "collision" interaction and "stitching" of two symbols in the process of aesthetic ideology" [2]. The difference between text narrative and "speech-picture" hybrid narrative is in the ideographic form. Gong Jushan believes that the "intertextual relationship"

between speech and picture can be used as an entry point to explore the principles of modern image narrative [3]. In recent years, with the popularization of mobile Internet technology and the rise of short video consumption, a new creation mode of short video taking interpretation of original literature as the main content has gradually grown mature, and has gained considerable receiving audiences by virtue of its unique speech and picture combined narrative form. Studying the speech-picture narrative principle of such adapted short videos will help to explore effective strategies for transforming original literature from single mode (text) to multi-modality (picture-voice-speech), and then find ways to improve the literature's acceptability in pan-information environment and find a feasible way to expand the literature's influence.

II. A NEW FORM OF NARRATIVE: PICTURE COLLAGE AND TEXT GUIDANCE

Since 2015, creators of short videos such as "Wen Yue Xiao Qiang (文曰小强)" and "Sailing on Magic Sea (幻海航行)" have adapted original novels in cross-media manner, and produced adapted short videos with audio commentary associated with pictures to quickly display the content of the original work. Shortly after the launching of adapted short video, it took only two years to bring together a large scale of audiences. Since the release of the "X-Minute Rapid Reading of 'The three body problem' series" in December 2015, Wen Yue Xiao Qiang had received more than one million views within three months through various video websites, WeChat official accounts and other new media platforms. As of August 2019, the total number of more than 200 original work rapid-reading short videos produced by Wen Yue Xiao Qiang has been viewed for 180 million times in total on Bilibili, Sohu Video Website and Tencent Video Website. Using the same creation mode, "Sailing on Magic Sea" has launched more than 160 adapted short videos since September 2017, and has totally been viewed for more than 20 million times on Bilibili and Tencent Video Website. At the same time, the number of creators of original work rapid-reading short videos has gradually increased. Creators such as "Jiutong Fengshen (九筒封神)", "Nangong Xingyu (南宫星宇)", "Jiongjilian (囧记莲)" and "Guangming Bookstore (光明

书店)" have successively released short videos; original work rapid-reading series gradually form a stable creation mode.

The huge number of views obtained by original work rapid-reading short videos reflects the rationality and effectiveness of its narrative strategy from the acceptance level. The special combination of picture, voiceover and sound effect gives a completely different narrative form to the adapted short video and the original literature. The role of sound effects is mainly to enhance the infectivity of the short video and serve as a transitional connection between pictures, while pictures and voiceover are responsible for storytelling. The pictures used in the adapted short video are mostly sourced from various film and television works spread on the Internet. According to the author's statistics and verification, in Wen Yue Xiao Qiang's rapid reading of "'The three body problem' series" of short videos, the pictures are extracted from hundreds of Chinese and foreign movies and documentaries, such as "American Gangster (美国黑帮)", "Artificial Intelligence (人工智能)", "The Law of Attraction (万有引力)", "Star Trek (星际迷航)" "Memoirs of a Geisha (艺伎回忆录)", "The Truman Show (楚门的世界)", "Farewell My Concubine (霸王别姬)", "Interstellar (星际穿越)", "Hsue-shen Tsien (钱学森)", "2001: A Space Odyssey (2001 太空漫游)", "Contact (超时空接触)", "The Message (风声)", "Cloud Atlas (云图)", "The Matrix (黑客帝国)", "The Curious Case Of Benjamin Button (返老还童)", "Inception (盗梦空间)" and so on. In adapted short videos, pictures are mainly used in two ways: the first is single picture frame, namely pictures in original film and television work are saved in "frames" and then edited; the second is to intercept the video clips of the original work and edit it into the adapted short video. Voiceover plays the role of storytelling in adapted short video. Pictures appear one by one under the "guidance" of voiceover. The two roles form an ideological system in which language and images work together. As single picture appear in short time, the short video presents the characteristics of collage as a whole. As the creator of short video has limited production levels, occasional errors in picture connection such as "frame skip" or "frozen frame" may appear in the short video, exacerbating the traces of picture collage.

Due to the wide source of pictures for the short video and the subjective selection of the creator, the pictures reflected by lens style, shooting technology and storage carrier, as well as the theme, character appearance, humanistic natural landscape are different and hard to be unified. One extreme case is that an adapted short video may use several different film and television characters to identify the same person in a novel, such as the heroine Ye Wenjie in the original work "The three body problem I". In the adapted short video, Wen Yue Xiao Qiang uses the different characters played by Li Bingbing, Zhang Huiwen and Zhang Jingchu in different movies to represent Ye Wenjie when she was young, and uses actor Gui Yalei and American actor Judy Foster to represent the elderly Ye Wenjie. Such a "rough" editing processing seems to challenge the audience's bottom line to accept the hypothesis of artwork. The dissemination of the concept of hypothesis in China originated from the article

"On Hypothesis" published by the former Soviet drama director O. Khlopkov in 1959. He pointed out that the stories people imagined while watching a drama depended on the hypothetical role of the drama. In other words, hypothesis is the tacit understanding between the creator and the recipient, and is a contractual acceptance premise that allows the recipient to smoothly enter the "summoning structure" of the work and believe in the narrative content of the work. Generally speaking, if traditional film and television work has obvious picture differences and overly prominent creation traces, the self-consistency and authenticity of the narrative content will be questioned, and the "hypothetical" relationship between the work and the audience will be affected. However, short videos have not been rejected because of these issues, and viewers seem to do not care about the overly exposed creation behavior of short videos. So, how can the rough and prominent creation traces of the short video get across the threshold of "hypothesis" without affecting the acceptance of the audience? Based on the current acceptance environment of information generalization and the information anxiety that people generally have in the information generalization environment, it is necessary to clarify the information characteristics of such short video's narrative media in order to explain the reasons.

III. NARRATIVE CORE: THE DIVISION OF INFORMATION BETWEEN SPEECH AND PICTURE

Original work rapid-reading short videos are mostly adapted from full-length and medium-length novels. In order to place the huge amount of information into a short video with very limited time, the producer may screen and reprocess the content of the novel. Compared with the original work, the narrative information of the adapted short video has undergone two major changes: first, the story clue is simplified and the causal relationship of the plot development becomes clearer; second, large amount of details irrelevant to the clue of plot development are filtered out. The considerable textual volume of full-length and medium-length novel is the creative space for writers to display their writing skills and rhetoric level. According to Booth's "The Rhetoric of Fiction", the author shapes the rhetoric appearance of the novel by selecting writing skills and further affects reader's reading effect. As an important skill in novel writing, the arrangement of light and dark clues will hinder readers from receiving the information of the novel, thereby inspiring the reader's psychological motivation to find out the content of the novel and giving birth to the pleasure after reading. Because of this, the author may often work hard on the arrangement of light and dark clues in order to enhance the rhetorical appeal of a novel. However, for short video adaptation, the multiple light and dark clues in a novel's text and its complex relationship mean that the existence of a large amount of information is not conducive to the short-time dissemination of the novel's content.

Sorting out the main story of the novel and refining several light and dark clues into one main clue can further

provide conditions for screening the novel information on the basis of simplifying the narrative structure of the novel. From the content of the short video, the creator get the novel's information edited again with the help of the simplified main clue by retaining the information that is closely related to the main clue, and filtering out the information that has little to do with the main clue, such as the information depicting a character's images and emotional changes and the natural environment, and ultimately achieve the effect of reducing the amount of information in the original work. The processed information of the novel can be divided into two parts: the main story and related details. From the perspective of information transmission, the voiceover of the short video tells the main story, namely disseminates the information of main story; pictures carry and transmit detailed information. The division of information and cooperation between the two realizes the efficient cross-media dissemination of a novel's information.

The division of information between speech and picture helps shorten the information transmission time and shorten the acceptance time of the recipient. Readers' understanding of language text often depends on their own imagination. The process of accepting literary works is also the process of readers' continuous imagination. In the short video, the display of pictures replaces the picture imagined by the recipient and simplifies the recipient's acceptance. The display time of a single picture is very short. The audience does not need to observe, taste, and think about the picture, but only need to receive the picture information. According to Claude Elwood Shannon, the father of information theory [6], information represents the determination of a certain state. Each frame of picture in the short video contains a large amount of clear information. The audience's reception of the picture information essentially confirms the state of many details involved in the voiceover speech. According to Liu Tao's "Context Theory: Analysis of Interpretation Rules and Visual Rhetoric", language text are actively creating a context which has the function of "anchoring" the meaning and can "prevent external information from invading the visual frames"[4]. Wang Zeqing also believes that "polysemy is the characteristic of picture expression. The recipient needs to use or go beyond the language playing an anchoring role to effectively interpret the picture". [5] By virtue of the meaning anchoring function of language text, the recipient can circle what a picture points to within a short time and further determine the specific meaning of the picture expression.

The information cooperation between voiceover speech and pictures ensures the recipients' efficiency in understanding and digesting the narrative content. The guidance of by voiceover speech and the rapid display by pictures allow the recipient to unconsciously speed up the pace of receiving and processing information without spending time on tangling such "noise" appeared in pictures as is inconsistent or mutually exclusive with the speech information. This information receiving oriented acceptance process effectively shortens the length of acceptance, and also drives viewers to ignore the sense of difference caused

by collage of pictures; to a certain extent, this dispels the audience's pursuit of realistic images, and maintains the "hypothesis" contract between the author and the audience.

IV. NARRATIVE EFFECT: NEGATIVE ENTROPY AND REDUCTION IN RECEIVING COST

According to the previous discussion, we can know that the "picture collage under guidance of speech" narrative shape of adapted short video envelops a narrative core with clear division of information between speech and picture; speech and pictures constitute a cooperative information system from information level. This information system carries and disseminates the information processed from the original work.

From the original work to the adapted short video, the changes in the screened and processed information not only appear in the total amount, but also in the degree of "combing" of information. Before editing, the short video producer often needs to interpret and digest the content of the original work for multiple times, then grasp the core of the story in general, and then simplify the story clues and refine the details. Wen Yue Xiao Qiang has shown his large number of notes and adapted text for short video after a careful reading of the original work to his audience for several times on his WeChat official account and WeChannel, in order to show that he has spent time in reading the original work carefully and sorting out the information and imply that the processed information is still true to the information in the original work. Excellent literary works often have complex storylines, accurate and rich metaphors and metonymies, building a deep inner world full of possibilities for various interpretations. Adapted short video linearly simplifies the clues in the original work, refines and repositions the detailed information, and performs the operation of "combing" the original information. Compared with the information in the original work, the "combed" information becomes more "orderly" on the basis of "reduction in volume of information".

According to Shannon's information theory, the degree of order of information can be measured by information entropy: the more disorderly a system's information is, the higher its information entropy value is; the more orderly it is, the lower its information entropy value is. Adapted short video uses "speech-picture" narrative, and also realizes the reduction in information entropy of the original work while getting the original information in order. The concept of entropy was originally derived from thermodynamics and was introduced by German scientist T. Clausius in the second law of thermodynamics in 1854, namely "it is used for discussing the dissipation of energy and the enhancement of system disorder" [6]. Hungarian physicist Leo Szilfird put forward the concept of negative entropy in 1929 to describe the decrease in entropy, which is the phenomenon of system disorder. The orderly simplification of the original information during the production of adapted short video can reduce the information entropy and can be considered a negative entropy process.

Negative entropy makes the adapted short video reflected the reduction in cost of receiving information in the narrative form. Complete information dissemination contains five elements, namely communicator, recipient, information, media and feedback. The communicator encodes the information, and the receiver needs to decode the received information and then realize the acceptance of the information. In the creation and consumption of short video, the editing of short video is like encoding, and the viewer's interpretation of the viewed content is like decoding. Compared with reading the original work, watching short video and receiving the combed information significantly reduces the time and attention paid by viewer; namely the costs in time and labor are reduced from the perspective of investment and returns. When people accept the hypothesis of "X-minute rapid-reading of the original work" and try to achieve the effect of reading the original work by watching short videos, they will naturally have the feeling of low cost and high returns. However, this feeling is just an illusion, because the considerable humanistic value in literary text cannot be inherited and transmitted by short video.

V. CONCLUSION

Cross-media adaptation of short video reshapes the form of literary work, making it easier to enter the current channel of information dissemination and also closer to people's acceptance preferences. This different way of information dissemination indirectly expands the influence of literary works. Neil Bozeman, an American media culture researcher and critic, said in "Amusing Ourselves to Death", "The uniqueness of media is that although it guides the way we see and understand things, its involvement is often not noticed". [7] If only the media carrying literary content is changed, the way of information carrying and dissemination will be changed. When people are interested in the content carried by a new media and accept it, they also express their recognition to the way of information transmission. Exploring cross-media literary adaptations at the information level is a respect for the objective fact that the spread of literary and artistic works is essentially the spread of information, and also a face-to-face response to the changes in people's acceptance preferences in the current context of information generalization. We cannot simply regard the deformation and transmission of literary and textual information by new media as the replacement of the information carrier, and ignore the complicated effects posed by changing the media on information transmission and reception habits. Of course, the adaptation behavior is highly strategic, and the interactive relationship with the audience is also complicated.

"Heidegger called this world a 'picture world', Bourdieu noticed the challenge of television to traditional newspapers, and they both found the extension of the literary nature of the information age to picture orientation" [8]. Pictures can provide information similar to the text of a novel, but cannot provide reader with the special feelings of the text and the interpretation and influence brought by the text interpretation. Text still has irreplaceable value. Therefore, creators of short

videos emphasize the precious value of the original work in the video and express their respect and love for the original work. Wen Yue Xiao Qiang's slogan "carefully read the original work after watching the video" interspersed in the short videos shows the source and purpose of the enthusiasm of most short video creators.

Information transmission is a dimension of narrative. Analyzing the narrative principle of literary adaptation of short video at the information level is to clarify the changes of information transmission in cross-media adaptation of literature and its impact on people's acceptance, and then acquire the strategies and means worthy of reference in literary adaptation. The reason and the law of communication of emerging film and television works in the current context of information generalization should be explored and must be acquired and well applied in creation of film and television works; analyzing the "speech-picture" narrative characteristics of adapted short video is just the first step. Based on the precious spiritual value and positive role of prompting people to think about the reality of literary and artistic works, it is worth of exploring the way to achieve a balance between the audience's entertainment preferences and the transfer of humanistic values. In this regard, it is also necessary to clarify issues such as how new media is involved in literary and art communication and how new media reshapes the form of literary and artistic works.

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