

How to Retell the Chinese Myths in the Neo-Mysticism: The Analysis of the Chinese Mythology Game

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Abstract: Under the cultural wave of "neo-mysticism" in the 1990s, countries began to carry out "myth retelling" activities. It subverts traditional mythological values, deconstructs and constructs the meaning of traditional mythology, and embodies the value of contemporary mythology. In the context of contemporary neo-mysticism, the retelling of myth has been inextricably linked with the cultural production focusing on content and creativity. As a new mass culture consumer goods after film and television and music, with the help of the communication advantages of new media, the scope of cultural radiation of games is increasing and its influence is becoming more and more extensive. It becomes a global popular culture phenomenon. And it is also coerced into the whirlwind of neo-mysticism that swept the world. The wedging of myth enriches the cultural meaning and content creativity of the game, and completes a cultural communication with its global entertainment consumption. Therefore, this study focuses on the emerging trend of neo-mysticism. Through participatory observation of role-playing games - Honor of Kings and Lady White Snake, in-depth interview and questionnaire survey of game users, this study deduces and summarizes the techniques of myth retelling involved in the game, in order to provide reference for the mythological retelling of other art forms, and promote the spread of Chinese mythological culture under the trend of neo-mysticism.

Keywords: Neo-Mysticism; Myth Retelling; Role-Playing Games; Cultural Production; Chinese Mythological Culture.

1. Introduction

Myth originated in the era of ancestors and is closely related to the development of human history, but the interpretation of myth in each era presents different characteristics. With the rapid development of science and technology and the diversification of communication carriers, the scope of myth communication is faster and wider. Under the cultural wave of "neo-mysticism" in the 1990s, the world began to carry out the activity of "myth retelling" (Colbert, 2004). It is based on technological development and takes traditional fantasy works as copies. Through the re-summoning of mythology, it subverts the traditional mythological values, deconstructs and constructs the meaning of traditional mythology, and explores the meaning and metaphysics contained in the irrational imagination of mythology. It is an integral part of mass culture [1]. Therefore, the retelling of myths has been inextricably linked with the cultural production focusing on content and creativity. The development of contemporary media technology also makes it gradually complete the transformation of myth narrative text from text to visual schematization through digital multimedia technology (Campbell & Moyers, 2011) [2].

Video game is one of the emerging mainstream forms of entertainment after film, television and music. According to the report on China's game industry from January to June 2015, the number of Chinese client game users and mobile game users reached 305 million and 366 million respectively from January to June 2015 (Custer, 2015) [3]. As a cultural carrier, with the help of the communication advantages of new media, video games have become a global popular cultural phenomenon and has been coerced into the whirlwind of neo-mysticism all over the world. The cultural communication function and aesthetic education function of games have been paid more and more attention by educational and cultural departments and cultural researchers gradually (Gee, 2006). In the digital age, how to integrate and reconstruct national

traditional culture with video games as the media, and explore the dissemination and inheritance of national culture in the digital space is an urgent problem to be studied (Anderson, 2007) [4]. However, looking at China's academic field and video game market, it can be found that there are lots of studies on Chinese mythology in all walks of life, but there are few studies take video games as the communication platform. Many video games only touch the surface of Chinese mythology style and lack a certain depth. In view of this, this study will carefully sort out the presentation and utilization characteristics of myths and elements in video games through specific cases and survey data, and focus on solving the following problems: how are myths in video games retelled and utilized? What is the significance [5]?

2. Literature Review

This research proposal reviews the following key concepts, some of which are very important for the construction position of myth game retelling, because myth game retelling is not a phenomenon of "existence", it is the result of the interaction between game designers, original painters, sound engineers and users.

2.1. Neo-mysticism

The first person who studied and defined the word "mysticism" was the mythologist Melekinsky of the Soviet Union (Gould, 1981). He analyzed 'mysticism' in the literature of the 20th century, called the phenomenon that writers draw on the mythological tradition to create literary works 'mysticism', and believed that it is not only an artistic technique, but also the world perception related to this technique (Gould, 1981) [6]. At present, there is no clear definition of 'neo-mysticism' in academic circles, and it is regarded as a cultural wave rising in the middle and late 1990s (Colbert, 2004). It takes technological development (mainly computer technology) as the basis, fantasy as the feature, traditional fantasy works as the copy, and commercial

interests and spiritual consumption as the ultimate goal (Winkler, 2005) [7]. It is not only the product of multimedia co-existence, but also an integral part of mass culture, that is, it uses visual technology such as film and television, animation, games, painting and the Internet to aesthetically express myths.

The change of social environment makes the phenomenon of myth revival appear new characteristics of the times [8]. Neo-mysticism, as a universal cultural trend, its characteristics are mainly manifested in two aspects:

The first is the major transformation of cultural values, the evolution process from the mainstream to the individual, and then from the individual to the collective. In the late 19th century, anthropology began to pay attention to the development of paganism, foreign countries, cultures and races, and elves, wizards and pagans all presented various forms to discuss new myths and stories (Campbell & Moyers, 2011). After breaking the Christian monotheism, the evolution of God in fairy tales has changed from a tall and far-reaching one in the past to a powerful collective. For example, in *Avatar*, the original people drove away the earth people who plundered resources and regained the spiritual faith of culture (Tehovnik, 2014). The constituent elements of these myths are no longer monotheism or individual heroism, but more collective strength to eliminate the magic barrier of desire [9].

This change in cultural values is mainly due to the rapid development of capital since the 20th century (Segal, 1996). Human beings are self-centered, ignore the existing relationship with nature, and equate the value of life with money. For a long time, living in self-centered cognition, human beings began to fall into the struggle of power and capital in an infinite cycle (Gould, 1981). While science and technology bring more convenience, every aspect of people's life is also firmly bound in rationality. It is in this environment that "neo-mysticism" conveys the current cultural values and cures the chronic spiritual diseases of modern people through the reconstruction of mythology (Meir, 2011) [10]. The dreams and beliefs existing in ancient myths have become a kind of power. Without the operation of rational consciousness, they enter the human subconscious and use the irrational way of thinking to find a good way to relax the spirit in myths.

The second is the creation of literature and art and the field of mass media. The creation of "neo-mysticism" works is inseparable from the development of science and technology, let alone the communication carrier of mass media [11]. At present, the development of science and technology makes it common that there are elements of science fiction in mythology (Cantalops & Sicilia, 2018). The mythological world can be created without region and space, but the substantive content is criticizing the coldness and cruelty of the real society (Broadberry, Guan & Li, 2018). Mythological factors often appear in the rational description of the text in the form of prototype, or as a certain depth pattern dominates the structure of the text (Caufield, 2017). However, because creators are influenced by modern scientific rational thinking, the logical thinking in "neo-mysticism" works is often based on real life. Authors endow the "myth" works with profound meaning, follows the original myth thinking, and adds the rational thinking of modern science to create a strong contrast, which is more to arouse people's reflection on real life (Campbell & Moyers, 2011). This internal reflection is the unique characteristic of "neo-mysticism". The success of

films such as *Avatar* and *Lord of the Rings* is a good example, when the reality is too cruel, people begin to look for the spiritual world in myth (Colbert, 2004) [12].

According to the above discussion, it can be found that neo-mysticism, as the product of modern cultural industry and cultural consumption, reflects the rebellion against the indifference and cruelty of modern life in terms of values and requires the return and revival of primitive fantasy worlds such as myths, witchcraft, magic and fairy tales [13]. Modern media incorporate myth into mass culture as an important social phenomenon. "Neo-mysticism" gives people hope of value reconstruction.

2.2. Myth retelling

"Retelling of myth" is a creation and publishing project on myth rewriting launched by Jamie Byng, a famous publisher of Canongate Books in the UK, all over the world in 2005 (Robertson, 2015). This project aims to reconstruct the traditional myths of various countries, it takes the myth as the prototype, integrates the writer's personality style, so as to retell the myth classics of thousands of years (Robertson, 2015). It is neither an academic study of traditional mythology, nor a simple rewriting of ancient mythology [14]. It shapes personalized style mythology according to personal imagination, gives it different meaning, and reflects the change process of contemporary people's ideas.

Chinese scholar Sun Xianke believes that "retelling" is an ancient literary skill, it repeats an early traditional model or story or theme, which implies some changing factors, such as deletion, addition and change, so that the new text is different from the original text and becomes an independent creation (Fang, 2018). Any attempt to achieve new meaning production by changing the basic appearance of the original text can be regarded as a part of the text phenomenon of "retelling". At the same time, he pointed out that in the context of modern culture, the "retelling" of classical narration in the form of modification, continuation and adaptation has exceeded its simple restatement and become the main way of "retelling" (Fang, 2018) [15]. Maithreyi (2011) also pointed out that one of the effective ways of "retelling" is to complete the establishment of new narrative discourse through the "deconstruction" of the original narrative. Robertson (2017) pointed out that "retelling" is not simply restatement, but re-creation [16]. It can be seen that if people want to create on the original basis, it is necessary to deconstruct the original text of myth and reconstruct it after adding new elements, so as to complete the transformation of the pre myth text. "Reconstruction" focuses on the combination of new elements and mythological narration in the process of retelling, while "rewriting" focuses on the creation of text (Segal, 1996). The wedging of myth into the content leads to "retelling of myth" itself becoming a creative activity of the subject, that is, the subject creates a text with new narrative significance by deconstructing and reconstructing the pre myth text under the trend of neo-mysticism (Winkler, 2005). Reconstruction and rewriting are different in terms of emphasis. Although the ways of reconstruction and rewriting are slightly different, they all focus on the transformation and utilization of contemporary mythological resources, which is part of the activity of "retelling" [17].

Based on this, in the process of retelling, on the one hand, it would maintain the continuity between the new myth text and the pre myth text, which indicates the existence of tradition. On the other hand, it would launch a new narrative

and inject new spirit into new myth texts. The French poet Victor Segalen once said that myth is just a combination of words, it can be valuable only by dismantling myth and leading to new collision or new harmony (Forsdick, 2001). Therefore, a successful "myth retelling" should contain two characteristics:

Firstly, "myth retelling" must adapt to the network context of the 21 century, so as to inject new spirit into myth texts (Hosseini, 2014) [18]. The macro environment in which the "myth retelling" of online novels, video games and films takes place is the prosperous and open 21st century, and the micro environment is the network context of freedom but paying attention to attention economics (Robertson, 2017). Therefore, the new spirit of "myth retelling" is mainly reflected in two aspects: one is the integration of the spirit of the times. Taking the online novel as an example, Chinese Monk Sha's Diary skillfully reflects the confusion and hardships of contemporary young people by describing the bits and pieces of the four masters and disciples on their way to learn scriptures (Franklin, 2014). The second is the aesthetic implication with network context. For example, in order to cater to the reading taste of the majority of Internet users, Wu Kong Zhuan has added a new spirit that is not found in the Journey to the West [19]. It interprets the story of modern journey to the west with traditional characters, expresses the thinking concept of modern people, and especially highlights the rebellious spirit of resisting authority and destiny (Mcclanahan, 2013). If the rebellious spirit against authority and fate and the spirit of pursuing freedom in Wukong Zhuan can be regarded as the continuation of the theme of Journey to the West, but the theme of love is added to cater to the aesthetic taste of Internet users.

Secondly, compared with the myth as the original text, the "myth retelling" of online novels, video games and films must have a new narrative (Maithreyi, 2011). The three elements of narrative structure are generally character, plot and environment (Meir, 2011). Therefore, the retelling of myth in online novels, video games and films naturally revolves around character, environment and plot [20]. The retelling of character image includes the increase or decrease of the number of characters and the change of character. While the retelling of plot is an important part of online novels, video games and movies. Compared with the change of character image and environmental description, "myth retelling" generally pays more attention to the change of plot (Goryunov, Konjkova, Murgul & Vatin, 2015). It is no exaggeration to say that almost every online novel, video game and film would change the plot of original myth more or less when retelling the myth [21]. At the same time, character image can be more real and vivid only when it is placed in an appropriate environment. Therefore, "myth retelling" also pays attention to changing the environment of myth text.

2.3. The retelling of Chinese myths in game

As for the research on "the retelling of Chinese mythology by contemporary games", scholars generally focus on the application of Chinese traditional cultural elements in games, and put forward that the academic circles mainly study the traditional cultural elements contained in games from the perspective of semiotics (Boom, 2006) [22]. Cheng (2013) proposed that video games often use various traditional cultural elements to construct the game world. And some of them consciously use myths to create game background, atmosphere and narrative clues, such as Chinese Paladin,

which takes Chinese myths and legends as the background and martial art and fantasy as the theme, and it is an important online game for spreading and reconstructing myths in contemporary times. Similarly, Franklin (2014) used the methods of content analysis and structuralism to interpret the culture in Chinese Paladin. Through the analysis of the plot dialogue in the game text, he proposed that the traditional culture was mainly presented in the way of the game background, and the traditional culture and modern culture were intertwined in the game to form a pluralistic and decentralized cultural landscape [23]. Xian (2016) also studied the specific application of Chinese traditional cultural elements in game clothing, architectural scenes, props and graphic symbols attached to these objects in several important parts of the original painting design of role-playing games, including role design, architectural scene design, props design and so on. In addition, for the modeling design of Chinese traditional cultural elements and game characters, Broadberry & Guan (2018) proposed that it can enhance its nationalized style and elements and deeply explore the roles of Chinese traditional cultural elements [24].

In this regard, there are scholars have put forward different views and believe that the focus of academic research is on the superficial excellent material and traditional culture, such as scene design and character costumes in role-playing online games, while ignoring the spiritual content in role-playing online games (Bourgonjon, 2014) [25]. Anderson (2017) pointed out that there are some problems in the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture in online games, such as excessive entertainment, destruction of traditional cultural elements, serious homogenization, lack of traditional cultural connotation, vulgar violence, chasing eyeballs and so on. In this regard, Mangiron & Dong (2018) pointed out that promoting the inheritance of fantasy culture in Chinese games, it not only needs to improve the quality of games and give consideration to the unity of gameplay and cultural inheritance function, but also needs to pay attention to the ideological connotation, optimize the communication platform and create a good atmosphere for cultural inheritance. Yan (2008) also pointed out that the combination of online games and Chinese traditional culture does not take historical stories as the shell in games, or put buildings or props expressing Chinese flavor in scene design, but refers to the consistency between players' cultural psychology caused by games and Chinese traditional value orientation and morality [26].

Through the above research, it can be found that the cultural carrying and communication ability of video games has been recognized by the academic circles, but the application of mythological culture generally focuses on the symbolic level. The entertainment of the game itself and the analysis of a large number of scenes and characters make people ignore the thinking on the cultural level of the game. Therefore, the topic of this study has a certain novelty, but also increases the difficulty of this study [27].

3. Methodology

The retelling of myth in the game is a complex cultural phenomenon, for its research, people need to adopt a scientific and rational attitude. In order to make the research results more accurate, this study adopts a combination of qualitative research and quantitative research. Among them, in qualitative research, participatory observation method and in-depth interview method are adopted. In the quantitative

research, the questionnaire survey method is adopted. Through quantitative research, this study finds the law of myth retelling in game, through qualitative research, it has an in-depth understanding of this event, so as to complement, verify and explain each other [28].

3.1. Participatory Observation

In order to further observe and analyze the research object, the author would experience myth games as a game player, participate in the myth game player community, and observe the game players and the interaction between players. At the same time, it records and sorts out the experience process and observation results, so as to summarize the communication content and effect of Chinese myth culture in the myth game, as well as the problems presented in this process. In this study, the author would experience games such as Honor of Kings and Lady White Snake, record and sort out the audio-visual language in games, and joined the interaction with other players.

3.2. In-depth Interview

In-depth interview achieves the purpose of exchanging opinions and constructing meaning through face-to-face conversation between interviewers and interviewees (Trauss & Juliet, 1990). Through the process and content of the interview, interviewers can explore and analyze the behavior motivation, beliefs, attitudes and views of interviewees (Flick, 2009). They can also clarify the questions through the interactive process of question and answer, so as to confirm the real feelings and behavior cognition of interviewees. In this study, a total of 6 in-depth interviewees would be selected, who are mythological game players. Through in-depth interviews with game users, this study understands the presentation of mythical culture in games in the eyes of game players, as well as their acceptance, recognition and real feelings of mythical culture in games, so as to analyze the retelling characteristics and effects of mythical culture in games, and integrate the successful methods of shaping mythical images.

3.3. Questionnaire Survey

Based on in-depth interviews, this study designs a questionnaire for the audience information, myth presentation and communication effect of myth games. It is constructed in the form of closed-ended questions and distributed publicly on a variety of social platforms through random sampling. Its purpose is mainly to understand the players' understanding, acceptance and satisfaction with Chinese mythology in games by issuing questionnaires [29]. On this basis, it summarizes the presentation characteristics and communication effect of mythological culture in games, and strives to collect some suggestions on research problem. In order to improve the reliability and validity of the research data, in the distribution of the questionnaire, it would be divided into two stages: pre survey stage and large-scale survey stage. In the pre survey stage, a small-scale questionnaire would be distributed and collected to investigate the respondents' understanding of mythological culture in games, so as to set reasonable questions, interview scope for the formal survey in the second stage [30].

4. Likely Conclusion and Recommendation

This study involves quantitative and qualitative research. Qualitative interviews involves the position of constructivism and the nature of interpretation, in this process, views, experiences and opinions can be collected and summarized. Quantitative investigation can measure the views of qualitative research through data analysis. I think it may produce meaningful conclusions. How to retell Chinese mythology in video games may be divided into two parts: the first is to study the retelling of mythological image and mythological situation in the pre text of Chinese mythology by the digital technology of video games. Second, combined with the narrative plot of video games and compared with the pre text of Chinese mythology, it deduces and summarizes the retelling techniques of mythological narrative plot, in order to provide a typical example for the creation of other new mythological works. In other words, by dividing Chinese mythology into mythological spirit, mythological modeling and mythological stories, it helps to understand the specific application of Chinese mythology in games, in order to analyze and obtain the specific embodiment of the functional value, cultural value and aesthetic value of Chinese mythology in games. The hypertext narrative technology used in video games will activate Chinese mythology to a certain extent. At the same time, as a part of cultural products, video games containing Chinese myths are also an integration of Chinese culture and will spread with the mass consumption of video games.

There are still some deficiencies in the discussion of this research proposal: first, the in-depth interview and questionnaire survey for game narrative and myth retelling are limited by the length and the size of audience. Second, due to the lack of scientific research conditions, the author cannot dabble in many professional fields, and the search of text materials and game materials are not enough. In the future research, scholars can make more in-depth exploration and analysis on the retelling of Chinese mythology in games through more excellent works and interviewees.

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