

The Image of Green Snake on Screens in China over the Past 30 Years

Meng Zhang^{1,a,*}

¹*School of Literature, Capital Normal University, Beijing, China, 100089*

a. 2736519942@qq.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: *The Legend of the White Snake* is a well-known traditional story in China. The love between Xu Xian and white snake has always been praised by people. Among them, the supporting role "Green snake" has not been marginalized again and again because of the identity of the supporting role in the evolution of the text. On the contrary, she has become a soul character that cannot be ignored, and has even become the protagonist in some adaptations. In the era when popular Culture is faddish, film and television adaptation of traditional works is a topic worthy of attention. In the adaptation of the story *The Legend of the White Snake*, Green snake's image has undergone a series of changes, reflecting the spiritual pursuit of people in different eras. This study adopts the case analysis method, taking texts such as *Green Snake*, *The legend of Green Snake*, *White Snake 2* and *White Snake: Love* as the research objects. From the four aspects of the text's own vitality, the audience's preferences in the era of popular culture, and the particularity of film and television texts, the reasons for the evolution of the image of the green snake on the screens of Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China in the past three decades have been drawn.

Keywords: The Legend of the White Snake, Green Snake, Image Research, Literature, Film and Television

1. Introduction

The Legend of the White Snake is a popular folk tale of the Chinese nation. Studying the evolution of Green snake's screen image is conducive to grasping the pulse of cultural development, exploring the laws of literary and artistic creation, and exploring the spirit of the times. Since *The Legend of the White Snake* was originally presented in the form of literary texts, current academic research mostly focuses on the evolution of the image of the Green Snake in literary texts with the evolution of dynasties, and because of the rapid development of the film and television industry, there have also been many *White Snakes* in recent years. A milestone in film and television works related to "Biography", the research on screen image needs to add new objects in time with the times. This paper tries to start from the perspective of film and television works, focusing on the evolution of the image of the green snake on the screen, selecting regions spanning mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and themes spanning movies, TV series, opera movies, and animation movies, and the time span from the 1990s to 2020. In 2009, select the typical text film *Green Snake*, the TV series *The Legend of the Green Snake*, the animated film *White Snake 2* and the opera film *White Snake: Love*,

starting from typical film and television texts to explore the era of popular culture The spiritual pursuit reflected in different cultural products.

2. The Plasticity of the Green Snake Itself

2.1. White Snake

From the perspective of Green snake itself, compared to the White Snake who played the role of a virtuous and upright ideal wife in previous interpretations, Green snake's image is more three-dimensional and richer, her character is more lively and lively, and her supporting role also makes her more malleable. In the story of "*Legend of the White Snake*", the gentle and virtuous White Snake sacrificed her life to save her husband and stole immortal grass, and to defend her emotional flooded Jinshan Temple, her resistance and rebellion were based on the premise that the small family was facing a crisis, and her powerful magic power was nothing but a The blessing on the road of "Guardian" is not for oneself. Such a powerful and infatuated image of a good wife satisfies the fantasies of countless male readers. However, in the creation, it is inevitable to fall into a deadlock of old-fashioned routines. The love between Xu Xian and the white snake has been deduced by dynasties and dynasties, and it is difficult to make new tricks. Faced with the dilemma of the image adaptation of White Snake, Green Snake has become the key to the creator's breakthrough [1].

2.2. Green Snake

Just like the maid Matchmaker who matched Cui Yingying and Zhang Sheng in *The Story of the West Chamber*, the green snake plays a similar function in *The Legend of the White Snake*". Although the protagonist's story is too splendid and difficult to play in the previous generation's story, but the indispensable role in the story determines that this role will not be out with the interpretation of history. The identities of such characters are very mysterious because they don't have much ink. The story does not revolve around them, and there is relatively little information about the characters. These two points give a lot of room for future adaptors to change. In *The Legend of the White Snake*, the green snake plays the role of threading the needle, and it becomes a stark contrast to the people in the story.

In the original version of *The Legend of the White Snake*, the green snake was not even a snake but a male fish. Because of the defeat of the white snake, she became the maid of the white snake, which is a very demonic image. With the evolution of the times, Green snake has gradually become a lively and lovely image of a chivalrous woman beside the gentle lady White Snake. On the current screen, the image of the green snake continues to blossom and bear fruit. Facing the mature and stable, gentle and dignified senior sister White snake, she is a lively and agile little junior sister who is full of curiosity and incomprehension of the world, adding many vivid and interesting bridges to the plot. In the face of Xu Xian and white snake, who are in love with each other, she is a young girl who is in love and doesn't know what it is, and naturally leads to a dissection of "what is love"; in the face of Fa Hai, a feudal guardian Taoist, she dares to resist, this rebelliousness Compared with the white snake maintained by its own small family, it is more primitive and natural [2].

The dance drama *Legend of the White Snake* directed by Lin Huaimin is the first of its kind to reshape Green snake's role. Different from the previous generation of Green snake, the changed dance drama brought Green snake, who used to be a green leaf, to the front of the stage for the first time, and created Green snake's own road of love interpretation. Green snake has self-awareness for the first time. Just like Lin Huaimin's understanding of the role, "Green snake is an independent woman. Like White Snake, after a long period of cultivation, she also has human desires. She is also in her youth and has pursuits of love and desire" [2]. Speak your own words." This adaptation makes Green snake no longer a speechless bystander, and opens the main line belonging to Green snake.

Since the beginning of Lin Huaimin, the charm of green snake has been continuously discovered by creators. Due to the overly instrumental nature of the earlier texts, Green Snake has been left with a great deal of room for interpretation. Compared with the white snake whose image has long been fixed and difficult to renovate, the green snake shows rich possibilities in different creations. This kind of character-rich supporting role is very energetic. Once he encounters a creator who is willing to adapt, or likes to reverse the era, such as the 1990s when popular culture was prosperous, he has the opportunity to leap into the dragon, and the maid becomes the big heroine. In Tsui Hark's film version of *Green Snake*, Green snake is a charming and charming rebel, who is not only the rival of White Snake in a certain sense, but also coexisting with White Snake, and there is a subtle expression of same-sex love in it. In *Green Snake and White Snake*, the green snake becomes the negative image opposite to the white snake. In order to absorb the yang qi and seduce the man into a trap, he is also crazy for Shi Junbao, and his love can't go into the devil. In *White Snake 2: The Rising of the Green Snake*, Green Snake carried the banner of sisterhood, is the soul of the "obsessed" theme, and mixed with some subtle LGBT hints. The rich and diverse moldability of sisters, rivals, lovers, enemies, etc., makes the story of Green Snake constantly innovating and being welcomed by the general public [3].

3. The Vitality of the Text of "The Legend of the White Snake"

3.1. Content

It is worth mentioning that the high nationality of the story of *The Legend of the White Snake* has continuously brought "traffic" to the characters in it, and creators in all eras can find things that the public likes to see in it. There are endless topics of interracial love between ladyboys and monsters. Fahai represents the duality of order and free love, and the wonderful martial arts episodes *White Lady Stealing Immortal Grass* and *Water Man Jinshan*, etc., are popular among the public. There is sufficient room for creation, and the rich elements are not easy to be overwhelmed in the homogenized traditional story.

3.2. Form

From Yue Opera to Peking Opera, to TV dramas and movies, *The Legend of the White Snake* has not been absent from the cultural life of audiences in every era. In word of mouth, *The Legend of the White Snake* has become a common memory of the people. The audience loves to watch it, and there is a natural market, and the creators are also willing to continue to recreate it. Unlike the supporting roles in other stories that have gradually been marginalized, the story of *The Legend of the White Snake* has been mentioned again and again, and it has continuously entered the public's field of vision in various forms. Green snake's image is naturally not easy to be forgotten by people, and it is also constantly innovating in interpretation [4].

4. Audience Preferences in the Age of Popular Culture

4.1. Characteristics of Popular Culture

Since the 1990s, the commercialization trend of literature being copied in batches has become more and more obvious, and China has entered an era of popular culture, which has a distinct "anti-sacred" and "diversified" character. In it, any cultural production "is no longer limited to its early, traditional or experimental forms, but will be consumed throughout everyday life" [5]. The adaptation and filming of classic film and television dramas also "inevitably take into account economic interests and increase their entertainment and compatibility with modern society." Deconstructed adaptations

suddenly became mainstream. The masses are no longer satisfied with traditional interpretations, and relish the jokes [6].

4.2. Case Study

Tsui Hark's version of *Green Snake* is adapted from Li Bihua's novel of the same name. It goes against tradition and boldly writes the four-cornered love relationship between Green snake and Fahai, with Xu Xian, and with the white snake. Among them, the green snake played by Maggie Cheung seduces Fahai with a snake body in the water. The scene is full of eroticism. The green snake walked from behind the scenes to the front of the stage and became the most intense stroke [7]. The bold interpretation of the love between Green snake and Fa Hai also continued in the Taiwanese TV series *Blue Snake and White Snake*. Before entering the empty door, Fa Hai "Shi Junbao" and the famous prostitute "Yi Zhang Qing" transformed by Green snake have a passage. In love, the two have different ways of being good and the other evil, and they do not conspire with each other. In *White Snake 2: The Raising of the Green Snake*, the reincarnated White Snake is a handsome young man. Green snake is dressed smartly and has a high snake-like braid. Green snake, who traveled to Shura City, talked about the reincarnation of white snake. In love, in addition to the persistent sisterhood, the implicit LGBT expression highlights the new perspectives of creators and audiences in the new era. It is not without splashes when operas are put on the screen [8]. Green snake, an independent woman who dares to love and hate in *The Legend of the White Snake: Love*, has won unanimous love from the audience. The rich creation of popular culture and the more diverse and inclusive attitude of the audience have given birth to one after another wonderful green snake image [9].

5. The Particularity of Film and Television Texts

5.1. Differences between Different Texts

The natural differences between film and television texts and opera texts give the supporting role Green snake more room for interpretation. Due to the different presentation forms of film and television and opera, some interpretations must be discarded in the process of cross-media adaptation.

5.1.1. Drama

Take the newly-written Yue Opera movie *White Snake • Love* as an example, two very popular figures in Yue Opera have been removed from the movie. One is that when Green snake assassinated Xu Xian, Green snake performed "horse stepping on a flying swallow" with one foot, and Xu Xian kept his back and waist down. This extremely test of the actor's balance requires the actor to remain motionless on the stage for a long time, and on the opera stage. The top is the color head, which is slightly embarrassing in the film and television works. The other is Xu Xian's big figure who fell off a somersault on the bridge and is called "back grabbing" in operas [10]. This superb technical move will win a lot of prizes every time he appears on the stage of opera, reflecting Xu Xian's subjective efforts and thinking of the lady. Desperately wanting to take the initiative to leave this place, but in the movie, this action was removed, and Xu Xian was like a waste, beating and crying along the road.

5.1.2. Movies

Although the film and television adaptation inevitably loses some of the splendor of the unique characters of opera actors, it also opens up a new space for interpretation. First of all, the performance of film and television weakens the performance of Green snake's personal skills in opera, and enlarges the discovery of the character of Green snake. In film and television works, it is necessary to show the character's character through lines, performances, close-up shots, etc., while in opera, there are

no close-up shots, lines are determined playbooks, and old opera fans pay attention to whether the singing is good or not. Whether the figure is in place or not, the quality of the word of mouth depends on the quality of the performance itself, but also the response of the fans, so it is more difficult to discover the charm of the green snake in such a limited display space. Compared with opera, the film has weakened more in terms of skills. The heroic Wudan has become the "supporting actress" on the screen, and the audience no longer pays attention to the Huadan green snake in Yue Opera and Wudan green snake in Peking Opera. The unsophisticated actions focus more on the plot and the characters themselves, which gives the adaptation more room for interpretation. In the opera, Green snake's action of stepping on a flying swallow with one foot is amazing, but it has no effect on the display of the character's character [11]. Infused with soul, in the face of Fa Hai's questioning about ethical principles, the green snake holding the double swords blocked the white snake behind him, showing the true nature of the woman. The long tone let out a coquettish "I-Bah!", and the following words were even more earth-shattering: "You love me, I'm in the way, who's eyes are blocked, which Buddhist affairs are shut up, and where are you going against the sky, why do you want to dominate?!", more avant-garde lines, more meticulous shooting, the expression of film and television escapes the traditional playbook's frame of Green snake, and vividly shows Green snake's spirit of resistance, making the whole character of green snake more modern sex [12].

5.2. Development of Film and Television Production Technology

On the other hand, the development of film and television production technology brings more possibilities for shaping characters.

In *White Snake 2: The Raising of the Green Snake*, when Green snake wakes up in a different world, the scene around him is no longer the familiar scene of the Song Dynasty, but an apocalyptic wasteland city. Green snake with a high ponytail is in the wasteland. Riding a motorcycle through the city, adding a bit of heroism. With the help of 3D modeling technology, the film creates a bizarre and bizarre world of "Shura Field" that is intentionally separated from the original world of the legend of the white snake. The audience can feel Green snake's deep obsession with the white snake in the apocalypse in the bizarre visual experience, which shows the character's perseverance and strength. In *Legend of the White Snake Love*, the special effects shots of the film were completed by the special effects teams of Australia, New Zealand and Shenzhen, China. In the bridge section, the special effects scene of "Water Over Gold Mountain" lasts for 6 minutes. The original freehand performance shown by throwing water sleeves on the stage is changed to a special effect scene that is comparable to a disaster blockbuster. The love and hate between the green snake and the white snake and Fahai. The hatred broke out in the turbulent water waves, and the struggle and pain of the characters, the unyielding resistance to fate and feudal ethics and morality were more vividly displayed [7].

6. Conclusion

To sum up, the evolution of the screen image of the green snake is based on the plasticity of the image of the green snake and the national character of the text of *The Legend of the White Snake*. The technique has the characteristics different from the classical art form, and the characteristics of the creation method further influence the direction of the character creation. This paper selects typical film and television works, and makes a preliminary exploration of the reasons for the change of the screen image of the green snake in China in the past 30 years. However, the number of text studies is limited, and only a few representative works can be discussed. In the future research, the author will try to sort out more works and further explore the connection between literary works and film and television adaptations.

Reference

- [1] Wu Hao. *Inheritance and innovation of folklore under the adaptation of film and television: Taking the image transformation of the white lady in "The Legend of the White Snake" as an example*. *Cultural Industry*. 2020, (27)
- [2] Zhao Jing: *A preliminary study on the evolution and interpretation of the image of the green snake in "The Legend of the White Snake"*. Southwest Jiaotong University. 2007.11
- [3] Wang Yali. *The Recreation of Folk Art in "White Snake: Origin"*. *Film Literature*. 2019,(19)
- [4] Hu Yuzhi. *An Analysis of the Phenomenon of "Joking" in Film and Television*. *Journal of Yichun Teachers College*. 1995. Issue 6
- [5] Zeng Yan. *Mass Consumption and the Evolution of "The Legend of the White Snake"*. *New Literature Review*. 2016,5(04)
- [6] Li Xingke. *Research on the phenomenon of Qing Dynasty TV dramas at the turn of the century*. Sichuan University. 2005.3
- [7] Wang Yibing. *A New Path to Explore the Value of the Cultural Community of the "National Tide" in the Opera Film: A Comment on the Cantonese Opera Film "The Legend of the White Snake-Love"*. *Art Review*. 2021, (09)
- [8] Chen Shuchao. *Emotional Concepts in Movies and TV Works themed "The Legend of the White Snake" in recent years*. *Sichuan Drama*. 2020, (01)
- [9] Xu Chen: *Modern Communication of the Story of "White Snake" - "The Legend of White Snake" in Film and Television*. Liaoning University. 2015.5
- [10] Wang Qi: *The Cross-Media Rewriting of "The Legend of the White Snake"—Taking the adaptations in Hong Kong and Taiwan since the 1970s as the object*. Fudan University. 2013.5
- [11] Shao Yang: *Three Rebirths in Drama: On the Rationality of "Deconstructed" Film and Television Adaptation of Classical Novels*, *Art Wide Angle*, 2014.01
- [12] Weng Zihan and Li Ruiwen: *Exploration on the Film and Television Path of Traditional Opera—Taking "The Legend of the White Snake" as an example*. *School of Culture and Media, Central University of Finance and Economics. Shenhua (Part 2)*. 2022, (06)