

Reshelled Translation : Legal and Intercultural Predicaments in the Global Circulation of Chinese Short Dramas and the Transformative Potential of Digital Humanities

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ABSTRACT This paper studies the dual predicaments facing the global dissemination of Chinese short dramas through the concept of “Reshelled Translation”. It believes that “Reshelled Translation” is not simply a type of linguistic transmission, but a multi-level process where Chinese short dramas are repackaged as locally original products by substituting language, performers, settings and cultural markers. The above two results are: an explicit legal problem of copyright protection and an implicit intercultural problem of cultural erosion. Given the above problems, the paper puts forward a data-driven framework for proactive construction based on digital humanities. The three links in the framework are: first, use LDA topic modelling and sentiment analysis to discover cross-cultural value consensus; second, construct a knowledge-graph-based agent-based evaluation system for cultural embeddedness assessment; and finally, build an executable translation strategy through a multi-agent collaborative translation and detection system. Together, these stages have turned the diffuse intercultural risks into quantifiable data, identified culturally rich works that are worth proactively translating, and produced translated editions that balance value adaptation with cultural inheritance. Therefore, the article puts forward “Reshelled Translation” as a new way of cross-border cultural mediation and proposes a proactive strategy for the international dissemination of Chinese short dramas.

INDEX TERMS Reshelled Translation; Chinese short dramas; copyright enforcement; cultural identity erosion; digital humanities; proactive construction

I. INTRODUCTION

RECENTLY, ReelShort, a major platform for the overseas distribution of short dramas, has become embroiled in multiple copyright disputes. Allegations that it plagiarized original works developed by leading Chinese short-drama companies have sent shockwaves through the industry. As a pioneering platform in the global circulation of short dramas, ReelShort has repeatedly ranked among the top free entertainment apps in the United States and is widely regarded as a representative short-drama application in the North American market. On the surface, these incidents may appear to constitute little more than disputes over licensing boundaries between competing firms. In fact, however, they point to a deeper structural problem: an emerging double vacuum in both rights claims and cultural claims within the global circulation of Chinese short dramas. This paper conceptualizes this practice as “Reshelled

Translation”.

In the practice of “Reshelled Translation”, the narrative system, character arrangement and emotional rhythm of the original work are kept to a certain extent, but the language, performers and sociocultural context are modified substantially. When a Chinese short drama goes through the full process of “original Chinese script - overseas adapted production - platform distribution”, an unauthorised translated version may be repackaged and marketed as a local work. In light of the above, a contradictory reversal has occurred: local producers have claimed copyright and originality over the narrative materials from which the Chinese companies’ works were derived. At the same time, when Chinese stories are introduced to foreign countries in a de-Sinicised cultural form, the results of cultural dissemination may also be significantly different.

Taking the controversies surrounding ReelShort as its

starting point, this paper applies an interdisciplinary system of legal studies, intercultural communication and digital humanities to examine the dual predicament created by “Reshelled Translation” in the global dissemination of Chinese short dramas: the explicit problem of copyright protection and the implicit issue of de-Sinicization. Based on the above, it is proposed that the proactive construction of translation and adaptation strategies can be used to make overseas expansion of Chinese short dramas a more legitimate and culturally meaningful path for global communication of Chinese culture.

II. EXPLICIT LEGAL PREDICAMENTS: THE TRIPLE DILEMMA OF COPYRIGHT ENFORCEMENT

As Chinese short dramas have begun to gain international attention and are now subject to “reshuffling translation”, issues of copyright have gradually emerged. Short dramas are protected by the copyright system of various places as copyrightable works. China and the United States are typical cases, and under the Berne Convention, protection has been extended to cinematographic works and works expressed in a process analogous to cinematography [4]. These are known as audiovisual works in China and motion pictures in the United States. In addition, the constituent elements of a work, such as scripts, music and characters, may also be protected by copyright as individual works. Copyright owners’ exclusive rights generally include the right of reproduction, adaptation, distribution, public performance and communication to the public. Therefore, many countries have introduced copyright protection at the theoretical and practical levels..

A. THE JURISPRUDENTIAL DILEMMA: THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIVIDE BETWEEN COPYRIGHT AND AUTHORS’ RIGHTS

From a historical perspective, the protection of literary and artistic works has been carried out under the two main systems of the continental authors’ rights system and the Anglo-American copyright system. Given different legal histories and geopolitical environments, the countries’ copyright systems have developed in various ways. Commonwealth jurisdictions have followed the tradition of the British Empire and extended protection to sound recordings and broadcasts of works in addition to literary and artistic works. Copyright is generally considered to be a type of property right under this system [6].

On the other hand, jurisdictions that follow the author’s rights system consider a work an extension of the author’s personality and inner intellectual and spiritual life, and thus, one’s thoughts and emotions. Therefore, the rights to the work are protected as the author’s exclusive rights, and performers, phonogram producers and other disseminators of the work are granted related rights or neighbouring rights separate from these exclusive rights. Most of the countries in continental Europe that have been influenced by German and French legal traditions generally fall into this category,

and their copyright laws typically contain special provisions for related rights and pay more attention to protecting the author’s moral rights.

In the course of cross-border legal practice for “reshelled translation”, there are two different systems of rights. One puts more emphasis on the exclusive features of a work and the efficiency of its dissemination; the other still believes that the author and the work are inseparably linked. Therefore, in terms of the legal analysis for Chinese short dramas going abroad, a simple comparison of statutory provisions is insufficient. One should also know the various systems of copyright in other countries and the values these systems hold. Only on this basis will the translation and adaptation reduce legal risks while maintaining the original spirit of the work. It is also a difference in legal culture, and thus an inevitable problem of cross-cultural communication.

B. THE INSTITUTIONAL DILEMMA: LEGAL TERRITORIALITY AND UNEVEN ENFORCEMENT ENVIRONMENTS

Copyright protection arises automatically upon the creation of a work without the need for registration or other procedures, and is therefore territorial in nature. Although the international convention has harmonised the standards of copyright protection for member states to a certain extent, individual countries still have the right to determine, within the limits set by that convention, the extent of protection, exceptions to the right, and duration of protection. Therefore, the right holder can only file a claim under the law of a particular jurisdiction and within the sovereign territory of that jurisdiction, and generally, judicial decisions only have legal effect in the state where they are issued.

For short dramas, the typical forms of infringement are unauthorised use, plagiarism, editing, remaking, clipping and unauthorised reposting. Although the TRIPS Agreement requires its implementation by the member countries, the actual level of intellectual property protection in these places varies [20]. Singapore in Southeast Asia is a typical case of a strict intellectual property system and effective enforcement; it is often referred to as a model for intellectual property protection. The Copyright Act in Singapore has also granted powers to the police for warrantless detention of suspects involved in the trade of counterfeit goods [23]. Cambodia and Laos have weak enforcement systems and a lack of judicial transparency; thus, even though they have copyright protection, it is often more in name than in fact, resulting in high rates of piracy and weak enforcement.

Under the concept of “reshuffling translation”, the problems of copyright protection for overseas distribution of short dramas go much deeper than just the transfer of linguistic symbols. At a deeper level, they can be seen as a problem of legal transposition at both the level of substantive rules and enforcement conditions. Singapore has high-standard protection and weak enforcement in Cambodia, so it is one of the most serious problems related to the territorial scope of copyright protection. Due to the

disjointed legal system, rights holders face both disparities in the content of law in different places and weak enforcement mechanisms. As a result, the rights guaranteed by the international conventions do not always receive full protection in practice. Given the legal independence of the countries, it is still unclear how to reduce these protection gaps in the international protection of intellectual property.

C. THE ENFORCEMENT DILEMMA: COST BARRIERS AND THE “TRAGEDY OF THE ANTICOMMONS”

Based on Adam Smith’s cost-benefit theory, it can be seen that short-drama companies aim to achieve high returns in a short period by exploiting the popular boom of a drama. If the costs of cross-border rights protection are too high relative to the lost business opportunity, most platforms will be unwilling to take legal action. Cross-border claims arising from “Reshelled Translation” face difficulties in applying the law of jurisdiction and applicable law compared with domestic disputes; generally, the right must be protected under the law of the place where the infringement occurs, and protection standards vary across jurisdictions and evidentiary rules are often complex. Overseas platforms are also unwilling to cooperate, and domestic judgments generally need to be recognised and enforced by local courts, extending the time required for rights protection significantly.

A typical case is the ReelShort dispute. The right holder would generally have to file a lawsuit in the United States where the defendant is registered. Given that the alleged infringer’s place of incorporation, filming and distribution have all occurred abroad, Chinese courts face a significant jurisdictional problem. Although there has been a trial, serious issues persist in the areas of service of process and enforcement of judgments. As China and the United States have not signed a bilateral treaty on judicial assistance for civil and commercial matters, it is unlikely that the successful judgment enforcement will be realised. Therefore, the right holder is often compelled to file a lawsuit in the United States; there will be high costs and a long trial period, it may take several weeks or months to obtain a preliminary injunction, and the ordinary litigation could be as long as two to four years or even longer in complex cases.

Michael Heller’s theory of the “tragedy of the anticommons” can also be applied to this problem. If the various rights over intellectual property are divided into too many fragmented rights, and each right holder can potentially prevent others from using the creation, then the cost of negotiation and licensing will be excessively high, and the resource will be underutilised [15]. Given the situation of cross-border rights enforcement, if every small component of a short drama, such as props or background music, needs separate licensing or negotiation in different areas, the transaction costs will be prohibitively high. Jurisdictional barriers, extended litigation periods and uncertainty about the recognition and enforcement of judgments are in fact judicial expressions of this overall fragmentation. Impose

a high cost to make it economically unfeasible for rights holders to enforce.

III. IMPLICIT INTERCULTURAL PREDICAMENTS: THE EROSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THREEFOLD CONSTRAINTS

The previous section has identified the following explicit barriers to copyright protection for “Reshelled Translation”: a lack of a legal basis, institutional gaps, and high costs of rights protection. While the original creators are unable to address the legal problems, another problem is silently worsening. Works that have been subjected to “reshelling” lack a narrative plot and have also had their cultural connotations removed. If the legal predicaments are the explicit outcomes of “reshelled translation”, then their cross-cultural impact must be even more mysterious and profound. They are not shown in the result of litigation, but in the dilution of cultural codes, the disappearance of cultural markers, and the gradual forgetting of cultural roots.

At the bottom of this implicit problem is the system-level erosion of cultural identity during the process of international communication. “Reshelled Translation” is not simply a change in language; rather, it is a whole-systematic reduction of culture that affects core values and their carriers in context, thus diminishing their discursive power. Value conflict serves as a market signal for “reshelving”; contextual stripping leads to a loss of cultural identity; and excessive domestication results in cultural silence. The three attributes are related to one another and work together to put forward a triple restriction on cultural identity.

A. THE ETHICAL DILEMMA: CULTURAL VALUE CONFLICTS AND THE INCENTIVES FOR “RESHELLING”

The first of the three constraints stems from deep-seated conflicts in values at the base level. The motive for “reshelling” is a value conflict in cross-cultural communication; that is to say, the ethical outlook of Chinese short dramas may not meet the expectations of foreign audiences. It is precisely to reduce the market risk caused by this tension that “Reshelled Translation” is a rational choice according to the logic of capital. By altering the faces, settings and language of Chinese stories, they are presented as “local originals” to avoid the impact of cultural appropriation [11] and achieve high commercial returns.

Geert Hofstede’s culture dimensions theory offers a reference system for the problem above. Hofstede believes that culture is “the collective programme of the mind” [10], and based on this idea, has put forward several basic cultural dimensions. Among them, individualism-collectivism, power distance and long-term-oriented versus short-term-oriented cultures are particularly prominent in the comparison of Chinese and Western cultures, and they directly influence the narrative logic of short dramas [10].

A value conflict of individualism and collectivism is frequently found in “Reshelled Translation”; due to the influence of Confucianism, many Chinese short dramas

focus on family responsibilities or the common good and aim to bring glory to the family, for example. This is a typical feature of collectivist cultures in the media [7]. Many Western audiences, on the other hand, are more likely to expect stories focused on individual realisation, self-assertion and rebellion against constraints. When the motif of sacrifice for the family is translated too literally in overseas contexts, forbearance may be misinterpreted as weakness, and obedience as a lack of selfhood, thus amplifying the impact of cultural discount.

Differences in Power Distance further worsen the value conflict. The relatively high power distance in Chinese society leads to the deep-seated hierarchical relationships among people, so respect for elders and obedience to authority frequently serve as unspoken foundations for plot construction. Such hierarchical narrative orders are more readily accepted in high-power-distance cultures [13]. However, in low-power-distance Western countries, the audience is more likely to expect equal-status talk and direct defiance. Therefore, they may not be able to understand the taboos on insubordination or revenge plots based on restrained endurance before retaliation, and instead expect the protagonists to challenge injustice at a much earlier stage.

Different Durations of the long-term and short-term orientations affect narrative speed. Chinese short dramas frequently present delayed gratification in the context of karmic retribution and release emotional tension after prolonged narrative construction. This kind of narration is in line with the long-term-oriented character of East Asian culture [12]. On the other hand, audiences who are short on time want immediate satisfaction and expect each episode to be highly moving emotionally. If the speed of the story is too slow, people will lose interest.

It is precisely due to these value conflicts that the market has provided a demand for “reshaped translation”. From a commercial calculation standpoint, it may seem less risky to strip away the cultural origins of a work and reshape it according to local demands than to face the uncertainty of cultural devaluation. However, this capital-driven way has more serious problems. If a story lacks moral value, it will no longer be recognized as a good work of Chinese literature and will lose its roots. Therefore, Chinese creators face the legal problem of right protection and, at the same time, a systemic loss of cultural identity during the process of going global. Therefore, the ethical dilemma is the first of the three types of restrictions on the implicit intercultural problem.

B. THE IDENTITY DILEMMA: CONTEXTUAL STRIPPING AND CULTURAL HOLLOWING-OUT

Following ethical conflict, contextual stripping constitutes the second of the threefold constraints within the intercultural predicament. The core operation of “Reshelled Translation” — the substitution of faces, settings, and language — may appear to be a form of localized adaptation, but in fact it entails a systematic stripping away of the cultural context on which the story depends. Once a narrative is uprooted

from its original cultural soil, its cultural identity gradually becomes blurred, diluted, and ultimately erased.

Edward T. Hall’s theory of high-context and low-context cultures provides a crucial analytical framework for understanding this mechanism [8]. In high-context cultures, meaning is embedded to a great extent in the physical environment, interpersonal relationships, and social roles surrounding communication. Information is encoded economically, and its interpretation depends heavily on the receiver’s contextual knowledge. By contrast, low-context cultures rely more heavily on explicitly encoded linguistic information and tend to favor a communicative style in which meanings are made fully explicit [9]. Traditional Chinese culture is widely regarded as a typical high-context culture [29]: a glance, a form of address, or a seemingly minor prop may carry rich layers of meaning. In such contexts, relational structures themselves govern behavioral logic, and much of what matters lies in what is left unsaid. It is precisely from this contextual density that much of the appeal of Chinese short dramas derives.

Yet “Reshelled Translation” disrupts precisely these high-context features. First, the substitution of actors severs the cultural associations embedded in bodily signs: gestures such as bowing, lowering one’s head, or maintaining restrained composure lose much of their cultural intelligibility, while the implicit cultural subtext conveyed through the facial expressions and demeanor of Chinese or East Asian performers are significantly weakened [19]. Second, the setting strip no longer holds cultural value. The family system linked to the Siheyuan (traditional Chinese courtyard house), or the sense of ancestry represented by the ancestral hall, has been replaced by Western villas or modern apartments, and thus the story takes place in a culturally diminished space [17]. Third, linguistic substitution reduces the transmission of implied meaning: the resonance of idioms, the suggestiveness of allusions, and the layered meanings of puns are all substantially diminished in translation [2]. Low-context cultures are more likely to require explicit meaning; therefore, many of the attractions of Chinese narratives lie precisely in their avoidance of directness. As a result, the fundamental difference will lead to the loss of culture in translation.

Reshelled Translation thus forces a high-context story into a low-context narrative system and removes the contextual basis for its existence. When this occurs, often only an empty plot of the story is left: people are still together, but their relationships lack depth; conflicts still exist, but the reasons for them are unknown; emotions are still present, but they have lost their initial strength. In light of the above contextual deficiency, adapters are frequently required to provide explicit explanations. As a result, there is no more subtlety and no more resonance, only bluntness and didactics. Thus, the story has lost its original cultural connotations and failed to create a new basis for audience identification; it has become what can be described as a culturally rootless narration [22].

The Disruption in the Process may Lead to a Loss of Cultural Identity. After substituting the faces, settings and languages, and systemically removing the original cultural markers, the work can no longer be recognised as a Chinese story. Only in this case will there be room for a counterclaim of originality or ownership. Thus, the problem of identity arises: a strategy to avoid value conflict has resulted in the erosion of cultural identity and, consequently, reduced visibility and recognition for Chinese stories abroad. When the erosion of cultural identity reaches a point where it is no longer recognised, the work undergoes a form of identity bleaching and becomes a stateless narrative rather than a Chinese story. This is the second of the three types of constraints in the intercultural problem.

C. THE DISCURSIVE DILEMMA: EXTREME DOMESTICATION AND CULTURAL SILENCING

Whereas the first two constraints operate at the levels of values and context, the third concerns the more fundamental issue of discursive power. Once cultural identity has been thoroughly erased, a more ironic phenomenon emerges: works subjected to extreme domestication may even come to assert originality against their original creators. Such reverse claims become possible precisely because “Reshelled Translation” completes an all-encompassing process of domestication. It not only makes the work appear locally original, but may also gradually lead adapters themselves to forget, or no longer recognize, its actual origins [24]. Here, legal infringement and cultural silencing converge in a particularly damaging way, forming the third of the threefold constraints within the intercultural predicament: the discursive dilemma.

Lawrence Venuti’s theory of domestication and foreignization provides an important framework for understanding this phenomenon [24]. Domestication seeks fluency and naturalness in the target text, minimizing the reader’s perception of cultural otherness, whereas foreignization deliberately preserves the presence of the source culture. Venuti argues that the longstanding preference for domestication in the Anglo-American world is, in essence, a strategy embedded in relations of cultural hegemony: by rendering foreign cultures invisible, it reinforces the centrality of the target culture [24], [25]. Reshelled Translation is a far-fetched case of this domesticating logic. It also extends to a wider process of cultural substitution: Chinese faces are replaced by foreign figures, Chinese settings by overseas places, and worlds of Chinese daily life are transformed into Westernised habits and details. The purpose is to make foreign audiences feel that the work is not Chinese at all.

These three steps of extreme domestication are shown below [24]. The first is linguistic domestication: scripts are expressed in fluent and idiomatic forms of the target language, and idioms and cultural references are replaced with expressions more familiar to Westerners. At this time, the text surface is no longer a translation. The second is visual domestication: Chinese faces are replaced by Western ones,

Chinese settings by overseas places, and so on; thus, audiences can experience a fully familiar visual environment. The third and most significant is cognitive domestication; through the combined effect of the first two levels, one’s consciousness of the work’s origins gradually fades. After the visible cultural symbols have been destroyed, people will no longer know that the original story was told in Chinese. Adapters may sincerely feel that the work is their own creation, and audiences may receive it as a locally original work. Thus, the cultural origin will gradually fade from people’s minds.

Cognitive domestication is thus the psychological foundation for the reversal of attribution. When the adapters no longer know the origin of the work, there will be no claim of originality. It should not be deemed to have knowingly infringed on the law; rather, it is a kind of good-faith cultural amnesia that is even more difficult to prevent, prove and correct than deliberate piracy. Thus, Chinese creators are facing not only legal infringers but also people who believe in good faith that they are the original creators [26]. According to Venuti’s theory, adaptation is not a neutral mode of translation but is always related to power imbalances. When Chinese stories are adapted to such an extent that their origins are no longer discernible, China loses discursive agency in the world of culture; this is not due to a lack of a voice, but rather because that voice has been thoroughly “translated” into another person’s system [24], [27].

Therefore, a speech act problem has occurred. Once Chinese stories have been assimilated to the extent that their origins can no longer be identified, the two foundations for claims will also be weakened. Legally, it is harder to provide evidence because the cultural markers have been removed; culturally, the origin of the narrative is also becoming less known to the public [3]. Yet recognizability is the prerequisite for discursive power, and “Reshelled Translation” functions by removing this recognizability. At this time, the ethical problem has revealed the market incentives for reshelling; the identity problem has explained the mechanism of contextual stripping; and the discursive problem has clarified the cultural consequences of extreme domestication. Together, the three predicaments lead to a basic problem: when a Chinese story appears abroad in a de-Sinicised form, can it still be referred to as a Chinese story? After the systematic erosion of cultural identity in cross-border communication, will there still be a Chinese discursive system at the global cultural level?

IV. THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL HUMANITIES: FROM REACTIVE RESPONSE TO PROACTIVE CONSTRUCTION

The above analysis has identified the two problems caused by “Reshelled Translation” in law and cross-cultural communication. At the same time, there are also some formal legal deficiencies, such as an unclear legal basis, disparity in institutional application, and high costs; thus, protecting

the rights of original creators has not been feasible. At the same time, an implicit intercultural predicament is that value conflict generates incentives for “reshelling”; how contextual stripping leads to cultural hollowing-out, and how extreme domestication results in cultural silencing. As the two predicaments are becoming more and more intertwined, the old reactive mode of operation - legal remedies and retrospective cultural self-examination - is no longer suitable. We should be able to build proactively rather than reactively.

The feasibility of such a shift is rooted in the inherently digital nature of short dramas. Their production, circulation, and consumption all unfold in datafied forms: user comments, viewing metrics, and content features can all be subjected to quantitative analysis. When the object of study is itself a data phenomenon, any effective solution must necessarily be informed by data-driven thinking. It is precisely here that digital humanities demonstrates its transformative potential. By mobilizing technological tools to process and interpret large-scale cultural data, it offers a new pathway for addressing the intertwined legal and intercultural predicaments generated by “Reshelled Translation.”

A. DATA-DRIVEN IDENTIFICATION OF CROSS-CULTURAL VALUE CONSENSUS IN SHORT-DRAMA CONTENT: LDA TOPIC MODELING AND SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

The preceding discussion of intercultural predicaments has shown that the market incentive for “Reshelled Translation” is rooted in conflicts of cultural values, specifically in the structural misalignment between the ethical orientations embedded in Chinese short dramas and the expectations of overseas audiences. In conventional research, however, such conflicts are often treated as vague or experience-based judgments rather than as empirically testable patterns. If the goal is to move from reactive response to proactive construction, the first step must be to transform these diffuse value conflicts into quantifiable and operationalizable evidence. Digital humanities offer a means of doing precisely this by making it possible to address two central questions in data-driven terms: which value dimensions matter most to overseas audiences, and which value expressions in Chinese short dramas are most likely to generate misunderstanding, discomfort, or resistance?

Therefore, LDA topic model and sentiment analysis were used in this paper to systematically mine user comments on comparable content available on overseas platforms. Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) is a general-purpose topic model that can find hidden themes in large bodies of text [5]. Therefore, the dispersed and unstructured comments from the audience can be organised into a system of understandable value dimensions. These dimensions can be further examined by sentiment analysis [16] to gauge the emotional response of the audience, and thus, patterns of cross-cultural value alignment can be identified.

First, one collects comments from users of other short

drama culture on platforms like YouTube and TikTok for operational use. First, carry out text preprocessing; then, apply an LDA model to discover topic clusters and extract keywords along with the weights of these topics. Then, manually interpret and label these topics; for example, “family ethics” may be associated with keywords such as family, parent, and sacrifice; “struggles for justice” with justice, fight and right; and “self-realisation” with freedom, choice and self. Therefore, based on the above analysis, a cross-cultural value consensus database can be built.

Sentiment analysis is then used to map the distribution of emotions in each value dimension and to identify “high-risk value points”, that is to say, dimensions that are relatively less positive and comparatively more negative [21]. Compare the above high-risk dimensions with the value orientations often found in Chinese short dramas to generate a value-conflict risk matrix, and clearly identify the value dimensions that need attention and assign corresponding risk levels.

Finally, the above proactive strategy for dealing with cultural value conflicts in short-drama content yields two positive results: first, a cross-cultural value consensus database, which presents in a table the value dimensions most often noticed by overseas audiences, along with their core keywords and sentiment distributions; and second, a value-conflict risk matrix that compares Chinese value dimensions with overseas value consensus, marks high-, medium-, and low-conflict categories, and provides corresponding risk descriptions. Together, these two tools have transformed the previous abstract value conflicts in cross-cultural communication into quantitative data and provided an explicit, feasible starting point for follow-up strategies of proactive construction.

B. QUANTIFYING CULTURAL EMBEDDEDNESS IN SHORT DRAMAS: A KNOWLEDGE-GRAPH-DRIVEN AGENT-BASED EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

While LDA topic modeling and sentiment analysis help clarify the direction of proactive translation by identifying cross-cultural value consensus, a further question remains central to any strategy of proactive construction: which Chinese short dramas are truly worth translating proactively? Put differently, how can we determine whether the cultural imprints embedded in a work are sufficiently deep and structurally integral to resist being stripped away through “Reshelled Translation”?

As the preceding discussion has shown, the erosion of cultural identity under “Reshelled Translation” stems from forcing high-context stories into low-context narrative frameworks and stripping away the cultural ground on which they depend through the substitution of faces, settings, and language. Accordingly, the stronger a work’s cultural embeddedness—that is, the more deeply its cultural imprints are woven into the narrative structure and the more difficult they are to remove without damaging the integrity of the

story—the more it merits proactive translation and the more resistant it is to the cultural erosion produced by reshelling.

Traditional evaluation methods rely heavily on expert judgment and are difficult to scale. To address this limitation, this section introduces a quantifiable evaluation framework built on knowledge graphs and agents.

The framework is built on a knowledge graph of Chinese cultural imprints, which organizes elements such as ethical orientations, interpersonal relations, value configurations, and aesthetic features into a searchable network of cultural knowledge [30]. On this basis, a cultural-evaluation agent is constructed. Through retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) [14], the agent retrieves relevant cultural background knowledge from the knowledge graph when assessing script segments and uses it in conjunction with the script itself, thereby ensuring that the evaluation is properly grounded.

Divide the script into several scenes or narrative units for operationalisation within the framework, and then use a knowledge graph to systematically retrieve relevant cultural background information for the cultural imprints in each section to identify and analyse them. The four directions for the agent's dynamic assessment of these imprints are inheritance, locality, vitality and relationality; then, a “reshelling” operation is simulated to determine whether the removal of a particular imprint would cause serious damage to the integrity of the narrative logic [18]. Those imprints whose removal would result in visible structural fragmentation may be classified as “low-strippability” imprints and constitute the main source of a work's cultural embeddedness.

On this basis, two analytically significant results emerge from the framework. The first is a total cultural embeddedness score and rating, through which scripts can be classified into high-, medium-, and low-embeddedness categories, thereby providing a quantitative basis for determining which works should be prioritized for proactive translation, which remain translatable but require adaptation, and which are not well suited to proactive translation. The second is a cultural imprint inventory, or what may be called a cultural gene map of the script, which specifies the location, type, score, and predicted strippability of each imprint. The former addresses the problem of selecting which works merit proactive translation, while the latter provides a fine-grained basis for the subsequent generation of translation strategies, enabling proactive construction to proceed on the basis of a precise identification of culturally significant elements.

C. A BRANDED STRATEGY FOR PROACTIVE SHORT-DRAMA TRANSLATION: A MULTI-AGENT COLLABORATIVE TRANSLATION AND DETECTION SYSTEM

Once cultural embeddedness has been assessed, culturally dense works suitable for proactive translation have been identified, and a fine-grained cultural imprint inventory has been generated, the final task of proactive construction is to use digital-humanities technologies to transform these scripts into translated versions that align with overseas value

consensus while preserving their cultural core. On this basis, a recognizable official translation brand can be gradually established.

As shown in the previous analysis of intercultural predicaments, “Reshelled Translation” erodes cultural identity by means of traditional translation methods that either excessively domesticate or rigidly literalise; the former fully aligns with the target culture and results in a loss of culture, and the latter maintains the original form but creates a barrier to comprehension. Therefore, the core of proactive construction should not be to enhance the efficiency of translation, but rather to create a translation strategy that balances “value adaptation” and “cultural preservation” by lowering the barrier to understanding and preserving the cultural essence of the original work as much as possible. It will be difficult to achieve this end with only one translation subject, as audience adaptation, cultural identification and quality control all need to be addressed simultaneously.

Recently, agents in the field of digital humanities have developed and improved to some extent. A multi-agent collaborative architecture [28] can be used to divide the functions that would otherwise be part of a single translation process, and an iterative system of translation and detection can be built.

The three kinds of special agents in this system are: The translation agent is to produce an initial draft according to the dual constraints of the value-conflict risk matrix and the cultural imprint inventory. Then, based on the demands of the end-users, the reflection agent will determine whether there are any ambiguities and put forward modifications. The cultural audit agent will then determine how well the cultural inheritance of the original has been preserved in the translation, assign a corresponding fidelity score, and propose necessary revisions. According to the iterative cycle of translation → reflection → audit [1], the translated text is continuously modified; therefore, it should no longer be regarded as a single instance of textual transmission but rather as a dynamic correction system that gradually achieves an ideal harmony between value adaptation and cultural inheritance. Therefore, translation is no longer simply about converting language; it is now a two-way adaptation process that considers both the audience's understanding and the preservation of culture.

Once the fidelity of the key cultural imprints reaches a predetermined level, the system will generate two primary outputs: an anticipatory translation guide, which includes the complete translated text along with scene-by-scene strategies for managing cultural imprints and alternative renderings for high-risk parts; and a cultural fidelity detection report, which lists whether the cultural imprints have been retained after translation in a checklist format, along with their fidelity scores and audit notes, and simultaneously accumulates case data for future optimisation work. The former provides a working and reviewable foundation for proactive translation; the latter converts a one-time translation experience into reusable knowledge resources.

Moreover, the value of this system is not limited to producing a translated edition of a single work. More profoundly, it will help build a brand system gradually over time. All works processed by the multi-agent collaborative framework can be added to an index or other identifying list during translation. High-quality translated content and clear preservation of cultural imprints together form the foundation for recognising an official translation brand. As a result, these works have continued to circulate in overseas markets, and audiences have gradually become familiar with and trust official branded editions—versions that meet the demands of intelligibility and retain recognizable Chinese cultural imprints — and are increasingly regarded as more reliable official editions. It is especially true that the market space for “Reshelled Translation” is not only based on copyright appropriation but also on the lack of stable audience recognition of provenance and authenticity.

After the formation of the first official translation brand, the audience was no longer a passive recipient of the content; instead, it actively sought out and preferred versions with the mark of official endorsement and cultural accuracy. Thus, brand recognition can be turned into a market barrier against “Reshelled Translation”; even if infringing versions appear, they will be less legitimate as they cannot replace the cultural credibility provided by official translations and are unable to easily displace the trust that has already been built with the brand.

Thus, the multi-agent collaborative translation and detection system can build upon the value consensus identification and cultural embeddedness assessment by transforming their data-driven results into an actionable, iterative and brand-forming proactive translation strategy. It provides a solution to the technical problem of how to carry out translation and addresses the strategic problem of how to safeguard cultural identity and establish long-term competitiveness through translation. In this way, proactive construction can be regarded as a response to the dual predicaments of “Reshelled Translation” and is thus implemented.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the phenomenon of “reshelled translation”, this paper systematically studies the two predicaments facing the global dissemination of Chinese short dramas: the explicit problem of legal rights protection and the implicit crisis of cultural identity. The two predicaments are closely related, and together they lead to the same conclusion: the old way of passive response is no longer effective, and a new path out of this impasse urgently needs to be found.

Therefore, this paper puts forward the strategy of proactive construction based on digital-humanities technologies. Through three links of value consensus identification, cultural embeddedness assessment and multi-agent translation, diffuse value conflicts are converted into quantifiable evidence; high-quality works with deep cultural imprints are identified, and translation strategies are generated that balance value adaptation with cultural preservation to build

brand assets through iterative optimisation. Thus, “Reshelled Translation” is subject to a triple constraint: official versions are in line with overseas values and thus reduce the incentive for reshelling; strong cultural embedding limits the efficacy of reshelling; and brand recognition shrinks the market for reshelled products. When the reasons for infringement, the practicality of reshelling, and the market environment supporting it are all weak, then the problems of high-cost legal enforcement and cultural identity erosion can be solved more fundamentally.

The first three levels of the research results are as follows: conceptual, perceptual and practical. Reshelled Translation is proposed as a specific type of cross-border cultural mediation in this paper. At the same time, it will also bring in the perspectives of law, cross-cultural communication and digital humanities. It is now a data-driven proactive construction system in practice that goes beyond passive response to strategic directives. Future studies will further explore the feasibility of technical realisation and extend this analytical system to other kinds of cultural works.

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