

Sign Manipulations Adopted by the Actors in *White Deer Plain*—Take Bai Jiaxuan and Lu Zilin as a Case

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The corpus of this research was selected from the novel *White Deer Plain*, focusing on the inter-characteristics of various sign text modalities (fiction, TV lines and TV series), involving the interaction between sign text interpreters such as authors, scriptwriters, directors, actors, censors, post-producers, audiences, etc. Sign manipulations were adopted in these processes. It can be said that these sign processes from linguistic signs to TV drama cross-media and multimedia composite signs are typical sign text. Therefore, the research about complexity of the sign process attracts authors' interest. There are relatively few studies on the analysis of Bai Jiaxuan and Lu Zilin in *White Deer Plain* from the perspective of semiotics. This paper will analyze the differences in the characterizing process between novels and TV series from the perspective of sign manipulations.

Keywords: Bai Jiaxuan, Lu Zilin, *White Deer Plain*, sign manipulations

Introduction

White Deer Plain was a novel created by Chen Zhongshi, who was a famous contemporary Chinese writer. In 1997, this novel won the fourth Mao Dun Literature Prize, which is the highest honor of literature award in China. In 2017, the TV series of *White Deer Plain* was first broadcast in TV channels in China. In 2018, the show won the Outstanding TV Drama Award at the 12th Golden Eagle Festival.

In 2017, the TV drama *White Deer Plain* was widely acclaimed and welcomed in China. Its success lies in its high restoration of the original work, while following the popular principle of film and television art. On the premise of maintaining the basic plot of the original work, some plots and characters are appropriately deleted or rewritten, which highlighted the main plot and core characters, the development history of the Chinese national spirit, and the significance of Confucian cultural inheritance (Nong, 2020).

The original work and the TV series complement each other and promote the effective dissemination of Confucian culture. With the inheritance of Confucian culture for thousands of years, it is inevitable that the essence and dregs coexist. The original *White Deer Plain* objectively reflects this fact. The classic of the original work is that it not only carries forward the essence of Confucian culture, but also does not avoid the infringement of the dregs of Confucian culture on the people, so as to trigger people's deep thinking (Nong,

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2020). The TV series has artfully dealt with the essence and dregs of Confucian culture.

Since the publication of Chen Zhongshi's novel *White Deer Plain* in 1993, there have been sculptures of Qinqiang Opera, drama, dance drama, comic strip, film and TV series and other works of *White Deer Plain* in different art forms. In 2012, director Wang Quan'an's film *White Deer Plain* was the first adaptation of the original work in the form of audio-visual images, but it was met with many doubts. The core image of white deer in the original *White Deer Plain* does not appear in the film, and several main characters such as Mr. Zhu and Bai Ling are not portrayed in the film. Generally speaking, the audience criticized the film adaptation more than praised it.

Obviously, the adaptation of *White Deer Plain*'s sculpture, drama, dance, film and other art forms makes the novel become the prototype story of various artistic adaptations. However, choosing to present drama content within two or three hours from a novel of 500,000 words is the root cause of criticism for adaptations of *White Deer Plain*, including movies. Due to the limited time, these adapted texts cannot present the overall style of the original works. It is generally believed in academic circles that the TV series version of *White Deer Plain* has achieved the best adaptation and presentation of the novel, presenting the basic features of the novel in a comprehensive way, which is beyond the reach of films and other art forms (Liang, Gong, & Lu, 2017). In academic area, the research results on the analysis of the characters in the novel of *White Deer Plain* are pretty fruitful, especially the analysis of the main characters in the novel, showing the phenomenon of multi-angle research. However, there are relatively few studies analyzing Bai Jiaxuan and Lu Zilin in *White Deer Plain* from the perspective of semiotics. This paper will analyze the differences in the characterizing process between novels and TV dramas from the perspective of sign manipulations.

Sign Manipulations Adopted by Zhang Jiayi (Plays Bai Jiaxuan)

Chen Zhongshi mentioned in the interview that

I don't want to describe the characters with the previous concept of class struggle. If we must say there is rebellion, this point may be clear, that is, I accepted the cultural psychological structure theory of a literary theorist in the mid-1980s, and I used this theory to create the characters. (Tai, 2009)

The patriarch is a historical concept, it has a distinct mark of the times in the feudal system of the continuation of the era, and it has been universal and has a practical function of the folk autonomous leader (Tai & Li, 2019). But after the Republic of China, the patriarch was gradually diluted, until the founding of the nation no longer existed (Tai & Li, 2019). Although the image of the landlord coincides with it to some extent, the concept of landlord as a class has appeared since the 1920s. The key figures in this particular segment of dynasty change are the patriarchs, who inherit the cultural genes of their ancestors and struggle to maintain family stability. Similarly, the representative of the ideal of integrity in the traditional personality is still the patriarch. Therefore, Chen Zhongshi devoted all his efforts to shape the image of Bai Jiaxuan.

In the *White Deer Plain*, the author has created many characters to a certain height, from whom the moral sense of the Confucianism can be seen (Wu & Xu, 2022). Among them, the most representative is Bai Jiaxuan, the soul character of the novel. As a patriarch, Bai Jiaxuan advocated the Confucian culture, and he grew from an ordinary farmer to a patriarch. In this process, it was also the transformation process of the Confucian culture for human beings. Like other villagers in the *White Deer Plain*, Bai Jiaxuan had many dreams when he was young. He pursued money and land, but after taking over the responsibility of the patriarch, he accepted

Mr. Zhu's teachings and became determined to follow the Confucian culture and be a nice man. As the patriarch, Bai Jiaxuan resolutely became the defender of the Confucian culture. Despite all kinds of difficulties, he was always able to treat with an open-minded attitude.

Bai Ye (1993) believed that for the portrayal of Bai Jiaxuan in *White Deer Plain*, the author not only regarded him as an ideal peasant model, but also regarded him as a mirror that could be clearly reflected. The author also wrote the usefulness and uselessness of the traditional spirit of benevolence and righteousness in the historical development through Bai Jiaxuan, especially when Bai Jiaxuan happily regarded his son Bai Xiaowen as the county magistrate as the result of the manifestation of the spirit of "white deer", but also with a kind of paradoxical content, suggesting Bai Jiaxuan's benevolence and righteousness pursuit to the opposite of the will of the final bankruptcy (Bai, 1993).

Sun Ke (2020) made a profound analysis of Bai Jiaxuan from the image of the eldest son in the family novels, and thought that the image of Bai Jiaxuan in the novels seemed to be more like the identity of a parent, for he was the head of the village and the last patriarch of *White Deer Plain*. But from the perspective of Bai Jiaxuan's devout attitude towards traditional culture, he was the eldest son of his family and traditional culture. Bai Jiaxuan, the leading male figure in the *White Deer Plain*, is deeply influenced by the culture gene of his ancestors, advocating the Confucian ethics, practicing benevolence, justice and morality, and living on the principle of governing the body and practicing the family to see the good and do the honest and trustworthy. The rational spirit of the Confucian philosophy flowing through the veins of his father Bai Bingde has influenced Bai Jiaxuan's life path from childhood to youth. In the eyes of the villagers, Bai Jiaxuan will take over the White Deer Village patriarch status (Lin, 2021).

In the novel, Bai Jiaxuan accidentally found that under the snow there was a strain of green seedlings, Bai Jiaxuan asked Mr. Zhu to explain the phenomenon, Mr. Zhu mysteriously explained for the white deer god had been appeared in the plain, so Bai Jiaxuan went back to require Lu Zilin to change the land, then Bai Jiaxuan moved his father's grave to this land which intended to make Bai's family have a change of fortune and bring the good luck (Zhang, 2021). This kind of metaphorical approach made the story complex.

In the TV series, the creators have melted the extremes between Lu Zilin and Bai Jiaxuan's personalities, making them fuller and more realistic, and more easily accepted by the audience in terms of image presentation. In the TV series *White Deer Plain*, the characters of Bai Jiaxuan and Lu Zilin are properly rounded. For example: in the TV series, Bai Jiaxuan was in the incident of handing over to the farmer. He exchanged his own life for Lu San, he said, "I couldn't live just to live. This time I exchanged my brother Lu San, not to save people, but to truly be a human being". Compared with the handover incident described in the novel, Bai Jiaxuan solved the matter with only a letter written by his brother-in-law. Bai Jiaxuan in the TV series looks more human with the help of the plot. However, Lu Zilin wanted money, sex, and an official position, and at the same time, he also wanted a happy family. He hoped his family to be full of children and grandchildren with shining lintels. It is the image of a peasant who combines small evil and small good.

When actor Zhang Jiayi talked about his character Bai Jiaxuan in an interview, he told the interviewer about his understanding of the character and his filming experience. The authors excerpt the key points as follows. Zhang Jiayi said,

I read this novel when I was in my 20s, and I have read the *White Deer Plain* for several times. I am from Xi'an, and *White Deer Plain* is very close to my home. The people and details described by Mr. Chen Zhongshi in this novel are not unfamiliar to me. After reading it in Shaanxi dialect, it will be very smooth. I was a little excited when I came to act, but

when the script was put here, I didn't dare to read it for the first week, because *White Deer Plain* is really not an ordinary weight in our hearts. In fact, if you don't touch it well, it's better not to touch it. If you want to do it, there is only one way do it well.

What does the character Bai Jiaxuan mean to you? Zhang Jiayi said that,

From the novel to the script, it is an adaptation of 500,000 to 800,000 words, and there is absolutely no water in it. Sometimes before the actual filming, the other actors who acted with me, we tried our best not to be emotional, but pressed and accumulated feelings and emotions. From the perspective of feeling, there is a very big difference. At first, I read the novel, and I was attracted by the storyline in it. In the process of capturing and feeling, I searched for identity, which is relatively shallow, and I couldn't say what I liked. When I read it later, I was able to understand more that it was Mr. Chen Zhongshi who was reading this author. When I finished playing this role, I shaved my head and came home. My wife said that I had changed a lot recently, and she would wonder if I was still in the life of Bai Jiaxuan. It's true that after filming for a long time, he still lives in my heart.

In the TV series *White Deer Plain*, the appropriate increase in the plot between father and son bridges the gap between father and son in the novel. This further highlights the softer side of the father's personality. Bai Jiaxuan and his daughter: Bai Jiaxuan is strict with his son, which is consistent with his serious image, but in this way, his image is too sharp. Therefore, the scriptwriter Shen Jie tries to add some interaction with his daughter so that the audience could see Bai Jiaxuan in a different way from the original story. In the original novel, Bai Jiaxuan has always a high authority, and no one could challenge him. But in the show, from his interactions with his daughter, Bai Jiaxuan doesn't seem as traditional or stiff as in the novel. For example, when Bai Jiaxuan learns that Bai Ling's feet will be bound by her mother, only one paragraph is used in the novel. But just to show it on screen, the characters are not fleshed out enough to show Bai Jiaxuan's softer side.

In the TV series, Bai Ling's crying and not binding her feet in childhood accounted for as much as two episodes, and there were four episodes when Bai Jiaxuan refused to let his daughter bind her feet. The first scene is from the 17th to the 20th minutes of episode 14. Bai Jiaxuan squatted outside, one hand touched his head, he could hear his daughter tore heart burst crying in the house. Bai Jiaxuan turned his head and got up, trying to stop her mother from entering the house. This shows that the patriarch who has been taking the principle of feudal moral conduct as the life creed at this time is just a father. On the surface, he loves his daughter dearly and gives up to bind her feet, but in fact, it is the change of his individual thoughts. However, he also makes progress and changes with the changes of life, instead of being blindly dogmatic, which is the practical significance of Bai Jiaxuan. He is not confined to narrowness and compromise, but is always growing through thinking and changing.

Generally speaking, when the actor plays the role of Bai Jiaxuan, the performance of the character is very consistent with the character characteristics in the original work. The scriptwriter and director prefer that the actor plays Bai Jiaxuan in a way that is infinitely close to the original novel. Actor Zhang Jiayi manages to play Bai Jiaxuan as the patriarch, and also highlights the father's love for his daughter, which is not reflected in the original work. Actor Zhang Jiayi's sign manipulations are reflected in the manipulation of acting. As a powerful male actor in China, Zhang Jiayi is also the producer of the crew in the shooting process of the TV series, and there are also sign manipulations in the guidance of other actors in the performance process. Therefore, the sign manipulations of actor Zhang Jiayi are reflected in two levels: the first aspect is subjective level, and the other aspect is objective level of sign manipulations. To be more specific, at the subjective level, sign manipulations embody three points. The first point is the exchange and discussion between actors on

acting skills; the second point is the implantation of character characteristics in the consciousness of actors through the understanding of roles; the third point is to play the role through expression, eyes and body language. Sign manipulations at the objective level are also reflected in three aspects. The first aspect is the use of props. The second aspect is the makeup of the actors. The third point is the actor and actress's costumes. These are the sign manipulations at the actor and actress's level.

Sign Manipulations Adopted by He Bing (Plays Lu Zilin)

In the novel *White Deer Plain*, the character Lu Zilin also has a prominent personality, and he is an indispensable main character in the novel. At the same time, Lu Zilin is also the most controversial character in *White Deer Plain*. Many readers and viewers simply think that Lu Zilin is a bad man after reading the novel and watching the TV series. However, after careful investigation, they find that Lu Zilin is a complicated man, not a completely bad man. His life through the wind and rain, also having enough wonderfulness, is a small person in the big time, although not as Bai Jiaxuan's spirit and magnum, but also quite personality, commendable. He looks kind outwardly and occasionally jokes with his children. He was in fact a man of extreme complexity and pursued fame and fortune, who was immoral, filthy, despicable, hideous, and full of selfish desires (Zhang, 2020).

The activities of Lu Zilin fit with his personality and unfolded accordingly, forming an important sub-line and effectively writing out Lu Zilin himself. There is no need to prove that in the relationship between men and women Lu Zilin is actually a beast. However, Lu Zilin was born in Lu's family. According to the regulations left by his ancestors, no matter how hard he tried, he could not become a village chief. Therefore, he did not have as much inherent moral responsibility as Bai Jiaxuan. Instead, he paid more attention to practical problems of interests and enjoyment, and sought beneficial exploration of self-realization.

So far, the research on Bai Jiaxuan has been quite in-depth. However, Lu Zilin, a character who forms a complementary relationship with him to a certain extent, has been reduced to an ugly symbol used to contrast Bai Jiaxuan's image. In fact, Lu Zilin also has important patriarchal cultural significance. He used his personal experience to show from another dimension the imprint of traditional patriarchal culture on characters in the changing times (Liu, 2020). Therefore, compared to Bai Jiaxuan, Lu Zilin has more sense of reality.

Lu Zilin contended for the ruling power in the White Deer Village, to defeat the Bai's family, to retaliate against the peasant association to his swim fight, extremely despicably possessed Tian Xiao'e and set up beauty framing Bai Xiaowen. Lu Zilin took refuge in the Kuomintang authorities in every way and became the village contractor of the White Deer Village, consciously acting as a loyal pawn of the Kuomintang ruling the *White Deer Plain*. This character designed by the writer should be said to contain deep meaning. In a sense, the Kuomintang reactionary regime is always connected with the inferior and negative quality of Chinese traditional culture. However, it is worth paying special attention to that in the artistic generalization of the struggle between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, Chen Zhongshi did not simplify and polarize, but he tried to reveal the complexity of history and struggle (Wang, 1993).

The Bai's family and the Lu's family have been fighting openly and secretly from beginning to end, comparing each other and not admitting defeat. Through several incidents, it could be seen that the contradiction between the two families has gradually escalated, and Lu Zilin also became more hostile to the Bai Jiaxuan's family after his psychological imbalance. For example, it is described in the novel that after the victory of the 1911 Revolution, Lu Zilin found a new opportunity to stand out—going out to serve as a village

contractor. He decided not to continue to compete with Bai Jiaxuan for clan power and prestige, but to use power to realize his wishes. Since then, he has embarked on a path opposite to the benevolence and righteousness in White Deer Village, and quickly completed the role change. He no longer has to consider the views of the villagers in White Deer Village, and no longer needs people's respect. He wants them to fear their own power.

However, during this period, Lu Zilin did not completely abandon the guise of the Confucian culture of benevolence and righteousness, and was still full of courtesy, righteousness and shame (Ji, 2010). He still attends various ceremonies in the clan as an important person in the clan. When his son Lu Zhaopeng didn't want to marry and live with Mr. Leng's daughter, he hid outside and didn't come home, he took out the aura that his father was the one who made the decision in the family, and slapped Lu Zhaopeng into the bridal chamber with three slaps.

The second incident is Lu Zilin's Wind Stirs the Snow campaign, it was his proud son Lu Zhaopeng who made Lu Zilin lose face. In the novel, it is written that in the revolutionary movement against the landlords and squires in White Deer Village, Lu Zilin lived an unspeakable bitter life, because his son Lu Zhaopeng contracted Tian Fuxian and 10 villagers including him were pushed to the public for criticism. When his money embezzlement was revealed, he felt that his son Lu Zhaopeng was urinating on his face, making him disgraced (Chen, 2005). This scene is also restored in the TV series, and the actor showed the embarrassment of Lu Zilin's loss of face after being competitive. It is also very comical to the audience. Since then, Lu Zilin hated the Bai's family even more, because Lu Heiwa also helped Lu Zhaopeng to expose his crime of corruption in this incident. A series of events in the home brought the foreshadowing.

In the shaping of Lu Zilin's character, the creative team, from a holistic point of view, tried to avoid some bad habits of Lu Zilin in the novel, so that he would no longer be a heinous negative image for the audience. Why so positioned? Shen Jie, the TV scriptwriter, said that if writing Lu Zilin's badness and selfishness blindly, this person would appear weak. He tried to add something comic to the struggle between White Deer Village and his family, to turn him into a hateful and lovely man, so that the audience could feel his selfishness and narrow-mindedness, and also feel his bottom line. He couldn't betray the White Deer Village's two families that have held the land for several generations, couldn't betray the son. First of all, Lu Zilin needs to be loved and hated to a certain extent, which reduces his badness and selfishness. We could also see the most authentic and simple qualities on him, compared with the perfect image of Bai Jiaxuan. Secondly, how to combine the evil of Lu Zilin with the soft requires deep exploration of the image of the character. He wants to make a fortune as an official. He wants his son and grandson to be safe. In fact, since ancient times, this is the simple law of survival for ordinary people. If the image of Lu Zilin is constructed in this way, it is meaningless for the meaning of the work, and it is neither aesthetic nor revelatory for the audience. Therefore, it is necessary to set such a conflicted psychology for Lu Zilin, so that his image will become more profound and vivid.

He was bad, but not bad to the end, which is where his contradictory image lies. Take episode 47 for example, Lu Zilin lets Tian Xiao'e to seduce Bai Xiaowen, in order to let Bai Jiaxuan lose face, but he is not really bent on killing the Bai's family. When he saw Bai Jiaxuan lying in the doorway of Tian Xiao'e's home, although he said to Bai Jiaxuan: "You know that you are angry, you know that you are not decent, and when you scold people in the ancestral hall, you do not expect that you are not decent". In fact, it is not difficult to see in this paragraph, although the scandal is the mastermind of Lu Zilin, when he saw Bai Jiaxuan so angry he did not throw stones at the man in the well. All the things Lu Zilin did were just scratching his head. He just

wanted to vent his anger on Bai Jiaxuan. Psychologically, this reflects the humblest side of the common people. His vision is also narrow, but this is the most real growth in that era under the common people but did not dare to openly show the side.

Xing Zhimei (2011) analyzed that Lu Zilin's character prototype is the image of a traitor. Of course, he was just a little guy in the village, not one of those wicked people. His actions are basically for his own interests, that is to say, there is a reason for his existence, which is understandable. From this point of view alone, it could only be said that he is a vulgar person. When he defends his own interests or seeks interests, he often does things that harm others to benefit himself. This is despicable and insidious.

Actor He Bing, who plays Lu Zilin, said he first read the novel in the early 1990s and was impressed. Later, he always wanted to play Lu Zilin in the drama version, but at that time, the director said that he was too young to play Lu Zilin. Until the filming of the TV series began, he thought he had a lot of fate with the play, and finally played Lu Zilin in the TV series. Actor He Bing also talked about the advantages of adapting this novel into a TV series. He thinks that the TV series is long enough, large enough, and has enough space and time to express, because a good novel has a core backbone, and all the clues are closely related. However, the length of the TV series is too long. Although every detail could be well displayed, it is easy for the audience to forget its main line. What people want to express the most may be deviated, unlike a short movie or drama, its core value will not be lost, but the characters could not be fully displayed. There is no way to solve this, and every artwork will have its shortcomings.

When the interviewer asked He Bing, "Should we treat Lu Zilin as a bad guy"? He Bing replied,

No, because good and bad are basically based on a moral point of view. We will find in life that when we usually look at people, we are basically looking at others, and we rarely use one. We look at ourselves from the perspective of morality, and when interests are placed in front of us, we will not think of morality.

Therefore, it is difficult for us to really restore it. A landlord, a rich peasant full of selfishness, his most distant goal is to live a life of food and clothing on this land. It would be even better if he could be a local emperor and someone would listen to him. The Lu Zilin's family has a full family of children and grandchildren, generations of descendants, a big house, and a lot of animals. This is all his dream.

He Bing also expressed his views on the ancestral hall and village covenant in *White Deer Plain*. He believed that the ancestral hall is actually equivalent to the spiritual home of the Chinese people. If we do not have a clear belief in the return of income, we could only believe in the ancestral hall. This is the way we maintain our relationship with our ancestors. It maintains the minimum moral guarantee of the villagers, our loyalty, and what we have done for our descendants. The security center was politics for Lu Zilin, and it protected the villagers to a certain extent. At that time, the Chinese villagers had no culture, and they might do some outrageous things, such as not paying food. Lu Zilin's security center was there to persuade them to pay. In fact, both the ancestral hall and the security center are designed to restrain the villagers, one is spiritual security and the other is political restraint.

When talking about how actor He Bing viewed the two sons in the TV series, he believed that Lu Zilin wanted his two sons to be officials. They exist to make the Lu's family famous and for the pride of the Lu's family. You are not alone, you are the flag of the Bai's family, just like the flag hanging outside the house. This is also the place of Lu Zilin's tragedy. This is just like the education we received when we were young. Parents rarely respect their children's will and ideas, and they are more about asking what you want to bring to the

family, or what your role is, which is very utilitarian. This is also a question from the author Chen Zhongshi, do you love these children? If you love them, you should respect them! But Lu Zilin couldn't do it, and Bai Jiaxuan couldn't do it.

To sum up, sign manipulations adopted by He Bing appeared in two aspects: sign manipulations at subjective level and sign manipulations at objective level. Firstly, the sign manipulations at the subjective level also include three aspects. Firstly, the actor He Bing communicated with Zhang Jiayi to solve the problem of how to interpret the hatred and love between the Bai's family and the Lu's family. Secondly, the actor's interpretation of the role of Lu Zilin shows the complexity of Lu Zilin's human nature. He has many illegitimate children in *White Deer Plain*, but he will make the right choice in front of the big right and wrong. Thirdly, the actor He Bing shows the sign manipulations at the actor level in the expression of eyes, expressions and body language. In addition, sign manipulations at the objective level include three aspects. The first point is reflected in the props used by Lu Zilin. The second point is Lu Zilin's makeup. Finally, sign manipulations are Lu Zilin's costume design. These are the sign manipulations of actor He Bing.

Conclusions

Chen Zhongshi chose the philosophical standpoint of the Confucianist rationalism in traditional Chinese culture, and shaped Bai Jiaxuan's traditional virtue of sticking to self-restraint without changing his original heart. Bai Jiaxuan is the embodiment of rationality, and literature shows human nature (Lin, 2021). Bai Jiaxuan adhered to the principle of rational life and doing things, survived the storm, which marked the victory of the rational spirit. On the contrary, the character in contrast to Bai Jiaxuan is Lu Zilin. His life is full of more satirical comedies, but the ending is a great tragedy. His life is controlled by irrationalism on the whole, which is doomed to failure. Lu Zilin died tragically at the end of the novel due to the fiasco and madness, which forms a huge contrast with the rational Bai Jiaxuan.

There are three findings in this research. At first, the space that actors can manipulate is lesser, they should show according to the requirements of the original and the director and the role of location; the actors should conform to the description of the original from appearance to personality, as far as possible; of course, to find a completely different and original role is unrealistic. Therefore, actors need to be familiar with the connotation of the original, try to explain to the audience and show the characteristics of the characters in the original.

Secondly, sign manipulations occur in some certain circumstances which depend on the actors or actresses' personality and their understanding of the novel *White Deer Plain*, such as their body manipulations, voice manipulations, emotional manipulations that can perform close to the original character image.

Thirdly, the results and influences of the sign manipulations adopted by actors and actresses in episode include two aspects. On the one hand, the author used the Shaanxi dialect to write the novel, however, the actors and actresses take the Mandarin as the main language. It leads to reduce Shaanxi native customs in the original work, because some words and characters need dialect to perform. On the other hand, there are some debates on the selection of actors and actresses. Some young actresses did not perform the character of the novel due to lack of acting experience and poor acting skills.

We should view these two independent works (novel and TV series) rationally and objectively, and revile the adaptation of the drama version with the subjective imagination experience. Although there is room for improvement in facial expressions, body language and inner understanding of the characters, young actors should be encouraged and understood. The drama version of *White Deer Plain* and the original version of *White*

Deer Plain as two different media transmission, no matter the scriptwriter, director or the actors themselves, will have their own understanding and interpretation of the characters in the TV version. It could be said that the TV version of the character is a lot of external forces gathered into the play in the choice of actors or actresses who are facing a great commercial risk. As a result, we should look at the adapted TV series objectively and rationally.

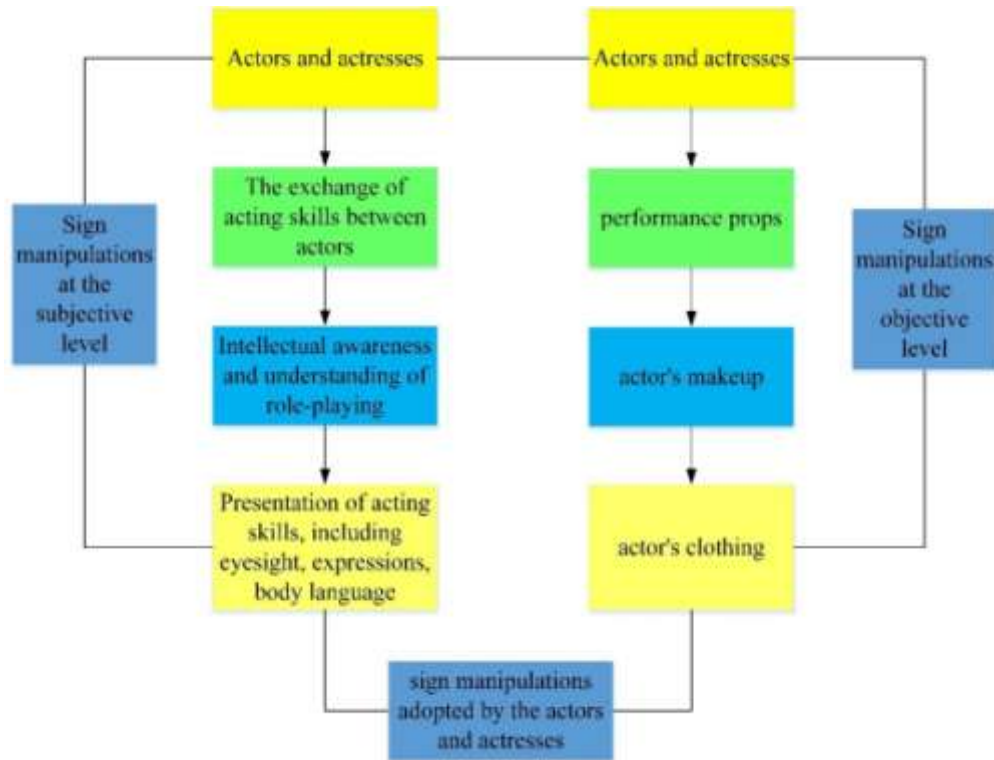


Figure 1. The flow chart of sign manipulations adopted by actors and actresses.

Figure 1 clearly shows the sign manipulations at the actor level. From the above Figure 1, we could see that the sign manipulations at the actor level could be divided into the sign manipulations at the objective level and the sign manipulations at the subjective level. In detail, the sign manipulations at the objective level exist in the props, costumes, and makeup used by actors during their performances. The sign manipulations at the subjective level are reflected in the actors' interaction of acting skills, the actors' cognition and understanding of the roles they play, and the actors' own acting skills, including the sign manipulations of the characters by eyes, expressions, and body language. It could be said that the subjective and the objective are interdependent, and only through the sign manipulations of these symbols could actors play roles that are more in line with the original work.

In general, the results and effects of sign manipulations at the actor level include two aspects. If the actor could make good use of the sign manipulations at the objective level, such as having suitable costumes and props, and matching the makeup of the character, then the actor could realize the interpretation of the characters of the novel at the objective level. In the second aspect, if the actor communicates with his peers and has a deep understanding of the characters in the novel, and the actor uses the sign manipulations at the subjective level properly, he could truly and successfully perform the characters in the novel and achieve the shaping of the

characters of the novel. The limitation of sign manipulations at the actor level lies in the actor's own character, appearance, and the upper level, that is, which actor the crew chooses to play the role in the novel.

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