The " Theft of Fire" in Digital Age

- a case study on Chinese fansub group Yi Gui Jun Tuan

Author: Pan Du

Media and Communication MSc, Lund University, 2019

Supervisor: Annette Hill

Examiner: Tobias Linne

Abstract

The Fansub group refers to a group of people produce and share the translation work of media content based on their interests. Fansub groups are always viewed as a hotly debated topic which involves many different academic research fields, including piracy, fan labour and so on. China has attracted special attention in this topic due to a large number of fansub groups as well as some censorship policies. However, most existing studies focus more on power relations and distributions, pay less attention to the fan community and fan productions.

Instead of treating fansubbing as pirated activities, this thesis intends follows Crisp (2015)'s idea of viewing fansubbing as a part of the cultural process of film distribution. By conducting the semi-structured interview with fansubbers, the case study on Chinese fansub group "Yi Gui Jun Tuan" explores fansubbers and their engagement with and translation of *Game of Thrones.* This thesis provides the idea of extension engagement and adaptation engagement when researching media content which adapted by another medium. In addition, this thesis discusses the unequal push-pull relations (Hill, 2019) between formal media and informal media. Moreover, this thesis argues that not all the masses enable to participate in participatory culture and write rogue archive since capable people play the role of a gatekeeper. Because hierarchy exists within and outside the fansub groups, which happens with identity construction, culture, and geography. Besides analysing theories, this thesis also provides Yi Gui Jun Tuan's working process and working strategies in details.

Keywords: fansub groups; fan free labour; engagement; formal and informal distributions.

Acknowledgements

Throughout the whole process of this thesis, I have received countless support and assistance. Firstly, I would like to thank all the informants in this study, who shared their knowledge and opinions with me without reservation. This thesis cannot be done without them. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Annette Hill, for her valuable guidance. Special thanks go to my fellow students, especially Chinese fellow students for all the meaningful discussions and suggestions. Last but not least, I am grateful to my family and my boyfriend who always support and believe in me.

Table of Contents

Introduction

A Fansub (a short term of fan-subtitled) group refers to a group which consists of fans translating overseas animations, films and television series they love from one language to another. Fansub groups are different from official translation because most of them are amateurs and cannot get the recognition of copyright holders. Therefore, the fansub groups is a hotly debated topic related to copyright issues, as Crisp suggests "any discussion of the global circulation of films through informal online channels must also consider the role of fansubbing in this arena" (2015, 108). There exist fansub groups in many countries and areas which has raised many scholars' interests, such as Orrego-Carmona (2018), Crisp (2015), and Hu (2005). Among all these fansub groups studies, China "attracts special attention in both popular and academic publications" compared to other countries (Crisp, 2015, 83).

According to Wu, "as the country with the highest piracy rate, China stands at the heart of the international piracy "epidemic"" (quoted in Crisp, 2015: 82). From the word "epidemic", we could sense the seriousness of informal distribution in China. Crisp (2015) points out that the situation in China is most notably different from other countries due to some important reasons. In the mainland of China, fansub groups have appeared in large numbers since 2000. The first fansub group who started translating American television series is F6, established in 2002. The drama they chose to translate is *Friends.*[1] At that time the Internet has become popular in China, and Chinese citizens have begun to have access to overseas movies, television shows, animations, variety shows and other media content from Europe, America, Japan, and South Korea. The emerge of the Internet has created a free shared space for Chinese, as fansubbers mentions in this study: "The Internet was introduced and used by Chinese as a free platform to share anything so that people have formed a habit that search and download free resources online" (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media). However, despite that Chinese people have access to watch overseas drama, the level of foreign language of many viewers in China is not adequate enough to watch foreign media content in their original language. Therefore, "there is badly in need of translations" (Garvin, 31, M, Internet).

---

[1] https://www.douban.com/group/topic/104898202/

Another important reason for the birth and growth of the fansub groups was that the number of film and television institutions that had the right to introduce overseas programs, such as China Central Television, was limited. The relevant approval procedures of the National Radio and Television Administration were also very complicated. According to the announcement of the Chinese government in 2018, proposers who want to apply for introducing approval need to provide at least 7 different documents. For example, the application form, self-examination report, and synopsis of each episode of not less than 300 words. Moreover, there is a huge possibility that content contains sex, violence, and superstition censored or prohibited from being introduced because there is no rating system in China.[2] Therefore, there are many overseas films and television series cannot be watched through Chinese formal distributions. The fansub groups thus have become important for Chinese audiences to access foreign media content and cultures, and plays a significant role as a "bridge".

Despite that fansub groups have provided Chinese audiences a way to get in touch with overseas films and television series. There is one thing cannot be ignored, which is that all fansub groups have been accused of copyright infringement and piracy. Some of them have even been arrested because of doing this. For instance, two Chinese men were been arrested in Japan in 2016 because of translating Japanese cartoon illegally.[3] Facing so many risks, many of them are still trying to survive and have won millions of loyal viewers. There are also some noted Chinese scholars and film critics that have mentioned the significant role the fansub groups and informal distribution has played. Dai Jinhua, a professor of Peking University, points out that "the pirated resources has fed the cultural taste of Chinese from generation to generation" (quoted in Jiang and Zhang, 2019)[4]. A film critic Yang Shishang holds a similar opinion. He thinks that our generation of film fans, as well as younger fans, rely hugely on pirated resources in order to meet spiritual needs.[5] Many Chinese media also pay attention to fansub groups. However, their ways of reporting fansub groups are quite similar. "The way of

---

[2] http://www.nrta.gov.cn/art/2018/11/4/art_2423_39574.html
[3] https://www.guancha.cn/Neighbors/2016_09_29_375868.shtml
[4] https://www.huxiu.com/article/287099.html
[5] http://www.jintiankansha.me/t/6BG6FIqcNr

some Chinese media portrays us is like stereotyped, talking about we are selfless. It is true but I believe there are more things worthy of discussion. But it seems nobody notices that" (Garvin, 31, M, Internet worker).

Based on the above discussion we could found that China is indeed a special country to conduct fansub groups study due to some political reasons. Moreover, it is interesting to note that even though people know fansub groups violate copyright, many Chinese scholars and media still praise and admit the existence of fansub groups. Facing this contradiction, it is important to explore what kind of role the fansub group has played in Chinese society and why Chinese fansub groups have gained such a common recognition. Furthermore, as the informant Garvin points out above, to study Chinese fansub groups could help us to gain more knowledge besides viewing them as voluntary workers. For example, we could add more knowledge about fan free work, fan community, the power relations between fansub groups and Chinese informal distribution. Thus, this thesis chooses to conduct a case study of the fansub group Yi Gui Jun Tuan.

Yi Gui Jun Tuan

Yi Gui Jun Tuan is a well-known Chinese fansub group that only produces translation work of the American popular television series *Game of Thrones*. Yi Gui is a homophone for the "white walker"[6] in Chinese and Jun Tuan means army. Yi Gui Jun Tuan thus means the army of the white walkers, from which their passion and love to *Game of Thrones* can be seen. This fan organization originates from an online forum and their 60 members committed themselves to the translation and creation of *Game of Thrones*. The translation of television series started in 2011, the year the first season aired. Yi Gui Jun Tuan is active on many Chinese online forums and all the social media accounts have got many followers. For example, there are currently more than 280, 000 people follow the Weibo[7] account of Yi Gui Jun Tuan. Furthermore, according to Fomalhaut (31, M, New media) who is the director of this fansub group, each translation is downloaded around 100, 000 times. As we could see from the

---

[6] Whitewalker is a humanoid creature and a supernatural threat to mankind who dwell north of The Wall in Westeros in Game of Thrones.
[7] Weibo is a Chinese microblogging (weibo) website and one of the biggest social media platforms in China. Launched by Sina Corporation on 14 August 2009. As of Q3 2018, Sina Weibo has over 445 million monthly active users.

number of followers and downloads, the work of this fansub group has got considerable recognition in China.

There are reasons for choosing Yi Gui Jun Tuan as the case to conduct research. It is a special fansub group, not only contains many general traits as other Chinese fansub groups, but also has its own specialty. Firstly, Yi Gui Jun Tuan is based on a fan community of *Game of Thrones,* which is a popular television series worthy of study. Jason Mittell (2015) raises that, "over the past two decades, a new model of storytelling has emerged as an alternative to the conventional episodic and serial forms", which is narrative complexity (ibid.: 54). *Game of Thrones*, in Mittell's view, is a great example of narrative complexity mode. He further argues that *Game of Thrones* contains some certain qualities which are worthy of discussion: the "multiple focalized structure" (ibid.:307), the death of "leading characters"(ibid.: 305-307), the "invitation to explore extratextual sources" (ibid.: 479), and "the orienting of Paratexts"(ibid.: 650). Therefore, according to The Guardian, *Game of Thrones* was "the biggest drama" and "the most talked about show" on television by 2014[8] and have formed a broad, active international fan base. For instance, in 2012 Vulture.com ranked the series' fans as the most devoted in popular culture, more so than Harry Potter's or Star Wars'.[9] Therefore, the study of Yi Gui Jun Tuan also provides us an opportunity to investigate the Chinese fansubbers and how they engage and produce translation work with the globally popular series *Game of Thrones*.

Some fansub groups have more influences than Yi Gui Jun Tuan, and many of them have started to earn money from making subtitles. Which leads the second reason of choosing Yi Gui Jun Tuan, this group can ensure us to get a purer understanding of the fan free labour, as they claim that they insist to do not make any profit from producing translating *Game of Thrones*. That is to say, the data acquired from this group will not be influenced by other factors such as profit and commercial cooperation.

---

[8] https://www.theguardian.com/television-and-radio/2014/mar/22/game-of-thrones-whats-not-to-love
[9] https://www.vulture.com/2012/10/25-most-devoted-fans.html

As Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) suggest that in the fan community there exist different levels of fans. They mention that fans who can produce content will be followed by second followers who cannot produce fan works independently. Yi Gui Jun Tuan seems to become a culture representation in *Game of Thrones'*s Chinese fan community and has got more than 280, 000 followers as mentioned before. Many followers have shown their loyalties to this group. As we could see from it, a close relationship has been formed between Yi Gui Jun Tuan and its followers. Thus, Yi Gui Jun Tuan provides us a good chance to critically analyse the relationship between fan producers and their perception of second followers. For example, is there exist a hierarchy between fans who can produce work and normal fans? How fan producers view other fans? Last but not least, Yi Gui Jun Tuan is a group that combines two different kinds of translators: amateur translators and professional translators. Some members of this group become professional translators and gain recognition from some publishing houses such as ChongQing publishing. Most importantly, they have Qu Chang as their special consultant, who is the official translator of the original novel *A Song of Ice of Fire.* Therefore, from conducting an analysis on Yi Gui Jun Tuan, we could gain more detail ideas about how translation skills are applied by amateur translators, and in what reasons that fansub group works get recognition from official publishing.

Aims and research questions

Crisp (2015: 2) considers "'pirate' activities as part of the wider social and cultural processes of film distribution" and this thesis will follow this idea. That is to say, the focus here is more about fan culture and fan labour instead of talking about copyright issues. The aim of this thesis is to critically analyse fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan and their engagement with and translation of *Game of Thrones*. The process of transforming identity from normal audiences to fan producers, and the role Yi Gui Jun Tuan has played in the fan community of *Game of Thrones* also be investigated. Besides theoretical analysis, this thesis presents some important information regarding the working process, working ethics, and rules and strategies to avoid risks of this fansub group as well.

Based on the above aims, the research questions are formed as follows:

1) In what ways do fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan engage and disengage with *Game of Thrones*?

2) How do fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan negotiate their free labour practices for fansubbing?

3) What are the power relations within hierarchies of fandom for Yi Gui Jun Tuan?

Literature Review

Informal and formal distribution

In regards to studying the fansub groups, we must establish a clear understanding that is the importance of platforms. Without the digital media platform, sharing media contents whenever and wherever cannot be realized. There are two forms of distribution: formal and informal. "Formal distribution is the legal acquisition of rights to show a film theatrically and/or produce DVD/Blu-ray copies for retail sale within a given territory" while informal distribution is quite hard to define (Crisp, 2015). But it is without a doubt that the fansub group belongs informal distribution as Crisp (ibid.) suggests that "any discussion of the global circulation of films through informal channels must also consider the role of fansubbing in this arena" (ibid.: 108). Crisp holds a critical attitude towards prescribing a hierarchy of piratical acts since they are "ultimately judged on economic grounds" (ibid.: 13). Furthermore, In Crisp's opinion, it is more suitable to consider piracy as filesharing and view the "pirate activities as part of wider social and cultural processes" of media content distribution (ibid.: 2), which is also the foundational thoughts in this thesis.

Unlike Crisp chooses to focus less on the economy, Labato and Thomas (2015) choose to study media with the formal and informal economy. They point out that informal and formal media cannot be studied separately as "informality and formality are always connected and codependent" (ibid.: 45). For example, formal can manage and control informal activities and informal can influence formal markets. They further propose an idea of the spectrum of formality, argue that the boundary between two forms is not fixed and not unbreakable, instead, is quite "movable and permeable" (ibid.: 48). This means that there is a possibility that informal media can be formalized. However, this formalization is not easy. According to Labato and Thomas (ibid.), the transparency of media systems plays an important role in formalization. If the media activities become more transparent gradually in finance, regulations and other aspects, the informal factors can turn into formal. But if the transparency decreases, the deformalization can also happen. Talking about formalization, there is a "contradictions and trade-offs between elements of the flexibility-security matrix"

(Labato and Thomas, 2015: 177). Informal media enjoys flexibility while formal media want security. It is thus difficult to negotiate between two forms. What Labato and Thomas mention about the formalization is important for this thesis, as it provides an insight of analysing the codependent and contradict relationship between formal and informal media.

There are also other scholars who are interested in informal distribution. Orrego-Carmona (2018) argues that technological advancements enable audiences to change their way of engaging with media content globally. He notices the importance of fansubbing which enables audiences to actively participate in the distribution of media content. Besides fansubbing, there is non-professional subtitling according to Orrego-Carmona (ibid.). He points out that non-professional subtitling is different from fansubbing as fansubbing based on strong fandom while non-professional subtitling triggered by political activism and grassroots movement. In addition, Kosnik (2016) proposes an interesting concept named rogue archive to describe the digital participatory culture nowadays, which provides us another perspective to view the informal distribution. By using fan fiction archives as her core case study, she argues that rogues of digital archiving have effectuated "cultural memory's escape from the state" (ibid., 4), and cultural memory has become more democratic. This is because the Internet allows everybody to create their own archive based on their interests, which cannot be achieved in traditional memory institution. Based on the point of Kosnik (2016), fansub work can also be viewed as creating a rogue archive in this thesis.

Power-relations

In Foucault (1998)'s opinion, power and knowledge are inseparable. Therefore, he suggests us to abandon a tradition which allows us to imagine that "knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests" (ibid.: 76). Rather, we need to admit that power produces knowledge and power and knowledge directly imply one another (ibid.). This knowledge-power relation has provided us a vital idea to analyse the fansub group as they empower themselves by using their language knowledge-ability to produce media contents. In addition to knowledge-power, there are more power-relations studies need us to take a close

look at. For example, Corner's power over and power to (or empower) (2011) can help us to study the power-relations inside and outside the fansub groups.

In regards to "power over", Crisp (2015) points out that "economic, political and cultural circumstances of any acts of piracy ultimately shape how they play out in the lived experience of the people who produce, distribute and consume pirated media." (ibid., 83). In the particular case of China, piracy happens is because of "special economic and political circumstances rather than cultural mores" (Ting quoted in Crisp, 83). There is one aspect Crisp suggests us to pay attention when examing Chinese piracy, which is the strict quota system, only very few foreign media contents can be introduced in China yearly. The implies that the Chinese government has absolute control over the review and introduction of foreign media, and also has absolute control over the viewing media contents of Chinese people.

The above reason has played an important reason for giving birth to the development of China's piracy industry and the emergence of fansub groups, which means that the "power to" shows up. Orrego-Carmona (2018) describes fansubbing as a valuable way to empower users, and describes fansubbers and other ways of informal distribution as "a grassroots movement for users to make up for the lack of distribution and delayed international releases" (ibid., 326). Kosnik (2016) also holds a similar opinion. She thinks that with the help of digital media development, normal users and audiences are empowered to create their own cultural memory compared with traditional media era where cultural memory is monopolized by elites. She further suggests that, compared to before that trying to persuade traditional memory institutions which controlled by upper-class to admit and recognize their tastes and cultural materials, subcultural and marginalized groups are now empowered to have their own digital archive which can be "constructed and operated by members of their communities" (ibid.,10). Therefore, she concludes that the traditional cultural power structure is facing severe subversion and challenges by the masses.

The audience perspective

Fansub group members must be audience first, and then they can proceed to the next step of

activities, analysis, translation, dissemination and other. Therefore, it is vital for us to understand the perspective of the audience before conducting a fan analysis. For most people, the study of audiences consists of "little more than the information they read in the media" (Nightingale, 2011, 3). However, pointed by Morley (1980), audiences were transformed from passive receivers into active participator since they consciously engaging within media content by using their own social experiences. Bruns (2007) holds the same opinion as Morley: no matter they notice this identity change or not, " they have become a new, hybrid, producer" and also can be called "active audience" (ibid.). Toffler (1980) coins the term "prosumer" to emphasize that audiences can act as both roles of consumers and producers at the same time. Moreover, in terms of media audiences, Athique (ibid.) suggests us to consider them as "resident" under "conditions of reception where viewers perceive what is on-screen as somehow coterminous with the society in which they live. "

In addition to the concept of "active audiences" and "prosumer", there is another concept many scholars (e.g. Nightingale, 2011; Madianou, 2011; Hill, 2018) suggests us to pay attention to, which is transnational audiences and transnationalism. Due to the "intensification of global migration and the parallel proliferation of transnational media in the past 15 years," the focus is put on nation and translations' diversity of ethnic and culture. (Madianou, 2011: 444). Transnationalism can be viewed "as broadly referring to the "multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states" (Vertovec, 2004) and often occurs through practices of cultural mixing (Athique, 2016: 4). Compared to the audiences of traditional media, online audiences are "inherently transnational" due to the World Wide Web (ibid., 9). When doing analysis regarding transnational audiences, Hill (2018) suggests us to consider the importance of distribution contexts, place and time. In addition, Athique (2016) uses "non-resident audiences" to describe transnational audiences and further introduces the concept of "global imagination" and "social imagination" to us which could be useful to conducting analysis regarding transnational audiences. A recognition of "mental maps" is important to "global imagination" according to Athique (ibid.), through which the individuals' sense of social existence and assertion ability can be understood by themselves.

Audiences are always "cognitively and affectively engage" with the media contents (Hill, 2018). As a fansub group is an interest-oriented online community, there must be a highly active engagement that exists when the members of fansub groups watch and produce the media contents they love. It is like what Jenkins (2006a:131) points out: "fans are the most active segment of the media audience because they refuse to simply accept what they are given and insist on the right to become full participants." In a case study of the reality TV show *Got to Dance*, Hill (2018) points out the spectrum of engagement on the basis of Corner's (2011) work on the stages of engagement. The spectrum of engagement is "a sense of engagement as multiform, where engagement is based on core elements but experiences in diverse ways" (Hill, 2018). A spectrum includes both emotional and critical involved, switching between positive and negative engagement, to disengagement (ibid.). As Hill mentioned, disengagement is also important but often ignored by researchers when conducting audiences study. Thus, we need to pay more attention to disengagement as it helps us to understand the relationship between audience and media content and producers in a more comprehensive way. The spectrum of engagement is important in this thesis as it provides a valuable way to analyse and examine the relation fansubbers have built between *Game of Thrones*.

Fans, Fan practices and "Free" fan labour

Fans can be considered as a special kind of audience. "Fans are, in fact, the most visible and identifiable of audiences" (Lewis, 1992:1). Jenkins (2006a:131) describes fans are the most "active segment of the media audience" because they refuse to "simply accept what they are given and insists on the right to become full participants." Fans are not always being viewed as a positive image. People always stereotype fans such as: "devote their lives to the cultivation of worthless knowledge and place inappropriate importance on devalued cultural material" (Jenkins, 1992:10). In contrast to the stereotype, Jenkins (ibid.) provides us with another perspective to view fans, which is that fans can be considered as a resistance to the cultural hierarchy. In his opinion, fans actively and intensively embrace the text they love and try to connect their social experiences with it. Furthermore, fans initiative engaging with

media and "assert their own right" to play roles as interpreters, critics and producers based on their favored content. Therefore, the fan culture can be considered as "an open challenge to the "naturalness" and desirability of dominant cultural hierarchies, a refusal of authorial authority and a violation of intellectual property" (ibid., 19). What Jenkins mentions can be fully applied to this thesis, as fansubbers can be viewed as producing text based on their favored content and play roles as interpreters.

Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) point out that there is a continuum exist among consumer-fan-cultist-enthusiast-petty producer. And there is a possibility that fans will transform their identity into petty producers. The identity changing process can be viewed as moving from the "learner" stage to "establishment" stage (ibid., 142). According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), during the process of transform identity, they gradually accumulate different kinds of professional knowledge and skills. Another important point related to fans is the "second followers" (ibid., 141). As fan groups grow, people with more relevant knowledge and insights will gradually have their followers who can be influenced. This indicates that second followers are "increasingly follower-like in their tastes, as society becomes more media-saturated" (ibid.). By conducting a case study of female fan fiction, Kosnik (2016) argues the important role the Internet has played for fan activities. Because the Internet provides convenient and free access for fans to join various activities. Fiske (2010) mentions that "fans are semiotically (meaning), enunciatively (talk) and textually productive and thus use them to help to define the fan community." This reminds us that we need to analyse the fan community from different perspectives as fans construct their community in different ways.

Fan labour can be considered as creative activities conducted by fans which often includes "revise, rework, remake, and otherwise remix mass-culture texts without dreading legal action or other interference from copyright holders"(Kosnik)[10]. Fans normally invest significant time as well as money to create products what they are interested in, and they share their productions with other members of fan community without making a profit. Even though

---

[10] http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.XHaOxC2VagQ

most fan works are amateur, which was originally intended to spread among a small group of people, it is now attracting more and more attention and recognition. For example, Fiske (2010: 39) argues that fan work often "crafted with production values as high as any in the official culture" Kosnik (ibid.) thinks that the Internet economy depends on fan free labour and also points out that "fan productions exemplify the unpaid value creation which is endemic to the digital economy".

There are many scholars have questioned the word "free" despite the fact that most fans are doing unpaid work. For instance, by conducting interviews and textual analysis on youth Indonesian fans, Sugihrtati (2017) argues that the urban youths joining digital fandoms are "not free from the hegemony of capitalism" because they have become "pay labourers, engaging in free digital labour for the powers of the global culture industry." Kosnik[11] also points out that "free" fan labour is actually not free as "fandom is already monetized". She further warns us that we should not be happy with the "free" model of fan labour, "in which fans "get" to increase the worth of mass-media products without receiving pay, in exchange for the relief they feel at the prospect of never being sued for creating value" (ibid.).

Participatory culture and online communities

In the book of *textual poachers: television fans and participatory culture*, Jenkins (1992) formally put forward the concept of participatory culture which can be used to explain the current phenomenon of intensive interaction between producers and audiences. By using the five rules of participatory culture defined by Jenkins (ibid.), fansub groups and their activities can be viewed as the typical participatory culture: 1) there is no high barriers as fansubbers' work do not need a high professional skills; 2) fansubbers work together as a group and support for sharing fan productions; 3)there exists informal mentorship and old members are willing to teach newcomers; 4) the contributions of fansubbers matters as second followers are quite relying on them; 5)there is a connection even in real life among each fansubber. Orrego-Carmona (2018: 333) views "non-professional translation as a social phenomenon framed within the participatory culture that has shaped the globalized audiences of media

---

[11] http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.XHaOxC2VagQ

content and creates more room for audiences to participate in." Furthermore, "the online formats used by the networks of informal distribution are well suited for the consumer-led disruption and co-creation since they are not protected and can be re-used in online websites and social media" (ibid., 327). Therefore, Orrego-Carmona (ibid.) argues that informal distribution websites provide users an opportunity to explore the boundaries of online public space.

Fansub groups are gathering together based on their similar interests and identities and thus the online communities formed. However, there is a high deviation in the number between productions and consumers. "In every online community, only a minority of the members is actively engaged in the production of any type of content" (Nielsen 2006; Sun et al. 2014; Yang et al. 2016 quoted in Orrego-Carmona, 2018: 331). On the basis of the above idea, Orrego-Carmona (2018) further mentions that in the communities, most of the members are lurkers who consume the content produced by other members quietly. Lurkers are still important in Orrego-Carmona's view despite they do not produce content. This is because that lurkers as the receiver and audiences enable the circulation of productions success.

From the above discussion on previous research, we can see that fansub group, as a kind of participatory fan labour, can be studied on a wide range of aspects and many of them have been deeply discussed. However, there are still some new topics or new angle which are worthy of being introduced to this academic field. For example, despite there are many scholars who have done the study on power-relations around fansub groups, most of them only focus on one aspect and ignore the truth that there is a tension between every factor. Many studies mentioned that China is a country with special national conditions and the government policy plays an important role in the existence and development of fansub groups. However, the specific details about the policy such as censorship and fixed quota of imported media contents are studied by almost no one.

There is a new way of doing fan translation work which also needs us to pay attention: amateur translators and professional translators are combined to produce media contents

together. There also exists an unwritten set of rules known by every fansub groups which can be used as an industry principle to help members avoid potential risks. Furthermore, above the previous discussion on informal distribution, there is a new trend of informal distribution: posting the translated work on foreign websites, such as Yandex (Russian), it could be interesting to explore more. Thus, this thesis will try to explore the more new area and wish to digger more.

As the focus of this thesis is a Chinese fansub group named Yi Gui Jun Tuan, the perspective of Chinese scholars are important. Therefore, despite the truth that many Chinese scholars have built their arguments based on foreign scholars' ideas, we still need to divide a special part to present how they analyse Chinese fansub groups.

China

Chinese people in general lack copyright awareness and thus quite suitable for the development of fansub groups. Indeed, according to Wu (2012: 503), 'as the country with the highest piracy rate, China stands at the heart of the international piracy "epidemic" '. By using the word "epidemic", Wu points out the important role China has played in global informal distribution. Therefore, from very early on, Chinese scholars have the absolute geographical and cultural advantages to pay attention to this topic. When using "fansub group" as the keyword to search on CNKI[12], 474 academic literature can be found. The very first article to discuss fansub groups was published in 2005 written by Yi, which only has little to do with online culture or media. It mainly talks about how to use AutoGK to make a subtitle for films from a computer technology perspective, and briefly introduces the three most well-known fansub group websites in China at that time: Shooter (was shut down in 2014), Hanstyle and TLF. Cheng (2007) is the first one can be found to discuss the fansub group from the perspective of media. She argues that the fansub group generated by the Internet has made great contributions to the "synchronous" watching of American television series by Chinese audiences, points out the reason why the introduction of American television series by television media has failed, and provides suggestions for the future development of traditional

---

[12] China National Knowledge Infrastructure, The largest literature database in China.

media: cooperate with fansub groups and introduce overseas excellent programs and films. Cheng's article is interesting to discuss with the work of Labato and Thomas (2015). Both of these two works mention that there is a need for cooperation between informal distribution (fansub groups) and formal distribution (television stations). However, after twelve years of Cheng's proposal, under the policy of the state administration of radio, film, and television (SARFT), traditional media still cannot be free to introduce overseas television programs. The cooperation between the informal distribution and formal distribution still hard to achieve, which is an interesting point this thesis wants to dig out.

Recently, with the further development and popularity of fansub groups in China, related research is also growing which can be divided into three main disciplines. The first one is to discuss the legitimacy of fansub groups (e.g. Yu, 2016; Xu, 2017; Du, 2018). The second one is the discussion about translation skills and methods, which is also the subject that accounts for the largest proportion (e.g. Yu, 2017; Yin, 2018; Ma and Xie, 2018). The last one is to discuss communication and cultural issues, which is the central part we need to take a closer look at as this thesis decided to treat fansub groups as a part of fan culture productions.

In contrast to legal scholars, most Chinese media scholars hold a positive attitude towards the existence of fansub groups. Under the premise that the official translated films cannot satisfy the Chinese audiences, the fansub group not only undertakes the responsibility of spreading the overseas television culture, but also plays an important role in the global knowledge dissemination (Yu, 2012). In view of the phenomenon that more and more fansub groups began to translate foreign open courses, Yu (ibid.) believes that this action solved the problem of a scarce and unbalanced distribution of excellent educational resources, and that any studious audience could obtain educational opportunities without language barriers or entry barriers in China. However, Yan and Chen (2017) have different views on it. By using the theory of "knowledge gap" (P. Tichenor, G. Donohue, and C. Olien, 1970) and "information gap" (N. Kartzman, 1974), they point out that there is a gap between the fansub group and the audiences, and between different audiences, and this gap is quite hard to bridge. What Yu (2012) and Yan and Chen (2017) suggest is important as they help people to notice that there

exists a hierarchy along with the flow of information and knowledge. That is to say, people who have access to the digital world can acquire more information and knowledge than other people. Therefore, the Internet not only provides more free information, but it also further enlarges the gap between different groups of people because of the unbalance of technology.

Culture perspective and power-relations

The perspective of audiences and fans study is often adopting by Chinese media academia when doing research on the fansub group. They believe that fansub groups and their activities are forming what Jenkins (1992) calls "participatory culture" in the digital age. Wang (2016) argues that after the emergence of electronic media, the audience's independent power has been enhanced, and the speed of communication with the world has also been increased. Thus, through collective wisdom, the fansub group endows the text with new meaning through its own interests. On the basis of Wang (ibid.), Shen and Luo (2017) further raise an argument about the cultural imperialism through analyzing the translation work of fansub groups. They believe that by using translation, commentary, and satire to reproduce overseas shows, Chinese fansub groups well combine the original text with Chinese elements and Internet culture. This means that the participatory text creation helps Chinese audiences to resist the assimilation of western culture and promote the development of Chinese culture. The view of cultural imperialism indicates the intention of fansub groups have and the role of fansub groups have played, which will be examined in this study.

As can be seen from the above discussion, Chinese scholars often discuss the culture aspect of fansub groups with power-relations. There is a high agreement among many articles that the existence of fansub group is the competition for the mainstream discourse power of the official control among the people (e.g. Hu, 2005; Wang, 2016; Shen and Luo, 2017; Chen, 2018; Sun, 2018). Hu (2015) points out that "Online Chinese fans invent new spaces for Chinese transnational networking with self-help and sharing, as a way of resisting the aloofness from marketing strategies". She further uses the word "guerrilla fighters" to describe online Chinese fans who tried to acquire overseas media contents "in the politics of autonomy, network and low-cost digital technology" (ibid.). "Time-space constraints and the

official distribution hierarchy" are the important topics mentioned by Hu (ibid.), which is also the key point will be analysed in this thesis. Even though Hu's argument is basing on the analysis of the informal distribution of Japanese television drama, but it could be helpful to be used to compare the similarities and differences between Japanese television fans and American television fans.

Sun (2018) is the only scholar can be found in China who uses the method of the interview to study fansub groups. The usual methods adopted by many other Chinese scholars to study fansub groups are content analysis and online observation. Sun (ibid.) not only conducts the interview with fansubbers, but also combine another two methods which are online observation and questionnaires. She interviews 14 people from 13 different groups for at least half an hour and gets 87 valid questionnaires. From the data obtained, she points out that the fansub group is a social networking community based on knowledge and technical structure and driven by the Internet spirit. However, the difference in knowledge level, knowledge resource acquisition and the structural difference in the network space make different fansub groups and different members of the fansub group form a resource dependence relationship. And this dependence inevitably led to the emergence of power. Thus, the recognition of knowledge power has become the secret power logic of the fansub group. Sun's work   lays this thesis a foundation as this thesis also analyse power relations around the fansub group and use the interview as method.

Free labour

"Agonistic giving, reciprocity-seeking, altruism, and companionship" constitute the four working features of the fansub group (Hu, 2009). Hu argues that, on the one hand, the Chinese fansub group conforms to and imitates the reality of neoliberalism. They established an elitist order and once again defined the full use and maximum performance of the state of self. On the other hand, the promotion of non-profit voluntary dedication in Internet subtitle culture seems to be in conflict with the cruel labour exploitation under the capitalist rules of neoliberalism. This idea has been endorsed by other scholars. Cao and Zhang (2012) also mention that communication technology demands people's energy and time by giving them

"freedom", and the boundary between entertainment interest and network labour tends to be blurred. In the information society, the flexible interest of knowledge labour and the dissemination of new technologies have become the source of productivity for the "information mode of development". Thus, the flexible economic accumulation of capitalism and the deprivation across time, space, national boundaries, and classes are more hidden.

By using the idea of Hi-Tech gift economy (Barbrook, 2005), Zhang (2017) points out that the fansub group represents a communist work ethic instead of neoliberalism work ethic because members can decide their own working hours, working methods, working contents and in the result, sharing labour achievements. But at the same time, he also raised the same question as Feng (2011): is this free, voluntary and non-voluntary labour empowering people to participate in cultural construction, or will it be ultimately subject to capital control and exploitation? The same question will also be asked in this thesis.

From the above discussions, we could see that Chinese scholars have sufficient theoretical knowledge on the understanding and researching of fansub groups, but most of them are just talking on paper without much practice except Sun (2018). There are many things this thesis can learn from Sun's work. But this thesis intends to do something different. Compared to Sun's choice to combine three different methods, this thesis chooses only to use the qualitative interview. Moreover, Sun interviews people from 13 different fansub groups, which means the information and knowledge she acquires is quite aboard and general, not specific. This thesis chooses to conduct a case study and put all the emphasis on one fansub group, which means the knowledge this thesis acquire can be more detailed and specific. Besides, Sun's research only focuses on power-knowledge relations and ignore other aspects. For example, there is almost no research on the informal and formal platform/distribution in China. This study, therefore, can be filling the gap of practice shortage and contributing to the Chinese media academia to a certain extent.

Methodology and Method

This chapter discusses and reflects on the methodology and method adopted in this study. This chapter first discusses the methodology and method, and then goes through the research process in details. At the end of this part, there is a self-reflection regarding method and relations between informants and researchers.

This thesis is built on the methodology of social constructionism which "assumes that people construct meanings and their understandings of the world" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2016) by all kinds of social interactions (Burr, 2003). In this study, producing fan work is an interacted learning process to gain more knowledge regarding translations, media content productions, and further creates new meaning and knowledge about fan labour. Social constructionism also emphasizes that "all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative" (Burr, 2003) which enables us to avoid to have presumptions of truth regarding fansubbers. Instead, social constructionism helps us to recognise that the existence of fansubbers needs to be analysed with Chinese "particular social and economic arrangements" (ibid.: 4). Thus, by following the social constructionism theory, we could have a better understanding of how fansubbers using social interaction and practices produce meanings and knowledge for themselves and others. Furthermore, as fansubbers are doing translation work by using the Chinese language, which could also provide us a chance to investigate how fansubbers use language to produce and construct meanings (ibid.).

With the notice of language is essential, in-depth qualitative interview is adopted as the method in this thesis, which can help us to access each fansub member's "own attitudes and values" and most importantly, "giving voice" to the fansub group members who have been "ignored, misrepresented in the past" (Seal, 2012: 210). Although fansub groups were not ignored by media scholars, researches about them are basically one-sided in China such as describing them as elite volunteers or people who ignore copyright. Therefore, more opinions and voices from themselves need to be heard. Most importantly, we should clearly recognize that fansub members hold some specific knowledge regarding fan content production and some public access which cannot be replaced by other knowledge. Thus, the interview in this

thesis does not just interview with some random fans. On the contrary, it is better to be considered as interviewing with "exclusive informants" or "elite interview". However, according to Bruun (2015), it is more accurate to use exclusive informants instead of elite interview for the circumstance where a specific genre of elite informants involved. This is because the purpose of this thesis is to gain exclusive knowledge of backstage stories and fan producers' attitudes towards fan content production. This means that we could acquire exclusive knowledge of how Yi Gui Jun Tuan produces and spread fansub work and their own reflections on their identity through interviews.

Accessing informants

Bruun (2015) points out that many qualitative research interviews emphasize the asymmetric power relations between researchers and informants and the latter are always seen as the underdog by many researchers (Kvale and Brinkmann quoted in Bruun, 2015: 139). However, according to Bruun (2015), we must question this power relation assumption when we conduct interviews with exclusive informants. She (ibid.) thinks that since exclusive informants process a particular type of knowledge or even power, the relations between informants and researchers could be seen as symmetrical or even upside down, which depends on the status negotiation during the interviews. In this thesis, the power relations between myself and the informants showed in a more symmetrical way. Even though they possess some exclusive information which I don't know, all of them try to explain to me with patience. This is because I demonstrate my curiosity and eagerness to learn from them, which arises their interests to be my teacher in their area of expertise (Laurila quoted in Mikecz, 2012).

As Yi Gui Jun Tuan is an exclusive online organization and I don't have any acquaintances who can help me to get in touch with them. It is hard for me to find a way to access them. Bruun (2015) suggests that the wrong way of approaching informants could lead to a bad result such as losing the object of study. Therefore, I need to be careful when I approach them. I tried to approach their spokespersons, sent their media account private messages and asked

if I can interview them as an academic researcher through Sina Weibo[13]. Self-promotion is crucial since it "contributes to gaining formal and personal access and fostering individual rapport" (Okumus, Altinay, and Roper quoted in Mikecz, 2012). Therefore, I first presented myself shortly such as my name and other basic information in my message. I also emphasize that I am a master student at Lund University in order to "gain credibility and reduce the status imbalance"(Mikecz, 2012). Then, I expressed my love and thanks to their translation work of *Game of Thrones*. Finally, I indicated that I want to conduct a study on them and ask if it is possible to interview some members of them. I got the positive reply and the email address of the director one week later which enables me to give a more detailed explanation about my research to them and further ensure appointments and agreements (Bruun, 2015).

Building trust is the next step which is also important because it determines whether these potential informants are willing to share their exclusive knowledge and personal opinions with me. In order to get the director which is also the "gatekeeper" 's trust, I prepared background knowledge through reading their social media accounts and watching their fan works. Therefore, I basically built "a professional understanding of the problems in the informant's world" (Mikecz, 2012; Harvey, 2011; Ryan and Lewer, 2012 quoted in Bruun, 2015), which enables me to interact with them smoothly and confidently. I cannot acquire members information and personal contact at the first place since the director said all the members are all busy. Thus, all the informants are acquired through the director. I told him my needs and my purpose and he spread the information to their exclusive group and recruit informants for me. After one month with several effective emails such as discussing the specific interview time, the director managed to get 12 informants for me. I was quite worried about the quality of the interview at first because all the informant were acquired from the gatekeeper and they could prevent me to access to their exclusive information (Bruun, 2015) by having some agreements within the group and preparing same answers for my interview questions. But it turns out that my worries are unnecessary. Many of my interview questions are open-ended which enables me to get their own perceptions and stories. So that I can

---

[13] is a Chinese microblogging (weibo) website and one of the biggest social media platforms in China. Launched by Sina Corporation on 14 August 2009. As of Q3 2018, Sina Weibo has over 445 million monthly active users.

construct a consistent knowledge map by comparing different person's version (Mikecz, 2012), which proved the validity of the interviews.

Design, Piloting, Conducting the Research and ethics[14]

Before conducting the research, an interview guideline was designed which can be divided into five main parts: Personal Fandom and *Game of Thrones*, Fansubbing Labor, Transnational Distribution and Chinese Context, Fans of Fansubbing, and Future of Fansub Groups. In order to "make sure that the research design 'work' before embarking on the full-scale collection " (Hansen and Machin, 2013: 26), two pilot interviews were conducted via voice call through Wechat[15] because of the geographical restriction. The pilots went quite good and enriched my information on Yi Gui Jun Tuan further. For example, I noticed informants' dissatisfaction with the plot of *Game of Thrones* and love for the original novel. Complex relations between Tencent and Yi Gui Jun Tuan also brought out by informants. Therefore, I slightly revised my interview questions based on these two pilots. Of all 12 interviews, 7 informants are males while 5 informants are females. The age range of informants is from 24 to 32, most of them are around 30. Even though all informants are good at English, all interviews were conducted in Mandarin. The reason why to use Mandarin is because that I believe that native language could bring me much closer to the informants and informants could have a more accurate and free expression than using second language English during the interviews.

Face to face interview is important which enables me to observe informants' body language and non-verbal cues (Seale, 2012). Since my informants live in various parts of China and even the United Kingdom and the United States, 7 interviews were conducted by face to face in Beijing and Guangzhou, China. The other 5 interviews were conducted via Wechat, due to the geographical restriction again. All face to face interviews were conducted in cafes chosen by informants. A cafe is a place where informants feel relaxed and free to talk, and also a public place my safety can be guaranteed (Seale, 2012). Both Beijing and Guangzhou are the biggest cities in China so it sometimes took me more than 2 hours from the hotel I lived to the

---

[14] More details information regarding method can be found in Appendices

[15] WeChat is a Chinese multi-purpose messaging, social media and mobile payment app developed by Tencent

cafe informants chose. The voice call interview did not have such traveling troubles but it involved more technical problems such as weak signal. So during the voice call interview, both my informant and I had to pay attention to network connections, which is a little bit distracted. Moreover, voice call interviews won't allow me to assure them in person that all the dialogues and their personal information will be treated anonymously and carefully because "such guarantees are more difficult to convey in less personal settings" (Harvey, 2011). Therefore, I noticed that the relationships I built with voice call interview informants are not good as the one I built with face to face interview informants. For example, Lyanna of Bear Island (F, student) refused to provide her personal information such as age, major, school to me.

It is crucial for the researcher to "protect informants from harm in the research process" (Seale, 2012). Since topics regarding fansub groups relate to some sensitive issues such as piracy and Chinese policies, it is better to use informants' nicknames instead of their real names during the whole research process. Furthermore, all informants were asked to sign a consent form to ensure them that all the interview materials will only be used in academic research. Researches regarding illegal activities might cause distress to informants (Seale, 2012), therefore all the informants were told that they can refuse to answer any question at any time if they want to. However, all the interview questions were answered smoothly and nobody rejects any of the questions during the interview. When Hill (2019) conducted a study on illegal viewing of *Utopia*, she mentions that many potential informants dropped out since they felt nervous about sharing their illegal viewing experiences. This difference demonstrates the different attitudes towards copyright issues from different countries and also presents special recognition of Chinese people to fansub groups and illegal viewing.

Analysing the data

"Interview statements are, in a strong sense of the word, 'data,' and they become sources of information only through analysis and interpretation" (Jensen, 2002: 240). All interviews were recorded via my phone and then transcribed into Chinese transcripts. I read all the transcripts and wrote down some important points before doing coding to ensure that I have a general idea about what each informant said. All the transcripts were used to do the coding.

The coding process and analysing empirical data in this research mainly followed Seale's instructions (2012) and was divided into three stages: open coding, category development, and theme formation. Both deductive and inductive approach was importantly involved because "deductively determined codes to home in on the data, and inductive coding to explore this in more detail" (Rivas quoted in Seale, 2012). Bazeley (2013) points out that it is often difficult for researchers working in a second language like me to translate and interpret texts because it might cause "too much meaning is lost and interpretation is difficult and shallow"(ibid., 77). Therefore, I chose to use original language which is Chinese to transcribe and analyse my interviews. After analysing, I translated my findings from Chinese into English as this thesis is required to be written in English.

After analyzing all 12 interviews, around 860 open codes such as "friend recommendation" and " really good production" were generated. I used different colored pens to underline these codes and then transferred them from paper to my computer in order to sort them out. 23 different categories were developed in this thesis such as Time, Fan activities, Working rules and Engagement in a fansub group. In the process of building categories, "constant comparison within a category and constant comparison of the data across categories are needed" (Seale, 2012: 375). This helps me to check relationships between categories and make further adjustment such as rename some categories (ibid.). By applying theories to these categories, three main themes were identified which are: Fandom, Fan Free labor, and Power Relations. In order to see whether my themes can explain the data well and check if there is any data left (Seale, 2012: 377), concept maps are needed. With the help of drawing several mind maps and spidergrams on the above three main themes. I sorted out the different relations among each factor and theme and thus constructed the analysis part in this thesis as follows.

Self-Reflections

As mentioned before that interviewing with exclusive informants could lead an "asymmetric power relations" between researchers and informants (Bruun, 2015). Even though I didn't play an underdog role during the interviewing process, I indeed found that sometimes I was in

a situation of being led (Welch et al., 2002). This kind of feeling especially happens in the situation of interviewing the director Fomalhaut (31, M, New media) and Garvin (31, M, Internet worker). Despite I tried my best to prepare background knowledge before I interview them, this situation cannot be avoided. Both of them are really talkative but there are different reasons for being led by informants in my experiences. Fomalhaut took the dominate place is because that he possesses too much exclusive knowledge and information which even his members cannot acquire. The reason Garvin led me during the interview is that his pessimistic attitudes towards fansub work challenge my previous view of fansubbers. Luckily, I realized this issue during the interview process and constantly adjusted my questions based on their answers. I also constantly absorbed new information and opinions used them to enrich my data and enlighten my further research directions (Welch et al., 2002).

Hill (2012) encourages us to stay open-minded and combine various methods when we conduct researches. However, only one method is adopted in this research which is an in-depth semi-structured interview. There is another method I also took into consideration when I made the research plan, which is participant observation. According to DeWalt (2011), participant observation enables us as researchers to learn the explicit and tacit aspects of a specific group's culture by taking part in their daily activities and interactions. In this sense, I can learn about their fansub work process and how they negotiate with others in details by participant observation. But this method cannot be achieved due to time issues. In order to finish this thesis on time, I had to finish my data collection before April, before the last season of *Game of Thrones* aired. This means that there is no working process in Yi Gui Jun Tuan can be observed and participated for me when I conducted interviews.

Despite that only one method is used in this thesis, the data acquired from the in-depth semi-structured interview with informants of Yi Gui Jun Tuan still meets my need and enables me to achieve the aim of this study. The aim of this thesis is to critically analyse fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan and their engagement with and translation of Game of Thrones. All this information can be acquired through the dialogue with members of Yi Gui Jun Tuan. The interview also provides us their working process. Furthermore, because I only conducted

one method, I can focus on and manage to treat all data equally (Seale, 2012: 370). Thus, one method is not a problem in this thesis.

Exploring Chinese fansub practices through engagement of *Game of Thrones*

The following chapter explores fan practices and fan free labour of the fansub group Yi Gui Jun Tuan through critically analysing fansubbers and their engagement with and translation of *Game of Thrones*. This chapter begins by discussing the serial and intensive engagement of fansubbers with *Game of Thrones* and focusing on the process of fansubbers' identity transformation from audiences to fans to fan producers. By talking about the process of producing fan translation work, this part then goes on to analyse the methods and strategies Yi Gui Jun Tuan has adopted under the Chinese circumstance. Finally, the power relations within hierarchies of fandom for Yi Gui Jun Tuan is investigated.

Engagement with *Game of Thrones*

> I started to read the original book *A Song of Ice and Fire* from, around 2006 I think. Yes, before the *Game of Thrones.* And I felt like this book is different from books I read before so I found it interesting and was attracted by it. (Tywin, 30, M, office staff)

Talking about *Game of Thrones*, one thing we must pay attention to is this television series is adapted from a book named *A Song of Ice and Fire* which were written by George ·R·R· Martin. *Game of Thrones* is not the first one which adapted by other media form. *Harry Potter*, *the Lord of the Rings* and many other superhero stories are all its predecessors. Jenkins (2011) calls this cross-media transformation as transmedia storytelling and he thinks that " ideally, each medium makes it own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story". All 12 informants mentioned they have read the original book, before or after watching the television series. Therefore, when we analyse informants' engagement and fandom with drama, we cannot ignore the important role which the original novel has played.

For most informants, the original book is their first and foremost motivation to start to engage with *Game of Thrones:*

> Me and many of my friends, we are kind like to witness this television series from news to a real thing, every steps. I was really excited, when I saw everything I read before became a thing that I can watch and hear. (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media).

Jenkins (ibid.) points out that there exist two ways of shifts when content are spreading across the media: adaptation and extension. The former normally refers to retell the story by using another medium and the latter means not only using another medium but also adding something more to the existing story. The added comprehension is important, by which we could distinguish adaptation and extension by sensing how much the new content can help us to add our understanding of the whole story. *Game of Thrones* is a quite special case as the television series before the sixth season was mainly based on the novel. After the sixth season, the progress of the drama exceeded the novel, and the scriptwriter began to write independently. It thus could be viewed as both adaptation and extension involved in making content. And informants have different opinions towards these two forms of transmedia storytelling shifts.

> I felt particularly excited. Because in the first season, a lot of words in the drama were directly extracted from the book. What I particularly love becomes something that can be seen and listened to. It is really exciting. (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media)

From the above words, we can feel that the Fomalhaut' passion and love towards the novel naturally transferred to the television series. However, there is one thing need us to notice: what he praised is the "words were directly extracted from the book." That is to say, he enjoys and appreciates the act that producers use the lines and plots from the original novel. Thus we could argue that some informants start to have positive emotional engagement is mainly because that the television series create a familiar feeling based on the novel for them. This kind of familiar feeling is significant because it can build a close relationship between *Game of Thrones* and novel readers in a short time. But what if the content becomes different?

> I especially don't like the changes after the fourth season. I really liked this show in the first season. I think it was very faithful to the original, but after the fourth season, there began to be a big difference. I am very disgusted about these differences. From the fifth season, even this year, my views on the finale of this drama are very

pessimistic my attitude now is not participating, not discussing. (Garvin, 31, M, Internet worker)

As we can see from the above words, Garvin holds the same attitudes with Fomalhaut, and further emphasizes the reason why he thinks the first season is good: very faithful to the original. But when differences begin to show up and the familiar content decreases, his positive emotional engagement turns sharply to negative emotional engagement, even to disengagement. By using the word disgusted and pessimistic, we could sense his strong negative emotions. As for the attitude that not participating and nor discussing, is the sign that disengagement happens. Thus we could notice that most of the informants are satisfied with adaptation but strongly dissatisfied with extension.

It can also be linked to serial engagement which Hill (2018) has proposed. She points out that when we engage with television series or reality television show which returns regularly year after year, there is a serial engagement happens with the development of the story. "Audiences are sensitive to any changes made to a returning series that impact on their affective practices which they have built up over time. And this change might break their relationship with the series" (ibid.: 63). As these informants who have read the original novel and are very familiar with every characters and plot, they already build a quite good relationship with the story before watching television series. They thus are more aware of all the details and more sensitive to any slight change than normal audiences. That is to say, their series engagement is easier to start and also easier to break compared to normal audiences.

Furthermore, Mittell (2015) once proposes a model named unbalanced transmedia on the basis of Jenkins's ideal of balanced transmedia which are worthy of discussion on the case of *Game of Thrones*. Instead of every medium plays an equal role, Mittell (2015) believes that in the commercial media industry, "the financial realities demand that the core medium of any franchise be identified and privileged, typically emphasizing the more traditional television or film form over newer modes of online textuality" (ibid.:705). Even though for most those pure audiences, television is the dominant medium. We need to also consider another significant factor which is the originality. In this case, the novel and the author

George ·R·R· Martin are the originality for all 12 informants. Therefore, people who have read the original work are much easier to have a sense of loyalty to the originality, just like most informants have this sense of loyalty to the original novel. Thus, we could argue, for most of the informants, the novel stands the higher hierarchy than television series despite that television is the dominant channel for them. This loyalty plays a significant role when they engage with television series *Game of Thrones*. However, this dissatisfaction is not simply because the content were changed according to the informants. It is because the content or details were changed or created cannot match their previous knowledge. As we could see from the below:

> There are many illogical or unreasonable things happen in the sixth and seventh seasons. For example, we all know how big the Westeros is. It is impossible to travel from here to there by one day. How can screenwriter do not notice this? (City inspector, 30, M, programmer)

Mittell (2015) argues that "narrative events are closely linked to time" (641) and there are three layers of time in serial television narrative which are story time, discourse time and screen time. Even though the story world is unrealistic in the case of *Game of Thrones*, it is still important to adopt some strategies to make sure that audiences' sense of story time can be matched to what is presented on the screen. So that audiences can fully be convinced by the story. As we can see from the above complaint, the narrative events fail to match the informants' sense of story time and background setting which have built from season 1. They accept and believe the setting of Westeros land needs a longer period of time to travel in the story. But what showed on the screen collide their previous knowledge. Hence, a sense of confusion and dissatisfaction generated. Besides the rationality of time, there are also other details were brought up by informants. For instance, the logical of story development and the lines of each character. One may notice that beyond the emotional engagement mentioned above, cognitive engagement involved intensively as well. When informants watching *Game of Thrones*, they are not just passively receiving all the information but actively analysing almost every plot, characters, and details. Hill (2018) mentioned that cognitive engagement and affective engagement cannot be separated based on her idea of spectrum of engagement. When the information they receive cannot match their previous knowledge, their cognitive

engagement soon influences emotional engagement. This normally means turning positive emotional engagement to negative emotional engagement in this case. When this negative emotional engagement happens intensely, disengagement can also occur.

Mittell (2015) and Hill (2018) also emphasize the importance of character engagement, which can also be viewed as a part of the serial engagement. In this kind of engagement mode, audiences' attitude change with the development of characters as follows:

> I believe there are a lot people like me who don't like Sansa, or even hate her from the beginning. But after season four, you have witnessed what kind of things happened to her, and you can see her process of transformation and grow, and yourself also grow up. Suddenly, she became a attractive person to many people. (Tywin, M, 30, office staff)

This year, 2019 is the final season of *Game of Thrones*. The first seven seasons help audiences to build a stable relationship with each main character, no matter their impression to characters is positive or negative. As this television series return every year (except 2018) and talk about a really long story, audiences grow up and accumulate social experience with characters at the same time. With time flies, audiences witness that characters experience many things. And each experience makes them do a different decision. The result of it is that all character settings become more comprehensive and detailed. As the informant Tywin points out above, He witnesses Sansa's whole process of growing up and intensively engages with this character's experiences. Besides Sansa, another character was mentioned a lot by informants is Theon. These two characters both are experiencing a lot in the drama and have a clear change of personality. This kind of character engagement is quite easy for audiences to reflect on themselves and thus further understand every situation characters are in and every decision characters make. The sense of sharing growth process with characters accumulate through a long period, and normally has to gradually change audiences' impression towards to characters. No matter this impression changes from good to bad or bad to good. This kind of sharing growth process consistent with the idea of engaging with characters' construction

proposed by Mittell (2015), which is also the symbol that serial engagement occurs with characters.

From audiences to fan producers

Feeling such an intensive and serial engagement with novel and television series, one might argue that they can be viewed as fans of *Game of Thrones*. However, informants don't see themselves in this way since they believe that they still need to make one more step to change their identity from audiences to fans.

> Really feeling that I am a fan, in fact, it is the moment I named my ID and joined the discussion online. because if you just go to see and do not join this discussion, you are purely a reader, not a fan. But if you really start to discuss it, you become a fan. (Lion of Winter fell, 30, M, Medicine)

Hall (1996) claims that identities are fluid which are continuously in the process of alteration and transformation. There exists a possibility that normal audiences could transform their identities to fans or even fan producers when they engage with television series. But this identity transformation requires some important factors. The intensive engagement discussed above could be viewed as the start point to transform identity. Besides engagement, there are more factors involved. Based on the above quote, we could find that the transformation from audiences to fans for them is not just related to feelings such as intensive emotion, it involves more real practices. The practice could be diverse, from changing social media ID to participating online and offline fan activities or even producing fan work. That is to say, informants need to do something or be involved in some groups so that they could feel their identities of fan formed. When informants intensively engage with television series, there is a need or even eagerness to share their feelings with others. These practices are always initiative by themselves. More than half informants said that they have tried to find people who have same hobby through the Internet after reading or watching *Game of Thrones*.

Nightingale (2011) points out that fans not only require investment but also need involvement. The Investment could be considered in different ways, such as time investment, money

investment, and emotion investment. The act of reading books, watching television series is a time investment. Spending money to buy core hobby and light hobby is money investment. Half of the informants mention that they have the experiences of buying products of *Game of Thrones,* such as Garvin (31, M, Internet worker). Involvement means that as the fan identity, they are normally needed to be involved in some practices. According to the informants above, we could see that only interacting with other people can be considered as a fan to them. They believe that join discussion is important. Thus, we could see that fans often need other fans and further gathering as a community.

> We all become friends, like real friends in real life. There is a sense of belonging. And I always think that we formed a cohesive group. (City inspector, M, 29, programmer)

Melucci (1989) points out that there is an intermediate process in individuals gathering together and become a group. Individuals should recognize people who share the same orientations and act together, then the group or community formed. Thus, a sense of collective identity is generated within this fan community. Melucci (ibid.) considers collective identity with three parts: cognitive definition, active relationship, and emotional investment. According to him, the cognitive definition is about a cognitive framework regarding goals and also how to reach the goals. Active relationship means a good interaction among informants. And emotional investment can be viewed as mutual recognition of each other within the community. And all these three parts can be found in this *Game of Thrones* fan community according to the informants. Their goal of the cognitive framework is to "recommend and share this novel as well as television series to others" (Lion of Winter fell, 30, M, Medicine). "We all become friends in real life and often gathering together" (City inspector, M, 29, programmer) is a sign of active relationship. As for emotional investment, informants all show their recognition of other informants during the interview. For example, Yiyi (30, F, Internet editor) uses the word awesome to describe City inspector (M, 29, programmer) and City inspector says that he admires people such as Fomalhaut (31, M, New media) who has dedicated a lot to achieve their goals. Based on their own words, we could see all three aspects apply well on this *Game of Thrones* fan community.

Jenkins (1992) sees television fans as involved in participatory culture. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) mention that there is a possibility that fans will turn into fan producers. However, it is not easy to make this identity transformation. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (ibid.), people have to gradually accumulate knowledge, information and different kinds of skills from being audiences to being fans and to being fan producers. In another word, passion and love are far away enough for normal audiences to become fan producers. They need a period to expand their knowledge regarding what they like. Among all, special technical skills and analytical skills are the most important skills they need to acquire. Abercrombie and Longhurst (ibid.) further suggest us to notice that there are two stages from fans to fan produces, which are learner stage and establish stage. The period of accumulating related knowledge and skills is the learner stage, and the establish stage is fans acquire enough skills and ready to produce their own work. Once fans move from the learner stage to the establishment stage, different kinds of fan works generated.

> At first, none of us had this kind of experiences to make subtitles. So we downloaded and watched many works from other fansub groups to try to learn how other people do this. And we have many people who are interested in the Internet, so they always use their personal time to learn many other things to improve our visual quality. (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media)

There is one more thing we should be clear. Besides accumulate skills and knowledge, fans who want to become producers also need motivation. This motivation is vital for them to decide what kind of production they want to make. The motivation for this community, is dissatisfied with any existing Chinese translation of other fansub groups for *Game of Thrones*.

> In fact, we didn't want to do this at first, but the translations we watch didn't satisfy us. One is a matter of time and the other is a quality issue. We felt particularly uncomfortable, so we thought why not to try to do our own subtitles. (Lion of Winterfell, M, 30, medicine).

As we mentioned in the introduction part, China has a great firewall which bans Chinese citizens from getting access to many foreign websites or apps. This, of course, includes the two most popular American media content provider: Netflix and HBO.

With the reason of lacking formal distribution in China at that time, people who eager to

watch *Game of Thrones* has to find another way to meet their needs. And the informal distribution became the only way for them to before 2016. Therefore, it is quite understandable that all 12 informants have experiences in watching *Game of Thrones* through downloading online resources. In fact, searching and downloading resources online has already become a daily basis for many young Chinese. When one surf on Weibo (one of biggest Chinese social media platform), he will find that there are more than thousands of people who are "begging for overseas television series resources on bended knees" (Yiyi, 30, F, Internet editor).

There are mainly two kinds of people who participate in this informal resources distribution. One can be viewed as sharer who has the ability to use some special tool to break the access blockage. Another one is people who cannot break access blockage. Latter is quite relying on the sharer to acquire certain information which they cannot get in China. Furthermore, there is a possibility that some of the receivers will turn into share as soon as they acquire certain tools. Thus, the special technical skills for informants in this thesis is to learn how to make digital subtitles, how to upload and how to share through the Internet. Just like what Fomalhaut says above. And analytical skills is to understand and explain what information shows on and behinds the television series. When everything is prepared, Yi Gui Jun Tuan formed and fan labour starts to work.

The trade-off between efficiency and quality

According to Fomalhaut (31, M, New media), the director of Yi Gui Jun Tuan, there are around 60 informants in this fansub group. Some of them are in the group from the time Yi Gui Jun Tuan established, some of them join recently, through online recruiting. No matter old informants or new informants, there is a vital issue weight more than the level of understanding *Game of Thrones:* time.

> The United States aired the drama at 9 pm on Sunday, which is 9 am on Monday in China. After an hour, the outside network will release video resources. About 11-12 am, English subtitles come out. We start to translate from that time. Usually, 4 people do the translations, they normally finish at 14 and then proofreaders begin to proofread. At the same time, we also do visual effects and other post-production

things. If everything is smooth, our work can be released at 18. (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media).

Due to the time differences between America and China, Yi Gui Jun Tuan has to do it on Monday, the beginning of weekdays. People who have busy work cannot make it. Therefore, the main human resources are always university students and people who don't have an intensive job, such as the new media area. Even though Yi Gui Jun Tuan is just a fan organization, we can feel their professional spirits from above words. Every step is in order. As we can see that there is a specific routine to make subtitles: Resources → Translation → Proofreading → Group proofreading → Post-production → Compress the file → Release. Normally, other fansub groups don't have group proofreading and post-production these two steps. The first and most important step is getting resources. Both video resources and English subtitle resources are needed. According to the informants, the former one they usually get from Pirate Bay and the latter one can be found on Addic7ed. As soon as getting resources, they started to "cook meat". In Chinese fan community, they usually call video without subtitles as "raw meat" and video with Chinese subtitles as "cooked meat". As we can see from the above quotes that it normally takes Yi Gui Jun Tuan 6 hours to produce subtitles for *Game of Thrones.*

There are some other groups translate *Game of Thrones* too. And there exists an invisible competition between fansub groups. There is an important rule which can be applied to almost all the fansub groups, zero-day rule. It means that these fan producers cannot let the audiences to wait till the second day. This rule confirms the idea of Chinese online fan community tries to fight for breaking down time-space constraints which mentioned by Hu (2005). However, in order to battle for more audiences and followers and meet the need that people want to watch the drama as soon as possible. Many fansub groups choose to sacrifice the quality and even use translation software to do the translation work. This action was described as a fight for first publishing by many fansub groups. Thus, we could see that in fansub groups' world, time is of high value and time can decide audiences flow to some extent. Under this circumstance, Yi Gui Jun Tuan also tried to improve their efficiency in many ways. For example, City inspector (29, M, programmer) and Garvin (31, M, Internet worker) develop

some tools which enable them to edit and proofread documents online at the same time. So that they can save one or two hours compared with before. However, even though they care about efficiency, they still value more quality than time. Even more, in order to improve the translation' quality and make sure audiences can understand the plots. They decide to do more things. They make a visual effect for subtitles in order to match the drama's visual effect. They also tag each characters' name and identity when they show up. Most importantly, they also make annotations to explain the background information if the plots are complex.

Hill (2019) talks about the power of time in media industry. She suggests us to consider the time we spend on media as expensing others' labour, no matter producers are doing paid job or unpaid. Thus, the time audiences spend on fansub groups' work is a way of expensing labour. (good and bad quality of labour) She further quotes Sharma's argument that as researchers, we should observe how different people be affected by time management and to recognise the mutual time benefits for ourselves and others. All fansub works spread through the Internet, so there is no specific fixed time for audiences to watch *Game of Thrones*. They can manage their personal time to watch it but the primary condition for watching it is fansub groups finish their job and release the resources. It seems like that the fansub group has the initiative in this audiences-producers relationship of time management. However, we should note that there are several fansub groups doing the same thing at almost the same time. The same media content provides for the same group of audiences. That is to say, the first group share the file can gain the advantage, which is to decrease audiences' waiting time and get more downloads. Thus, in order to fight for this initiative, some fansub groups choose to push themselves to improve their labour or even to cheat, such as using translation software as mentioned before. But some fansub group such as Yi Gui Jun Tuan value quality more. The trade-off between efficiency and quality then can show the different audiences of different fansub groups to a certain degree. As the time audiences are watching the work produced by fansub groups, they are also experiencing the different quality of labour. Thus, audiences of fansub groups which value quality like Yi Gui Jun Tuan are more thinking highly of the viewing experiences while audiences of other fansub groups which value time care more about if they can watch it at the very first time.

Fan "free" labour

Fan "free" labour normally means that fan produce work and distribute it without receiving payment (Kosnik, 2013)[16]. Yi Gui Jun Tuan is a fan group which claims that they never earn money from producing and distribution subtitles for *Game of Thrones*.

> The non-profit is our bottom line, we all have decent jobs and we don't care about this small money, there is no need for us to make money from it. (Night Fear, F, 26, finance)

Many Chinese fansub groups think that doing fansub work is just as volunteer part-time job and they cannot make a profit from it. But there are more and more fansub groups start to earn money based on their work. All informants of Yi Gui Jun Tuan claim their objection to this action and believe that the purpose of fan work is to serve audiences. Thus, some Chinese media describe them as really good people who do free labour job. Informants in Yi Gui Jun Tuan do sacrifice a lot for making subtitles. According to Yiyi (30, F, Internet editor), Fomalhaut (31, M, New media) does not have time to eat lunch or have a little break. He is always focused on the production process. However, despite that informants do not earn money from doing fan work, there are more things about the word "free" which are worthy of discussion.

> It is true that we are in a gray zone, everybody admit in our group admit this. This is mainly because "making subtitles are always accompanied by downloading and spreading pirated resources, they are inseparable. So it is doomed to be an act of violating copyright from the beginning" (Garvin, 31, M, Internet worker).

The existence of fansub groups and the way they share it violate the copyright. This is the fact that none of Yi Gui Jun Tuan informants were trying to deny. What Garvin points out above also prove Lobato and Thomas (2015:45)'s idea that "informality and formality are always connected and codependent". Although they admit that they are violating copyright, many of them use a better word such as gray zone, legal marginality than piracy and illegal activities to describe their action.

---

[16] http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.XMEULZMzZE-

The act that all of them admit directly they are doing illegal things is a surprise in this study. However, when linking it to the current Chinese situation, we might understand why they can say it out without a doubt. As we mentioned before, many Chinese young audiences treat fansub groups as their only way to access the outside world. Many Chinese media depict the fansub group as a great fighter for viewing freedom and pay less attention to copyright issues. Besides, some publishing house and other formal platforms invite them to participate in some online or offline activities. Here we can link the discussion to the work of Lobato and Thomas (2015) again. As mentioned before that they think informal media and formal media are connected and can influence each other. In this case, fansub groups as a informal media expand the market for formal media as a taste-testing. Moreover, the good quality of Yi Gui Jun Tuan' work plays a role of educating model to formal media as this increases audiences' anticipation towards the translation work of *Game of Thrones*. From these, one may notice that Yi Gui Jun Tuan and their work get general recognition from many different areas, such as publishing, audiences and even their families. Night Fear (26, F, Finance) tells us that she told her whole family that she is translating American television series for online audiences and her family is quite happy and even proud for it. And all these things could be the reason that they think there is no need to hide the truth that they violate the laws.

Therefore, we could argue that, free fan labour is not totally free. Some of them get recognition from many other people. This kind of recognition could generate a sense of pride and achievement. Some informants even get fame and followers because of it, no matter they want it or not. And in the digital age, fame and followers can always turn into a economic payment. Jenkins (2006) brings out a term for us which is affective economics. "Affective economics is a new discourse in marketing and brand research that emphasizes the emotional commitments consumers make in brands as a central motivation for their purchasing decisions" (ibid.:279). And this is why some fansub groups can make money from it. As followers build a stable emotional connection with fansub work and the specific fansub group by watching their work regularly, there is a possibility that they will turn this emotional connection to consumptions. Moreover, because followers watch the fan work without paying year and year, there is a feeling of owing the fansub group something among some people. Thus, this kind of

feeling could also turn into consumption or even donation when the fansub group encounters problems or challenges. For example, when the founder of Fat Bird Movie[17] was being arrested by Chinese police, many his followers spontaneously raise bail fees for him.

However, even though there are some of them who afraid of the consequences of being famous, which means attract the Chinese government's attention. Most informants of Yi Gui Jun Tuan hold the faith that as long as they do not make a profit from making and sharing subtitles, they are safe. This perfectly matches what Kosnik[18] points out that the way fan work do not receive pay is for exchange of not being sued for violating copyright and creating value. Besides sacrifice the profits to exchange of being safe, there are more Yi Gui Jun Tuan needs to sacrifice behind the word "free" labour as follows:

> There are some people who steal our subtitles to sell to other people. They use our work to make a profit. We are really upset about it but it seems there is nothing we can do to solve it. Maybe the only thing we can do is to make a statement on our social media account. (Yiyi, 30, F, Internet editor)

As the fansub work is based on copyright issues. Even though they have devoted a lot of energy and knowledge into their fan work, no specific laws can protect their hard work. They are helplessness when their work becomes other people's tool to make money. As the above quotes, the only thing they can do is to make a statement to inform their followers. Therefore, no matter themselves are willing or not, their work will eventually be in involved in the market.

Besides fan work being used by other people to make a profit. There is another veiled way that shows fansub work inevitably involved in the market. Sugihrtati (2017) argues that "free digital labour are normally not free from the hegemony of capitalism". He thinks that when fans produce cultural texts voluntarily, "they become indirect promotional agents who eventually bring profits to the capitalist power". Because fan works can always attract more audiences and all these audiences could be viewed as potential consumers to the specific

---

[17] A personal informal website which provides film resources for Chinese audiences to download.
[18] http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.XMEULZMzZE-

culture. That is to say, fan works will eventually help capitalism to obtain the profit. In this case, the fan work of Yi Gui Jun Tuan plays a certain role in helping Chinese audiences to engage with *Game of Thrones*. This kind of engagement with fan work, can motivate audiences to consume products such as books and hobby. We should notice here that the consumption does not benefit for Yi Gui Jun Tuan, is a benefit for capitalism and companies who hold the copyright. Whether this fansub group is willing or not, the role of playing indirect promotional agents start with the time they produce fan work, which is also the start to be involved in the market eventually.

Push - Pull dynamic relations between Yi Gui Jun Tuan and Tencent

Many scholars hold positive attitudes towards fansub groups and fan work. For example, Hu (2005) thinks that "the online Chinese fans are guerrilla fighters in the politics of autonomy, network and low-cost digital technology" and fansub groups is a good way to empower Chinese netizen to show their resistance to official distribution hierarchy. Yi Gui Jun Tuan and other fansub groups indeed help Chinese official distribution to expand the unknown market and meet Chinese young people's need at a certain degree. For instance, Tencent video, one of the biggest Chinese video websites, has bought the copyright from HBO since 2016.

> If this drama was not such a hot topic among Chinese young audiences, I don't think it will be introduced by those companies. (Tywin, 30, M, office staff)

As we can see from the above words, informants believe that the reason why Tencent decided to introduce *Game of Thrones* is because of the popularity on the informal distribution. Therefore, Chinese audiences watch this television series through formal channel become possible. At present, there are two formal channels in China, besides Tencent video, the other is the set-top box called Top Theater which belongs to HBO. Compare to Top Theater, Tencent video is more convenient for most audiences. Because Top Theater needs people to have a set-top box while people can get access to Tencent video anywhere anytime with their phone, ipads or laptops. Both these two formal channels need audiences to pay. The monthly

membership fee for Tencent video is around 15-20RMB, which is around 10-14SEK. Compared to the membership fee of foreign video websites, such as Netflix and HBO, Tencent's membership fee is quite cheap. In China, Among people who regularly pay the membership fee, the highest proportion is people aged from 19 to 24, 46%.[19] However, most of this age group are normally high school students or university students, cannot afford high fees. This could be the reason that Chinese membership fee of video websites are usually cheap.

Unlike other Chinese video websites that cannot air foreign television series synchronize with other countries, Tencent makes this synchronization happens[20]. Therefore, there are more and more people who are willing to pay the Tencent membership. After all, watching Tencent is more convenient compared to download informal resources. But there still exists a big issue, which is all the content they watch was being censored. That is to say, all the violence and sexual parts were deleted or edited, which might influences audiences.

> I have a really interesting story, one has told me that she found out Daenerys has three dragons in total at the end of season two which surprised her a lot. She always thinks there is only one dragon and even argues this with her friends. Because, you know, when Daenerys had her three dragons, she was naked, and Tencent cut all her body part except her face, so audiences of Tencent only see one dragon. (Lyanna of Bear Island, F, student)

From the above words, we could know that censored part has a certain influence on audiences, in terms of understanding plots. In fact, people hold different opinions towards the censored version of Tencent. Some people think it is unbelievable and unfair to pay for content which is not complete. Chinese netizen even describes this version as the castrated version which totally ruins their viewing experiences. Taking episode 1 of season 8 for example, the original version lasts around 55 minutes, but the Tencent version only lasts 48 minutes. However, besides some detail information and characterization, almost all informants hold another opinion. They believe that there is no huge impact on delivering information on Tencent

---

[19] http://www.sohu.com/a/232834825_114819

[20] Normally, when Chinese companies want to introduce a foreign television series, they have to wait for the whole season aired aboard first. That is to say, the resources provided by Chinese formal distribution are always three months late than aboard. However, Tencent can provide the resources at the same time. Don't know the reason why.

version. Some of informants of Yi Gui Jun Tuan even think that the censored version is more family-friendly which is suitable to be recommended to elders.

> I know that there are many people, the older generation, the 40s, 50s or even older, also want to watch it, and some people watch it with the whole family. I usually recommend these people to the censored version of Tencent. The original version is a bit too embarrassing. I think many of them are conservative, it is hard for them to handle these violence and nude scenes. (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media)

Fomalhaut is not the only informant who think Tencent's version is good for elders. China is a country which currently has no rating system, and this is the main reason why most of the media content introduced from overseas need to censored. Many informants think it is not Tencent's fault to ruin the completeness of plots. They believe that Chinese policy should take this responsibility. Tywin (30, M, office staff) describes the Chinese censorship as the totally abnormal paternalistic policy. Tommen (34, F, civil servant) also has similar thoughts. She thinks the Chinese censorship is treating Chinese from 0 to 100 years old as small children. So that Chinese audiences are being overprotected for a long time. Therefore, they think that elders are more suitable to watch the censored version because most of the elders have not encountered violence and nude scenes before. As we can see, compared to some young audiences who abuse Tencent's censored version, most of informants show their understanding of Tencent. Yiyi (30, F, Internet editor) points out that "Under the censorship policy, Tencent has already tried its best to meet audiences' need."

However, despite most informants have showed their support to Tencent's copyright, one important thing needs us to pay attention to is that most of them don't really watch *Game of Thrones* on Tencent. Therefore, some informants try to balance their respect to copyright and their needs to watch the uncensored *Game of Thrones,* which is a way of mixing formal and informal media economies (Lobato and Thomas, 2015).

> I felt quite guilty when I watched the downloading resources, so even if I don't watch *Game of Thrones* on Tencent, I pay for membership anyway, I think it is my way to show the support to the copyright and alleviate this sense of guilty. (Yiyi, 30, F, Internet editor)

However, we need to bring Hill (2019)'s pull-push dynamic relations out here. Hill (ibid.) points out that there is a pull-push dynamic between audiences and official production/distribution which works both ways. This means that media production and distribution can push audiences into content, and audiences can also push back to the official production and distribution. We could view this act of downloading resources as push back to express their dissatisfied with censored part of official distribution and access blockage. Fansub groups didn't stop to make subtitles and audiences still watch *Game of Thrones* through informal distribution even though official distribution Tencent has bought the copyright. If this push back action goes too far, there might create a bad impact on official distribution who paid a lot for copyright. This could put Yi Gui Jun Tuan to an even more dangerous place.

> In 2016, after the episode one of the season sixth were aired, the Weibo account of the Yi Gui Jun Tuan was banned immediately. In fact, it is not only Yi Gui Jun Tuan, including the Shenying group, including Renren group, all of our accounts which translate and distribute Game of Thrones were banned. (Lion of Winterfell, 30, M, Medicine)

All the informants believe that Tencent is the one who banned them. The measure Tencent adopted is not harsh. After all, there are many Chinese people who in charge of fansub groups were sued or caught and asked to pay a high fine because of copyright holders cannot stand them to ruin their opportunity to make money. Therefore, there are more and more fansub group informants want to cooperate with official distribution when there is a chance. So that they can still do things they loved and avoid all the risks.

Tencent also offers this chance to Yi Gui Jun Tuan once. When Tencent asked them to buy their subtitles, Yi Gui Jun Tuan thought "it could be a hard-won chance which means we get the recognition by copyright holder at first" (Fomalhaut,31, M, New media). From the informant's word, we could note that they want to get the recognition by formal distribution. And it is an opportunity for them to get rid of the name of the informal distribution. This means that their work could be presented and shared for more audiences. However, they

eventually decided not to take this chance as follows:

> We decided to not work with them for many reasons. But the most important thing is their ignorant arrogance, really ignorant arrogance, or arrogance without fear. Whether it is the treatment they give us, the conditions they give us, or the way they communicate with us. It almost makes me want to talk dirty. (Night Fear, 26, F, Finance)

Again, from the above words, what Feng (2011) thinks that voluntary fan labour could be ultimately subject to capital control and exploitation become true. Tencent holds the copyright, which means this company takes the dominant place and Yi Gui Jun Tuan is doomed to be an underdog in this cooperation. From the above word such as ignorant arrogance, we could sense that this unequal relationship makes the informants' feel extremely angry.

"Tencent only willing to pay very less money which is ridiculous to us to buy our work" (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media). Tencent also proposes many unfair conditions such as none of their names can be showed up in the video and their account cannot post video anymore. The result of taking this offer is to let Yi Gui Jun Tuan become a group that no one knows anymore. So they will lose their recognition and followers, and also lose control of their own work if they said yes to Tencent. Therefore, they refuse to take this offer and thus trying to survive in a much harsher situation now. In order to deal with Tencent's inspection and protect themselves away from risks, Yi Gui Jun Tuan adopts many strategies. For instance, they abandoned the Chinese cloud storage service and turn to use the Russian cloud disk services because they think Chinese people cannot inspect overseas services. Moreover, they use special codes when they post their work which only their old followers can understand, like a riddle game. Lobato and Thomas (2015: 177) state that there exist "contradictions and trade-offs between elements of the flexibility-security matrix". They think that informal media prefers flexibility and formal media enjoys security. Therefore, it is tough to make the formalization since none of them can sacrifice what they want, which can seen in the case of Yi Gui Jun Tuan and Tencent.

The hierarchy relations in fan community

Talking about the followers, Yi Gui Jun Tuan has more than 280, 000 followers now. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) propose an important concept which is second followers. They believe that people with more relevant knowledge, insights and can produce fan work will gradually have their followers. And these capable people will gradually become the representation of certain culture while second followers will "increasingly follwer-like in their tastes." Indeed, capable people such as Yi Gui Jun Tuan provides many good services and resources to second followers without receiving payment.

As mentioned before, Jenkins (1992) believe that fan work and fan culture is "a refusal of authorial authority and a violation of intellectual property"(ibid., 19). Kosnik (2016) also points out that in the digital era, subcultural and marginalized groups enable to have archives of their own interests. Thus, Kosnik (ibid.) believes that fan works and digital technologies enable people to subverted and counteracted the traditional power structure. Both of their opinions are true in this case. The existence of Yi Gui Jun Tuan has brought the *Game of Thrones* culture into China and play a significant role in spreading and popularizating everything related to *Game of Thrones*. However, while the traditional culture hierarchy has been challenged, a new form of cultural hierarchy in the fan community generated.

> I am not very willing to discuss this novel or television series with people who are outside this community. It seems like, it is bad to say this. I don't think they deserve. (Fomalhaut, 31, M, New media)

There are so many different levels of fans according to informants. To most of the informants, many people who claim they are *Game of Thrones* fans are "fake fans". They believe that the reason that there are more and more people claim they are fans is that this television series is popular. People want to join this fan community, not because of love, but because they want to join in the fun in this great popular culture show their tastes are following the trend. Most of the informants don't like this phenomenon, and they don't even like the truth that *Game of Thrones* is so popular in China. Fomalhaut (31, M, New media) describes *Game of Thrones* as "migrant worker drama", which means that even those who have no free time to have fun know this television series. If "migrant worker drama" is not a derogatory term, then "flea

market literature" (City inspector, 29, M, programmer) can show their dissatisfied attitudes. The popularity of *Game of Thrones* in China can be sensed from the above two words, after all, it is known by migrant workers and can be found in the flea market. At the same time, informants also show their sense of depreciation of *Game of Thrones*.

Bourdieu (1980: 253) suggests that "the most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated" when she analyses the life of the aristocracy. This thought can be applied well with this situation. Yi Gui Jun Tuan informants cannot stand audiences who have no understanding of background knowledge to share similar tastes with them because it devalues their fandom. Therefore, for most informants, it is hard for them to discuss with different levels of fans and the feelings were described as "sift sand for gold" (Night fear, 26, F, finance). The result of it is they turn into keep their discussions within the community. Therefore, with the sense of exclusion, we could argue that the participatory culture is not all the fans or audiences can be participated in, or can be fully participated in. Kosnik (2016) argues that with the help of digital technologies, cultural archives which used controlled by elites and upper class can also be written by the masses now. This cultural archives can be called as the rogue archive according to Kosnik (ibid.). However, in this thesis. We find that the rogue archive is also not written by all the masses. In the digital era, only the people who have abilities and accesses can hold the speaking right.

Even within the community, there is an invisible hierarchy as well. As we mentioned before, *Game of Throne* is adapted from a book. This adaptation hierarchy is exactly around the original book:

> We all are not drama fans, we are unswerving original novel fans. Everyone is discriminating against those drama fans. All the core informants are novel fans and those drama fans are absolutely being discriminated. (City inspectors, 29, M, programmer)

According to the above quotes, we could see that the book fans discriminate against the drama

fans. This is mainly because they believe that the book contains more information and details, and most importantly, is from the original author. Therefore, people who have read the novel have these thoughts that they know more than drama fans. But there is a contradiction generated. The aim of this fansub group is to share and introduce *Game of Thrones* to more Chinese people, but they refuse to take in most of the other fans. What causes this? As Hall (1996) says, identities are constructed through difference and 'The unities which identities proclaim are, in fact, constructed within the play of power and exclusion' (ibid.: 5). From which, we could interpret this contradicted feelings and complex situation. From the beginning, people who get the chance to read the novel are the minority. Most informants enjoy this feeling of being special. But they also want to get recognition from other people so there is an eagerness that sharing this hobby with others. After more and more normal audiences and fake fans with no background knowledge participate in, informants want to show their differences from those people. Therefore, they keep their discussions only within the people who have similar thoughts. And hide their identity to other people. Yet, while these super fans are trying to keep their specialty, they were being isolated by others too.

> Due to some policy reasons, We Chinese fans somehow are doomed to be isolated from the international fan communities. Because we don't have access to get in touch with them. (Yiyi, 30, F, Internet editor)

It is interesting to note that when the above informant is talking about the difference between international fan communities, she not only uses the word isolate but also in the passive voice. From her point of view, this kind of isolation is caused by some external factor. Besides policy reason which is access blockage, there are at least two more factors stop the merging process of the Chinese fan community to the international fan community, which are the cultural differences and language differences. In these three factors, most people believe that the access blockage play the dominant role. However, there is one hold different opinions:

> I sometimes use VPN to access Facebook or Reedit. But only for acquiring information or news, not for foreign fans community. I always believe that fan community is relatively a introverted cultural atmosphere. I can access their community but it is hard for me to communicate with them. Not the problem of language, it is more like a problem of culture. (Honda, 26, M, student)

From Honda's point of view, access blockage is not the most important factor. People can break access blockage by some technical tools. And, the language difference is also not a big problem for them. They are all quite good English-users. However, the cultural difference is a gap that hard to bridge. All informants don't get the chance to get into the international community. So we could argue that the hierarchy continues to happen with culture and geography. This view is match the study of Wu (2015) once did, which question and challenge a general presumption that it is the great fire wall which prohibits the Chinese to join the transnationalism. She argues that when audiences choose media platform, they instinctively choose those related to their cultures and even locations. That is to say, even if the access blockage disappears, there is a high possibility that most of them still choose those familiar platforms. Therefore they can get more a similar culture exchange. Thus, this isolation between Chinese fan community and the international community is not only passively created by Chinese policy, but also belongs to their own choices.

Bearing all of the above discussions in mind, we have seen that the work of fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan is based on the intensive and serial engagement with *Game of Thrones*. The fan free labour is not totally free even though fansubbers do not make money from it. Fansubbers need to use some strategies to survive in the push-pull relations (Hill, 2019) with formal distribution Tencent. Moreover, the hierarchy exists within and outside the fansub groups which happens with identity construction, culture, and geography.

Conclusion

Based on a case study of fansub group Yi Gui Jun Tuan, this thesis critically analyses fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan and their engagement with and translation of *Game of Thrones*. By conducting a semi-structured interview with fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan, this thesis provides a profound and comprehensive idea regarding fansubbers and their relations to others such as formal distribution and other fans. Throughout the detailed analysis, we have known that the positive engagement is the main reason for fansubbers in Yi Gui Jun Tuan to become a fan producer and the negative engagement can cause disengagement or even quit from the fansub works. Fansubbers have acquired different skills while engaging with television series and find motivation, which enables them to produce fan work. During the process of working, they have formed a set of rules and strategies in order to compete with other fansub groups and survive under the push of the formal distribution. The hierarchy exists within and outside the fansub groups, which happens with identity construction, culture, and geography. The following part will present key findings and answer three research questions in details.

In what ways do informants in Yi Gui Jun Tuan engage and disengage with Game of Thrones?

Informants of Yi Gui Jun Tuan have shown their intensive engagement with *Game of Thrones*. As *Game of Thrones* is a television series which basically returns every year from 2011, the engagement build between informants and the series is serial. This kind of serial engagement has been shown as two parts in this thesis, which are the character engagement and plot engagement. Informants intensively engage with characters and continuously change their attitudes and comments towards them with the development of plots. Compared to the character who keeps the same personality all the time, informants are more engaged with the character who experiences and has changed a lot such as Sansa and Theon. Furthermore, there is a sense of sharing growth process generated between characters and informants. Informants witness all the experiences of characters and further reflect these experiences and decisions characters have made on themselves. That is to say, as the time informants watching the

characters' story, informants also link the characters' situation to themselves and imagine how they will act, which can be viewed as a part of engaging with characters' construction (Mittell, 2015).

Talking about the plot engagement, the original novel *A Song of Ice and Fire* plays an important role in influencing informants' engagement with dramas. All the informants have read the novel and claim that the novel is the reason for most of the informants to start to engage with *Game of Thrones*. Therefore*,* in the viewing process, informants continuously compare television series with the original book intentionally or unintentionally. There are two kinds of shifts in the transmedia storytelling according to Jenkins (2011), adaptation and extension. Informants are basically satisfied with adaptation but dissatisfied with extension in this research. When the differences between the television series and the book appear, all the informants have shown their loyalty to the original book which confirms the idea of unbalanced transmedia (Mittell, 2015) instead of balanced transmedia (Jenkins, 2011). Thus, the dominated medium for informants is the original book. The main reason why most of the informants show their loyalty to the novel is because their related knowledge is originally based on the novel. Therefore, when plots of television series match their previous knowledge gained from the novel, they feel satisfied and positively engage with the drama. But when the development of plots is different from the novel and the informants' previous knowledge are being challenged, the negative engagement generated.

Both cognitive and affective engagement are found during the viewing process of informants. Compared to normal audiences, informants have shown more cognitive engagement in this research. They are not just passively receiving but actively analysing almost every plots, characters and detail. The rationality of the story is very important to them and the reason for them to judge the rationality is again according to the novel. Cognitive engagement and affective engagement is not separate based on the Hill (2018)'s idea of spectrum of engagement. Informants' cognitive engagement always influences the affective engagement when they engaging *Game of Thrones*. When informants are satisfied with the rationality of the story, there is a positive emotional engagement. When the rationality of the story cannot

meet informants' expectation, positive emotional engagement turns sharply to negative emotional engagement. Moreover, there is a possibility that the negative emotional engagement will turn into disengagement eventually if the dissatisfaction with the story continues to occur. This kind of critical thinking and intensive cognitive engagement also shows the identity of informants are different from normal drama audiences. It confirms that their identity of being novel fans and each kind of engagement help them to further reinforce the novel fans identity.

How do informants in Yi Gui Jun Tuan negotiate their free labour practices for fansubbing?

Not all the audiences could transform their identities to fans and even to fan producers. It requires both investment and involvement (Nightingale, 2011). Besides investing emotion, time and even money to *Game of Thrones,* informants also actively involved in online discussions and fan activities. During the time informants are engaging with the television series, they are also accumulating knowledge and different kinds of skills in order to become fan producers. Special technical skills and analytical skills are the most important skills for fan producers (Abercromibie and Longhurst, 1998). Becoming fan producers also needs motivation which determines what kind of fan work informants want to produce and what kind of special technical skills they need to learn. The motivation for Yi Gui Jun Tuan is to provide and share the uncensored resources of *Game of Thrones* to Chinese audiences with good quality of translation. Therefore, the main special technical skill they need to learn is the process of making digital subtitles and the analytical skill is to able to explain and deliver all the information shows on and behinds the plots of *Game of Thrones*.

There exists a trade-off between time and quality in Yi Gui Jun Tuan. Time is of high value among almost all fansub groups because there are many fansub groups produce one same television series. Time management is important not only for producers but also for audiences (Hill, 2019). There is a competitive relationship among different fansub groups because that the time they release the resources can decide the flow of the audience. Under this circumstance of fighting for being the first one to release resources, Yi Gui Jun Tuan chooses

to value translation quality more than time. The time we spend on media can be considered as expensing others' labour, no matter producers are doing the paid job or unpaid (Hill, 2019). As the time audiences are watching the work produced by fansub groups, they are also experiencing the good or the bad quality of labour. Thus, audiences of fansub groups which value quality like Yi Gui Jun Tuan are more thinking highly of the viewing experiences while audiences of other fansub groups which value time care more about if they can watch it at the very first time. So there is a value chain for different fansub groups of different kinds of fans of *Game of Thrones*.

Yi Gui Jun Tuan is making and sharing subtitles for *Game of Thrones* without making a profit. However, fan free work cannot be totally free. As making and sharing subtitles as well as resources online is violating copyright, the way of Yi Gui Jun Tuan insist do not earn money is for exchange of not being sued (Kosnik)[21]. Some of the informants get fame and followers which can always turn into economic payment if they want. Once followers build a stable emotional connection with Yi Gui Jun Tuan, their consumption behaviour and purchasing decisions will be influenced. This is what Jenkins called (2006) affective economy. Fan free labour and fan work will eventually be involved in the market and not free from capital control (Sugihrtati, 2017; Feng, 2011). Informants basically have no control over their own work because no specific law can protect them, so other people can steal their work and sell it. Besides, because fan works can always attract more audiences and all these audiences could be viewed as potential consumers to the specific culture. That is to say, fan works will eventually help capitalism to obtain the profit.

There is a push-pull relationship (Hill, 2019) between Yi Gui Jun Tuan and official distribution Tencent. The work of Yi Gui Jun Tuan could be viewed as a push back power to show their dissatisfaction towards the official distribution hierarchy. The result of it is that Tencent has seen the potential of *Game of Thrones* and decided to introduce this drama. In this case, Yi Gui Jun Tuan has played a role as a taste-testing for Tencent (Lobato and Thomas, 2015). However, Tencent's version is censored which again arose many audiences'

---

[21] http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.XMEULZMzZE-

rejection. So Yi Gui Jun Tuan still exists as a push back power to censored version. This push back places the fansub group as a quite dangerous place because as a copyright holder, Tencent can adopt some method to restrict them such as codification and measurement (ibid.). In order to avoid risks, Yi Gui Jun Tuan also adopts some strategies such as using Russian cloud to store their resources. The copyright issues put Yi Gui Jun Tuan and Tencent into an unequal relation which means the cooperation is quite impossible. As Lobato and Thomas (ibid.) mention that it is hard to formalize informal media because the purposes and the way of making contents are different.

What are the power relations within hierarchies of fandom for Yi Gui Jun Tuan?

As the second research question talks a little bit about the power relations between Yi Gui Jun Tuan and Tencent, the follow-up part will discuss more hierarchies generated from power relations around this fansub group.

Informants argue that there exist "fake fans" who want to join the fan community of *Game of Thrones.* They think that the reason why these fake fans want to join fan community is not that they love the book or drama, is because that they want to join in the fun in this popular culture and show their tastes are following the trend. Informants in this study cannot endure that their tastes are devalued by these people who have no understanding of background knowledge of *Game of Thrones*. As a result of it, on the one hand, they refuse to admit those fans as part of the fan community. On another hand, some informants choose to hide their fans identity outside the fansub group and keep their discussions within the community. The sense of exclusion thus generated The participatory culture is not that all fans or audiences can be participated, or can be fully participated in. Furthermore, the rogue archive raised by Kosnik (2016) is also not written by all the people in this study. Only people who have skills, knowledge and accesses such as Yi Gui Jun Tuan could have the speaking right and write the archive.

There exists hierarchy within Yi Gui Jun Tuan as well. Informants who are novel fans discriminate drama fans because most of them are loyal to the originality as mentioned in the

first research question. However, while the informants' of Yi Gui Jun Tuan are trying to keep their specialty by clearing the boundaries with other different kinds of fans and audiences, they are isolated by others too. They think that Chinese fans somehow are doomed to be isolated from the international fan communities by three main reasons: access blockage, language differences, and cultural difference. Due to the fact that all informants are good English users, the language barrier barely exists for them. The access blockage is also not the most important factor causing the Chinese fans are isolated by international fan communities. Most of the informants are good at technology and all of them know how to break the access blockage by using technical tools. However, the cultural differences is a gap that hard to bridge according to some informants. informants can log into and observe the foreign forums of fans community, but it is hard for them to join the conversation. Because they feel like "fan community is a relatively introverted cultural atmosphere" (Honda, 26, M, student) and people from other cultural background is hard to participate. Thus, the fan community hierarchy continuously occurs with identity construction, culture, and even geography. This confirms the idea of Wu and Taneja (2015) that the great firewall is not the only one which prohibits Chinese to join the transnationalism. When informants try to choose a media platform to communicate with others, they instinctively choose those related to their cultures and even locations.

Further research recommendation

The topic of Chinese fansub groups is worthy of more discussions. For further research, the focus can be put on those second followers, which is the audiences of Yi Gui Jun Tuan. Based on this thesis, we basically have an understanding about fansub groups such as their working process and power relations around them. However, we could not ignore the important role of audiences can play in this study of informal distribution. By conducting a study of Yi Gui Jun Tuan's followers, we could understand further about how the relationship between fan producers and followers was built and try to figure out if this relationship is stable or shaky. Furthermore, the concept of engagement can also be applied so that we could know if Yi Gui Jun Tuan has played an important role to help followers to deeply engage with *Game of Thrones.*

At the end of this thesis, as a Chinese who grow up with fansub groups and informal distribution resources, I want to commemorate the following fansub groups and resources websites:

At the end of 2009, BTChina closed the download;

At the beginning of 2011, VeryCD closed the download;

In the winter of 2014, Shooter Website announced the closure;

On December 20, 2014, Renren Film and Television was officially closed;

On July 12, 2017, Bilibili took a large-scale film and television drama off;

On January 2, 2019, the BT Paradise webmaster was sentenced to three years in prison and fined 800,000;

On March 1, 2019, the Fat Bird movie was closed, and the stationmaster was detained and fined 150,000.

After the stationmaster of Fat Bird Movie was detained, many resources websites and fansub groups announce that they will stop all or part of the translation job such as Yuanjian fansub groups. Some media describe the time after March 1, 2019 as post-Fat Bird era.

> It will die eventually, we are all happy to see it die. But before the real problem solved, people will continue to do it. (Yiyi, 30, F, Internet editor).

Maybe one day, there is no existence of fansub groups in China as Yiyi said. Therefore, I wish this thesis could not only serve as a study that analysing the value of fansubbers in fan studies, but also serve as a rogue archive to commemorate their works and voices.

References

Chinese literature:

陈欣.浅析跨文化传播视域下的字幕组传播效果[J].新闻传播,2018(10):30-31.

成云.字幕组引发全球同步剧集[J].西部广播电视,2007(03):66-67.

冯建三.从《传播理论史:回归劳动》看文化与劳动的关系[J].山西大学学报(哲学社会科学版),2011,34(04):56-63.

胡绮珍.中国字幕组与新自由主义的工作伦理[J]. 新闻学研究(台湾) 2009(101):183-199

余冰珺.字幕组在跨文化传播中的角色分析[J].今传媒,2012,20(10):139-141.

沈忱,骆正林.参与式文本创作:字幕组"神翻译"[J].浙江传媒学院报,2017,24(03):63-69.

孙黎.青年亚文化社群的运行机制与权力关系——基于 13 个网络字幕组的研究[J].重庆邮电大学学报(社会科学版),2018,30(04):102-108.

汪金汉.从"文本盗猎"到"公民参与":詹金斯的"参与性"媒介受众研究[J].福建师范大学学报(哲学社会科学版),2016(02):191-197.

燕道成, 陈曦."知沟"视阈下我国网络字幕组与受众间的差异分析[J].传媒观察,2017(04):38-40.

易水寒.银色幕布下的灰色边缘[J].电脑爱好者,2005,(21).

殷燕,刘军平.互联网翻译"文化公共空间"的衍变研究[J].长白学刊,2017(02):144-150.

张斌.中国字幕组、数字知识劳(工)动与另类青年文化[J].中国青年研究,2017(03):5-12.

郑莹,李佳蔚.二次编码:字幕组的跨文化传播——基于国内美剧字幕组的研究[J].新闻研究导刊,2017,8(02):133-134.

English literature:

Athique, A,. (2016). *Transnational Audiences: Media Reception on a Global Scale*, Cambridge: Polity

Abercrombie N. and Longhurst, B.,(1998). *Audiences*. A sociological theory of performance and imagination. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Bazeley, P. (2013). Qualitative Data Analysis. Practical strategies. London: SAGE.

Bourdieu, P,. (1980). "The Aristocracy of Culture," *Media, Culture, and Society*.

Bruns, A,. (2007). From prosumer to produser: understanding user-led content creation. London.

Bruun,. (2015). *Advancing Media Production Research*.pdf

Burr,.V,. (2003). *Social Constructionism.* Taylor & Francis Routledge

Crisp, V,. (2015). *Film Distribution in the Digital Age: Pirates and Professionals.* Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Corner, John (2011). *Theorising Media: power, form and subjectivity.* Manchester

DeWalt, Billie R., DeWalt, Kathleen M,. (2011). *Participant observation : a guide for fieldworkers.* Lanham, Maryland: Altamira.

Fiske, J., (2010). *Understanding popular culture.* Londdon; New York: Routldge

Foucault, M,. (1998). *The history of sexuality: v1 The Will to knowledge.* London: Penguine Books.

Orrego-Carmona, D., (2018), "New audiences, international distribution, and translation" in *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation.* edited by Elena Di Giovanni, and Yves Gambier, John Benjamins. Publishing Company Amsterdam / Philadelphia.

Hansen, A., & Machin, D., (2013). *Media and communication research methods.* Basingstoke Palgrave Macmillan.

Hall, S,. (1996). *'Who Needs Identity?' in Questions of Cultural Identity,* eds Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay: London: Sage.

Harvey, W. S., (2011). 'Strategies for conducting elite interviews.' *Qualitative Research.* 11(4), 431–441.

Hill, A,. (2012). Audiences in the round: multi-method research in factual and reality television. In Bruhn Jensen, Klaus (eds.). *A handbook of media and communication research: qualitative and quantitative methodologies.* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge

Hill, A,. (2017). 'Reality TV Engagement: reality TV producers and audiences for talent format *Got to Dance'* in *Media Industries*, Volume 4, issue 1 May 2017.

Hill, A,. (2018). 'Media Audiences and Reception Studies', in *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation*, edited by Elena Di Giovanni, and Yves Gambier, John Benjamins.

Hill, A,. (2018). 'Engaging with Television', in Shawn Shimpach (editor) *Routledge Companion to Global Television*.

Hill, A,. (2019). *Media experiences,* London and New York: Routledge.

Hu, k,. (2005). The power of circulation: digital technologies and the online Chinese fans of Japanese TV drama. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies.* Vol. 6 Issue 2, p171-186. 16p.

Iwabuchi, K,. (2004). 'Introduction: cultural globalization and Asian media connections'. In Koichi Iwabuchi (ed.) *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV dramas,* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1–22.

Jensen, A,. (2002). *Handbook of Media and Communication Research* (2002).pdf

Jenkins, H,. (1992). *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, New York and London: Routledge.

Jenkins, H,. (2006a). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Kosnik, Abigail De,.(2016) *Rogue archives: digital cultural memory and media fandom,* Cambridge, MA : The MIT Press.

Leeds-Hurwitz, W,. (29 June 2016). Moy, Patricia (ed.). Social construction. *Journal of Communication*. Oxfordshire, England: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/obo/9780199756841-0106.

Lobato, R & Thomas, J,.(2015). *The Informal Media Economy,*Cambridge: Polity.

Madianou,M,. (2011). Beyond the Presumption of Identity? Ethnicities, Cultures, and Transnational Audiences in *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, London: Blackwells

Melucci, A., (1989). *Nomad of the Present*. Temple University Press.

Mikecz, R., (2012). Interviewing Elites: Addressing Methodological Issues, *Qualitative Inquiry,* 18(6) 482–493

Mittell, J,. (2015). *Complex TV : the poetics of contemporary television storytelling,* New York: New York University Press.

Morley, D. (1980). *The "Nationwide" Audience: Structure and Decoding*. British Film Institute, London.

Nightingale, V,. ed. (2011). *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, London: Blackwells

Seale, C., (2012). *Researching Society and Culture*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication. ISBN 978-1-8492-0799-7.

Sugihartati, R,. (2017). Youth fans of global popular culture: Between prosumer and free digital labourer. *Journal of Consumer Culture.*

Toffler, A. (1980). *The Third Wave. Bantam, New York.*

Vertovec, S. (2004). Cheap calls: the social glue of migrant transnationalism. *Global Networks*, 4, 2, pp. 219–224.

Welch, C., Marschan-Piekkari, R., Penttinen, H., Tahvanainen, N. (2002). Corporate elites as informants in qualitative international business research. *International Business Review, 11,* 611-628.

Wu, X., (2012). Broadening the Scope of Cultural Preferences: Movie Talk and Chinese Pirate Film Consumption from the Mid-1980s to 2005. *International Journal of Communication*, 6 (2012), 501–529.

Wu, X., Taneja, H., (2015). Does the Great Firewall really isolate the Chinese? Integrating access blockage with cultural factors to explain web user behavior. *Computer Science*, Vol. 30 Issue 5, 297-309.

Online resources:
https://www.douban.com/group/topic/104898202/

http://www.nrta.gov.cn/art/2018/11/4/art_2423_39574.html

https://www.guancha.cn/Neighbors/2016_09_29_375868.shtml

https://www.huxiu.com/article/287099.html

http://www.jintiankansha.me/t/6BG6FIqcNr

https://www.theguardian.com/television-and-radio/2014/mar/22/game-of-thrones-whats-not-to-love

https://www.vulture.com/2012/10/25-most-devoted-fans.html

http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/kosnik/#.XMEULZMzZE-

http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2011/08/defining_transmedia_further_re.html

Appendices

Appendix 1.1: Interview guideline in English

Part 1 Personal background and Fandom

Please introduce yourself

- Ages, professions, education, major...(nicknames, why?)

When and how did you know the *Game of Thrones*?

- Novel? Comics? TV series? The author?

- What's special about *Game of Thrones* compared with Chinese TV series

- What are the differences and similarities between watching *Game of Thrones* in China and abroad?

Do you consider yourself as a fan of *Game of Thrones*?

- If so, since when? What kind of fan do you think you are?

- Please share your experiences of participating online or offline fan-activities.

- Are there any similarities or differences between Chinese and foreign *Game of Thrones fans?*

Part 2 Working in a fansub group

When did you know about fansub groups?

- Which group is the first fansub group you know?

- How would you define a fansub group in China?

- What do you think causes the popularity of fansub groups in China?

- Someone argues that fansub groups violate the copyright, what do you think?

(For founders)

Please tell me about the process you establish Yi Gui Jun Tuan.

- Any problems or challenges? (establish, producing)

- What is the difference between leaders and members?

- How do you recruit people? How many members you have now?

  (For members)

How did you join Yi Gui Jun Tuan?

- Why did you want to join this group? (expand if the answer is fandom)

- Have you done anything like this before you join Yi Gui Jun Tuan?

- Any interview or test?

- What is the difference between normal *Game of Thrones* fans and fansub members?

  (For all)

Could you please talk about the whole working process?

- What do you feel is in charge of in the group?

- How do you usually get the resources?

- How long does it take for producing one episode?

So let us get into more details about your job in Yi Gui Jun Tuan

  (For translators)

How do you translate?

- What matters in particular when you translating *Game of Thrones*?

- What is your proudest translation?

- Do you consciously combine Chinese culture when your translation?

- What is the difference between official translators and fansub translators?

  (For post-production)

How do you usually do post-production work?

- Are you an amateur or a professional?

- I noticed that your work is accompanied by a lot of beautiful special visual effects. Why bother to do that?

- At the end of each season, you always revise your work and make the perfect revision. How

come you do this?

(For publishing)

How and where do you usually post your work?

- Many websites for restoring data were shut down, what do you think about it? How do you solve this problem?

- You publish your works in code words only known to fans. What are the reasons? Will it lose potential viewers?

What is the ratio of men to women in the group?

- What caused this?

- Why almost all founders and old members are male and the newcomers are mainly female?

- What is the difference between female fans and male fans?

What do you think about this kind of unpaid work?

- Is there any reward mechanism? What did you get from it?

- How do you balance your professions and fansub work?

- Could you talk about your feelings about turning your fandom as a job?

- Would you share your fansubber identity to your family or friends?

Has this job made you even more like *Game of Thrones*, or less?

- What reasons make people leave a fansub group?

- Have you ever considered leaving?

Part 3 beyond the group

Have you watched the translated *Game of Thrones* by Tencent (the Chinese company who bought the copyright three years ago)?

- What do you think? (censored part, translation quality, visual quality)

- Compare to them, What are your advantages? What are the disadvantages?

- What kind audiences Tencent has? What kind of audiences you have?

What do you think about the censorship/introducing policy in China?

- Who will be affected by this censorship in your opinions?

- Do you have censorship/state control in the country you live in now? What are the differences between the two countries?

- How to avoid risks under these policies?

How do you view the relationship between Yi Gui Jun Tuan and followers?

- Are they simply the fans of the TV shows, or are they also the fans of yours?

- Since when Yi Gui Jun Tuan has fans? What helped?

- How did you interact with them?

Does Yi Gui Jun Tuan help the influence and the popularity of *Game of Thrones* in China?

- Why do you think so?

What were you usually do when *Game of Thrones* was not aired?

- Is the group still running during this time or not?

This season is the last season, do you have any plan after it?

- What will this group go to do?

- What do you think about the future of Chinese fansub groups?

Thanks for your patience, do you have anything to add?

Appendix 1.2: Interview guideline in Chinese

<p align="center">*第一部分 个人背景和粉丝情结*</p>

请介绍一下您自己

- 年龄，职业，教育，专业……（昵称，为什么？）

您何时以及如何知道权力的游戏的？

- 小说？漫画？电视剧？作者？

- 与中国的电视剧相比，权力的游戏有什么特别之处

- 在中国观看权力的游戏和在国外有什么不同和相似之处？

您认为自己是权力的游戏的粉丝吗？

- 从什么时候开始觉得是的？您认为您哪一种类型的粉丝？

- 请分享您参与线上或线下粉丝活动体验。

- 中国的和国外的权力的游戏的粉丝有什么相似之处或不同之处吗？

<p align="center">*第二部分 在字幕组中工作*</p>

您什么时候知道字幕组的？

- 哪个组是您接触的第一个字幕组？

- 您如何定义中国字幕组的存在？

- 您认为是什么原因导致字幕组在中国如此受欢迎？

- 有人认为字幕组的存在侵犯了版权，您怎么看？

（问创始人）

请分享您建立衣柜军团的过程。

- 有遇到任何问题或挑战吗？

- 领导者和成员之间有什么区别？

- 您如何招纳新人？组里现在有多少成员？

（问成员）

您是怎么加入衣柜军团的?

- 您为什么想加入这个团体?

- 在您加入衣柜军团之前,您有过做字幕组的工作经验吗?

- 您有参加任何面试或考试吗?

- 普通的权力的游戏的粉丝和字幕组成员有什么区别?

(问所有人)

您能谈谈整个工作过程吗?

- 您在小组负责的是什么?

- 您通常如何获取片源?

- 一般制作一集需要多长时间?

接下来让我们深入了解您在衣柜军团的工作

(问翻译人员)

您是如何翻译的?

- 当您翻译权力的游戏时,特别重要的一点是什么?

- 您最骄傲的翻译是什么?

- 翻译时您是否下意识地去结合中国文化?

- 官方翻译和字幕组翻译有什么区别?

(问后期人员)

您通常如何做后期?

- 您是业余爱好者还是专业人士?

- 我注意到您的作品伴随着许多好看的特殊视觉效果。为什么这么做呢?

- 在每季结束时,您总是修改您的工作并推出完美修订版。为什么?

(问发布人员)

您通常如何以及在哪里发布字幕组的作品?

- 许多用于储存数据的网站都被关闭了,您怎么看?您怎么解决这个问题?

- 您使用只有粉丝才看的懂的密语发布小组作品。原因是什么?这样做会失去潜在的

观众吗？

该组中男女比例是多少？

  - 是什么造成的？

  - 为什么几乎所有的创始人和老成员都是男性，新成员主要是女性？

  - 女粉丝和男粉丝有什么区别？

您怎么看待这种无偿的工作？

  - 组内有奖励机制吗？您从做字幕组的工作中获得了什么？

  - 您如何平衡您的职业和字幕组的工作？

  - 您能谈谈您把自己的爱好当作工作的感受吗？

  - 您会与家人或朋友分享您的粉丝身份吗？

这项工作有让您更喜欢权力的游戏吗？还是热爱减少了？

  - 人们离开字幕组通常是因为什么原因？

  - 您有没有考虑过离开？

第三部分 腾讯，政策以及字幕组的未来

您是否看过腾讯（三年前购买版权的中国公司）翻译的权力的游戏？

  - 您怎么看（审查部分，翻译质量，视觉质量)？

  - 与他们相比，衣柜军团有什么优势？有什么劣势？

  - 腾讯的受众群是怎样的？您有什么样的受众群？

您如何看待中国的审查/引进政策？

  - 在您看来，谁会受到这种制度的影响最多？

  - 您现在居住的国家/地区是否有审查/控制权？这两个国家有什么不同？

  - 衣柜军团如何避免这些政策下的风险？

您如何看待衣柜军团和粉丝之间的关系？

  - 他们只是电视节目的粉丝，还是你们的粉丝？

- 从什么时候因为什么衣柜军团开始有粉丝的?

- 您是如何与他们互动的?

衣柜军团是否有助于权力的游戏在中国的影响和普及?

- 您为什么这么认为?

当权力的游戏没有被播出时,您们通常在做什么?

- 该组是否仍在此期间运行?

今年这一季是最后一季,您之后有什么计划吗?

- 衣柜军团未来会做什么?

- 您如何看待中国粉丝团的未来?

感谢您的耐心回答,您还有什么需要补充的吗?

Appendix 1.3: Consent form

<div align="center">

采访同意书

The "Theft of Fire" In the Digital Age

硕士论文

</div>

研究人员：杜盼，隆德大学传媒与交流专业硕士在读

硕士论文 *The "Theft of Fire" In the Digital Age* 旨在研究以衣柜军团为例的中国非盈利性字幕组。此篇论文的目的是研究衣柜军团字幕组的成员以及他们对美剧"权力的游戏"的参与和翻译。采访问题将主要围绕衣柜军团字幕组的工作流程以及成员对美剧"权力的游戏"和粉丝免费劳动力的看法。

每个采访大概会持续一个到一个半小时的时间。在征得您的同意后，我会使用电子设备记录我们的对话。所有的对话仅会被用于学术分析以及隆德大学传媒与交流专业的硕士论文中。在采访过程中，您可以根据自己的想法自由地回答问题。您可以决定不回答任何问题，也可以随时停止采访。

我向您保证，您将在整个研究期间保持匿名。经过您的同意后，您的网络名字会被使用。所收集的有关您的对话和材料会被安全存储，只有负责该研究的人才能识别参与者。如果您同意参加此次研究，请在下面签上您的名字。

_____

姓名

_____

签名

_____

日期

Appendix 1.4: Information on informants

1. Fomalhaut: 31, M, New media, Beijing, the director of Yi Gui Jun Tuan .

2. Lions of Winterfell: 30, M, Medicine, Guangzhou, the director of Yi Gui Jun Tuan.

3. Tommen: 34, F, Civil servant, Xi'an, a core member for more than 9 years.

4. Oathkeeper: 31, F, Biologist, UK, a core member for more than 9 years.

5. Lyanna of Bear Island: F, Master student, USA, a newcomer. Her namesake Weibo account has currently more than one million followers

6. Yiyi: 30, F, Internet editor, Beijing, graduated from University of Groningen, Holland.

7. Garvin: 31, M, Internet worker, Beijing, a core member for many years.

8. City inspector: 29, M, Programmer, Beijing, graduated from UIUC, USA.

9. Tywin: 30, M, Office staff, Wuhan, quit since season 6.

10. Lingling Taishoudun: 24, M, Master student, Beijing.

11. Night Fear: F, 26, finance, Nanjing, graduated from Newcastle University, UK, quit since season 6.

12. Honda: M, 26, Master student, Beijing.

Appendix 1.5: Sample transcription

Informant: Night Fear, F, 26, finance, Nanjing, graduated from Newcastle University, UK, quit since season 6.

Pan: Please introduce yourself to me.

Night Fear: Night Fear, it is also my fansub group ID. I am 26 years old. I have a graduate degree in finance from the University of Newcastle, UK. Now I am in China and my main job is finance but I am also a translator.

Pan: Does the your ID have anything to do with GOT?

Night Fear: "For the night is dark, and full of terrors." This sentence is from the original novel, *the Song of Ice and Fire*, is a common prayer of the religion of R'hllor.
I really really like Melisandre, so I choose to use this name.

Pan: When and how did you know the GOT?

Night Fear: In the third season, yes, I was binge-watching Sherlock, and then the show was not updated for a long time, so I gave up. And someone told me to watch GOT. So I started to watch it. Because I remembered very clearly that when I was in the summer vacation, I was quite free therefore I binge-watched the whole 3 seasons and I think this drama is really good. Then before the fourth season comes out, I read the original five volumes and jumped immediately from the drama to the original novel. Yes, then I am unwavering to be the fan of the novel.

Pan: What's special about GOT compared with Chinese TV series?

Night fear: Actually, I don't really watch Chinese TV series. First of all, I think it is the degree of rhythm control. Chinese TV dramas always have a lot of unnecessary plots which are total nonsense to me. The point is, it is not only the GOT. Basically, all the European and American drama is certainly much faster than the Chinese drama. They have a fast pace and contain lots of information. I like it. As far as the plot is concerned, I don't want to talk about the plots after the fourth season, because if I say it, I will complain about it for a whole day.

The first three seasons are really good though.

There is also an issue of making textures. I think a drama, no matter it is a virtual story or adapted from true history. It has a texture-like thing, that is, everything inside it should be in line with the whole set. GOT did it really well.　And I think that domestically produced dramas make people very distracted. For example, he is obviously in wartime, but everyone is dressed neatly, the clothes are shiny, and everyone also paints very delicate makeup. You cannot believe the thing you watch according to these details. Yes, there is also background music, because I personally value the background music and sound effect very much. The background music of GOT is ace!

Pan: Have you seen the GOT in the UK? How did watch the GOT in the UK?

Night Fear: In the UK, my university subscribed the TV account for us. So we can use that account to watch the shows we want to.

Pan: Is there any difference or similarity between watching the GOT in the UK and in China?

Night fear: Yes, after I returned to China, I went back to the era of downloading resources again. In China, although I know that Tencent has also been introduced the GOT, but there are some problems with the Tencent version. The first one is that some parts were censored and the second is the quality of the translation. But if in the UK, because we have the account so I just watched HBO directly. I don' t need the translation, so it is enough for me to watch it with English subtitle.

Pan: If the school does not buy you an HBO account, would you choose to pay to become a member?

Night Fear: I might won't buy the annual fee member by myself, but I will share one account with some classmates and pay it together. Because after all, I only stayed in the UK for one year, it is not very cost-effective for me to buy it alone. But If you have a friend who can share the account with you, it could be very convenient. I think there is a so-called "recharge

for your faith." I am willing to pay for my faith.

Pan: Do you think you are a fan of GOT or the Song of Ice and Fire? When did you start to become a fan?

Night Fear: Certainly, I fell into it when I watched the first episode.

Pan: What kind of fan you think you are?

Night Fear: I think I should be a " Buddha-like fan"[22] now. Before it is like in love, there is always passionately period. But now I have already been a "Buddha-like fan", my attitude towards the drama, is like totally don't care. But if the author, GRRM finish the sixth volume, or posts a preview of the Blood and Fire. I will still excited as on fire. When GRRM posts the preview on his blog, it is just like the Chinese New Year to me. But in terms of the drama, including the trailer, I still will watch, but it cannot brings such mood swing to me.

Pan: Have you ever participated in some online and offline fan activities?

Night Fear: Yes, online. I am not only the translator of YGJT, but I am also an editor of "The Black Castle"(an online magazine which introduces fantasy drama/novel to Chinese audiences). I also went to attend the GOT media meeting for the sixth season which held by HBO, and I participated in this event as a Chinese reporter. And I also visited several locations where the GOT was filmed, Croatia, Spain, and Northern Ireland. I wrote some passage about my tour which published on the social media account of the "Black Castle".

Pan: You went there as the reporter of the "Black Castle?"

Night Fear: No, it' s the "Taotaotao movie" (an online organization which only produces the film trailers), this organization was invited and at that time I was in the UK. I am also a member of "Taotaotao movie ".

Pan: What kind of feelings do you have when you participate in online and offline activities?

---

[22] A Chinese cyberword. It means that she is very calm and will not have great emotional fluctuations.

Night Fear: Online, the level of everybody's fandom and education is almost the same, it is more like people discuss things equally. But offline, the HBO media meeting I mentioned before, I worked as a reporter so it is a more professional occasion. I was also invited to share my opinions about the GOT once at a viewing activity in China. I also participated in some offline activities with Qu Chang, Zhao Lin, and the Chongqing publication. That was the translators meeting of the Song of Ice and Fire. I attended as the host or guest. So I think that my feelings are different online and offline. Because during offline activities, I am like a relatively dominant role.

Pan: Have you ever visited the foreign fan forum? is there any difference between Chinese fans and foreign fans?

Night fear: The difference is that, because after all, GOT is rooted in the history and culture of Europe and America, foreign fans have this advantage. They can always find many details that Chinese fans can't find, including prototypes of the characters. I have seen a historian special before, but he is a drama fan, analyze the prototype of each character or each world. And I also found out an economic PHD essay which is about the economic cycle in the Song of Ice and Fire, I feel benefiting of reading it. This kind of reasonable inferences is very scarce in China.

In China, the discussion is still more limited to entertainment, almost no one digs the details. The atmosphere on the international forum is relatively friendly. But people are easy to quarrel against each other on the Chinese forum. And there are a lot of very low-level comments that make me feel very uncomfortable, so I prefer international forums. I only communicate with the same level people on Chinese fan forums. For example, the most typical discussion on the Chinese forum recently is about the female characters and actress. Probably because I am a woman, so I am really sensitive to this part. Some forum is really a "straight male cancer"[23] gathering place. They are discussing whose figure is better and whose chest is bigger. Some discussions are even worse than this.

---

[23] Straight man cancer is a Chinese neologism for a group of men who are stubbornly sexist, it refers to a group that uses a variety of reasons and actions to belittle women's value, harm women's rights, and hinder the movement for gender equality.

Pan: When did you know about fansub group?

Night Fear: In the second year or the first year of college, I started to get in touch with the subtitles group directly. I know from High school that there are subtitle groups who translate foreign dramas, but just knowing it, know there is such an existence.

Pan: Which group is the first fansub group you know?

Night fear: Renren. Yes, because the first foreign drama I watched was the Big Bang, I watched this drama on their website.

Pan: How would you define a fansub group in China?

Night Fear: This is a group, first and foremost non-profit, non-profit is very important. We are a non-profit organization, and it is a part-time thing. What we do is to translate according to the content of the work. We mainly translate some authorized or unauthorized foreign videos or articles. Translation, fandom and non-profit, these three points. non-profits are important, and fansub groups are not profitable. If you want to make money then go to work as a commercial translator. But normally we don't use the name of the fansub group to do the commercial translation. We normally do it in the name of ourselves.

Pan: What do you think causes the popularity of fansub groups in China?

Night fear: I think the first is the time difference, that is, the time difference of receiving information. The rule of most subtitle groups is zero-day. This zero-day rule can't be done in many other places before. But now some movies could be synchronized as other countries. There are more and more official social media account and translation films or dramas for Chinese audiences. So that the advantage of the fansub group has been cut a large chunk. The second one is the need for good content. After all, the difference between domestic creation and foreign creation still exists. Naturally, there will always be people who want to pursue something different. So there is this demand.

Then there is one that is Sharing spirit. Because the fansub group is not profitable. Sometimes, Some people want to be famous so they do this job. I have to admit that some people gain

fame because of translating dramas. But the fame still based on the quality of the drama itself. Also, some people are purely doing fansub work because the drama is too good and they want to share it with others. So this is the sharing spirit. There are also some domestic restriction and regulations on cultural products, resulting in a lot of things that we can't introduce into China legally or completely. And even if we introduce something, the time difference also exists.

This is actually a very objective situation. And there is still one, I feel that nowadays, foreign language education in China is improving, and more and more people are capable to do the translation. And most of the members of the fansub group are students, especially university student because they have more free time. Basically, you won't continue to translate after you get into work, because you don't have that time. Maybe I don't know about the fansub group which translates Japan and South Korea's drama. They may have a smaller time difference. But the time difference between Europe and America is big. You can't do the translation anymore, no matter if you want to do it or not. I have to go to work, I want my job.

Pan: You just mentioned the issue of copyright. Many people think that the fansub group is violating the copyright. What do you think?

Night fear: Yes, I agree, I agree with this. In fact, what I want most is that the fansub group can be recognized by the translation value of their own labor, and I really hope that the fansub group could be completely replaced, or replaced in most cases.

Pan: Replaced by what?

Night Fear: The legal copies, but it should be uncensored, all the plots should be complete. And also the good quality of translation and can follow the zero-day rule. In fact, I did not participate in the translation anymore since the sixth season, the copyright is a very important reason. Because in the sixth season, Tencent has been introduced GOT. There is a personal reason because at that time I started to translate things for HBO, so I definitely won't participate in the fansub thing again.

Pan: You work with HBO now?

Night Fear: Yes, sometimes. I translate some interviews for them and some things about the Westworld. So this is also the reason why I stopped to work in the fansub group, otherwise, it will be super contradictory. I personally prefer the fansub group to be banned, but it is not the kind of simple and rude one-size-fits-all, because if the real problems and needs are not solved, then fansub group still need to exist.

Pan: When did you start to join the YGJT and for what reason?

Night fear: the fourth season. In fact, I joined the Black Castle first. It was the third season. After watching the series, I read the original novel. At that time, the Black Castle is recruiting translators. So I applied and passed the test. Few months after joining the Black Castle, YGJT said that they need a translator and asked me if I had any interest. I said yes, and that is how I started.

Pan: What is the test like?

Night Fear: An article called rereading the Dragon, is written by a people named Steve. He has re-read and interpreted every chapter of the Dragon Dance. They were translating that series of articles at that time. My test was to translate the article talked about Melisandre. I cannot remember how long the article is.

Pan: So is your fandom make you to join the group.

Night Fear: Yes of course. And there is also a personal reason, that is, I need a hobby to support my English learning. I was not particularly good at English before. At that time I was a fan of Sherlock and because of the fansub group, my English advance rapidly. But Sherlock stopped to update so I have to change to another hobby to support me. As a result, I turn to the Song of Ice and Fire.

Pan: Could you please tell me how many fansub groups you have participated in?

Night Fear: Three. YGJT, Taotaotao movie, and a group which translate Sherlock series. Three are enough. I can't do more.

Pan: So what is the differences and similarities among these three groups?

Night Fear: The working process and labor division is like the same. The team members are different, and then the founders might have a certain impact on the group. For example, YGJT has a group proofreading system. After the translation and proofreading done, other subtitle groups suppress and then post the video, and everybody rest. But maybe because the person who do post-production in YGJT is always very busy, and he went home late, so we use this time to do group proofreading. Proofreaders post the translation to the group chat and everyone can join and check if there are any bugs, mistakes, or if there is improvement needed. Other groups I have participated in do not have this step. In fact, group proofreading is quite good, because you cannot see the problem yourself sometimes, but others can.

Pan: What is the difference between normal GOT fans and fansub members?

Night Fear: It is definitely not the same and it is mainly based on the degree of you like, and your appeal. I am still watching the series but I will not translate anymore. Because I don't like it that much now, it cannot give me motivation. But I want to mention that if you get involved, the sense of accomplishment and acquisition is really different. You are very proud because What people watch is translated by me. This feeling is totally different from simply watching. There is also the possibility that because of the job of the fansub group is with some entry barriers, not everybody can do this kind of job. So the partners who work with you, their level is similar to you, and it is very comfortable to get along with. And if it's just a normal fan, you will feel that there could be a lot of conflicts on ideas and the angle of view, like I said before. I think that the general fan community is like sifting sand for gold. It's very tired and annoying. But if it's everybody is on the same level, it's totally different. This is actually very important to me.

Pan: Could you please talk about the whole working process?

In fact, it is very simple. Generally speaking, I remember that the series is played on Sunday in America and Monday morning in China. About 10 o'clock, we can get video resources. and at around 11 o'clock, the English subtitle cames out. Then, when the English subtitle comes

out, everyone gathers together through the internet and divide the labor. Generally, there are four people in each episode for translation. Each person can get one quarter. People usually do this during lunch break. Because we need to post it as soon as possible. All the people go all out in work during the lunch break. I think the translation is the simplest step and also the fastest. Most people finish their translation before 14 o'clock and send it to proofreaders.

Normally we have two people proofread in one episode. Each proofreader checks two translations. The proofreading goes actually very fast, just read it and modify some errors. The group proofreading is the most time-consuming part. Everyone will, of course, as long as you want to participate, will go to the group chat and discuss the translation quality. If there is something we cannot decide, we will ask Qu Chang to make the final decision. After the decision is made, the entire Chinese subtitles, Chinese and English subtitles normally come out before 17 o'clock. The next step is to edit timeline. After the timeline, we do post-production and visual effect. Before we don't have a visual effect, but we have it now. and after post-production, we will try to add subtitles into videos and watch it quickly. If there are no bugs, we post it immediately.

Pan: How do you usually get the resources?

Night Fear: I think the video resource is from Pirate Bay, and the English subtitle resource is from Addic7ed.

Pan: What matters in particular when you translating GOT?

Night Fear: Actually, I think that if you are talking about translation, no matter the content, I have the same requirements for myself. First of all, GOT is a very rich drama, and of course, other translation works are also applicable. When you translate a drama, you are mainly translating lines. So the most important thing is what people say. The words you translated must match to the identity of the character. You can't let a poor people say those very elegant words which are only the nobles can say. Just like this, but in fact, this is true for all translation works. And another one is the simplicity of the language. There are two different branches, which are assimilation and alienation translation. I personally prefer to assimilate

translation. So if your output language is Chinese, you must follow the rules of Chinese and try to be concise. Our internal rule is that the Chinese characters of one line cannot exceed 22 words. It is like a provision or unwritten rule in this group. Because people must watch the drama and you can't just get information from the subtitles, you also need to acquire information from pictures. You can't let subtitles take up too much energy. It's just an auxiliary role. That is to say, your text must be very smooth and not very long.

Pan: You said that you will change the English expression into Chinese expression. Will you subconsciously combine some Chinese culture such as idioms to GOT?

Night fear: Yes. I sometimes do this. But when you quote slang or idioms, you can only quote the corresponding era. For example, I can use Chinese idioms, but they must all be older, not new. Otherwise audiences will feel weird and the feeling is also like to jump to another different drama.

Pan: What is the difference between official translators and fansub translators?

Night fear: If you have been systematically trained in translation, you will be much better at grammatical structure than intuitive translation. I indeed get some theoretical support. Because I started as an amateur translator and later I chose to study the theory of English-Chinese translation course in school, which really helped a lot. Then I also touched on some assimilation translations, such as Mr. Yu Guangzhong's articles and some professional theories and trainings. Which really helped me a lot. And as for fansub translators. We know more about the original novel so we could have a better understanding of GOT than other official translators. Also, we have a different purpose, we do it for fandom, for love, but official translators do it for career and money.

Pan: What is the ratio of men to women in the group?

Nigh Fear: Night Fear: Speaking of this,   YGJT is very unusual. The other two fansub groups I joined are basically all girls, but there are many males in YGJT! The specific data, maybe the Lion and Fomalhaut know clearer than me. I feel like almost half-and-half.

Pan: So the fansub group you have joined have more girls.

Night Fear: There are a lot, a lot of girls. It is like, if someday a male joins us, we will be super excited. Maybe because YGJT is initiated from Baidu Tieba (a Chinese online forum), so we have more males? I don't know.

Pan:What is the difference between female fans and male fans?

Night Fear: Night Fear: I feel that there will be differences between the standpoint and angles on both sides. It is really different. For example, in general, male fans are more concerned with male characters, while female fans are more concerned with female characters, and may also be related to reading, viewing and the sense of substitution.

Pan: What do you think about this kind of unpaid work?

Night fear: I think this is just happy, it is good if you feel happy. If we ignore the copyright issue, it is really fun to do it. Because no matter what you want before you join the group. Most of us are actually holding the purpose of sharing and communicating. This purpose can be satisfied.   And there is also like each can take what he needs. It may be more like the self-satisfaction of personal growth. Yes, personal or social, this sense of accomplishment is very important.

Pan: Has this job made you even more like GOT, or less?

Night fear: I like it more. But how to say, this is also a certain degree thing. Because after all, what you like is based on the quality of the drama. Your work as a fansub member is just an added value, but in fact, the most important thing is the quality of the drama. In fact, this job makes me more like it, but the quality of the series is declining, so I obviously don't like the drama now. It has nothing to do with the fansub group. It is still an objective factor. Because the translation is actually a simple process, a process of language transformation. You might add some value to it but after all, you dance while wearing a chain, you can't get out of the original intention.

Pan: Have you watched the translated GOT by Tencent?

Night fear: Night Fear: I have seen it a bit, not a lot, not wanting to see it. The first is the drama itself. The drama actually has a lot of meaningless naked and violence shots, the problem is getting more serious in the later period. In the early stage, maybe in these naked and violence scenes,　some dialogue or lines or plots with information were also inserted. But recently, they make violence scenes for violence.　In fact, I personally are very opposed. And Tencent's translation I feel okay. But it is also the level of okay, for example, I give Tencent six points out of ten. I will definitely give my YGJT 7 to 8 points.

Pan: Is the censored part affect the audience to understand the story?

Night fear: In fact, the story will not be too affected, because, after the sixth season, the nude and violence scenes are meaningless, so even if they are deleted, it does not affect people to understand the plot.

Pan: Compare to them, What are your advantages? what are the disadvantages?

Night Fear: The first advantage is quality, but to be honest that this advantage is actually shrinking. Because after all, the drama is adapted from the original novel. And everybody can read it if they want to read. If they read the original novel, the quality can be also good as us. The second advantage is that the name tagging. We make post-production so when characters show up, their names appear with them. We are quite proud of this because many people told us that these name tagging help them to distinguish characters. However, name tagging is a very friendly thing for newcomers, but if you have reached a certain level, it has no effect on you.

There is still a problem with YGJT, the copyright. This is the biggest disadvantage and the most fundamental disadvantage. There is also a time the members turnover. I think all the fansub group has a certain cycle. Especially regarding the time difference problem. If this person is in the United States, he may not need to worry about the time. But if you are in the UK, if you want to catch up with this translation time in the UK, you are supposed to do work at three o'clock in the morning. I cannot do it.　It is very unfriendly to the UK time zone. If

you are in the Chinese time zone, it completely taking over your working hours. So time is really a big problem.

Pan: So you worked in YGJT before you went to UK?

Night Fear: Yes, I did it during my third year and fourth year of university. At that time I mainly worked as a translator or proofreader. I didn't have many lectures at that time and even if I had a lecture, I was free after 11: 30 am so I can do it. It did not disturb my studying.

Pan: What kind audiences Tencent has? What kind audiences you have?

Night fear: The audience of YGJT is mainly those brought from Baidu Tieba, and those people who attracted by our media social account. YGJT is a fansub group that only translate one series, which is rarely seen. Most of the groups are comprehensive subtitle groups. For example, Eden, such as the Tattered Bear, they are all comprehensive subtitle groups, so they may have different kinds of audiences watch their different works. But YGJT has only one drama, so fame is more based on word-of-mouth. And Tencent's advantage in this respect is obviously very huge. Whether its financial advantage, or its marketing advantage, or the channel advantage. All these YGJT certainly cannot compete or compare.

Pan: What do you think about the censorship/introduce in China?

Night Fear: I personally don't like it very much, but I also know very well that it is a process. Because in this era, many of Chinese regulations are quite backward, very brutal and one-size-fits-all. The government has a very vague right, and then cause a lot of imaginary fears and self-censorship. So there will be a lot of things that can be easily manipulated by them. The decision obviously belongs to them, not to our audiences. So in fact, it is very irresponsible to the audience. Because they are screening others for the right to get information, and their subjective assumptions will overwrite a lot of things. It is just like a few people making a decision for a large audience. This is something I really disagree with. No matter the cultural work or media work, it should actually correspond to many different vertical groups. And these groups are actually very complicated. No matter from age or the products that people need or want to contact, it is not okay to use one single rule.

Pan: Does censorship influence the living environment of fansub groups?

Night Fear: Yes. There must be some, like what happened to Renren before (a subtitle group which was shutted down by the government several years ago), I know that they are doing Renren film and television now. I really don't know if they have copyright or not. Because I feel like they are still making money without buying the copyright. But I am not sure about this, so I dare not say it, but if they do, it is really a shame of fansub groups. Because the most important point of fansub groups is non-profit because not profitable can be regarded as the most fundamental point. After all, we all know that we are doing the gray thing. So whether from the point of law or morality, we cannot do other things besides sharing. If you are still using this method to make profits at this time, it really touches the red line and bottom line of fansub groups. So this is why most fansub groups don't like Renren. There is also Youzimu. These two can be regarded as the shame of fansub groups.

So the thing actually depends on how big and ambitious the fansub group is. Including the shutted down of the shooters website, I witnessed this event from the beginning to the end. In fact, shooters only shared the subtitle resources and timeline, not even share video resources, but at the time, it was the first one shut down by the government because of the one-size-fits-all censorship and introduction policy. So I think fansub groups should be more careful nowadays and definitely cannot make money from this job.

Pan: Did you know about the British censorship system or pirate when you were in the UK?

Night Fear: I don't know much about it, because I didn't pay much attention to it before. But there are some schools in the UK, for example, Oxford, Cambridge, I heard that they have very strict rules about copyright and pirate. But because we were provided with these accounts by the university, so in fact, we do not have this demand to download resources.

Pan: Do you think that our country will make a specification or regulation for the subtitle group in the future?

Night fear: I think it is unlikely. Because fansub groups are, the biggest limitation is it in the

gray zone. The fasub group is a transitional product, and it is a thing that will disappear for sure. Maybe the best way out is Zhao'an (offer amnesty and enlistment to rebels). If the subtitle group can be transformed into an industry association, then the talent of the translator this association reserves and its efficiency is very immeasurable. But why don't they do it? Because the whole translation area now, the domestic payment still stagnate in 1999. And the company who has the copyright, they know that you are doing kind of illegal things, they know that you will produce works anyway. So they have no fear, and they will buy your work at a very unfair and unreasonable price. There are many unequal treaties, and I don't know if other members have told you this.

Pan: Yes, I have heard that Tencent once wanted to work with YGJT and buy your translation work.

Night Fear: We decided to not work with them for many reasons. But the most important thing is their ignorant arrogance, really ignorant arrogance, or arrogance without fear. Whether it is the treatment they give us, the conditions they give us, or the way they communicate with us. It almost makes me want to talk dirty.

Pan: Does YGJT help the influence and the popularity of GOT in China?

Night fear: I think yes. Because first of all, the YGJT has a natural advantage, that is, it starts from the Baidu Tieba, and it has a good communication channel and audiences. Then on this basis, YGJT has carried out a language conversion, then it is naturally we can get more and more audiences. From the download of the subtitles, we can see the growth. And also the hits of some our previous trailer, all the data are showing that there are indeed more and more people watching.

Pan: So what kind of role do you think subtitles play in helping to understand the story?

Night Fear: In fact, it plays a role like a ladder mainly for those do not have enough language ability to watch the drama.

Pan: Will you take the initiative to share your identity as a fansub member with your

family and friends?

Night fear: Yes, and I am very proud. If there is nothing to hide. I   share it, I will take the initiative to share it. And I also tell them clearly, what kind of people am I working with, where are they, what kind of education they get. So the family feels very happy for me. So sometimes if I want to meet some friends are not members of the fansub group, I always tell my family that I am gonna meet my fansub group members. Yes, I lie to them sometimes because they always give me green light if I meet with fansub members.

Pan: I am very curious about how you get the chance to do the translation for HBO. Can you talk more about it?

Night fear: First of all, I have more contact with them during the sixth and seventh season. Because the people I know who work for HBO Asia before has changed his job now. And HBO, in fact, they are very curious about the Chinese market and really look forward to it. They want to come in, but they don't know how to do it. The Chinese market is a blank for them and they know nothing about it. They don't know what kind of strategy the Chinese market needs and how to promote it, but they want to do it.

I get in touch with HBO directly, but this opportunity is very rare for the domestic fansub groups. Because you are doing gray or illegal things, you are embarrassed to see the copyright owner. I get the chance to meet them because of "Taotaotao movie" which I mentioned before. Because Taotaotao mainly does trailers so in this group we don't have illegal issues. But there are very few people can get this kind of chance and also there are very few opportunities. What happened to me is really a coincidence. Yes, because after that meeting, the HBO sixth season media meeting, I told them about these things. At that time, I communicated with him about two or three nights, and then I get the chance to help them to do the translation.

Pan: So they actually know the existence of fansub groups? What kind of attitude do they have?

Night Fear: They know it. I told him directly. At the beginning of the conversation, I was quite worried and thought maybe it is a taboo for them. But later, after we get to know each

other, we started to talk about this. I think they don't really care about this issue. Maybe for these international companies, fansub groups explore a good market for them. They don't really care at this time. But maybe also because they have not yet entered this market, and once they enter, they might suddenly turn hostile. So this is why I don't want to do the fansub job anymore.

Pan: Thanks for your time, is there anything you want to add?

Night Fear: Hmmm, No.

Appendix 2: Examples of Coding process

The first stage of coding
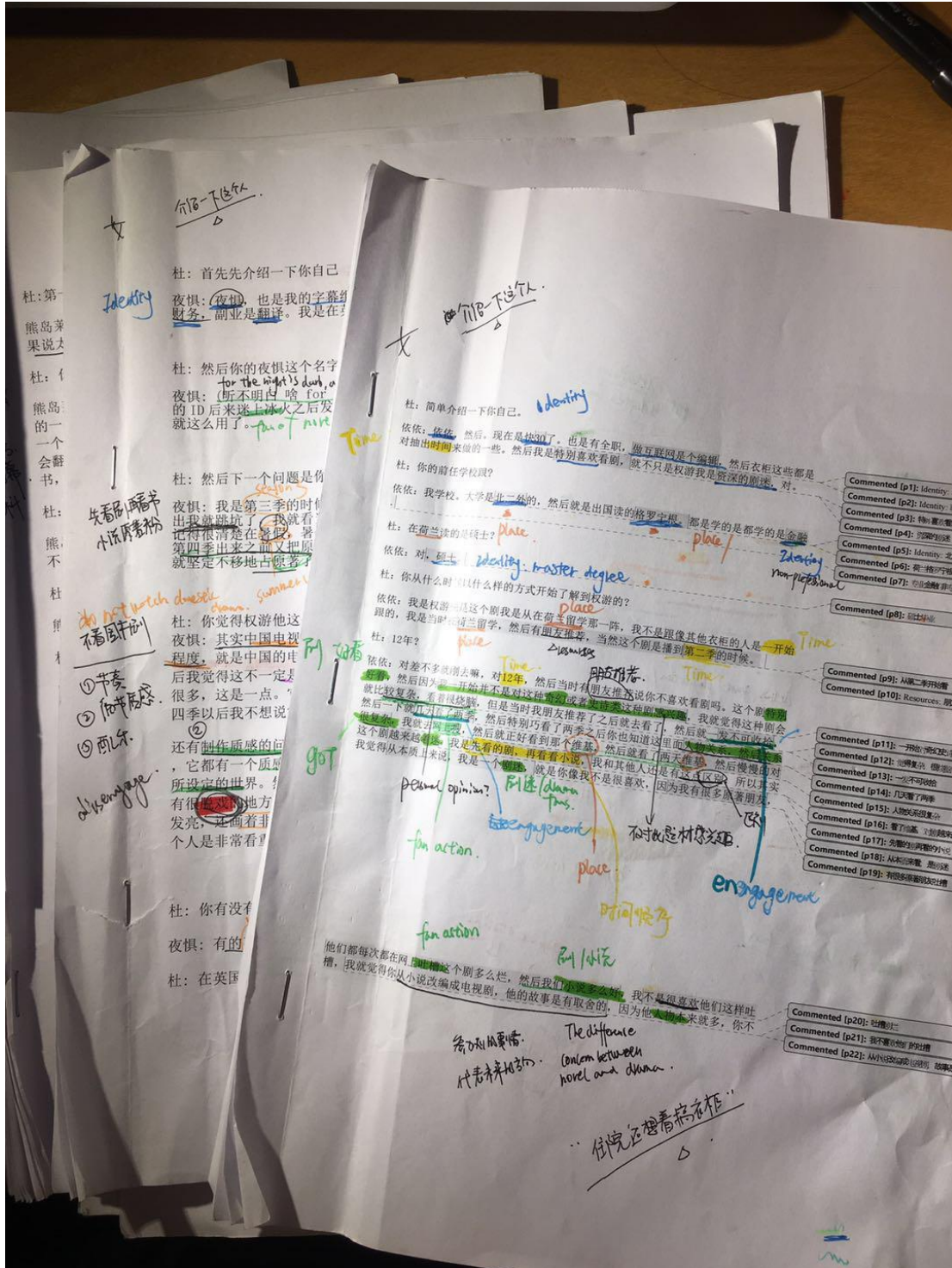
④ 依依

30岁/互联网编辑/北二外/荷兰格罗宁根/金融学/女

"从本质来看，我是个剧迷"
"我不喜欢原著朋友的吐槽"
"从只看国产剧到看美剧"
"猎奇心理"
"在荷兰也是看中我片源"
"有一些权缘粉觉得全世界的剧就权游最好，其他都看不上，捧一踩一"
"没有剧和小说的话，整个就处于停滞状态了"
☆ "中国的粉丝是注定要被国外粉丝分离出来的部分" ☆
☆ "新粉不会在雅断，比较注重于当下已有的东西" ☆
"现在的字幕组与以前的不样"
▽ "抢首发" "会撕" ▽
☆ "字幕组重要的争析点是开始在里面插广告" ☆
"相惜" "相输诚"
"我们对人的感情很深"
"五熟肉的牌是很重的" "出止不是其他字幕组成员"
"我们非常支持电影，电视剧引进"
☆ 充会员，补票 → 心补队愧疚 ☆
"怎么样都会舍功，引式不将"
☆ "随时在勤奋式权游东西" "译体-拉近镜头" / 中英语都18没3 ☆ 狮子
"在尽自己最大努力来保证这个剧的完整"
"流水线"作业
"要先保己"

"依依对于驳性别的理解
对腾用的看法   对你都的忠实

"对角色有一解的新的称呼，都是一种美称"   英你

☆ 我总会找到我的微博账我说得加好 ☆

与粉的关系

⑪

Example of sorting codes

	Citation	Descriptive codes	Analytical codes	Category	Theme
1	Citation	Descriptive codes	Analytical codes	Category	Theme
2	"I graduacted from University of Groningen, Holand"	Graduacted from Holand	Well-educated	Personal information	Fandom
3	"My friend recommend this drama to me"	Friend recommendation	Reason to engage	Engagement	Fandom
4	"I binge-watched it, it took me only several days to finsh two seasons."	Binge-watching the drama	Intensive engagement/time to watch	Engagement/Time	Fandom
5	"This drama and relations between people are complex, so I search it online"	drama is complex, need help	Further engagement	Fan activities/Engagement	Fandom
6	"I watch the drama first, then the novel, different than many other friends"	watch drama, then novel	Order of book and drama	Time/Engagement	Fandom
7	"I started to watch it from 2012"	Start to watch from 2012	Time to watch /Start to engage	Time/Engagement	Fandom
8	"I started to do fansub work from 2015"	Start to join fansub from 2015	Time to do fansub work	Time/fan activities	Fandom
9	"the production and actors are really good"	good production and actors	Positive engagement	Engagement	Fandom
10	"I watched it by downloading resources in Holand"	downloading resources abroad	Informal distribution	Distribution	Power-relations
11	"this drama indeed has it shortcomes"	Drama has shortcomes	Critical engagement	Engagement	Fandom
12	"the time of they travel across the land is really unreasonable"	Time to travel is unreasonable	Critical engagement/screen time	Engagement/Time	Fandom
13	"The translation quality of some fansub groups is really bad"	some fansub work is bad	Translation qualitites	Fansub groups comparison	Fan free labour
14	"old members in our group like to discuss and speculate what will happen next,"	Old members like to predict and discuss	Critical engagement	Members comparison/Engagement	Fandom
15	"new members more focus on plots are good, actors are good, less speculation"	New members less on predict	Affective engagement/Positive engagement	Members comparison/Engagement	Fandom
	"I know the existence of fansub groups from	know fansub groups from	information about the fansub		Fandom

Yiyi | Garvin | Night Fear | Lion of Winterfell | Tomman | City inspector | Honda

94

Appendix 3: Example of mind map