



# A Study on the Inheritance and Transformation of Ancient Literary Traditions in Online Literature

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## Abstract

As a burgeoning literary form, online literature has gained a significant foothold in modern literary circles due to its distinctive creation methods and dissemination pathways. This new genre not only inherits the rich legacy of ancient literature but also revolutionizes traditional literary forms through modernized expressions and innovative narrative techniques. It serves as a dynamic platform where classic elements of ancient literature, such as mythology, historical narratives, and cultural motifs, are reimagined and adapted for contemporary audiences. By analyzing the representation and transformation of these ancient literary elements within online literature, this paper explores the complex transmission and development of ancient literary traditions in the digital environment. It examines how online literature fosters a dialogue between past and present, allowing traditional themes to resonate with modern readers while challenging and enriching their understanding of cultural heritage. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the evolution of literature in the age of digital media.

## Keywords

Online literature; ancient literature; xianxia culture; creative innovation

## 1. Introduction

Online literature, as an emerging form, has swiftly captured the modern cultural market, offering a new platform for the dissemination and innovation of traditional literature. Its rise has not only transformed the ways literature is created and consumed but has also profoundly influenced the inheritance and evolution of ancient literary traditions. Ancient literature, with its rich cultural connotations and unique narrative styles, provides abundant creative resources and inspiration for online literature.

Currently, scholars have increasingly focused on the development of online literature and conducted various studies in this field. Ren (2024) combines computational and interpretive textual analysis to map the cultural features embedded in webnovel content, identifying genre elements, common lexicon, and story themes across 4,040 translated Chinese webnovels on global platforms. Wang, Tang, and Zhou (2024) explore the concept of glocalization by analyzing the phenomenon-level success of *The Lord of the Mysteries*, a Chinese fantasy webnovel. Their study examines how Chinese fantasy literature can globalize by addressing cultural, linguistic, and reader dynamics, thus enabling its worldwide reach. Liu (2024) investigates the adaptation of Tang Jia San Shao's *Douluo Dalu* series into anime, demonstrating how its detailed visual design, intricate image processing, and vivid character portrayal have successfully brought the novel's rich fantasy world to a broad audience.

Through the modernization and reimagining of ancient literary elements, online literature continues to uphold traditional culture while simultaneously driving innovations in literary forms. However, in the process of inheriting ancient

literary traditions, online literature also faces challenges, such as the misinterpretation of traditional elements and tendencies toward commercialization. Thus, an in-depth exploration of the representation and transformation of ancient literary elements in online literature not only helps in understanding how traditional culture adapts and evolves in a modern context but also serves as a valuable reference for future literary creations.

## **2. The Rise of Online Literature and Its Relationship with the Inheritance of Ancient Literary Traditions**

The rapid rise of online literature is not only the result of technological advancements but also a reinvention and continuation of traditional literary forms. By leveraging digital platforms such as novel websites, e-books, and mobile applications, online literature has quickly garnered a broad readership, with modes of distribution and creation that diverge greatly from traditional printed books. This shift presents both new opportunities and challenges for the inheritance and development of ancient literary traditions.

Classic elements of ancient literature, such as traditional historical novels, wuxia (martial arts) stories, and mythological tales, have been carried forward in varying degrees within online literature. For example, the novel *Battle Through the Heavens* (Dou Po Cangqiong) skillfully incorporates elements of ancient cultivation (xianxia) culture, modernizing these aspects to resonate with contemporary readers. This demonstrates the vitality of ancient literary traditions in a new media environment.

However, this transformation is not without its issues. Some works within online literature excessively dramatize ancient settings and character archetypes to cater to market demands, potentially leading to misunderstandings about the true nature of ancient literature. Therefore, examining the influence of online literature on ancient literary traditions requires not only a focus on how it continues cultural legacies but also a critical look at its re-creation in the modern context, as well as its challenges to and impacts on traditional literature.

By analyzing the representation and transformation of ancient literary elements in online literature, we can gain deeper insights into how ancient literature is revived and developed in new contexts. Furthermore, we can explore the influence of online literature on ancient literary traditions and its potential future development.

## **3. Analysis of the Representation and Transformation of Ancient Literary Elements in Online Literature**

The representation and transformation of ancient literary elements in online literature reflect how traditional literature adapts and innovates in modern creative contexts. Through the creativity and handling of online writers, these classic elements are incorporated into contemporary cultural settings, resulting in works that carry both innovation and literary significance.

Take *A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality* (Fanren Xiuxian Zhuan) and *Shrouding the Heavens* (Zhetian) as examples. These online literary works deeply reimagine and innovate upon ancient cultivation culture and mythological narratives. *A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality* combines the rich worldview of the cultivation genre with Daoist cultural elements, blending ancient religious beliefs with modern technological themes to create a virtual world that merges traditional charm with a sense of futuristic innovation. This integration not only allows Daoist culture to be represented in a modern context but also enhances the reader's immersive experience through modern narrative techniques. In contrast, *Shrouding the Heavens* boldly reconfigures ancient mythological characters and plotlines. The mythic figures are given new roles and backgrounds, while modern fantasy elements are incorporated to present traditional mythology in a refreshed form. This approach preserves the mystique of ancient culture while aligning with the aesthetic preferences of contemporary readers.

Moreover, ancient literary elements in online literature are not limited to reproductions of traditional themes but also involve innovative treatments of these subjects. For example, *The King's Avatar* (Full Time Expert) combines traditional wuxia elements with the modern world of online gaming, creating a new narrative mode. The characters not only inherit the heroic personas typical of wuxia but also blend in the competitive aspects of modern e-sports, breathing new life into traditional wuxia stories within a gamified setting. This innovative narrative style enriches the expression of ancient literary elements and contributes to the diversification of literary creation.

Through the analysis of these specific examples, we can clearly observe how online literature reinterprets and innovates upon ancient literary elements in the modern environment. This process not only demonstrates the adaptability of ancient literature but also underscores the active role online literature plays in cultural transmission.

#### 4. Adaptability and Innovation of Ancient Literary Traditions in Online Literature

The adaptability and innovation of ancient literary traditions in online literature showcase the flexibility and transformative potential of traditional culture in modern contexts. In their creative process, online writers often combine classical elements from ancient literature with modern narrative techniques to meet the aesthetic expectations of contemporary readers. For instance, *Way of Choices* (Zetianji), while continuing the theme of ancient cultivation culture, revitalizes traditional xianxia stories with modern narrative structures and plot designs, bringing new vitality to these age-old themes in a modern context. Similarly, *The King's Avatar* blends the traditional wuxia genre with modern e-sports elements, creating a new literary form. This fusion not only offers a fresh take on ancient literary themes but also enriches the formal expression of online literature.

The adaptability and innovation in online literature allow ancient literary elements to be preserved while also driving literary transformation and growth. Analyzing the adaptability and innovation of ancient literary traditions in online literature provides insight into how online literature redefines and perpetuates traditional culture in modern contexts. This adaptability is evident not only in narrative techniques and plot designs but also in the modernization of character development, linguistic styles, and cultural symbols. For example, *Joy of Life* (Qingyunian) successfully engages a wide readership by modernizing depictions of ancient bureaucratic culture and political intrigue, providing a fresh interpretation of ancient themes within online literature.

Additionally, many online literary works blend modern slang and internet vernacular with traditional stories, making these narratives more relatable to modern readers' lifestyles and modes of thinking. Through this multi-layered innovation, ancient literary traditions in online literature are not only preserved but are imbued with new life and energy, contributing to the diversification and richness of modern literature.

#### 5. The Impact of Online Literature on Ancient Literary Traditions and Future Development Trends

The impact of online literature on ancient literary traditions includes both positive inheritance and innovation, as well as challenges and transformations to traditional culture. The rapid growth of online literature has enabled the continuation of classic elements of ancient literature in new media environments. For instance, the *Ghost Blows Out the Light* series combines traditional archaeological adventure themes with modern suspense storytelling, creating a new narrative mode. This influence has not only spurred the revival of ancient literature but also diversified the channels through which traditional culture is disseminated.

However, the commercialization of online literature may lead to misunderstandings and oversimplifications of traditional culture. For example, some online novels excessively dramatize ancient settings and character archetypes, which could distort the true essence of ancient literature. Additionally, the immediacy and interactivity of online literature challenge traditional literary criticism and aesthetic standards.

Therefore, future research needs to focus on the long-term impact of online literature on ancient literary traditions, including its role in preserving and innovating traditional culture. Future development trends may include placing greater emphasis on the accurate transmission and innovation of traditional literary elements, promoting a deeper integration of online literature with ancient culture, and exploring new creative models to meet the evolving demands of readers. Analyzing the impact of online literature on ancient literary traditions and its future trends can offer fresh perspectives and directions for the preservation and dissemination of traditional literature.

#### 6. Conclusion

The rise of online literature has provided new opportunities for the inheritance and development of ancient literary traditions, while also presenting various challenges. Through a thorough analysis of the representation and transformation of ancient literary elements in online literature, it is evident that online literature has successfully integrated classic elements such as ancient cultivation culture, mythological tales, and the wuxia world into modern creative works. This has revitalized these traditional cultures within a new media environment.

However, tendencies toward commercialization and dramatization may result in misinterpretations and distortions of traditional culture, impacting the authenticity of ancient literature. In the future, the creation of online literature should place greater emphasis on the accurate transmission and innovation of traditional culture. By exploring new creative models and forms of expression, online literature can continue to contribute to the preservation and evolution of ancient literary traditions.

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