

IP Monetization Fuels Boom of Chinese Internet Literature Writers

■ By Nie Huichao

Internet literature, a quintessential facet of Chinese culture featured by mass creation and widespread readership, has now further emerged as a potent force for boosting cultural confidence. Over years of evolution, internet literature has broken free from its origins as mere text-based narratives. The intellectual property (IP) value derived from these creations, coupled with their profound impact on fans, has elevated internet literature to an integral driving force within the vast industry while still maintaining its commitment to delivering original content.

According to 2022 Report on the Development of Chinese Internet Literature released by the Literary Study Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, internet literature market has reached 38.93 billion yuan in 2022, achieving a high-speed growth of 8.8% compared to the previous year. The number of users for internet literature reached a staggering 492 million. The number of Chinese internet literature authors has cumulatively exceeded 22.78 million, covering 57 major sectors of the national economy. Excellent internet authors have the ability to create iconic works, leading the way for literature genres of their time. Today, top authors still dominate the lists, while new talents continue to emerge.



Tian Can Tu Dou

Li Hu, better known by his pen name Tian Can Tu Dou, serves as the Vice Chairman of the Zhejiang Provincial Association of Internet Authors and is a member of the 10th National Committee of the China Writers Association. In 2008, he began his writing on Qidian.com with his debut work, *Blademaster of Warcraft Entrance between Vertical and Horizontal* (《魔兽剑圣异界纵横》). In 2009, he achieved overnight fame with his second epic fantasy novel *Battle Through the Heavens* (《斗破苍穹》). His works have then been adapted into online games and mobile games, and all of his creations have been adapted into comics. Notably, *Battle Through the Heavens* has been adapted into a movie.

Tian Can Tu Dou has consistently endeavored to construct an oriental fantasy universe. He believes that such a universe not only easily resonates with Eastern audiences but also encapsulates the essence of Eastern cultural heritage, making it a powerful vehicle for cultural exportation. His effort has garnered substantial acclaim in regions such as Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia, Europe, and America. To facilitate the global promotion of his literary works, Tian Can Tu Dou has established a company for copyright management. This strategic move has concentrated all efforts on his creation and management, while vigorously propelling various adaptation projects. Based on novel creation, his works have extended into comics, animation, audiobooks, and further into the realms of game, film and television production.

Nan Pai San Shu

Nan Pai San Shu is a renowned Chinese writer, screenwriter, the Vice Chairman of the Zhejiang Provincial Association of Internet Authors and the Chairman of Nan Pai Investments. In 2007, he published the first book in the series of *Grave Robbers' Chronicles* (《盗墓笔记》). In 2011, Nan Pai San Shu

founded the magazine *Super Nice* (《超好看》) and served as the editor-in-chief. In the same year, he established the "Nan Pai San Shu Comics Studio". In 2014, he founded Hangzhou Nan Pai Investment Management Co., Ltd., specializing in IP ecosystem operation and development.

Nan Pai San Shu is one of the earliest authors to create internet novels in the genre of grave-robbing. His most famous work *Grave Robbers' Chronicles* uses suspenseful grave-robbing tales as a framework to construct a fantastic and special mystical world. During its serialization, *Grave Robbers' Chronicles* ignited an online frenzy. After its publication in physical books, it consistently secured prominent positions in both sales and online popularity. To date, it has sold over 20 million copies. Later, Nan Pai San Shu continued to create several related series set in the same fictional universe, including *Tibetan Sea Flower* (《藏海花》), *The Ocean of Sand* (《沙海》), and the serialized *Grave Robbers' Chronicles: Reboot* (《盗墓笔记·重启》) on his WeChat official account.



Gu Man

Gu Man, a renowned contemporary Chinese writer and screenwriter, gained fame for her novel *Farewell Silence* (《何以笙箫默》), and has since published works like *A Kingdom for Weiwei's Smile* (《微微一笑很倾城》), and *You Are My Glory* (《你是我的荣耀》). With the surge in adaptations of internet literature into films and television series, Gu Man's influence as an author continued to flourish.



Some readers view Gu Man's novels as constructing a utopian world centered around "love". In this Utopia, "love" reigns as the supreme justice and guiding principle, capable of overcoming all obstacles, which can be a rarity in the real world. Gu Man's delicate prose captured the subtle emotions in everyday life with precision. This resonated with the rising popularity of "sweet and affectionate dramas" in recent years, aligning with readers' demand for such content in the market.

Following the success of her works in film and television adaptations, Gu Man started prioritizing Intellectual Property (IP) considerations. For instance, when creating *You Are My Glory*, she first secured the authorization of the mobile game "Honor of Kings" (王者荣耀) and later pursued its adaptation into film and television. This strategy aligned with the successful film-game integration of *A Kingdom for Weiwei's Smile* and has provided Gu Man with valuable insights into IP development.

Tian Xia Gui Yuan

The literary creations of Tian Xia Gui Yuan (the pen name of Lu Jing) are renowned for the robust prose, witty writing style, boundless imagination, and a distinctive narrative approach that transcends the conventions of typical romance novels, capturing a vast and devoted readership. Tian Xia Gui Yuan has

published popular new books in the genre of youth literature, such as *Legend of Fu Yao* (《扶摇皇后》), *The Rise of Phoenixes* (《凰权》), *Phoenix Tilts the Heavens* (《凤倾天阙》), and *The Empress* (《女帝本色》). Her works have achieved remarkable success in terms of online views, sales, and adaptations into film and television series.



From a literary perspective, Tian Xia Gui Yuan's works have grand and intricate structures with delicate character portrayals. They offer a unique insight into human nature and human affairs. What is particularly noteworthy is how her works deviated from the typical themes of "striving for favor", "females' dominance over males", or "pure romantic narratives", and centered on female subjectivity and rights awareness. Her vivid and fluid narratives skillfully incorporate feminist ideologies.

"I don't focus much on national conflicts, instead I prioritize writing about how an ordinary person undergoes trials and grows. You can call it 'growth literature', where the growth of ordinary individuals becomes the central theme that constitutes the story's structure", says Tian Xia Gui Yuan. She believed that during the journey of growth, there would be many opportunities for new explorations, fresh insights and collisions, which might also enrich the plots of stories.



Ai Qianshui De Wuzei

Ai Qianshui De Wuzei, whose real name is Yuan Ye, is a contracted writer at Qidian.com and a platinum author at China Literature. His notable works include *The Record of Destroying Destiny* (《灭运图录》), *Throne of Magical Arcana* (《奥术神座》), *The Supreme* (《一世之尊》), *Martial Arts Master* (《武道宗师》), etc. In 2017, he was honored with the 2nd China Literature Foundation's Mao Dun Literature Prize for Newcomers in Internet Literature. In 2019, he was elected as the Chairman of the 2nd Executive Council of the Sichuan Provincial Internet Writers Association. In December 2021, he was appointed as a member of the 10th National Committee of the China Writers Association.

As one of the most prominent internet novels in recent years, *Lord of Mysteries* (《诡秘之主》) combines various cultural elements such as fantasy adventure, steampunk, and the Victorian era. The global total views of this work have reached an astonishing 25 million times.

Generally speaking, the works of Ai Qianshui De Wuzei exhibit a highly independent pursuit within the internet literature system, continuously exploring new themes and settings. He mentioned, "Reality will always be the richest source of nourishment for us, providing the most vitality to our creations. In reality, we can understand how the world operates, draw inspiration from many intriguing and relatable character prototypes, and incorporate humanistic concerns from the real world into our works."

