



Explores the mythological elements in Chinese animation design and their evolution

Liang Li

City University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

1449307548@qq.com

Abstract. Chinese animation has a long history, and one of its sources of inspiration is ancient mythology. The purpose of this article is to explore the representation of mythological themes in Chinese animation and how it has evolved in different periods. Through the analysis of representative works, we can understand the status and role of mythological themes in the development of Chinese animation, as well as its value in cultural inheritance and contemporary aesthetic concepts.

Keywords: animation design, mythological elements, Chinese aesthetics.

1 Introduction

1.1 The place of mythological themes in Chinese culture

Mythological themes play an important role in Chinese culture. As an important part of traditional Chinese culture, mythology reflects the ancient Chinese's understanding and thinking about nature, society and life. They show the imagination and creativity of the ancients, and the traditional values and morals contained in them have always had a profound impact on the thinking and behavior of the Chinese.

In Chinese mythology, the protagonists usually have superhuman strength and intelligence, and they are able to conquer nature, eliminate violence, and pursue a better life. These mythical characters and stories celebrate the Chinese nation's excellent qualities of self-improvement, bravery, unity and cooperation, and also express the ancient Chinese's vision and yearning for a better future. The film incorporates elements of some traditional Chinese myths and legends, such as Zhen Fei Niu, Ju Mang, Ji Rong, Hou Tu, Ying Long, etc., which not only add to the mystery of the story, but also play a key role in promoting and symbolizing the storyline, making the story more rich and diverse, and also providing the audience with an opportunity to deeply understand and understand traditional Chinese culture. [1]

In Chinese culture, mythological themes are not only expressed through literature, drama, music, dance and other art forms, but are also deeply rooted in folk beliefs and customs. For example, the mythical dragon and phoenix have become symbols of Chinese culture and are widely used in works of art and festivals. In addition, many myths

and stories have been compiled into traditional art forms such as opera and pingtan, and have been widely sung among the people, playing a role in cultural inheritance and education. Through the discussion of the theme of the story, we can effectively sort out the essence of the changes in Chinese animation. As a young art form, animation creation is not "out of nothing", but a re-innovation on the basis of other literary and artistic achievements. [2]

1.2 The development of Chinese animation

The development process of Chinese animation can be roughly divided into four stages: the founding period, the development period, the prosperity period and the transformation period.

Founding period (20s of the 20th century):

The founding period of Chinese animation can be traced back to the 20s of the 20th century. In 1926, the animated commercial "Shu Zhendong Chinese Typewriter" produced by Wan Laiming and Wan Gu Chan Brothers marked the birth of Chinese animation. After that, Wan Laiming completed China's first sound animation "Camel Dance" in 1935, and produced China's first feature-length animation "Iron Fan Princess" in 1941.

Development period (50-70s of the 20th century):

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese animation entered a period of rapid development. Representative works of this period include *Havoc in Heaven* (1961-1964), *Little Tadpole Looking for Mother* (1960), and *Na Zha Hao Hai* (1979). These works have distinctive national characteristics and artistic styles, and have been loved by audiences at home and abroad.

Boom period (80-90s of the 20th century):

After the reform and opening up, Chinese animation ushered in a prosperous period. The number and quality of works from this period reached new heights, with many classics appearing, such as "Three Monks" (1980), "Strange Tales from the Book of Heaven" (1983), "Sheriff Black Cat" (1984-1987), etc. In addition, this period also gave birth to many excellent animated series, such as "Hulu Brothers" (1986), "Shuke and Beta" (1989), etc.

1.3 The significance of mythological themes in Chinese animation

Inheritance of traditional culture: Myths and legends occupy an important place in traditional Chinese culture, and they reflect the ancient people's understanding of nature, society and life. Incorporating these themes into animation works helps to pass on and promote traditional culture. Animated characters are also a kind of visual symbols of a meaningful art form, which reflects the character's character, national aesthetic culture, and the development of science and technology, and is recognized by more people for its unique form and aesthetic value. Bizarre visual images and animated imagery of animated characters, expressing exaggerated and deformed visual aesthetic tension; Bright colors, cartoonish shapes and strong dynamics highlight the strong visual

pleasure of the senses; The humorous virtual image satisfies people's passion for joy and experience. [3]

Stimulate the imagination: Mythological stories are full of fantastical, mysterious elements, which are invaluable for animation creation. These assets can spark the imagination of animators and create compelling compositions.

Artistic value: Mythological themes have high artistic value, and they often have twists and turns in plots, distinct characters, and profound ideological connotations. Incorporating these elements into your animation work can improve the artistic level of your work.

Edutainment: Myths and stories often contain profound truths, such as bravery, kindness, unity, etc. Expressing these truths through the vivid and interesting form of animation can make the audience entertained while being subtly influenced.

Enhance national pride: Mythological themes are an important part of traditional Chinese culture and a valuable heritage of the Chinese nation. By creating animation works with this theme, we can enhance national pride and stimulate national spirit.

In particular, as the core part of animation technology, the production method has a direct and profound impact on the animation art style, narrative rhythm, charm performance, etc., and is often used to divide the animation type, which is the main entry point for the investigation of animation technology. [4]

2 Ancient Mythology and Early Chinese Animation

2.1 The origin and characteristics of ancient Chinese mythology

The origins of ancient Chinese mythology can be traced back to ancient times, when human civilization was just beginning, and people could not make scientific explanations for natural phenomena, human origins, etc., so a series of myths and stories were created to explain these phenomena. The main characteristics of ancient Chinese mythology are as follows:

Diversity: Ancient Chinese mythology originated from different peoples and regions, so it has diversity. For example, Han mythology includes legends such as Pangu opening the sky and Nuwa creating man, while ethnic minorities such as Tibetans and Miao also have their own unique mythological systems.

Rich Imagination: Ancient Chinese mythology is full of rich imagination, which is due to the fact that the ancients tried to explain the complex and mysterious world through mythology. For example, in ancient mythology, animals and humans could communicate, and the vagaries of nature were interpreted as the actions of the gods.

Inheritance: Ancient Chinese mythology has inheritance, that is, it has been sung, processed and enriched in the long river of history. For example, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* is an important work of ancient Chinese mythology, but it was not written all at once, but was supplemented and revised many times over the course of its long history.

Profound meaning: Ancient Chinese myths often have profound meanings, such as praise for bravery, kindness, unity, etc. These meanings are passed on to people through

myths and stories, V and have become an important part of the traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

Blending with historical events: Ancient Chinese mythology and historical events are intertwined, and some characters and events in mythological stories are endowed with historical significance. For example, the legend of the Yellow Emperor's victory over Chiyou reflects both the ancient wars between tribes and the identity and unity of the Chinese nation.

2.2 Analysis of early Chinese mythological classics

The mythological theme in early Chinese animation is a very unique theme, such as the analytical framework of traditional Chinese culture proposed by Gao Weihua and Qing Yuxiao [5], which has high practical significance, but lacks more diverse and universal investigation. Chinese animation artists present Chinese traditional culture and mythological stories in the form of animation, giving animation works a deeper cultural connotation and artistic value. "Havoc in the Heavenly Palace" and "What a Havoc in the Sea" are among the representative works.

"Havoc in Heaven": This work is based on traditional mythological stories, and shows the unique charm of Chinese animation art through the plot of Monkey King's havoc in the Heavenly Palace. In terms of picture expression, the artists used traditional Chinese ink painting techniques to vividly express the grandeur of the Heavenly Palace, the majesty of the gods and the bravery of the Monkey King. At the same time, the work also creates a mysterious and solemn atmosphere through the cooperation of music, which makes the whole story more fascinating.

"Nezha Troubled Sea": This work is adapted from the traditional Chinese mythological story "Nezha Lotus Reincarnation". In the film, Nezha's bravery, justice and fearlessness are fully displayed. Through delicate depictions and vivid expressions, the artists vividly express the growth process of Nezha and the plot of the struggle against the evil forces. At the same time, the film also conveys the truth that justice will triumph over evil through beautiful pictures and moving music.

From these two works, it can be seen that early Chinese animation has the following characteristics in the performance of mythological themes:

Integration of traditional culture: Through the animation works with mythological themes [6], the artists present the traditional Chinese culture and mythological stories in the form of animation, enriching the connotation and artistic value of the animation works.

Unique Artistic Style: Early Chinese animation artists used traditional Chinese ink painting techniques to make their animation works have a unique artistic style and beauty.

Edutainment: Mythological animations often contain profound truths and values, which are conveyed to the audience through vivid plots and beautiful pictures [7]. At the same time, these works are also highly entertaining and able to capture the attention of the audience.

In short, the mythological works in early Chinese animation are an important part of Chinese animation art, which not only has high artistic value and cultural connotation, but also lays the foundation for the later development of Chinese animation.

3 The value and challenges of mythological themes in Chinese animation

3.1 The cultural value of mythological themes in Chinese animation

The cultural value of mythological themes in Chinese animation is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

Inheritance and promotion of traditional culture: Animation works with mythological themes are usually based on traditional Chinese culture and mythological stories, and through the art form of animation, these traditional cultures and stories are inherited and promoted, so that more people can understand and understand Chinese traditional culture.

Enhance cultural self-confidence: Mythological animation works are unique cultural products in China, through which the self-confidence and cultural pride of Chinese animation creators can be enhanced, and at the same time, the audience can be more identified with and love Chinese animation.

Enriching the art form of animation: Animation works with mythological themes enrich the expression of animation art, making animation not only a form of entertainment, but also a way of cultural inheritance and artistic expression.

Entertaining and educating: Mythological animation works usually have profound truths and values, which are conveyed to the audience through vivid plots and beautiful pictures, and can also attract the audience's attention and achieve the effect of entertaining and educating.

3.2 Challenges Faced by Contemporary Chinese Animation

The main challenges faced by contemporary Chinese animation are as follows:

Fierce market competition: With the entry of foreign animation, the competition in the domestic animation market is becoming more and more fierce, and it is necessary to constantly innovate and improve its own strength in order to occupy a place in the market.

Lack of technical and artistic level: There is still a certain gap between the domestic animation production technology and artistic level compared with foreign countries, and it is necessary to continuously improve its own technical level and artistic innovation ability.

Changes in the audience's aesthetic needs: With the continuous improvement of the audience's aesthetic needs, the requirements for the quality and connotation of animation works are also getting higher and higher [8], and it is necessary to constantly adapt to the changes in the audience's needs and improve the quality and connotation of the works.

Imperfect policies and regulations: The policies and regulations of the domestic animation industry are not perfect enough, and the government and all sectors of society need to work together to create a good policy environment for the development of the animation industry.

3.3 How to find a balance between inheritance and innovation

Finding a balance between heritage and innovation can start from the following aspects:

In-depth understanding of traditional culture: To inherit traditional culture, we must first have an in-depth understanding of its connotation and value, grasp the essence of traditional culture, and avoid blindly following trends and excessive commercialization.

Focus on innovation: Innovation is the key to the development of the animation industry, and it is necessary to pay attention to innovation in animation production technology and artistic expression, and continuously improve the quality and connotation of works.

Maintain uniqueness: On the basis of inheriting traditional culture, it is necessary to maintain the uniqueness of Chinese animation, avoid homogeneous competition with foreign animation, and create an animation brand with Chinese characteristics.

Pay attention to market demand: We should pay attention to market demand, understand the aesthetic needs and psychological needs of the audience, constantly innovate and improve the quality and connotation of the work, and meet the needs of the audience.

Strengthen policy support: The government should strengthen policy support, create a good policy environment for the development of the animation industry, and encourage innovation and the emergence of excellent works.

4 Conclusions

Mythological themes have always occupied an important position in Chinese animation. From classical to modern, Chinese animators continue to draw inspiration from mythological themes and create many excellent works. These works not only show the charm of ancient Chinese culture, but also show the aesthetics and values of contemporary Chinese. In the future development, Chinese animation should continue to tap the unlimited potential of mythological themes and create more high-quality products with the characteristics of the times.

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