



# From Text to 'Tactile Text': The Media Transformation and Aesthetic Shift of Traditional Literary Narrative by Micro-Short Dramas

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**Abstract.** With the evolution of media technology and the popularization of short video platforms, micro-dramas, as a highly condensed and sensory-driven narrative form, have a profound influence on the communication and aesthetic reception of traditional literary texts, and the media change from "readable text" to "tactile text" is being produced. This paper takes an interdisciplinary perspective of media anthropology and narratology as the basic perspective, and draws on existing research results of literary adaptation and theory of sensory culture, and proposes a three-dimensional, intertwined analytical framework of "narrative reconstruction-sensory evocation-platform mechanism". This framework attempts to explore how micro-dramas through a fragmented rhythm, sensory camera language and emotional resonance mechanism of immediate reproduction, reshape traditional literary narrative structure, character construction and emotional duration. Unlike the previous approach to literary adaptation as "text transfer", this paper stresses that in the mobile media environment, literary narratives can not only be "told", but also be "experienced". The production of textual meaning is no longer dependent on the gradual process of linguistic logic, but is based on the immediate sensory reaction and the embedding of bodily experience. The "tactile texts" constructed by micro-dramas are dissolving linear time, deep narrative structure and psychology in traditional literature, and instead emphasize a logic of sensory pleasure based on the flow of emotion, thus forming a new model of the aesthetics of modern media.

**Keywords:** Micro-short dramas, Tactile text, Media transformation, Literary narrative, Aesthetic shift.

## 1 Introduction: From Text to the Awareness of 'Tactile Texts'

In recent years, with the popularization of smartphones, 5G networks and short video platforms, micro-drama style works have quickly emerged as a new form of video narrative. They have gradually become popular among audiences, widely accepted and emotionally involved in it. The episodes of this type of work usually last for 1 to 3 minutes, and are serialized on platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou and Video Channel

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of Wechat, etc. The narrative style has the characteristics of fast rhythm, strong emotional expression and intense sense of stimulation, presenting an aesthetic logic and media form completely different from traditional literature [1]. Under the influence of micro-drama works, the original literary narrative mode, which belongs to text, writing and immersion in imagination, has undergone a transformation and evolution of "text-based" into "visual-and-tactile".

In the face of this media phenomenon, the traditional 'adaptation' paradigm of literary studies seems increasingly insufficient. Historically, we understood textual adaptation as of a linear construction from 'novel to film or television', concerned with questions of 'representational fidelity', as the completeness of the narrative, preserving the thematic structure and the characters themselves [2].

However, in micro-dramas, narrative structures are compressed into highly fragmented segments, character construction tends toward stereotypes and labels, and detailed literary depiction is rapidly transformed into emotional stimulation and audiovisual impact. The meaning of the text no longer depends on a step-by-step logical development but rather upon the physical 'gratification' to the senses [3]. This 'gratification' mode of expression working on the senses (touch, emotional gratification, pleasure) is producing a change in literature within the mobile media ecosystem.

## **2 Theoretical Perspectives: The Intersection of Media Anthropology, Narratology, and Sensory Culture**

To understand how micro-skits rewrite traditional literary narratives, there is a need first to begin from the deeper logic of media theory and cultural perceptions. Media anthropology emphasizes that media is no longer a mere carrier of information, but rather a cultural apparatus liable to determine human perceptions and social relations. Marshall McLuhan [4] said that the medium itself is the message, 'the medium is the message,' and that each change in forms of media is something of a reorganization of perceptual structures and processes of reasoning.

In the rise of digital media the boundaries between the visual and the haptic are more and more blurred, whereby audiences are no longer passive receivers, but active participants in the making of meaning. Micro-skits are a result of this alteration in perception, probationing a new 'haptic cultural experience' achieved through the bodily position of 'holding—viewing—interacting'

Conversely, literary narratology is habitually devoted to the formulation of narrative form, temporal arrangement and character perspective, with the supposed presupposition that it is the logical unfolding of the text that gives birth to meaning. But this logical order is gravely perturbed in the course of the transfer into the media. According to the theory of levels of narrative conceived by Gérard Genette [5], on the reconstruction of a narrative it is usually implied the reemployment of the relationship 'story—discourse'.

The new employment in the micropieces reveals itself as the disintegration of time—narrative, the rhythm of the unfolding of the plot and the scenes in which the characters appear. The 'story' now rests no longer on the continuity of the narration of a linguistic kind, but becomes a new order of 'narration in fragments' by reason of the collage of

images, rhythm and emotion. The 'depth' of the literary narrative gives place to the 'immediacy' of the narrative in the media, this being in a sense an alteration of artistic technique, as it is also on the other hand the recodifying of the narrative, but under the conditions of media culture.

Research in sensory culture offers critical theoretical support for understanding this transformation. Social scientists such as Mark M. Smith [6] and David Howes [7] have suggested that it is the 'order of the senses' which form the intrinsic structures of forms of culture, and that social patterns of sensory behaviour in different historical civilizations determine the way in which people perceive and express the world.

The growth of micro-dramas corresponds to the emergence of a 'sensory capitalism' driven as it is by the emotional economy and logical empiricism, senses are stirred up, managed and commodity-breached [8]. Visual pleasure, emotional touch and corporeal behaviour become the leading measures by which narrative is valued, so that the process of 'reading literature' becomes one of 'feeling literature'.

### **3 Narrative Reconstruction: The Structural Shift of Fragmented Rhythm and Character Flattening**

In traditional literary narratives, there is generally a linear time organization dependent on very carefully worked out plot development and psychological portrayal of character as well as the evolution complexly of character in the midst of emotional, ethical and social structure within which the character changes [9]. Such literary work is characterized by 'progressive narration' which stimulates not merely the rational integrity of the tale which is the theme of the narration but also the aesthetic function in the portrayal of the inner life of the character through intimations of atmosphere and language. However, in this case radically changed by reason of the effects of platform algorithms, the attention economy and efficiency of diffusion.

Above all, the disruption of narrative rhythm breaks with the traditional linear sequence of 'beginning-development-climax-ending.' In micro-dramas, stories are often set directly in the middle of the 'interesting' stage, or the climax or turning point, avoiding a 'large build-up' and a lot of 'repetitive developments.' The point of this narrative method, which is to start from the middle, is to destroy the time order and it follows that emotion comes before the events [10]. In this process the complicated motivations and social evolution of the literary original are condensed into simple and easily recognized symbols of situation, so that we get a highly conventionalized method of indicating a 'fast descriptive narrative.'

Secondly, the flatness of characters is another obvious feature of the narrative structure of micro-drama. In traditional literature, the personality of the character is often gradually uncovered in the process of several conflicts, and through the growth and psychological changes of the character's trajectory, to promote the tension of the emotional conflict of the narrative structure. In micro-drama works, the character is often created as a kind of flat and stereoscopic, labeling type of symbolic unit. The type characters not only facilitate the public to quickly understand the plot in a very short time, but also match with the dissemination logic of the short video platform [11]. In the

adaptation, the characters of literature are often weakened in the multi-faceted motivation and emotional layer, and are replaced by simple and intense emotional labels, character is transformed from 'psychological individual' to 'emotional interface'.

4 Narrative Reconstruction: The Structural Shift of Fragmented Rhythm and Character Flattening

Micro-drama is dependent on the emotional driving capacity of film language, using such processes as the close-up, the jump-cut, the fast pan and slow motion to render the long-drawn-out processes of psychological expression of literary art into concrete visual expressions. It is this capacity of the camera for "the highly sensory" which affects directly the perceptive mechanism of the spectator. The feelings we have are no longer psychological contents which we must understand in words, but rather, an immediately and intuitively apprehended reaction of the body. In other words, they are not "read" as much as they are "stimulated."

Table 1. Traditional Literary Narrative With Micro-Short Drama 'Tactile Text'.

| Dimension            | Traditional Literary Text                                   | Micro-Short Drama 'Tactile Text'                          |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Emotional Expression | Inner monologue, delicate description, linguistic unfolding | Close-up shots, emotional BGM, physical performance       |
| Rhythmic Structure   | Gradual buildup, progressive development                    | Non-linear cuts, conflict-driven, climax-first            |
| Mode of Reception    | Reading, imagination, immersion                             | Viewing, swiping, reacting                                |
| Emotional Mechanism  | Empathic understanding, ethical reflection                  | Emotional triggering, symbolic cues, pleasure consumption |

Table 1 compares the basic opposing characteristics of the two narrative formats according to four key dimensions, namely emotional expression, rhythm structure, mode of reception, and emotional mechanisms. Traditional literature is seen as highlighting the painstaking crafting of language and psychological description, as reliance is placed upon linear rhythms and engrossing reading experience, which guides the reader towards meaning being gradually achieved through reason and emotion. Micro-dramas are then held within the grip of visual language and symbolic sensations, with the 'tactile' appreciation reached through rapid editing and emotional nostalgia, with instant satisfaction and emotional cursors drawn to the fore.

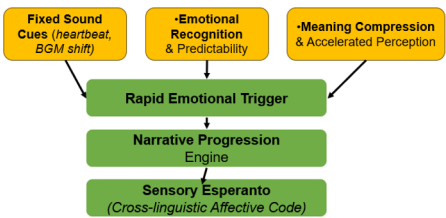


Fig. 1. Internal Architecture of Emotional Sound Cue Mechanism in Micro-Short Dramas.

Figure 1 demonstrated the internal structural pathway within the emotional sound effect mechanism operating within the micro-drama genre, indicating how sound effects perform the role of a ‘transcoder’, traditionally defined within a literary framework. The upper modules represent the input dimensions to this triggering mechanism, being the fixed stimulus sounds (for example: heartbeat, BGM rises in pitch), emotion recognition and predictability, meaning compression and perception acceleration. These act upon the lower core module, the Rapid Emotional Trigger, a mechanism performing a sensory recognition function in place of a language comprehension one and acting upon the downstream Narrative Progression Engine.

## 5 Narrative Reconstruction: The Structural Shift of Fragmented Rhythm and Character Flattening

Traditional literature adopts a deep description strategy, whereby the psychology of characters, plot tension, and emotional development is gradually revealed through layers of linguistic elaboration, while the micro-drama adopts shortly a paradigm of symbolic pleasure, which produces immediately palpable audiovisual sensations through high density stimulation of the senses and easily recognisable emotional cues.

This logic of using emotion to drive clicks to use happiness to sustain dissemination gives rise to an expression model that is characterized as 'depsychologised', 'simplified'. Personality should be formalized, plot progress should depend on the highest point of conflict, and the ending should meet the immediate need for emotional feedback. In other words, the platform mechanism is not merely a medium of communication, but also a generator of aesthetic structure.

**Table 2.** Platform Mechanism and Aesthetic Paradigm Shift.

| Platform Logic         | Narrative Form            | Aesthetic Mode       | User Behavior        | Literary Shift                              | Aesthetic Consequence       |
|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Algorithm-driven       | Compressed Plot           | Sensory Stimulation  | Swipe & Skip         | From Deep Description to Surface Symbols    | Reduced Cognitive Depth     |
| Complete Rate-Oriented | Conflict-Driven Structure | Pleasure Logic       | Emotion Clicks       | From Logical Progression to Instant Emotion | Increased Sensory Appeal    |
| Short Duration         | Rapid Climax Entry        | Emotional Volatility | Binge Watching       | From Inner Monologue to Visual Cue          | Narrative Fragmentation     |
| User Interaction-Based | Template-Based Ending     | Visual Symbolism     | Short-Term Immersion | From Language to Body & Music               | Affective Consumption       |
| Emotional Tagging      | Minimal Setup             | Musical Memory Cue   | Low Attention Span   | From Reflection to Stimulation              | Decline of Reflective Space |
| Scene Fragmentation    | Flattened Characters      | Editing Rhythm       | Instant Feedback     | From Complex to Simplified                  | Acceleration of Meaning     |

|                         |                     |                   |                      |                              |                                   |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Loopable Play-back      | Symbolic Expression | Color Saturation  | Emotional Projection | From Linearity to Modularity | Standardized Emotional Experience |
| Comment Overlay (Danmu) | Limited Dialogue    | Emotion Highlight | Passive Recognition  | From Reading to Watching     | Symbol Fatigue                    |

Table 2 systematically compares six key dimensions of micro-dramas under the influence of short video platform mechanisms, which are the following: i.e. Platform Logic, Narrative Form, Aesthetic Mode, User Behavior, Literary Shift, and Aesthetic Consequence. Through this horizontal presentation of dimensions, it clearly reveals the transition of the traditional literary path of “Deep Depiction—Reading—Reflection” to the new media aesthetic paradigm of “Pleasure—Viewing—Projection”.

This structure of creating a 'pleasure-first' media aesthetic is not only a construction of the narrative's content, it reconstructs the proposition of the reception. The scrolling and brief stops the users make involve their judging the plot, the emotional feelings no longer coming from a sympathetic understanding of the fates of the characters, but from the immediacy of the impact of the induced system of signs. In such a sense ai micro-short dramas produce a 'sign-emotion-feedback' closed-loop system, producing a shifting of literary experience away from the deeply mediated textual experience, to the consumption by the sensorial pleasures of the signs on the platforms, indicative of a most profound shift in both media narrative and media aesthetic.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Micro-dramas drive the narrative shift from 'readable text' to 'tactile text': linear chronology and inner monologues are reorganized by fragmented rhythms, emotional tags, and platform feedback loops, with algorithms and the body co-constructing aesthetics. Their value entails both gains and losses: popularity and sensory intensity increase, while reflective space and complex narratives are compressed. This article's framework reveals the collaborative mechanism of image-sound-metrics; future studies should employ audience-based empirical research and multimodal analysis to explore a hybrid dramaturgy that accommodates both immediacy and complex narratives.

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