

Research on the Transformation of Aesthetic Paradigms in Chinese Animation in the New Media Era

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Abstract. With the advent of the new media era, the platforms for disseminating animation art have expanded, raising higher demands for the precision of animation itself. This expansion has, to a certain extent, enriched and altered the aesthetic characteristics of animation, leading to a fundamental shift in its aesthetic paradigms. A paradigm refers to an example or model that possesses temporality, universality, and normativity. In the history of aesthetics, aesthetic paradigms are not static; they evolve in response to societal influences. New aesthetic paradigms integrate and transcend old ones, creating a continuous cycle. This paper first elaborates on the concepts of the new media era and aesthetic paradigms, then analyzes the evolution of aesthetic paradigms in Chinese animation in the new media era. The study aims to enhance the international cultural competitiveness of Chinese animation and provide a reference for promoting national spirit and unique Eastern aesthetics.

Keywords: New Media Era, Chinese Animation, Aesthetic Paradigm.

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly developing media technology landscape, Chinese animation has continuously transformed its functionality and artistic style within just a few decades. From initially imitating and learning from Western animation to establishing a distinct style during the "Chinese Animation School" period, Chinese animation has shone brightly on the world stage. Assisted by new media technology, various forms of art and culture from different regions have undergone significant changes in form, subtly altering the contemporary social and cultural environment. This environment, in turn, profoundly influences aesthetic activities. It is evident that the development of media technology constantly shapes people's perceptions and aesthetics of animation. After years of development, the quality of Chinese animation, both in terms of visuals and production technology, has significantly improved. The artistic style and aesthetic concepts differ greatly from those of the traditional media era^[1-4]. Therefore, researching the causes behind the transformation of aesthetic paradigms in Chinese animation in the new media era is of great significance for the sustained development of China's animation industry.

2. Definition of the New Media Era

The new media era refers to an era dominated by digital media and primarily driven by the internet as the main communication channel. The communication technology between people is closely linked to the development of human social history. From newspapers to radio, television media to the internet, media technology has long been a marker distinguishing different historical stages of human society. The new media era is essentially the environment for the dissemination of new media. Before defining the new media era, it is crucial to define what new media is. The new media era is a dynamic temporal concept that differentiates itself from the traditional media era. It is built upon the widespread adoption of digital and network technologies. In the new media era, digital network technology becomes the mainstream channel for social group activities^[5-6]. In this context, the speed of information dissemination is faster, and the scope is broader, providing ample space for the development of various art forms.

3. Characteristics of the New Media Era

3.1. Technical Characteristics

Compared to the traditional media era, the new media era has achieved innovative breakthroughs in technology. In the past, the mediums relied on for disseminating information were paper and analog signals. Paper as a medium had high transmission costs and low efficiency; analog signals, compared to the digital signals of new media, had disadvantages such as slow information transmission, poor quality, and weak signal coverage. However, the "digitalization" of the new media era converts traditional analog signals into digital signals readable by technology, allowing various information to be transformed into digital data and enabling efficient communication and sharing of information.

3.2. Communication Characteristics

The broadcasting era, dominated by analog signals, had relatively efficient information dissemination capabilities. However, compared to the new media era, the shortcomings of its one-way communication model were evident. In this traditional media period, the "one-to-one" or "point-to-multipoint" communication model required a higher level of professionalism from the communicator, aiming to share the intended meaning with a large and diverse audience and attempting to influence them in various ways^[7]. This one-way communication model of the media era overlooked the active cultural response from the masses, as the audience could only passively receive new media information. The emergence of new media technology has changed this dynamic, making the audience no longer passive recipients of information. The interactive nature of communication in the new media era allows the audience not only to provide immediate feedback to the communicator but also to participate in the production of information, becoming participants, creators, and disseminators of media content.

4. Evolution of Aesthetic Paradigms in Chinese Animation in the New Media Era

4.1. Aesthetic Paradigms of Chinese Animation in the Traditional Media Era

4.1.1 Content Sourcing

In the traditional media era, the content sourcing of Chinese animation was broad and profound, as illustrated in Table 1. The essence of national stories and mythological legends was explored, such as in *Havoc in Heaven*, where the fearless and rebellious actions of Sun Wukong against the heavenly authority vividly re-enact the spirit of the original *Journey to the West* and deeply celebrate the values of freedom and resistance. Additionally, animations that explored folklore and opera segments, such as *The Legend of the White Snake*, portrayed the complex and sincere emotional entanglements between people through delicate emotional depictions and captivating musical melodies^[8-9]. Fables and serialized novels also provided rich material for animation creation, as seen in works like *The Fox Borrows the Tiger's Terror* and the animated version of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. These productions entertained while educating, allowing the audience to gain wisdom and conveying positive values such as loyalty, intelligence, and courage.

Table 1: Content Sourcing

Categories	Classic examples	Characteristics
Story of the nation	The Story of Afanti	Inheriting national culture and reflecting national customs
Myth and legend	Havoc in Heaven	Resisting oppression and pursuing freedom, Sun Wukong's image is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people
Folk tales	Meng Jiangnu Weeps Over the Great Wall	Tell the wisdom and emotion of the people, and convey the wisdom of the people
Opera singing	Three Forked Crossroads	Integration of traditional opera art, show the charm of traditional performance
Anecdotal tales	The Fox Borrows the Tiger's Terror	Teaching through fun, convey moral ideas, simple stories contain profound truth
Zhanghui-style novel	Romance of the Three Kingdoms	Complex plots show historical wisdom and life philosophy

4.1.2 Forms of Expression

In the traditional media era, Chinese animation had a distinctive form of expression, merging with various traditional artistic forms to create a vibrant and deeply meaningful visual world. These art forms not only showcased technical skills but also preserved outstanding traditional culture. The meticulous and lavish style of painting bestowed animation works with rich color layers and a delicate texture, while the simplicity and reservedness of ink painting allowed animations to present a transcendental aesthetic, as seen in *The Tadpoles Searching for Their Mother*, which used ink techniques to create fresh and natural images, embodying the essence of traditional Chinese aesthetics. The integration of art forms such as New Year paintings, shadow puppetry, paper cutting, puppetry, and facial makeup enriched the methods of animation, endowing each work with deep cultural heritage and national characteristics.

4.1.3 Techniques of Expression

In the traditional media era of Chinese animation, linear narrative was a core strategy, ensuring the clarity and coherence of the storyline, allowing the audience to easily follow the plot development and understand the characters' motivations and the story's themes^[10-11]. This approach aligned with the public's aesthetic needs, enabling the audience to enjoy a visual feast while immersing themselves in the experience. The humorous and exaggerated techniques amplified characters' traits and crafted cleverly humorous plotlines, conveying profound life philosophies and wisdom in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. The incorporation of traditional Chinese music, opera elements, and other cultural aspects added a strong cultural atmosphere and artistic foundation to the works, enriching the auditory experience of animation. The perfect blend of music and visuals further enhanced the artistic expression of the animations.

4.2. Aesthetic Paradigms of Chinese Animation in the New Media Era

4.2.1 Content Innovation

In the new media era, Chinese animation creation is no longer confined by traditional frameworks. Themes such as science fiction and fantasy have emerged, providing the audience with entirely new visual experiences. These themes extend the narrative boundaries of animation, meeting the diverse needs of the audience and driving the development of the animation industry. After a long period of evolution, the content of Chinese animation has also become more aligned with reality. Animation, as an art form, reflects social issues and human depth, and has become an important platform for conveying positive energy and evoking social resonance. **I Am What I Am** is a standout example of this trend. Set against the backdrop of the traditional lion dance culture, the film skillfully integrates

the growth stories of modern teenagers, showcasing the charm of traditional culture while deeply reflecting the changes in contemporary society and the inner world of the youth. This gives animation works greater social significance and practical value.

4.2.2 Formal Innovation

The innovation in the form of Chinese animation has changed the creative ecology and enriched the dimensions of audience experience, as shown in Figure 1. The integration of AI algorithms, motion capture technology, and other advanced methods has imparted deep emotions to animated characters and significantly improved the fluidity of movements, achieving a profound fusion of art and technology. The widespread application of big data technology allows animation production teams to more accurately analyze audience preferences, enabling the customized production of content, thereby promoting the personalized development of the animation industry. Cross-platform communication strategies allow animation works to seamlessly transition between television, the internet, mobile devices, and even social media, forming a multidimensional, around-the-clock communication matrix that enhances the cultural transmission and influence of animation. The instant feedback mechanism on social media allows animators to quickly capture audience responses, achieving real-time interaction between creation and appreciation, shaping the future direction of animation art collaboratively.

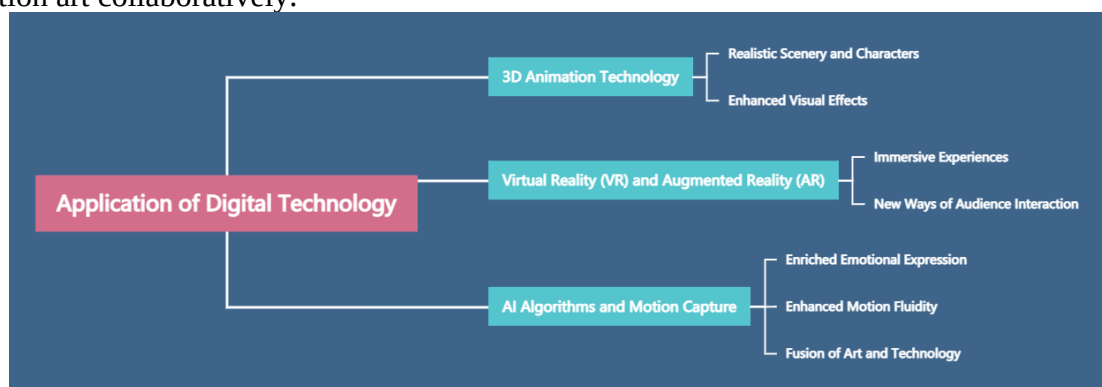


Figure 1: Application of Digital Technology

4.2.3 Aesthetic Experience

In the new media era, animators can skillfully blend Eastern and Western aesthetic elements, creating animation works that are both distinctly Chinese and globally relevant. The perfect combination of high-definition visuals and surround sound brings each frame vividly to life for the audience, while every sound effect resonates deeply, offering an unprecedented immersive experience. On the narrative level, animation works now place greater emphasis on depth and substance. Through complex character relationships, tightly woven plot arrangements, and profound thematic explorations, these works guide the audience to engage in deep reflection and introspection while enjoying a visual feast^[12]. This enhancement of aesthetic experience significantly enriches the audience's spiritual world and lays a solid foundation for the global dissemination and recognition of Chinese animation.

5. Research on the Transformation of Aesthetic Paradigms in Chinese Animation in the New Media Era

5.1. Visual Innovation Driven by Technology

The rapid evolution of new media technology has allowed the construction of animation scenes to transcend physical limitations, creating fantastical spaces beyond reality. From the meticulous detail of fur textures to the grandiose and spectacular scene layouts, digital technology demonstrates its sophistication and excellence. The integration of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) opens up new interactive dimensions for animation art, enabling the audience to "travel" into the

animated world, sharing joys and sorrows with the characters. The production methods and techniques of animation are profoundly altered by technological innovations, enriching the aesthetic content and scope of animation. As a result, animation works can transcend time and space constraints, fusing diverse cultural elements and artistic styles, presenting a multi-faceted and unique artistic landscape. Due to the widespread availability of technology, audiences can also enjoy high-quality animated works, further promoting the dissemination and development of animation culture.

5.2. Content Deepening and Emotional Resonance

In terms of content creation, animation places greater emphasis on character exploration, careful plot design, and subtle emotional expression, conveying deep thoughts and emotions. This transformation aligns more closely with the audience's life and psychological needs, evoking resonance and reflection. For example, the animated work *Dream of a Thousand Years* skillfully combines traditional culture with modern aesthetics, using the protagonist's time-traveling adventures to reveal the resilience, love, and sacrifice inherent in humanity. The characters are depicted with depth, avoiding one-dimensional stereotypes, with each character possessing a rich inner world and complex emotional layers. The film delicately portrays the intricate emotional entanglements between characters, whether it is familial love, friendship, or romantic love, each is endowed with profound meaning and moving power. Every scene is tightly connected, surprising yet logical, leading the audience to ponder the light and dark sides of human nature. While enjoying the animation, the audience also experiences deep emotional impacts, leaving lasting impressions.

5.3. Enhanced Audience Interaction and Participation

In the current era, the unique charm of animation art has constructed a new interactive ecosystem. Interactive animation has emerged, allowing the audience to make choices based on their preferences, even influencing the direction of the story. This experience enhances the audience's sense of participation and immersion. Additionally, online games have seamlessly integrated animation with interactive experiences, where players take on roles in the virtual world, embarking on adventures alongside animated characters. This immersive interaction extends animation beyond the screen into the audience's daily life. Social media serves as a bridge connecting audiences with animated works, enabling them to instantly share their viewing experiences and stimulate their creative enthusiasm. Through secondary creation, audiences express their understanding and love of animation, further enriching the cultural connotations of animation and forming a unique animation cultural ecosystem^[13-14]. The interactivity of social media fosters close connections among audiences, building a vibrant and creative animation community, injecting continuous vitality into the development of animation art.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the advent of the new media era has infused vitality and inspiration into the innovative development of Chinese animation art. Under this new backdrop, the aesthetic paradigms of animation have undergone a transformation, offering infinite possibilities in technological innovation. Animation works have evolved beyond mere entertainment vehicles, becoming bridges for cultural dissemination, conveying the unique charm of Chinese culture to global audiences. In the future, the Chinese animation industry should maintain an open and inclusive mindset, continually innovate, broaden its horizons, and employ diverse narrative techniques to tell Chinese stories. This approach will share Chinese wisdom with the world and showcase the Chinese spirit.

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