

A Study on the Advantages of Chinese Animation School in Publication and Distribution of A Study on the Advantages of Chinese Animation School in Publication and Distribution of Animation Artwork

——Take the animated films "Uproar in Heaven" and "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" as examples

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Abstract: The connotations and characteristics of the artworks of the Chinese animation school have laid the foundation for the success of publication and distribution, and we take the works of "Uproar in Heaven" and "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" as the main cases for analysis. The elaboration in the pre-release period ultimately resulted in a successful release of the works. In this paper, an analysis was conducted in terms of story clues, composing background, opera programming, the unique language of the animation, etc. In the end, it is enlightened that, to publish animated works with Chinese characteristics, it is needed to deeply dig out the essence of the ethnic art and to innovate with the traditional Chinese art as the basic components of creation, which is the basic soul of shaping the Chinese animated brand.

Keywords: Chinese animation school; publication and distribution; programming

DOI: 10.36012/the.v1i2.1435

The Chinese animation school has a pivotal historical position in the history of Chinese animation and is recognized by important international artists. Because of its unique and innovative style, it is named "Chinese School" by the international movie circle. It is represented by a large number of animated works with the aesthetic characteristics of traditional Chinese art during the 1950s and 70s of the last century. The Wan Brothers were the founders of the Chinese animation school, followed by such animation artists as Te Wei, Yan Dingxian, Ma Kexuan, and Zhang Songlin, among their animated works, "The Princess of Iron Fan" is the first full-length animated film in China, and "Uproar in Heaven" and "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King", which are hailed as two peaks of traditional Chinese animation, are representative works of those animated films. This paper will analyze these two classic works from the following three aspects to understand the particular aesthetics of Chinese animation.

1. The typical Peking Opera program is an innovative point for the release of artwork with Chinese characteristics

Chinese animators in the early years drew heavily on

the programmed performances of Peking Opera in their creations. Such innovation has enabled Chinese animation to have a unique artistic appeal. "The art of opera is the traditional artistic treasure of the Chinese nation, which contains and inherits the cultural essence of the Chinese nation for thousands of years. One of the major reasons for the opera remaining long-lasting is its popular and exquisite aria." [1] Animation originates from Europe and the United States after the Wan Brothers introduced animation into China, they also adopted the creation method of "By other's faults, wise men correct their own", incorporating a large number of Chinese elements into animation creation, making Chinese animation unique. The most distinctive Chinese feature is the incorporation of programs from Peking Opera into the creation of animation. "Uproar in Heaven" and "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" are the two animated films typical of traditional Chinese artistic features and style. For example, in "Uproar in Heaven", the scene of the Monkey King playing with the Daguan knife is a very typical programmed action in Beijing Opera (Figure 1). The Monkey King's bar juggling actions after he first got the gold bar are typical actions of the actor playing a martial role in Peking Opera, accompanied by a burst

of laughter from the Monkey King, and such programmed actions can also be found in Peking Opera. One more example is that, when the Heavenly Court sent the Heavenly Soldiers to capture the Monkey King for the first time at the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits, the Mighty Miracle God's "wow, wow, wow" is also a typical programmed action in Peking Opera. Er-Lang God also had to shout "wow, wow, wow" when he was fighting with the Monkey King, which is also the programmed language action in Peking Opera. The most common posture of the Monkey King looking out with his one hand on his forehead is also a program that often appears in Peking Opera. In "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King", in the two scenes of acrobatic fighting accompanied by the sounds of gongs and drums in Peking Opera, Nezha also used a lot of programmed actions in Peking Opera. Then the scene when the Prince of the Dragon Palace first appears walking with swinging arms, this also carries a distinct tinge of programmed action in Peking Opera. In "Uproar in Heaven", the various fighting actions of the Monkey King not only have a strong programmed action characteristic of the Peking Opera, but also are accompanied by shades of traditional Chinese acrobatic techniques and folk dances.



Figure 1. Image of the animated film "Uproar in Heaven" (1961 edition)

The animated film "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" concentrates on the quintessential film music of Chinese traditional opera. The film highlights the music background of Peking Opera, making the film embody the strong effect of Peking Opera. While the background music takes on the ethnic tones, it intensifies the rhythmic characteristics of Chinese traditional music instruments such as gongs and drums. The strokes of gongs and drums, the actions of the charac-

ters, and even the connections and transitions of the shots are close with one another, complementing each other.^[2] The percussion instruments in the Peking Opera are used during the fight, and stringed instruments are used during the emotional expression. The use of the ancient Chinese musical instrument, chime-bells from more than 2,000 years ago also enhances the film with the simple and unadorned sounds. Through the techniques of subtle actions, repeated sublimations, renderings, and contrasts, plus the background music of the Pipa and Erhu — traditional Chinese music instruments, the grandiose and melancholy music pushes the plot to its climax, as well as the audience's grieving mood. After Nezha cut his throat and died on the ground, the music becomes soothing and melodious, making the audience's emotion soothed and released, forming a distinct contrast to the noisy sounds of gongs and drums at the beginning of the next scene.^[3] In the expression of dramatic effects in animated films, music is used as a means of expression, just like a stage drama, it is sometimes menacing and sometimes calm. Only in this way can a dramatic effect be achieved and the goal of harmony between sounds and scenes is obtained.^[4] It can be seen from this that Peking Opera art is a treasure in the elements of traditional Chinese art. It has far-reaching influence in the history of art in the world, and has formed its own unique artistic features characterized by "singing", "speaking aloud", "acting" and "fighting". Both the works "Uproar in Heaven" and "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" incorporate this art form, absorbing its essence, removing its dross, and distinguishing Chinese animation from European and American animation, making Chinese animation have their own unique charm.

2. The unique plot lays the foundation for a successful release, and the explicit and implicit clues of the drama are intertwined

In the creation of an animated film, the plot of the story script directly affects the audience rating of the animated film. A good animation work not only has a unique and novel story theme, original and novel animated characters, beautiful animation, film, and television effects, but also requires strange script writing. The animation script should have the characteristics of a film or television script, but also should be accompanied by humorous and interesting animated images

that transcend the natural imagination and create a surreal atmosphere that will move the audience and leave them with a lasting impression after watching. The script of "Uproar in Heaven" is based on one of the four famous works in China — "Journey to the West", and the script of "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" is based on "Investiture of the Gods". The Monkey King in the animated film "Uproar in Heaven" finds that he lacks a suitable weapon in a drill of the monkeys at the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits and goes to the Dragon Palace to "borrow" a weapon. Thus, causing a battle in the Dragon Palace and then making a havoc in the Celestial Palace. This animated film focuses on the dramatic conflict between the Monkey King and the rulers led by the Jade Emperor, only keeping the plots related to the mainline of this story and deleting the parts that are not related to the mainline. Through a series of contradictions that continue to intensify, the Monkey King's heroic and tenacious personality gradually takes shape. "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" not only uses "make troubles" as a clue, but also is accompanied by the birth of Nezha, the worship of his teacher, the forced suicide and the incarnation of the lotus flower in the process of becoming a Taoist. Throughout the whole animated film, the emotional portrayal of the characters is delicate, the modeling is relatively mature, and production is excellent. It has become the first widescreen long animated feature film in China and is another new milestone of Chinese animation. Although the two animated films share a common word "make troubles", the objects to be troubled are different and the situations of making trouble are different. The animated film "Uproar in Heaven" is about Monkey King making troubles to gods and goddesses in heaven and "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" is about Nezha making troubles to the dragon king in the sea. From the perspective of the plots, their trouble-making is not active trouble-making. Rather, the main characters are forced to make trouble in the constant changes of the plots. Both animated films gradually unfold the story based on the theme clue of "trouble-making", and drives the beginning, development, change, and ending of the stories. making many twists and turns to the story, and deepening layer after layer to make the story intriguing and highly dramatic.

In 1859, Karl Marx, pointed out in the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, that the economic foundation determines the superstructure and culture is



Figure 2. Image of the animated film "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" (1979 edition)

the economic and political response. This theory is well verified here. These two works are inextricably related to the times in which they were created, and the thought connotations reflect the political context at that time to a certain extent. Both the animated films unfold due to the contradictions in their respective stories, develop closely along with the clue of "trouble-making", so gradually intensify the contradictions to the top and bring the audience to the climax of the story. The two animated films also closely keep pace with the background of the times and use the political context of the time as the implicit thread. "Uproar in Heaven" began to be created in 1961 and completed in 1964. It was a high-level presentation of culture and art in the historical context of that time. At that time, New China had been founded for more than ten years, and at that time, the new construction had achieved certain achievements, besides elimination of the old and innovation has reached a climax, some of the feudal ideas were still left over, so there is a certain "anti-feudal and anti-bureaucratic" social needs. The Monkey King is compared to the builder of the new China, and the Jade Emperor is compared to the representative figure of feudal society. "Uproar in Heaven" is a work that completely eliminates the feudal ideology and opens up a new pattern of establishing a new ideology of socialism in new China. Similarly, "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" was prepared in May 1978 and completed in August 1979. It was written at a time when the Cultural Revolution had just ended and the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Third Central Committee was held. During that period, China began

a new period of reform and opening up and socialist modernization construction. The animated film "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" was born under this historical background. In "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King", Nezha punishes evil and rewards the good. It uses the analogy of defeating the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas and other demons that eat children and boys to defeating "the Gang of Four" and politically bringing order out of chaos. It is a work that unveils the prelude to a new era of socialist construction.

3. Artistic characteristics and tensions add to the success of the Chinese animation school

Animation often uses exaggerated, deformed, anthropomorphic, and physicalized means to render the pictures, making the animation work more appealing. The Chinese animation school has taken some of these techniques to the utmost. "Animation, as a comprehensive art form that combines painting, film, and digital media technology, does not intend to seek authenticity, but rather uses various artistic expressions such as exaggeration, distortion, anthropomorphism, abstraction, and fantasy to show the fun and humor of animation. Exaggeration of action is often used by designers to express the magnitude of the elasticity of a character's actions to exaggerate the part or whole of a character's role so that the magnitude of the action is more exaggerated than in real life, even beyond normal logical thinking." [5] "Animation is a powerful and unconstrained style of creation. Animation is not limited by the performance of live actors and can show actions and expressions that live actors cannot make. Animation is not limited by the performance scenes and can present the scenes that do not exist in the objective world without any restrictions. Animation is also not limited by the objective conditions for the camera, and can freely show the shots taken from any angle. Therefore, animation is a truly unrestricted art form, free from the limitation of all-natural conditions and physical laws, and can maximize the release of human imagination." [6]

The animated film's unique anthropomorphic technique is used in the scenes of "Uproar in Heaven". Vivid animation language is a must technique for a successful animation work, which is usually an anthropomorphic exaggeration, physicalization, and other techniques. The anthropomorphic technique undoubtedly

assigns life to everything in the world, becoming one of the most unique art techniques in the art of animation, and is also reflected substantially in classic works of Disney. The exaggeration technique makes a resilient arrangement of the animated images, the visual impact is enhanced and the visualizability is greatly exhibited. The physicalization technique compares the things in the scenes to specific objects, in reality, to be more life-like and achieve more vivid artistic effects. These techniques are reflected to a great extent in "Uproar in Heaven" and "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King". In terms of character design, director Wan Lai-Ming did not directly adopt the modeling of the Monkey King from "The Princess of Iron Fan" in the animated film "Uproar in Heaven", instead, he asked the cartoonist Mr. Zhang Guangyu to design it, which was modified several times by the animation master Mr. Yan Dingxian and became the final model. It can be said that the Monkey King's image model was designed by at least three masters from "The Princess of Iron Fan" to "Uproar in Heaven", a classic modeling needs a process of evolution. This ultimately resulted in the Monkey King's image model with smooth, general, and vivid line profiles. The color is vivid, making the wild nature of the Monkey King fully exhibited, it can be described as "vigorous and brave". The modeling of the Jade Emperor in "Uproar in Heaven" has the strong characteristics of a piece of Chinese New Year painting. Shortly after the establishment of the crew of the animated film "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King", the Chime-bells were unearthed from the Tomb of Marquis Yi of the Zeng State in Suixian, Hubei Province. The film crew's music conductor, Jin Fuzai, organized a special team to go to the local area to collect the sounds of the chime bells and returned to Shanghai to edit and re-create the collected sounds. The majestic sounds and austere tones of the chime-bells of Marquis Yi of the Zeng State adds a touch of solemnity and mystery to the film.

In the "Uproar in Heaven", there are mountains and trees, flowers and grass in the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits, fruit trees are all over the mountain, the waterfall pours down smoothly like a ribbon inlaid between the foothills, naughty monkeys frolicking therein, some monkeys are picking peaches, some monkeys are playing on swings, three in a group, five in a group, they harvest piles of fruits, what a joyful scene! While in the East Sea Dragon Palace, there are fish and

shrimps, corals, and strange rocks everywhere, the water is rippling, corals on this side, and mussels on that side. The corals are big and red, and when the Monkey King walks under them, he seems to be under a tree. In the scene of the heavenly court, the rainbow turns into a flying bridge, the auspicious clouds float around in the sky, the divine light appears and disappears from time to time, there are countless pavilions, terraces, and open halls, and the slender fairies shake the hems of their skirts and fly around in the air from time to time. In the imperial horse stable, there are thousands of heavenly horses in a thousand different styles, they are very smart and full of vitality. Their eyebrows also show a bit of joy and look like living persons when blinking eyes. In the animated film "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King", the beginning is the traditional Chinese green and green landscapes as the background, which provides a contrast to the overall apricot yellow, looks gorgeous and beautiful, showing Nezha's birth is different from the rest, and containing the meaning of heaven dropping auspices. As Nezha goes on a tour, the background color of the East Sea coast gradually turns dull, suggesting the plot begins to evolve into a dangerous situation. The two animated films mainly adopt the form of ink and wash painting as a means of artistic creation. Ink and wash art is a unique means of calligraphy and painting in China with a history of thousands of years and deep meaning. The Chinese ink and wash art is a gem of traditional Chinese art and provides a visual aesthetic basis for the two animated films.

4. Conclusion

To create good animation works with Chinese characteristics, it is needed to deeply dig out the essence of the ethnic art and to innovate with the traditional Chinese art as the basic components of creation, which is the basic soul of shaping the Chinese animation brand. Drawing the essence from the classical Chinese masterpieces, as an animated script, is undoubtedly looking over the shoulders of the giants, laying the foundation for the two animated films to become classic ones. The two animated films combine the art of animation,

Chinese ink and wash art, ancient Chinese literature and fine arts, Chinese Peking opera art, and Chinese folk art of the New Year paintings in one. The ultimate achievement is that these two animated films have been hailed as the two pinnacles of Chinese animated films. From this, we can see that in future animation creation, we should absorb more of the essence of the ethnic art, be inclusive of all arts and combine hundreds of schools in one to achieve great success.

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Fund project:

1. Took charge of the 2018 Key Project of the Department of Education of Anhui Province for Humanities and Social Sciences of Regular Colleges and Universities SK2018A0021 — the emerging development model of animated films and "going out" strategy along the lines of the "One Belt, One Road" Initiative.

2. Took charge of the Project of the Department of Education of Anhui Province 2017JYXM0064 — Study on Correlation between Creative Brands and Classroom Teaching — Take Digital Animation as an Example.

3. Took charge of the Training Targets Project of the Fourth Group of Young Cadres of Anhui University.