

Research on Innovative Models of Chinese Mythical and Legendary Films in the New Media Era

--Taking iQiyi's Homemade Drama "Soul Ferry" as an Example

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Abstract

The new media era has revolutionized the dissemination of traditional culture, and the dissemination and development of Chinese mythological and legendary films are facing challenges. In order to achieve effective dissemination of Chinese mythological stories in the era of new media short videos, this article focuses on exploring the creative characteristics of iQiyi's self-made drama "Soul Ferry". Based on this, it is discussed that Chinese mythological and legendary films should pay attention to the effective combination of ancient and modern in innovation, and empower the dissemination of Chinese mythological and legendary stories in a suspenseful and supernatural way, in order to use Chinese mythological and legendary stories to tell Chinese stories well.

Keywords

Mythology and legend; Cultural innovation; Soul Ferry.

1. Introduction

Entering the era of new media, the production and dissemination of new media have ushered in unprecedented development opportunities. At the same time, the promotion and dissemination of traditional culture are like a fish in water. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposes to enhance the influence of the dissemination of Chinese civilization. Adhere to the position of Chinese culture, extract and showcase the spiritual symbols and cultural essence of Chinese civilization, accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative system, tell Chinese stories well, spread Chinese voice well, and present a credible, lovely, and respectable image of China. Chinese mythology and legends, as a part of traditional Chinese culture, carry countless excellent elements. However, in the era of new media, people's time is fragmented, and how to find new carriers to return to people's vision in such films has become a major challenge.

Since its release in 2014, iQiyi's self-produced drama "Soul Ferry" has been highly acclaimed, with three TV series and two movies, "Soul Ferry: The Yellow Spring" and "Soul Ferry: The Legend of the Condor Heroes". "Soul Ferry" mainly focuses on Xia Dongqing, who was possessed by Chi You in ancient times and could see ghosts, Wang Xiaoya, the Nine Heavenly Empress of Kunlun Mountain, and Zhao Li, a ghost messenger, among others, telling various supernatural events in modern life and the stories behind them. Soul Ferry adopts an internal focus narrative perspective and a variation perspective, incorporating ancient Chinese mythological stories into the hot events of modern society in the form of a TV series. It integrates art and local culture to create, showcasing local cultural confidence. This series of works has a low production cost, but with carefully constructed storylines and rich and profound ideological connotations, it has successfully gained popularity and become a new "classic" of contemporary Chinese new media literature and art. [2] Based on this, this article

focuses on the creative characteristics of the "Soul Ferry" series of works and the innovative models of Chinese mythology and legend films in the new media era.

2. The Development Status of Chinese Mythical Story Films in the New Media Era

2.1. The Development Status of Chinese Mythical Story TV Dramas in the Early Stage of the New Media Era

In the early days of the new media era, television media still closely followed people's lives, and Chinese mythological story films were favored by the public in the form of TV dramas. For example, starting from 2010, the "Living Buddha Ji Gong" series tells the story of a crazy monk crossing various destined people in the human world to overcome difficulties. The "Mazu" series, which was launched at the end of 2012, tells the story of a fisherwoman who transforms into the sea god Mazu, who saves the sea disaster, through her struggle with sea monsters. The "Fengshen Yingxiong Bang" series in 2014 tells the story of Jiang Ziya helping King Wu defeat Zhou and fighting against various demons to the death. In the same year, the iQiyi self-produced drama "Soul Ferry" tells the story of a young boy possessed by Chi You in ancient times, who collaborates with ghost messengers to solve supernatural events. In 2015, the popular "Flower Thousand Bones" tells the story of a "The story of a strange child cultivating into a demon god. This type of TV drama is mostly based on Chinese folk myths and legends, infiltrating them into family and love, and is deeply loved by audiences.

2.2. The Development Status of Chinese Mythical and Legendary Films in the Era of New Media Short Videos

Quickly, new media entered the era of short videos, and the fast-paced online life has turned people's time into many fragments. Being able to watch a TV drama in its entirety has become a luxury, let alone go to the cinema to watch a complete movie. Therefore, major video media platforms have launched playback functions at double and triple speeds, but this approach also addresses the symptoms rather than the root cause. In the era of new media short videos, Chinese myths and legends still exist in the form of TV dramas. In order to attract the audience's attention, such films mostly use high aesthetic actors to portray love stories. In other words, such films focus on "little fresh meat" to attract viewers to watch, such as "Honey Sinks Like Frost" and "Long Moon Ashes Bright". In recent years, there are only a few films that tell myths and legends.

3. Analysis of the creative characteristics of "Soul Ferry"

The TV series Soul Ferry consists of three TV dramas, namely "Soul Ferry", "Soul Ferry 2", and "Soul Ferry 3". The series centers around the characters Xia Dongqing, a "strange child", Zhao Li, a ghost messenger, and Wang Xiaoya, a mysterious woman from the Nine Heavens. The 444 convenience store is the center of the series, telling the supernatural events that occur in modern society and integrating them into Chinese mythology and legends. For example, the tearful "shark" in the first ancient Chinese book "Shan Hai Jing", the secret "Xie" that eats people, and the unsolvable ancient wonder "Tai Sui". In addition, it also introduces the Tang Dynasty folk legend "Zi Ling" into modern stories. Using the ancient mythical beast "gluttony" to reveal the ugliness of human nature in modern society, combining the New Year beast "Xi" with children, satirizing people's blind celebration of Western festivals and ignoring traditional ones. The focal narrative perspective of "Soul Ferry" combines the observations and feelings of several protagonists with the various information they store to decipher each supernatural event, stimulate the audience's curiosity, and adopt the form of a TV series. The audience can watch the complete story by selecting any episode.

3.1. The clever combination of myths and legends with modern life

Traditional TV dramas and movies of mythological stories basically narrate corresponding stories according to a fixed age, while *Soul Ferry* abandoned this model, changed people's stereotype of myths and legends, and each legend pointed out sharply the contradictions between hot events in society and human nature. Almost every episode of "*Soul Ferry*" tells a complete story. Among them, "New Year's Eve" tells the story of children who worship the Western Festival and eat Western food, but ignore and have no interest in it. As a result, they are caught back by the Year of the Divine Beast. This story satirizes modern young people who regard Western culture as popular and gradually forget traditional Chinese culture, leading to "cultural anger"; "The Curse of the Weaver Girl" describes a man in a village who insults the Weaver Girl who cannot create value, and is subsequently subjected to crazy retaliation from the Weaver Girl's younger brother. It satirizes the mythological story "The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl" in which the Cowherd secretly watches the Weaver Girl take a shower and steals her clothes; "Jun Zai Zai" tells the story of Japan's invasion of China during World War II, and the story of "Song Maiden" Da Xue using symbols to record the brutal behavior of the Japanese army, proving that "Shang Maiden also knows the hatred of losing the country" and so on. It portrays the modernity of ancient mythology, further exploring human desires and revealing the hidden and subtle aspects of human nature. This narrative style shares many similarities with the creative style of online microfilms in the era of new media short videos, allowing audiences to learn about various "fresh" myths and legends in interesting modern storylines, and thus triggering people to think about many social issues in modern society, such as journalists who expose the black and evil forces of the industry, satirizes the Five Gentlemen who prey on wild animals by humans, and migrant workers who are pushed down to death for wages. The development of domestic mythological dramas cannot simply be satisfied with copying existing mythological legends or literary works and adapting them without innovation, which cannot keep up with the pace of the times.

3.2. Flexible Switching between Intrinsic Focus and Variational Narrative Perspectives

In the internal focus perspective, everything is strictly presented according to the feelings and consciousness of one person or several tasks, only recounting the information and inner activities received by these people from the outside, and guessing and speculating their thoughts and emotions based solely on contact with others. The variant perspective is narrated by reducing information and increasing information in the adopted perspective types. In each episode of "*Soul Ferry*," independent protagonists engage in special behaviors to attract the attention of Xia Dongqing and others. Based on external information obtained by Xia Dongqing, Wang Xiaoya, and Zhao Li and their respective information storage, they make judgments and infer the actual situation of various supernatural events. Sometimes, in the "last minute rescue" section, a mutated perspective is adopted for narration. For example, in "*Sea of Void*," Wang Xiaoya's understanding of the mermaid is the Western set of mermaids, which is related to the information absorbed by Wang Xiaoya's female characters, while Zhao Li's understanding of the mermaid is based on the "return to the countryside" recorded in ancient books. It is related to their century old "ghost job", but in the ending of "*Sea of Void*", they did not advance according to their knowledge reserves. Instead, they ended the story in an unexpected way, using a mutated narrative perspective to tell the story of the shark eating the body of the deceased in a shipwreck, transforming into its appearance and going ashore to make a vow for them. In addition, in the spin off film "*Soul Ferry 3*" after "*Soul Ferry 3*", the relationship between Zhao Li and Xia Dongqing in their past and present lives is presented through a mutated narrative perspective, linking "*Soul Ferry*" (Part 1) and "*Soul Ferry 3*", perfectly exposing the audience's curiosity about the identity doubts of Zhao Li and Xia Dongqing in these

three films. In addition, in the case of Konghou Qin Ling Prajnaparamita unintentionally killing his master Bai Mudan and breaking his own strings, losing his memory, an internal focus narrative perspective is used to display everyone's memories and infer the true reason. The technique of flexibly switching narrative perspectives to trigger the audience's curiosity in the Soul Ferry series is not uncommon in film and television works, but it is still rare to see the combination of ancient and modern stories. This technique has a wonderful effect in telling mythological and legendary stories.

3.3. Utilize the unique advantages of TV series

The TV series adopts a split episode broadcasting style, with the main characters being the same and running through the entire episode. Each episode has independent and relatively complete stories, with several stories connected together. Rather than being a TV series, the Soul Ferry series is a collection of microfilms. The production format of the Soul Ferry series is not unprecedented, for example, the 1996 broadcast of "Ultraman", the 2009 broadcast of "Armor Warrior", as well as the "Apartment of Love" series and "The Ballara Fairy" and other TV dramas, all used this method for production. The "Soul Ferry" series of TV dramas all adopt the style of TV series, almost every episode tells a complete story, and it does not require the use of the form of adding a review of the previous episode to each episode, such as "Balala Little Demon Fairy" and "Armor Warrior", to connect. In the era of new media short videos, people's time is fragmented, and the time cost of chasing a complete TV series is very high. This type of TV series perfectly solves this problem. TV series is like a collection of microfilms, and users can click any button to create a complete microfilm. They will not be unable to understand a movie because they have not watched a previous episode.

4. Research on Innovative Models of Chinese Mythical and Legendary Films in the New Media Era

4.1. Cleverly Using Linking Time and Space Media to Integrate Ancient and Modern Times

In the current costume TV dramas, the cross dressing dramas caused by "throwing into the well" and "falling into the river" have already made the audience immune to them. Many such films and TV dramas are no longer able to stimulate the audience's desire to watch. If mythological films continue to use such a combination of ancient and modern creative methods, it will be detrimental to the development of mythological and legendary stories. Therefore, the combination of ancient and modern techniques urgently needs to be explored in a new way. "Nezha's Demon Child Descends", "The Return of the Great Sage", and "The Origin of the White Snake" are all adaptations based on traditional Chinese mythological stories, retaining both traditional storylines and incorporating modern elements, making the plot neither cliché nor dull. In people's stereotypes, ordinary people cannot live a hundred years, but animals and animals can avoid this stereotype, that is, the combination of ancient and modern can use some kind of artifact or divine beast that can exist in both eras as a link to present. For example, in the "Classic of Mountains and Seas", the water monster Wuzhi Qi can transform into a young girl and a white faced scholar, but its prototype is the extremely ugly water monster living in the Huai River. This image of the water monster can connect time and space. On the other hand, Wuzhi Qi's ability to transform can unite with the emergence of trust crises in current social life. The two work together to point out such social contradictions and trigger people's thinking. In addition to ghosts and monsters, there are also many objects that can connect time and space, such as elves. Legend has it that during the Tang Dynasty, a monk copied the word "ru" from the word "Tathagata" into a "woman" while copying scriptures. As a result, the word "ru" became a silent woman and reminded her. The "Miracle" in "Soul Ferry" used this story as a

prototype to tell a beautiful love story, Triggering people's deep reflection on the "loneliness" generated by being in a big city, connecting time and space can be achieved through the use of some elves that are not limited by time and space as a medium. Although the medium for connecting time and space in "Soul Ferry" is very creative, it must not be confined by it. Mythical story films need to innovate again on this basis.

4.2. Independent plot, leveraging the advantages of TV series

In the era of new media short videos, it is even more difficult to tell a complete story and attract audiences to improve the completion rate on media platforms dominated by short videos. The only challenge that can be made is in the form of feature films, such as microfilms. The story in the non-linear structure of TV series is not controlled by linear temporal order, and its radial structure pattern has the characteristics of expansion and comprehensiveness. TV series can be said to be a collection of multiple related microfilms. The production and operation mode of online microfilms has a high degree of freedom and low creation threshold, which presents a high degree of adaptability to the internal needs of Chinese cultural inheritance and dissemination. Mythical story films need to abandon traditional mythological TV dramas and innovate themselves, in order to occupy their own place in the platform of media integration. There are countless myths and legends recorded in various ancient books in our country, and folk myths and legends are even more diverse. There must be subtle connections among them. After simplifying and modernizing various myths and legends, they are classified and serialized to form different story units. Based on this, micro films are created for collection and classification, or they can be directly created in the form of TV series dramas, utilizing the unique advantages of TV series dramas to help spread myths and legends.

4.3. Mystery and supernatural empowerment, myth and legend story dissemination

Suspense films are derived from horror films and are based on Chinese culture. China's unique ghost culture, Confucian culture, and religious culture are all good fertilizers for Chinese horror suspense films.

In the era of short videos, telling a good story is important, but attracting viewers to click and browse is even more important. Throughout the excellent film works collected by various media platforms, micro film works created by college students are deeply loved by audiences. Due to the limitations of creation costs, these types of micro films are mostly suspenseful themes, such as "Bad Student", "Refrigerator", "Camera" and other student micro film works, including the "Soul Ferry" series mentioned earlier, which are also low-cost supernatural and suspenseful themes. It can be seen that when creating such films, films with suspense and supernatural themes combined with reverse endings are not only favored by the audience, but also can reduce creative costs, which can be said to be a win-win situation. In addition, ancient Chinese mythology and legends already have a mystical and supernatural color, and there is an instinctive need to integrate ancient and modern Chinese mythology and legends using suspenseful and supernatural themes. In addition, due to the fact that these types of films are mostly presented in a fictional manner, the entry of "unreliable narrators" can strongly trigger and advance suspenseful stories. Unreliable narrators have high intelligence and often weave a self-image by creating lies or fictional stories, causing the audience to fall into a narrative trap from the beginning.

5. Epilogue

In the era of new media, TV dramas have gradually lost their advantages, leading to the disappearance of mythological and legendary films from people's vision. Chinese mythological and legendary films contain tens of thousands of excellent traditional Chinese culture and are

important materials for telling Chinese stories well. This article analyzes the current development status of mythological and legendary TV dramas, explores the creative characteristics of the "Soul Ferry" series of TV dramas, and proposes a new creative model for Chinese mythological and legendary film and television works in the era of new media short videos. However, it is necessary to further explore the coupling mechanism between traditional Chinese mythological stories and related film and television works, and put specific creative content and filming into practice.

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