

In Early Chinese Animated Films: The Presentation of Life View

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Abstract: The theme of Chinese animated films gives a rich orientation as we reach the post-epidemic age. Re-examining the expression of life in early animated films can assist encourage the viewer to build a positive outlook on life in the face of the epidemic's impact. Chinese animated films express people's entire view of life to some extent after experiencing the ups and downs of development, stagnation, and RE development. At the same time, in early Chinese animated films, the concept of a life full of fighting spirit and passion helps to guide the viewer in developing a positive sense of life in the post-epidemic era.

Keyword: Life; Fighting spirit; Enthusiasm for life

Publication date: December 2021; **Online publication:** December 29, 2021

1. Introduction

COVID-19 overtook the globe in 2020, bringing this eternal proposition of life back into the public eye. Individual life is extremely vulnerable in the face of the epidemic virus. Panic, anxiety, and other negative group emotions quickly spread. People's emotions can be effectively calmed and a positive life orientation can be established by strengthening the guiding of people's correct concept of life through the screen. Re-examining the manifestation of life consciousness in each era of Chinese film history is very relevant at this moment. Animated films develop more slowly than other genres of films as an essential aspect of Chinese cinema. China's animation film industry has created a succession of works with good reputation and box office since the twenty-first century, thanks to the supervision of national policies and the enhancement of the creative environment. With the progression of time, the film's portrayal of life has likewise changed. "The significance of life is the establishment of "approval "of human social morality and ethics, and the outlook on life is the establishment of "approval." As a result, the perspective on life is dominated by human" concept "cognition and the explicit creation of the original force ^[1]." Through the parallel molding of the real world in the two-dimensional or three-dimensional world, Chinese animated films more directly and concretely express people's multi-angle thoughts on life, death, emotion, and other topics against the backdrop of the times. The enthusiasm and fighting spirit of life consciousness portrayed in Chinese animated films during the time of the new China's founding were favorable to overcoming the epidemic's living hardships.

The people were the masters of the country when the new China was created in 1949, and they rose up against the oppression of the three mountains. The country as a whole is overflowing with excitement. The capitalist camp lead by the United States implemented a comprehensive blockade policy against the rising China during the International Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Faced with the circumstances of the time, Chinese animated films actively sought the assistance of the Soviet Union,

combining traditional Chinese themes with a series of animated films based on the “Soviet model.” “In 1955, the cartoon “*Wu Ya Wei Shen Mo Shi Hei*” won the prize at the Venice Animation Film Festival, but the judges mistakenly thought that the film was a work of the Soviet Union, which reduced TeWei’s enthusiasm for the “Soviet model” and began to think about the innovative way to get rid of imitation [2].” In this context, Chinese animation film makers have created a series of Chinese animation with unique national style and rich national consciousness. Among them, fighting spirit and life enthusiasm became the main expression of the concept of life in this period.

2. Enthusiasm for life full of fighting spirit

The foundation of a new China has instilled hope in the Chinese people for the future. The Chinese people, on the other hand, have recently gone through the agrarian revolution, the war of resistance against Japan, and the liberation war. In its subconscious psyche, the Chinese people still have a strong fighting spirit. Following the establishment of the new China, the concept of the people as masters of the country caused the Chinese people to accept a new life full of hope while simultaneously reflecting on the terrible history of feudal oppression and humiliating history of aggression. These scar memories mostly indicate resistance to feudal control and the expression of the notion that man will overcome nature in the hands of artists full of hope and fighting spirit.

2.1. Resistance to feudal rule

The Chinese people suffered under feudal authority and oppression before embracing the new China. Their individual mind and collective will were persecuted severely. People’s own consciousness began to awaken and human nature returned after accepting the influence of advanced concepts such as freedom and equality. “*The Monkey King, Jigong Dou crickets, The Magical Pen,*” and other films with a rebellious attitude have all been released. Big Trouble in the Sky symbolises the rising of people’s inner consciousness and resistance spirit through the use of the traditional mythological coat and the rebellious Monkey King. The image of Monkey King, full of feeling of justice and fearless of violence, is more of an expression of the workers and peasants Red Army’s fearless might than an adaption of the actual circumstances. Traditional feudal dynasties are represented by the crafty God in the heavenly palace and the Dragon King who dominates one side. The creator changed the conclusion of the monkey king’s suppression, allowing the monkey king to successfully break the cage and overthrow feudal authority, demonstrating the awakening and return of individual life consciousness.

Group life consciousness began to emerge consciously alongside the return of individual life consciousness and the expression of heroism. The peasant and working classes were the major targets of the three mountains before to the creation of new China. They were confined both by the external surroundings and by their own thoughts. The peasant and working classes’ collective consciousness was weak, and they were unable to assemble a coherent resistance force. Because of ideological imprisonment, social oppression, and live suffering, life appeal only expresses a need for land, food, and clothing. Farmers and workers in the early days of the People’s Republic of China not only emerged from the hardships of individual life, but also demonstrated profound shifts in social awareness and outlook on life. In the puppet film *The Magical Pen* and the cartoon *Jigong Dou crickets*, the poor group began to be concerned by the creators. Whether it is the farmer oppressed by the county master in the divine pen or the carpenter who was almost forced to death by the prime minister’s son because of a cricket in *Jigong Dou crickets*, they all appear as oppressed silent sufferers. However, under the leadership of *Ma Liang or Ji Gong*, the pressure was finally defeated, and the group image and life demands changed from the bottom role of collective aphasia to the rebel who dared to speak and act. The transformation of group consciousness and image became the main expression of group portraits in this period.

2.2. Expression of the theme that man can conquer nature

With the successful implementation of the first five-year plan, China's national economy has increased significantly. "The substantial growth of industry and agriculture has initially changed the situation in which agriculture is the main part of China's total industrial and agricultural output value. In 1957, the total industrial and agricultural output value reached 124.1 billion yuan, an increase of 67.8% over 1952 at comparable prices^[3]." At the same time, the great leap forward. The development of the people's commune movement greatly inspired the life enthusiasm of our people. With the spread of modern western science and the successful test explosion of the first atomic bomb in 1964, the people had the concept of man conquering nature. In the 1963 ink and Wash Animation *Mu Di*, the creator revealed the theme that man can conquer nature and art is higher than nature. Through the plot of shepherd boy losing cattle, looking for cattle, Bullfighting and getting cattle, he placed man and nature in an opposite position, conveying the special life consciousness and spiritual influence of this period. Finally, the shepherd boy defeated the natural sound through the flute sound and returned home by cattle. Similarly, animated films based on fairy tales such as *The Monkey King* and *Prince Nezha's Triumph Against Dragon King* also aim to subvert the traditional concept of God worship.

3. High enthusiasm for life

In April 1956, with the proposal of the guideline of "a hundred schools of thought contend and a hundred flowers bloom," as one of the main literary and artistic forms, animated films are booming with Shanghai art film studio as the center. After the smooth implementation of the first five-year plan, people's hearts are full of expectations for future life. In 1957, the film Bureau of the Ministry of Culture issued *The Decision On The Great Leap Forward In Film Production*. Inspired by the great leap forward movement, the number of animated films has doubled, emphasizing the function of publicity and education to serve the mainstream ideology. Therefore, film creators consciously guide and establish the correct values for children's audience through animated films when producing their works.

3.1. Correct guidance of life consciousness through traditional ideas

influenced by the mainstream ideology, such as early Chinese films, early Chinese animation films also emphasize the social education function of works. During the first 17 years of creation, a series of persuasive and guided animated films were produced for children. The main purpose is to persuade children to establish a positive outlook on life and values. For example, *Chang Fa Mei*, which expresses the quality of "sacrificing oneself for others," *Ren Shen Wa Wa*, which advocates the traditional concept of "good and evil are rewarded," and *Hongyun Ya*, which emphasizes the spirit of "simplicity and courage", etc. Mainly to highlight the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation. *Xiao Mao Diao Yu* in 1950 can be said to be a model for persuading children. Its main model is that the protagonist shows a wrong way in the process of doing things, which leads to the failure of things. At this time, the mother / authority as an exhortator appears to teach, so as to make the protagonist succeed. These animated films use symbolic animated images and anthropomorphic animals to shorten the distance with children's audience, so as to better realize the guiding role of the film on children's consciousness.

3.2. Yearning for a better life in the future

At the end of 1956, the three major reforms were basically completed, marking the basic establishment of China's socialist system. The whole country is carrying out the cause of socialist construction in full swing. The people are full of hope for a better life. This kind of good wish and the good pursuit of life have formed a series of works full of bright endings in animated films. *Jin Se De Hai Luo*, produced by Shanghai art film studio in 1963, takes the traditional folk story conch girl as the prototype, and expresses people's

yearning for love freedom after the founding of new China through the persistence of fishermen's youth in love. The puppet film *The Magical Pen*, Ma Liang defeated bureaucracy through magic pen and wisdom and led farmers to live a bumper harvest and comfortable life. The end also contains the people's hope for a better life after the founding of new China.

Lu Bian Xin Shi, produced by Shanghai art film studio in 1964, is the product of fully integrating the background of the times and future elements. The film was produced in the stage of socialist construction. With the whole society learning from Lei Feng as the background, it conveys the fashion of finding money and being willing to help others. The film takes two lost money as the main clue, and conveys the mainstream ideology of the society through the praise of the shop owner for "one high style, one high style." The film is full of beautiful imagination of future life - high-rise cities, convenient cars, lush farmland and busy streets. These symbols symbolizing the future convey the inner hope of the people of the times for future life.

4. The view of life since the 1980s

Following a period of creative abundance in the early days of the People's Republic of China and a period of decline during the special period, Chinese animated films have experienced a significant rebound in production. People's lives were full of waste once the cultural revolution ended, and their life consciousness and life will were overcorrected, resulting in a sad mood. For a period of time, Chinese animated films have likewise depicted the downturn and turmoil of living consciousness. The convening of the Eleventh Central Committee's Third Plenary Session in December 1978 caused the Chinese people to re-examine all areas, reawaken people's consciousness, and launch criticism and reflection on wrong behaviour with high morale. The Confucian idea of life emerges from this thinking, which places importance on earthly life and the embodiment of life value. Through this concept, we can guide and reshape the values and outlook on life of people who have just experienced the cultural revolution.

The deepening of cultural exchanges between China and the west, particularly the increased introduction and translation of western film and television works, has had a significant impact on the Chinese people's notion of life, lifestyle, and aesthetic consciousness from the beginning of the 1980s. Under the invasion and influence of this foreign culture, the outlook on life also portrays a confused and suspended condition of being. At the same time, television's popularity has had a significant impact on Chinese cartoon films. Due to audience diversion and brain drain, the development of Chinese animation films has reached a halt.

In recent years, with the steady development of the film market and the support of national policies, Chinese animation films have made proud achievements. Whether it is *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child*, *White Snake*, *CUG: King of Heroes*, or *The Legend of Hei, Da Hu Fa* and *Mr. Miao*, which are the modern adaptation of traditional myths, have won a win-win at the box office and public praise. In such a creative environment, Chinese animation film creators, based on Chinese traditional culture, actively explore the relationship between nationality and cosmopolitanism, and have experienced the transition from emphasis on technology to emphasis on meaning.

Chinese animated films' life concepts are linked with Chinese culture and society. It is rooted in an endless traditional cultural essence and filled with a fierce fighting spirit for life and life. It is the Chinese nation's inherited red blood. Using history as a mirror, Chinese animated films depicted confusion and optimism in the years leading up to and following China's early national independence war. In the post-epidemic age, Chinese animated films should help the public move away from the fear of the epidemic and toward a more cheerful view on life.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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