



A Narrative Comparison Between the Animated Films *Frozen* and *White Snake*

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Abstract: Although the theme of the American animated film *Frozen* series and the Chinese animated film *White Snake* series are the same, they present completely different narrative structures. This paper makes a comparison between the two series of animated films from three aspects: narrative strategy, emotional clues and characters' personalities, and finds out some common narrative features of female-themed animated films under cultural differences, to further explore how animated films depict female images in the new era.

Keywords: *Frozen*, *White Snake*, narrative, animated film

The *Frozen* series, which includes two animated films in the US, broke the world box office record when it was released in 2014 and 2017, each grossing more than \$1bn.[1]The *White Snake* series in China also includes two animated films, *White Snake* and *Green Snake*. The first film was co-produced by Warner Bros. and Light Chaser Animation Studios, and the second one was produced by A Chinese animation company. It earned 450 million yuan and 560 million yuan respectively in the Chinese film market.[2]In addition, the *Frozen* series in the US and the *White Snake* series in China both won numerous awards, achieving both box office and audience praise.

These two successful animated films have common characteristics: the films have distinct visual images and have plots that can be understood by most audiences, and also have great marketing value. It is embodied in the following aspects: First, the image of the heroine is beautiful and powerful, which is in line with the cognition of modern audiences. The characters all have special abilities. When releasing their abilities, the visual stimulation brought by animation special effects is what audiences like to see. Second, the film's plot is exciting and easy to summarize. The *Frozen* series is adapted from the well-known Andersen's fairy tale "The Snow Queen", and the *White Snake* series is adapted from the story of "White Snake", one of the four major folklore stories in China. The reasonable adaptation in the animated film also satisfies the modern audience's fantasy of perfect love and intelligent, brave female image. Third, series films have good marketing value. The first of these two series films won a good reputation for the series, and the audience had very high expectations for the follow-up works. The *Frozen* series and the *White Snake* series share similar themes and narratives, but differ due to different cultural backgrounds and specific presentations. The following will make a detailed comparison of the narrative techniques of the two animated films from three aspects: narrative strategies, emotional clues and characters.

1. Two-line narration and one-line narration: a comparison of narrative strategies

The two-line narrative structure has two viewpoints, the two protagonists. Only looking at the viewpoints of one of the protagonists can also become a separate story. This way is easier to express the current state and psychological activities of the characters on both sides, so that the images of the two protagonists are more distinct and prominent. However, one-line narrative structure can focus on depicting a character or a story, so that the important events in the plot can all serve a character, and the storyline is clear.

In terms of the choice of narrative strategy, The *Frozen* series is a two-line parallel narrative structure, while the *White Snake* series is a one-line story. The *Frozen* series mainly tells the story of Elsa's journey from fear of her ability to control ice and snow to her ability to protect the whole country and finally to self-identity. In this process, sister Princess Anna never left Elsa away or abandoned her because of her seemingly terrible ability. It was the feelings between sisters that affected the mood change of Elsa and finally made Elsa become the queen who saved a country. The two main events, Elsa's knowledge of her magic and Anna's breaking of the spell, are simultaneous and interplay. Double narrative, lead most of the time by time or space, come into contact with the characters and events is different also, along with the advancement of the plot, the two main characters for a common purpose or clues to rejoin, concrete embodiment is in "snow", he is searching for the Elsa, Anna met her true love, Kristoff and his reindeer. After met snowman Olaf, they were led to find Elsa on the snowy mountain.

Snowman Olaf is one of the clues to the reunion of Elsa and Anna.

In the *White Snake* series, first film about snake Xiao Bai unexpected memory loss, save by human A Xuan, in order to help the Xiao Bai back memories on the risk, on the way Xiao Bai monster identity gradually exposed, A Xuan is still firmly in love with her, he became the monster for her, and then they faced the enemy together, the second film, Green Snake told about the story of Xiao Qing to save Xiao Bai, who was suppressed under the tower, and entered a Shura City fantasy world. She befriended a mysterious teenager in the escape from the fantasy, and in the end found that the teenager was actually Xiao Bai. The theme of film is the individual growth of around Xiao Qing. In the first part, the protagonists are Xiao Bai and A Xuan, and in the second part, Xiao Qing and Xiao Bai. Although the main characters of the two stories are the same, the types of stories, the main content of stories and the proportion of characters' appearance time in the whole film have all changed. It can be seen that these two films are two single-line stories with only partial connections between the characters.

2. Affection and love: the difference comparison of emotional clues

Mello Ponti said, "Emotion should be understood as a complete act of consciousness, as a pattern of our connection to the world, and thus determine its meaning." [3] Through the emotional clues of artistic works, we can understand the real meaning that creators want to express behind artistic works. Russian writer Fadeyev pointed out that "conveying emotions is one of the most attractive properties of art."

In the *Frozen* series, in addition to Elsa's self-growth, the main emotional clues are the sisterly affection between Elsa and Anna and Anna's own views on marriage. Anna grew up not forgetting Elsa, wanting to knock on her closed door; After Elsa fled to the snow mountains, Anna overcame difficulties to bring Elsa back home. These plots reflect the deep affection between Anna and Elsa. Anna initially falls in love with Prince Hans, who comes to the ball, and both Elsa and Kristoff, whom she meets on her adventure, emphasize one thing: relationships can't be trusted without getting to know each other. Hans just has other aims, and even wants to kill the two sisters. Christopher, the person who shared the adventure with Anna, is the one who really deserves love. Disney reveals the creator's intention through the attitude of characters towards feelings in the film. Women no longer need to rely only on men to save them, and they can also be their own heroes.

As one of the four love stories, the original text of the Tale of *White Snake* usually focuses on the depiction of *White Snake's* love for Xu Xian, but in the process of cross-media adaptation, there are more emotional clues different from the main line. For example, the love between Fa Hai and green snake, green snake and *White Snake*, Fa Hai and Xu Xian and so on. In *White Snake* series, the first part is mainly about the love story of Xiao Bai and Xu Xuan, which as a supporting role of Xiao Qing and Xiao Bai as sisters, although not biological, they live together with each other for hundreds of years, not affection is better than affection. The second part of the main emotional clues around Xiao Qing's obsession with saving Xiao Bai, interspersed with three secondary emotional clues (Xiao Qing's attitude towards emotions): from the very beginning of relying on the strong strength of the man to rely on the man as long as he truly loves you and then rely on their own state of mind to change, and finally found that the man who has been by their side is their sister Xiao Bai. The theme of the *White Snake* series is also a reflection on the independent consciousness of women and a study on what is really powerful. The main theme of the first movie is reflected through A Xuan becoming the weakest demon who can also save the seemingly powerful Xiao Bai, and the second movie is reflected through Xiao Qing being betrayed by the seemingly powerful man. In the second film, Xiao Qing and Xiao Bai's original affection has become a trend of love, the director said in an interview, Xiao Qing and Xiao Bai have mutual support between the friendship, but also the affection for each other, but also the love of each other's company, the relationship between them is very difficult to define, "just understood as love or friendship is a little narrow". [4]

3. Decisiveness and hesitation: the comparison of the difference in character

Marx believed that "marriage resulting from private ownership determines sexual subordination, that is, women become subordinate to men". Women in the new era not only realize personality independence but also realize economic freedom, which forces capital to make changes to adapt to the female market. The movie itself is a common commercial activity to get the audience to spend money. The narrative logic of Disney's princess series is to let the beautiful and kind princess wait for the rescue of the prince. The feminist movement in the United States developed early. From the late 1940s to now, there have been three feminist movements. The protest movement not only changed people's thinking but also affected legislation, which can be said to be quite effective. Chinese laws have been making efforts to promote gender equality and improve women's status. With the improvement of women's status in all aspects, the narrative logic of films also changes. In order to highlight the character of Elsa in the *Frozen* series, the story does not set a prince for Elsa. Instead, it focuses on the process of Elsa's character changing from cowardly, evasive and afraid of making mistakes to a queen who hopes her strength is strong enough to protect the whole country. In the second film, Anna and Elsa search for the mystery of their origins. Elsa

hears the call of the forest in the palace, although fears and retreats, but then bravely and firmly faces her fate. Anna, on the other hand, has always been very smart and adventurous, whereas Kristoff has always been on the outside of the main plot, trying to figure out how to propose to Anna, and it is the male characters, not the female characters, who are obsessed with love.

The *White Snake* series freed her from her role as a good wife and mother and gave her a new mission. As a token of love with a man in the original folklore, the bead hairpin is a tool used by Xiao Bai to carry out the assassination task. Xiao Bai has a mission as an individual. The character of Xiao Bai is not always meek. When faced with the close threat from mother snake and her clan, *White Snake* no longer blindly obeyed her because she was a former teacher. Instead, she took decisive actions and was unfeminine. Instead of simply emphasizing *White Snake's* devotion to love, she asked her husband to be more active in her devotion. *White Snake* has shed its folklore of caution and fear of being discovered as a snake, becoming more like a normal woman and revealing her true self. *White Snake* could have true love even if she did not help Xu Xian establish his career. They were equal. Other female characters in the same works are also independent, tenacious, intelligent and intelligent. The green snake is no longer a vassal of the *White Snake*, but an independent individual with a distinct personality. She no longer follows Xiao Bai in everything, but has her own ideas, and her personality becomes impulsive and frank. Xiao Qing also finds her value in the second animation and becomes the protagonist of the story. It can be seen that the creator's character setting was influenced by the social environment of equality between men and women. However, the character of Xiao Bai in the first film just looks strong. In the film, there are many stories in which she is picked up by men after fainting. In the second animation, Xiao Qing also shed tears because of the betrayal of men and even gave up the hope of life, which can be seen that the creator tries to break through, but still retains some traces of male-dominated thinking.

4. Epilogue

Although the *Frozen* series and the *White Snake* series have different cultural backgrounds and different ways of telling stories, they both achieved good results. It is because animated films convey the values and cultural connotations of their own countries through narration that they present distinctive visual effects. As an animated film, it may not play a great role in value guidance and cultural innovation, but if an animated film wants to go global, it is bound to reflect on the value behind the film. As the representative work of American animation, *Frozen* series embodies the values of pursuing individuality and freedom in Western culture. The *White Snake* series, as a representative work of Chinese animation, reflects the introverted and implicit values of Eastern culture. By comparing the *Frozen* series and *White Snake* series animation the narrative of the film, *Frozen* series are drawn on the narrative strategy is worthy of reference for Chinese animation films of two-line narrative strategy and decisive character shaping, the *White Snake*: cause series is exquisite, rich in emotional clues also deserves to be studied American animated movies.

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