



# A Brief Analysis on the Artistic Features and Functions of Animal Characters in Healing Animation

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**Abstract:** The healing animation that soothes our mind and gives us persisted comfort can leave audiences positive mood and spiritual solace. As an art type with typical missionary function, healing animation has become an important creative type with its unique spiritual soothing feature. Meanwhile, all kinds of animal characters are increasing in animation, and the shaping of characters plays an important role. The artistic features and functions of animals in animation works of healing system are analyzed, and the roles of these animals are interpreted in this article, aiming to lay the foundation for making more touching animation works.

**Keywords:** healing animation, role-building, animal role

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## 1. Healing animation's features and value

### 1.1 The origin of healing animation

The term "cure" originated from religious ceremonies with the original meaning of curing physical pain. It was then widely used in Japan in 1990s, and was mainly aimed for curing those people who were nervous, depressed, suffering from lots of mental and long-term mental exhaustion through different methods to relieve their mental stress. Healing animation is a new animation in recent years. Its current concept is to build warm, pure, sad, soothing and healing cartoon images. The modern pace makes people's hearts impetuous and unstable. We are eager to find a peaceful living atmosphere. The emergence of healing animation is to cater to the needs of the audience and make them feel peace and warmth, which has a huge market and social demand.

### 1.2 The features and value of healing animation

It is the rhythm and style of the plot that depends whether an animation is healing or not. Healing animation has no dark elements and can inspire people. Most of the stories come from real life. The feature of healing animation focus on making the audience produce a subtle emotion through simple life trivia and animation, and meanwhile, it does not contain obvious erotic information, violence, sadness, despair or pedantry. The existence value of healing animation is that it resonates with the audience emotionally and exerts a subtle influence. The audience mainly ranges from students, teenagers to adults who have just started to worked.

From the perspective of theme selection, healing animation is closer to daily life. Yoshifumi Kondô's work "Whisper of the Heart" is about an enterprising girl who loves reading, works hard, and tries to catch up with her favorite person. It is all about their daily life, no grand scenes of ups and downs, and only some stories of sweet first love met when they borrowing books from the library. Simple daily stories can heal the hearts of the audience, and let the audience find their own stories that are similar with the hero.

Judging from the plot style, healing animation can be roughly divided into two categories: daily relaxation and courage to regain confidence. The former focuses on the leisure atmosphere, pure environment and warm interpersonal interaction, so that the audience can feel the beauty contrary to the complexity and darkness of real life, and the soul can be redeemed. The latter gives the viewer hope through the process of inner transformation of the role.

From the perspective of style, the animation rhythm of the healing system is more soothing, while the plot is more lyrical and has warm and lyrical lines. The extensive use of inner monologue and narration of healing animated characters is an important component, which plays an auxiliary role in shaping characters and paving plots.

Judging from the choice of color system, the animation of healing system mostly uses bright colors. In Natsume's Book of Friends, reassuring colors, for examples, green that purifies people's hearts, orange that warms people's hearts, pink that symbolizes love, blue that broadens one's mood, and transparent colors of clear pool water frequently appear, constitute this typical healing animation.

It has unique value. In today's society, the fast pace of life makes everyone bear enormous pressure and burden. Impetuosity is spreading to social, and the accumulated pressure needs to be relieved urgently. People are eager to seek something that can comfort and warm their hearts. Most viewers bear the contradictions and pressures from work and family in real life. The healing animation has won the love of most viewers of all ages with a refreshing visual effect, unique imagination, technological means and ups and downs of the animation. The tough character-building in animation can give people psychological vent, convey the optimistic quality of bravely pursuing self in adversity to the audience, and lead the audience to embrace life with heart by changing roles. This kind of animation was born in response to the needs of society, market and people's hearts, which is not only popular in Japan, but also brings the "healing culture" to the whole world.

## **2. Characteristics and functions of animal characters in healing animation**

The shaping of various animal characters in the animation of healing system is increasing, and the shaping of characters plays an important role. Different from the animal characters in traditional works, the animal images focus around "healing".

### **2.1 Characteristics of animal roles**

#### **2.1.1 Type of animal roles**

In current animated films, many "actors" play the leading role, and their actions and emotions have been processed by animators. In this case, their animal characters are closer to the familiar animal images and closer to life. With the change of modern life style, all kinds of animals gradually be included in families, which virtually makes the relationship between people and animation closer. While telling the fate and experience of the characters, the life philosophy is told to the viewers with actions and emotions. Exaggerated facial expressions and behaviors, which are not possessed by living animal images, can be well displayed in animation. It not only adds more interest to us, but also renders the vitality and appeal of the picture, and enhances the emotional communication between viewers and movies.

*Chi's Sweet Home* tells the daily life of black and gray striped kittens. Each episode is only 3-10 minutes long, but it has tens of millions of hits on various platforms. The story takes place in an ordinary family, and the story is about the cat Chi. The warm daily life between Chi and human beings is a true portrayal of real life, and the peaceful and lovely pet activities have aroused the resonance of many cat lovers. As a brand-new healing animation, it can be regarded as a light sketch for everyone's entertainment in the current numerous works that are somewhat hardcore. The animators keep their most prominent features in the portrayal of the main character, kitten, the cute points that the animators intentionally left. Obviously, these points will let the audience have a strong sense of familiarity, remind them of their warm interaction with their pets, reducing their tension and receiving psychological comfort. Characters that are close to life will reduce the audience's defensive psychology and arouse the audience's resonance.

#### **2.1.2 Appearance design of animal characters**

The role in healing animation highlights its appearance and texture. The main character in the Oscar Best Animated Short Film *Piper* is a story about a newly born little standpiper. The spherical appearance and soft fluff together form a lovely protagonist image. When the sea breeze blows, the plush on the character swings with it. The chubby body, wide eyes, as well as the ignorant and sleepy eyes looking at the seaside make countless audiences feel the cuteness of the animal character directly. The same for the Oscar-nominated short film *Bilby*, featuring the unique rabbit-eared kangaroo in Australia. The story tells that this rabbit-eared kangaroo meets a bird in an inland area full of crisis. Bunny-eared kangaroos are all gray-blue, with fluffy ears hanging gracefully on both sides, round eyes carefully looking at the surrounding environment. The ruddy nose makes them look even more playful. The bird's image is docile and well-behaved, its whole body is white with no mottled hair, and its two big eyes occupy half of the area of a spherical body. These two interesting animal images make the whole picture flexible and rich, and two animal characters, one big and one small, make the picture balanced and orderly. The sleek shape and plush texture are typical image features that make the audience relax and appease their emotions. In animation, the breeze flicks the fluff of the characters, and the audience's restless emotions can be soothed by the wind, making people immersed in it.

#### **2.1.3 Role setting of animal characters**

Healing animation is also unique in character. Harmless and docile characters can amplify the healing feeling brought by the story. The animation *Shirokuma Cafe* mainly tells the interesting and healing daily life of selling cute things between Shirokuma and his friends Penguin, Panda and regular guests. Shirokuma, the owner of the coffee shop, is smart, reliable and good at cooking, with a gentle and humble personality. Other animal characters also have their own personality characteristics, such as calm or playful or humorous. All animal characters do not have aggressive personality characteristics, which makes the whole animation work bland and warm, with a sweet aftertaste. One of the features of animal characters in healing animation is their soft character. The protagonist has no obvious sharpness and the harmless character can better catch the

audience, so that they can be influenced by these beautiful characters.

#### **2.1.4 Color setting of animal characters**

The characters' colors can bring different feelings to the audience. Bright colors make people excited and active, while dark or low-brightness colors create a dark and deep atmosphere.

The healing animation *The Big Bad Fox and Other Tales* depicts three warm, loving and funny French humorous stories. The story happens at a small farm, which revolves around a group of fun-loving, just and kind-hearted little animals with poor intelligence. All the animals in the animation use warm colors, orange and white fox shapes, brown and yellow hens, and pale yellow chickens, which are matched with green trees in the background, to outline simple and warm farm life with only a few colors. The best animated film nominated for the 68th Academy Awards, *Ait Bear and Saina Mouse* tells the story of Saina, a little mouse who lived in an orphanage since childhood, who met Ait, the big bear, after escaping from the underground rat country. After experiencing various storms, they became good friends through thick and thin. In the film, the main characters mostly use Mo Landi colors, and the light taupe and tan outline the main characters of mice and bears. The elegant watercolor style makes the whole animation full of warm and soft temperament. Even in the dark picture, the animator tries to avoid the dark tone of the whole picture, but adds a warm light source to the protagonist to soften the depression and dullness caused by the dark tone, making the picture breathable and harmonious.

Color can affect the audience's mood. Using soft and bright colors in healing animation can create a positive atmosphere of animation, thus affecting the audience's feelings, and the audience can be cured and encouraged by direct picture effects.

## **2.2 The role of animals**

### **2.2.1 Emotional regulation of animal roles**

On the emotional regulation of the audience, healing animation plays a very important role. American psychologists have found that companionship with animals, such as cats and dogs, can significantly relieve human mental stress. "Animal doctors" and "animal teachers" exist in many formal medical institutions and schools. Similarly, in the classic healing animation, *Natsume's Book of Friends*, the protagonists Natsume and the cat teacher Madara support each other and experienced fear and separate. The animator turned the devil into a cmaneki-neko, and added an interesting character image to its personality. On the premise of keeping the basic structural characteristics of animals, by endowing the characters with personality and emotion, the characters can be more plump and easily accepted by the audience.

*Ait Bear and Sena Mouse*, a French animation in watercolor style, is an animal revolution for children and a social proposition story for adults. From the perspective of children, it is a fantasy adventure between bears and mice, and the harvest is sincere friendship, while adults can feel the warmth between the characters, and also understand the deep meaning and complex social connections behind the film, and be cured by it. The whole film gives people a warm and soothing feeling, and the most important thing is that different age groups have various thoughts and interpretations on this animated work, which makes the audience gain completely different experiences. Starting from the cute animal images, the most profound core is pointed out, which brings completely different viewing experiences and gains different psychological activities for audiences of different ages.

### **2.2.2 The selection of role in animal characters**

Healing animation can, to some extent, build a communication bridge between special groups and make the audience reconcile with the imperfect selves. The short film *The Power of Empathy* is taken from Brené Brown's speech on empathy. In the film, three characters with different languages are designed: fox, bear and elk. The bear in the short film represents "empathy", the elk represents "compassion", and the fox that falls into the bottom of the well is the one who needs help. These animals are a reflection of people in different states. It may be life. Every moment in our life that we are vulnerable and need to be understood and listened to. In the short story, the straightforward bear climbed down into the cave and kept company with the fox. He said nothing but hugged the fox and made the fox feel that the bear understood her situation. This is also a hand extended to those special groups with depression in real life, whether it is understanding, tolerance or love. In the face of partners who can't get out of trouble, the best help is companionship with understanding.

Another short film, *The Meaning of Sorrow*, is an abstract animation based on a philosophical poem. It tells the audience that the existence of small emotions is universal, and sad emotions will make them have a clear understanding and show their pain points and vulnerabilities. Then one need to admit and tolerate it and thus become clear, frank and natural. We should bravely reconcile with our imperfect selves and the imperfect world, face the occurrence with a bigger vision, and be confident and optimistic. The significance of healing animation can not only bring a soothing and harmonious movie-watching experience, but also make the audience realize the depressed people around us and understand them with tolerance. Meanwhile, people can reconcile with the inner self, find a new attitude towards life and embrace the imperfect self.

Combined with the above analysis, animal roles present different characters. In healing animation, characters will be

more round and lovely, close to the healing image in the audience's mind. Moreover, roles will be more positive, gentle and harmless in character, and bright and lively colors and warm and elegant Mo Landi colors will be used in color setting to make the picture effect more unified and harmonious. More importantly, these animal images have warm and inspiring power, and people are moved by them to have the courage to pick up life again and light the warm flame in their chests. Good animation works can also face a wider audience and become a real joy work. When dealing with different types of animation, we should grasp their commonalities, analyze the differences in commonalities and the characteristics of different styles of animation in order to make more excellent animation works.

### 3. The prospect of domestic healing animation

In the long term, the future of healing animation is very broad.

Domestic and healing animation *The Battle of Luo Xiao Hei Zhan Ji* has maintained its Douban score of 9.6 points in the 10 years since its initial release, ranking first among domestic animation dramas. It tells the story about a cat with human personality, Luo Xiaohei has a strong talent. But he didn't know his true ability as a cat demon when he was young. Since childhood, he has been living carefree in the depths of the forest. Due to the destruction of human beings, he was forced to embark on a journey to find a new home. In the process of Xiaohei visiting his cousin and grandfather in the countryside, a series of fantastic stories happened. Animation has a grand world outlook. People, demons and immortals live together on the earth. This animation is very cute. Its painting style is unique. A few strokes depict the image of a black kitten with simple lines, taking the route of aesthetic Chinese style. The picture is fresh, delicate, bright and warm, and depicts the whole world with casual brushstrokes and simple colors.

Ali, the hot IP image of the healing system in China is cute, warm and childish. Since 2006, stories about Ali have been serialized on the Internet and magazines, appearing in fairy tale picture books and animated short films. Ali's publications have exceeded 3 million sales so far, and there are tens of millions of registered fans online. Stories related to Ali are based on tapping the softness and strength in people's hearts, centering on the themes of affection, love and friendship, with warm style and thought-provoking power.

With the rapid development of domestic animation, we need in line with the psychology of the market and the audience, make the influence and acceptance of Chinese animation higher and higher. We need to change the traditional social concept that animation is for children to increase the industrialization development of animation to occupy a place in the market of many other animations aboard.

At present, the development of domestic healing animation has integrated new media technology *Meng Ya Xiong* is a three-dimensional healing animation, which mainly tells the interesting interaction between the members of the bear family and the breeder's uncle. As a plant elf, the protagonist of the story directly exposes himself to human vision for some special reason, and becomes a simple, honest and lovely bear image. As a result, a series of ironic and heart-warming daily stories were born, and they were stories with tears in their laughter. The protagonist is naive and simple, with a small bud on his head. He likes to take care of people, and he always bursts into some heart-warming golden sentences inadvertently. The three-dimensional texture makes the character more real, showing a vivid character image. Such a cute image is especially popular with young children, and derivatives related to budding bears are selling like hot cakes.

If we want to promote the China's industrialization of healing animation, we must conduct in-depth research on healing animation, integrate it with the requirements of Chinese culture and society, and combine the development of modern science and technology to create a modern healing animation with Chinese characteristics. Only by correctly understanding the social significance of healing animation and figuring out its development trend and the creative basis of psychological theory can the industrialization and localization of healing animation be truly implemented in China.

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