

Audiovisual Culture and Transmedia Narratives: Cross-boundary Presentation of Film Music in Literature and Cinema

Ruoyan Wang

School of Arts, Renmin University of China, Beijing 100872, Beijing, China

ryann_wang@ruc.edu.cn

Abstract: Film music as an important element in the film, since the emergence of sound film, it has played a key role in promoting the development of film plot. In the current process of cross-boundary integration of literature and film, it has become an important trend to use film music to bring different audio-visual culture to the audience, and to strengthen film memory through film music in cross-media narrative. In order to study the cross-boundary presentation of film music in literature and film, the film "The River Red" is taken as an example to analyze the audio-visual culture and cross-media narrative presentation of the music in the opening, transition and soundtrack in the cross-boundary presentation of literature and film, so as to provide reference for the development of film music.

Keywords: Audio-Visual Culture; Transmedia Narrative; Film Music; Literature; Movies; Cross Boundary

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of globalization and digital age, audio-visual culture and cross-media narrative have gradually become important forms of cultural exchange and communication. As a kind of audio-visual art, the music element of film plays an important role in the cross-media narrative. As two different art forms, literature and film have their own characteristics in story narration and emotional expression (Chen, 2023). However, with the development of the trend of media convergence, the cross influence between the two is becoming more and more obvious. As a bridge connecting the two, film music has a special significance.

2. THE PRESENTATION OF FILM MUSIC IN AUDIO-VISUAL CULTURE

Film is a comprehensive audio-visual culture that integrates a variety of art forms. It not only contains music, performance, literature, culture and other elements, but also creates an artistic world full of imagination and appeal through images, sound effects, lighting and other means. As an indispensable part of the film, film music plays a vital role in the

presentation of the film. Film music is a kind of music specially created for the film, which is usually created by the composer according to the film's plot, atmosphere and character and other factors. Its main function is to cooperate with the plot and emotional expression of the film to provide the audience with a more complete audio-visual experience. There are many types of film music, among which the three main types are original music, original music and adapted music (Wu & Wu, 2023). Soundtrack refers to the use of existing music to match the plot and picture of a film. This type of music is usually created by professional music production companies or composers. Such as *House of Flying Daggers*, the soundtrack of the same name used in the film *House of Flying Daggers*. Original music refers to music created specifically for film, and this type of music is usually commissioned by film producers or composers. For example, in the film "Nobody", the song "Hu Guangsheng" was composed and sung by the actor Ren Suxi. Music adaptation refers to the adaptation or re-interpretation of existing music works to adapt to the needs of the film plot. Such as "The River red" in the adaptation of Henan opera excerpts. As an important element in film works, film music has an important influence on film audio-visual culture. It can not only enhance the visual effect of the film, but also bring more profound emotional experience to the audience. In *Under the Hawthorn Tree*, for example, the music appears for only 35 minutes. In the scene where the male and female protagonists embrace each other across the river, director Zhang Yimou did not design the lines for the actors, but used the soothing background music to achieve the purpose of the narrative. At this time, the film music is silent lines, and the slow and slightly sad background music transmits the sadness of their separation and the helplessness of looking across the river to the audience. Although there are no lines, the audience can more resonate with the film plot under the guidance of the film music.



Figure 1: Film clips from *Under the Hawthorn Tree*

At the same time, film music can also promote the narrative rhythm of the film. Similarly, take the Hawthorn Tree Love as an example, the music in the film is mainly in G major, with simple melody and slow rhythm, which can bring the audience a strong sense of picture. The music starts with a single piano note, and gradually integrates the violin and other instruments (Eisenstein, 2014; TURAN et al., 2020). From the perspective of a film on visual and sound effects, piano tone down to men and women protagonist leave sentimental and weak show incisively and vividly, and ensemble music will also be two inner depressive mood to a climax, enables the audience to empathy, while in the static autumn came home, music didn't stop, this also is the embodiment of the static autumn heart sad for a long time do not come loose (Mulvey, 2013).

3. THE PRESENTATION OF FILM MUSIC IN TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVES

Transmedia Storytelling is an advanced concept of content creativity, which transcends traditional narrates and becomes a cultural activity based on collaborative creation and collective wisdom. It expands the world and depth of the story by telling a story on different platforms (such as books, magazines, movies, television, blogs, forums, social media, etc.) and guiding the audience from one medium to another (Fu & Zhang, 2023). For example, in the process of adapting the classic novel *Pride and Prejudice* into a film, film music has played an important role in maintaining the emotion and atmosphere of the original novel. In the film, the director cleverly uses classical music, such as violin concertos and piano music, to evoke memories and emotional connections with the original. This kind of music creates a noble and elegant atmosphere for the film, and also allows the audience to better feel the emotions and themes of the characters in the original work. In addition to using music from the original work, the film also re-created some music to fit the narrative and emotional expression of the film. The new music echoes the music of the original, preserving the emotion and atmosphere of the original, and injecting new vitality into the film. For example, in the film, when Elizabeth and Darcy are walking on the field in the English countryside, the background music is melodious and romantic, which expresses the deep emotion between them. Such music design allows the audience to better immerse themselves in the story and feel the charm of romantic emotions in the novel (Ames, 2011; Hutcheon, 2003).



Figure 2: Excerpts from the film *Pride and Prejudice*

At the same time, film music plays an indispensable role in the crossover between literature and film. It not only plays an important role in the film, but also maintains a close connection with literature. The film music also brings the emotion and atmosphere of the film into the literature. Through the cooperation of music, readers can better feel the beauty of the English countryside described in the novel and the emotional entanglement between the characters. In the film music of *Pride and Prejudice*, beautiful classical music and pictures echo each other, allowing readers to feel the beauty of the English countryside and the emotional entanglement between the characters (Tuan, 1977; Tzoulas & James, 2010). Such music design provides readers with a richer emotional experience and a deeper understanding of the original work. In addition, film music also provides a broader imaginative space for literary works. The power of music can stimulate people's emotional resonance and imagination, allowing readers to better immersing themselves in the story when reading literature. Through the guidance of film music, readers can more deeply understand the emotion, theme and meaning of the story, so as to better appreciate the value of literary works.

4. THE SPECIFIC CASE ANALYSIS OF FILM MUSIC IN THE CROSSOVER OF LITERATURE AND FILM

In the crossover between literature and film, film music has always added infinite charm to film art with its irreplaceable role. Through the close combination with the plot of the film, the film music can deeply show the emotional changes of the characters and the ups and down of the plot, so

that the audience can feel the plot and characters of the film more deeply. The music design of the film "The River Red" is undoubtedly a successful example. The overall music adopts "Henan opera + rock", which removes the original drab in the singing tone of Henan opera. Through the integration of rock elements, the penetration and rhythm sense of the soundtrack are highlighted, and more audio-visual experience is brought to the public (Chen, 2022). Zhang yimou's film audiences in operations with a special effect of viewing audio-visual feast, and the innovative application of film music, but also hide a lot of detail, realize the organic integration of transboundary literature and film. "The River Red" with the Southern Song Dynasty anti-Jin famous general Yue Fei as the spiritual carrier, shows the heroic history of Henan region. In order to better fit the theme of the story and express respect for Yue Fei, a heroic general, the film chose Henan opera as the music style. This kind of "Henan opera + rock and roll" film music left a deep impression on the audience. When the audience heard the melody again, it could not help but recall the heroic deeds of Yue Fei in "The River Red" and recall that unforgettable history.

(1) The film music in the opening: Director Zhang Yimou chose to present "The River Red" from the perspective of historical little people, which makes this old subject matter full of national emotional identity more suitable for young audiences. In order to make this heavy and humiliating history more suitable for young audiences, the director skillfully integrated elements such as suspense and comedy. The story begins with the assassination of an envoy of the State of Jin and the loss of a secret letter in the house of Qin Kuei, and begins with the search for the assassin and the lost secret letter as the main line. The characters of Zhang Da, Sun Jun, He Li, Wu Yichun and Yao Qin are gradually dragged into the story, and finally completed the transformation from "seeking letters" to "anti-espionage" to "promoting national integrity and the spirit of the country". In the film, between the thick spiritual core and the expression form of collage and blend, the score of traditional Chinese opera music becomes an important spiritual symbol, giving people a sense of detachment.

The film "The River Red" in the beginning of the film selected the Henan opera "Bao Gong Ci dynasty", with a unique audio-visual effect to show the Chinese traditional culture and the profound literary concept. Through the traditional form of Henan opera, the film shows the character and inner emotion of Bao Gong, and also conveys a sense of historical vicissitudes and insistence on justice. In terms of audio-visual effects, the music of "Bao Gong Ci Chao" is mainly composed of traditional Chinese instruments, such as pipa, erhu, etc., through the performance of such

instruments, it creates a simple and elegant atmosphere. At the same time, the singing design in the film is also very distinctive, not only shows the singing style of Henan opera, but also shows the inner feelings of Bao Gong incisively and vividly. The design of this audio-visual effect makes the audience better immersed in the situation of the film and feel the weight of history and the freshness of the characters. In terms of literary ideas, "The River Red" conveys the praise of traditional virtues such as impartiality, honesty and self-restraint through the passage of "Bao Gong's Speech to the Court". As a representative of honest officials in history, Bao Gong's image and code of conduct have become the core elements to show justice and fairness in the film. Through this song, the film expresses the pursuit of values such as justice, honesty and loyalty, as well as the memory and respect for the honest officials in history (Tao & MA, 2022). This literary concept runs through the whole film, so that the audience can deeply feel the spiritual connotation and humanistic value of traditional Chinese culture while appreciating the plot.

(2) The film music in the transition: One of the most impressive things about the movie, "The River Red," is the high-spirited, fast-paced soundtrack that runs through the film's transition. This kind of music design is particularly prominent in the scene where the main character is running in the corridor, which gives the audience a strong sense of jumping off and tension (Slingerland, 2007).



Figure 3: Movie excerpts from "The River Red"

In the film "The River Red", the design of the transition music combines

music, literature and film perfectly in its unique way. It not only provides a strong support for the emotional expression of the protagonist and the display of the inner world, but also presents a vivid historical picture for the audience by echoing the historical background and era atmosphere at that time. First of all, in the movie "The River Red", the design of the transition music is not only a simple musical background, it is closely related to the emotion and inner world of the protagonist, and becomes an important means to express the protagonist's emotion. Whenever the protagonist experiences an emotional climax or turning point, music can always appear at the right time and provide strong support for the expression of the protagonist's emotions. It is like a mirror, reflecting the protagonist's inner emotional changes, the protagonist's happiness, anger, sadness and its inner struggle in the face of difficulties incisively and vividly. For example, when the protagonist is faced with difficult choices, the concert becomes tense and exciting, and through the change of melody and rhythm, the audience can feel the inner contradictions and struggles of the protagonist. At the moment of victory or defeat, the music becomes correspondingly high or sad, providing a deeper level for the expression of the protagonist's emotions. The close combination of the music and the protagonist's emotion enables the audience to feel the protagonist's emotional world more deeply. It not only enhances the viewing experience of the film, but also allows the audience to have a deeper emotional resonance with the story and fate of the protagonist. Secondly, the design of the transition music is not only limited to the emotional and inner world of the protagonist, it also successfully echoes the historical background and the atmosphere of the time. This music design not only provides a strong support for the expression of the protagonist's emotions, but also presents a vivid historical picture for the audience by echoing with the historical background and era atmosphere. In the film, the transition music uses a combination of traditional instruments and modern music arrangements to adapt poems into songs. This cross-boundary integration of music and literature not only preserves the cultural connotation and emotional value of literary works, but also presents them more vivid and three-dimensional through the form of films. This kind of music design not only reflects the film production team's in-depth research and understanding of the historical background and the atmosphere of The 'Times, but also shows its unique insight into the cross-boundary integration of music and literature. Through the cross-boundary integration of music and literature, the audience can also feel the historical charm and cultural atmosphere of

that era while enjoying the film. This way of presentation makes the audience feel as if they are in that era and feel the atmosphere and emotion of that era. At the same time, this music design also provides a richer background and level for the display of the protagonist's emotion and inner world (Lu, 2015). In addition, the music design of "The River Red" realizes the extension of time and space through the unique audio-visual culture presentation and cross-media narrative. This extension is not simply to add music elements to the film, but to create a strong visual and auditory experience through the close integration of music and pictures. In the film, the transition music and the picture are closely connected, presenting a vivid historical picture together. The combination of the music and the picture makes the audience seem to be in that era and immersed in the story world. This kind of experience allows the audience to feel the tension and stimulation of the plot more deeply, and at the same time, it can feel the atmosphere and emotion of the historical era more truly. This kind of presentation of audio-visual culture not only enriches the artistic expression of the film, but also makes the audience better immersed in the story world. Through the mutual echo and complement of music and pictures, it realizes the extension of time and space, allowing the audience to have a deeper understanding of the history and culture of that era.

(3) The film music in the soundtrack: In the movie "sacred", the choice of music is a bright spot. The director carefully selected selected excerpts of Henan opera such as "Lower Chenzhou", "Mu Guiying", "Bao Qingtian" and "Exploring Yin Mountain", and incorporated rock elements into them for innovation (Xi, 2023). This kind of music design gives a unique flavor to the specific plot in the story, and also successfully realizes the suggestion of the setting of people and the development direction of characters.

First of all, when the singing girl Yao Qin appeared, the film soundtrack was selected from the Henan opera adaptation Mu Guiying Hang Shuai. This choice is closely related to Yao Qin's character setting. Mu Guiying is a heroic female figure in Henan Opera, and this music is in sharp contrast to the original setting of Yao Qin -- one is a singer who moves around in the wind and dust, and the other is a heroine who has heroic deeds. This contradiction between the music and the characters is reasonably explained in the subsequent development of the storyline. Yao Qin evolved from a singing girl who only knew how to survive, to a brave woman with a firm belief and the courage to kill Qin Kuai, a transformation that fits Mu Guiying's image well.



Figure 4: "The River Red" Yao Qin scene

Secondly, in the movie "The River Red", the scene of Yao Qin assassinating Qin Hui is undoubtedly a climax, and the choice of music will push the emotion of this plot to a climax. The director chose Henan opera "Ten Guards" as the soundtrack for this plot, which not only reflects the respect and inheritance of traditional culture, but also gives deep meaning in emotional expression and plot development.

The Henan opera Shi Bao Guan tells the story of Bao Zheng who was not afraid of power and acted with justice. The justice and bravery shown in this traditional play are echoed by Yao Qin's assassination of Qin Hui. When Yao Qin decides to kill Qin Hui, the music injects more courage and strength into her actions.

At the same time, the music also provides the emotional preparation for the audience, making the audience more nervous and excited at the moment when Yao Qin killed Qin Hui, and full of expectation and curiosity for the development of the story. In addition, the selection of Ten Guards in Henan Opera also plays a connecting role in the character-building and plot development.

Yao Qin's transformation from a singing girl who only knows how to survive to a heroic woman who daunts to kill Qin Kuai is in line with the image of Bao Zheng in the Henan opera Shi Bao Guan. The contrast and echo between the music and the characters make the audience have a deeper understanding of Yao Qin's character and inner world.



Figure 5: "The River Red" Yao Qin assassination Qin Hui excerpts

Finally, in the whole film, the selection of music such as "Bao Gong Zha Mei Case" highlights the director's in-depth understanding of the story's background and the atmosphere of The Times. Such music, with its unique rhythm and rhythm, echoes the development of the story and provides strong support for the characterization. When the story is tense and exciting, the music will also be tense, creating a sense of immersion for the audience. When the story reaches its climax, the music also follows the excitement, making the audience feel the emotion and tension in the story. This kind of music not only adds more layers to the film in terms of emotional expression, but also plays a role in the narrative structure. They connect the various plots of the film together, making the whole story smoother and more natural. This continuity not only allows the audience to be better immersed in the process of watching the film, but also makes the theme of the film more prominent and distinct.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, in the crossover between literature and film, film music has become the link between the two. Through music, it can not only foil the emotion of the film, but also promote the development of the film plot and bring a new audio-visual culture to the audience. In addition, the refreshing film music can deepen the audience's impression of the film, and when the audience hears the film music, they can recall the plot of the film again, just like the transition score in "The River Red". It can be seen that film music, as one of the important elements of film audio-visual culture,

has a positive effect on the crossover between literature and film, as well as strengthening the memory of film in cross-media narrative.

References

- Ames, R. T. (2011). *Confucian role ethics: A vocabulary*. The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press.
- Chen, T. (2022). Empathy and identity: on the creative communication of film music. *Film Review and Introduction*, 21(42-45).
- Chen, T. (2023). On the innovation and development of film music and film narrative. *Film Review and Introduction*, 17, 103-107.
- Eisenstein, S. (2014). *Film form: Essays in film theory*. HMH.
- Fu, L., & Zhang, X. (2023). The development path and aesthetic expression of Chinese film music from three awards. *Contemporary Film*, 8, 150-154.
- Hutcheon, L. (2003). *The politics of postmodernism*. Routledge.
- Lu, Y. (2015). The Communication Form of Calligraphy. *Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press*, 22.
- Mulvey, L. (2013). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In *Feminism and film theory* (pp. 57-68). Routledge.
- Slingerland, E. (2007). *Effortless action: Wu-wei as conceptual metaphor and spiritual ideal in early China*. Oxford University Press.
- Tao, J., & MA, S. (2022). Aesthetic Cognition, Subject Consciousness and "Breaking the Circle" Effect: Music Evolution and Artistic Role in the Phenomenon Level Theme Film in the New Era *Sichuan Theater*, 10, 138-142.
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. U of Minnesota Press.
- TURAN, C., Ali, U., GÜRLEK, M., & DOĞDU, S. A. (2020). DNA Barcodes for Identifications of Two Lionfish Species *Pterois miles* (Bennett, 1828) and *Pterois volitans* (Linnaeus, 1758) in the Mediterranean. *FishTaxa*, 16, 29-36.
- Tzoulas, K., & James, P. (2010). Making biodiversity measures accessible to non-specialists: an innovative method for rapid assessment of urban biodiversity. *Urban ecosystems*, 13, 113-127.
- Wu, X., & Wu, T. (2023). From "Recovery" to "maturity" : aesthetic chant of Chinese film songs in the transition period *Film Review and Introduction*, 15, 104-107.
- Xi, M. (2023). Some things, more important than life and death-film "sacred war" using a Que word remember history. *Chinese Journal of the North and the South (Monday)*, 3, 32-51.