

A Micro-exploration of the Social History of Anime in the Early 21st Century: An Appreciation of the Anime "Shakugan no Shana" as an Example

Junhao Chen

College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China

Abstract: Language is a tool for human thinking and communication, but with the advent of the age of visual culture, anime is becoming a brand new form of cultural expression, and this trend is becoming more and more obvious. Combining the history of anime with the intellectual history, we find that the history of anime is not only externally conditioned, but also inherently generalized in the history of anime itself. The study of anime history is part of the study of history, and depends on the philosophy of history in its overall consciousness. History is neither the history of a certain person, nor the history of a certain number of persons. The general appearance of history is depicted by people. How to make the written history consistent with the real history is the responsibility of the historian and cannot be separated from the culture and language that carries it. The author will take the classic Japanese anime "Shakugan no Shana" in the 2000s as an example, and preliminarily explore the reasons for its popularity and decline from three perspectives of plot setting, character setting and world setting.

Keywords: Anime; Social History of Anime; Japanese Anime Culture; Shakugan no Shana; Intellectual History

1. Introduction

The television anime film "Shakugan no Shana" is based on the Japanese novelist Yashichiro Takahashi's light novel work of the same name, which was produced by J.C. STAFF, and was released on October 5, 2005 to rave reviews. The anime "burning eyes of Shana" anime has 3 seasons and 3 specials, a theatrical version, before and after 6 years, and in October 2006 started broadcasting the "melancholy of Ryougou Haruhi" together

created a "light anime" era; animation heroine Shana's CV Nail Miyagi Rie with this completely popular, and derived from the "Nail Miyagi four moe". The anime heroine Nail Miyagi Rie's CV has become popular, and has given rise to ACG cultural symbols such as "Nail Miyagi's Four Moe", "Pride", and "No Road Race".

2. Plot Setting of Anime Film Shakugan No Shana Anime

Character, plot and environment are three dialectical and unified elements in the creation of anime, the plot is centered on the characters, the characters are vividly presented in the plot, the environment accentuates the characters, and the characters leap onto the screen. A successful anime work is not only to create a favorite character, but also to create an impressive storyline. For anime creators, the core task of creation always revolves around how to set up a fascinating and unusual storyline. This distinctive feature of Japanese anime's emphasis on storyline follows Osamu Tezuka's core concept of success - the importance of story content and plot. The prosperity of Japanese anime can be said to be initiated by Osamu Tezuka, who created "Tekkai Astro Boy" with a storyline that was exciting enough to attract a large number of viewers to watch the work, which caused others in the industry to follow suit, and also to produce split-episode television animation, laying the groundwork for the birth of later long-form narrative television animation works, such as more than 700 episodes of Naruto and more than 1,000 episodes of The King of Thieves. The foundation was laid for the subsequent creation of long narratives such as Naruto and King of Thieves. Osamu Tezuka and subsequent manga artists used manga and anime as a vehicle to create many fascinating and exciting plots. The youth category of

anime draws more complex works with twists and turns, which are more suitable for young people to watch than the previous positioning of "Iron Arm Astro Boy" and other works for teenagers, and the psychological and emotional portrayal of the characters in the girls' manga is also meticulous. Other kinds of comics, such as hot-blooded works, require plotting to show the high fighting spirit of the protagonist, and sci-fi works also integrate philosophical issues, such as the coexistence of human beings and technology, into the story. This shows that Japanese manga artists pay great attention to the content of the story and regard it as the most central and crucial element of their works.

While the first two seasons of the *Shakugan no Shana* anime focused on the daily lives of the main characters and their battles against the "Apprentice" (similar to the common anime "villain"), the third season takes a sudden turn: the main character, Yohji, has "gone rogue!" In the third season, the plot takes a turn for the worse: Yuji, the main character, has gone rogue, entering into a contract with the creator god of the Apprentice, and becoming the leader of the Apprentice. He did this with one purpose in mind: to end the endless war between the Apostles and the Fire Mist. He doesn't want Shana's fate to be a life-long battle with the Apostles, and he doesn't want his parents and friends to be killed by the Apostles one day. In order to protect the people he loves, Yohji decides to create a "new world" between the "human world" and the "red world", so that all the Apostles can move to the "new world". He decided to create a "new world" between the "human world" and the "red world", so that all the "disciples" would move to the "new world" and never see each other again. But the Fire Mists were unanimously against it: according to the character of the Apprentices who did whatever they wanted, it was impossible for them to be peaceful in the New World, and the world would still be in danger of collapsing. So the Fire Mist and the Apprentice fight for their beliefs [1]. In this way, the audience's preconceived notion that the Apprentice is a "villain" is directly overturned, and the plot twist is realized in a reasonable and natural way. In the end, the "new world" is created, most of the "Apprentice" have moved to the past, and some of the "fire mist" along with

them to monitor the "Apprentice's" behavior. Some of the "Fire Mist" traveled with them to oversee what the "Apostles" were doing. After a whole season of fighting, Yohji and Shana finally understand each other's good intentions, Yohji in order to change Shana's destiny, to create a "new world" in order to achieve this goal, he sacrificed too much, carry too much, but he is willing to for the love of his life in the silence in the hard line; experienced so much, Shana is willing to continue to continue to walk with Yohji, and with him to complete the "new world" together with the "new world". After so much, Shana is willing to continue to move forward with Yuji and complete the "New World" program with him. The two of them step into the "New World" hand in hand, and start a new prologue at the end of the world.

The anime has 3 seasons and 72 episodes, although a great deal of the original novel's plot has been cut, e.g., the prequel to the Medieval War and the padding of the characters who appeared in Season 3, which inevitably left the anime party bewildered. This is a common problem for light anime, not to mention that "*Shakugan no Shana*" is still such a huge story. However, the JC Club at the time still used high production standards to present the main essence of the original to the audience, at the very least, told a good story and initially shaped a large world system. From the point of view of the plot, the anime was very innovative and impactful at that time, and with this thrust, the plot was fixed in the audience's mind, leaving a beautiful and deep memory!

3.Character Setting of Anime Film *Shakugan no Shana* Anime

As a long-running serialized series, it creates a dozen or so main characters, each with his/her own distinctive characteristics and intertwined relationships, with the most distinctive, popular, and successful persona being Shana, the main female character. Raised by Wilhelmina from a young age, Shana is resolute and determined as a Fire Mist Warrior. However, she has been instilled with the mechanical dogma of "become Fire Mist and kill the apostles" in her education and training since she was a child, and lacks rich feelings and the ability to think independently. It is only when she meets the hero and interacts

with him that she gradually understands social common sense and recovers what she has neglected for many years: "feelings". She develops a crush on the main character, becomes jealous of her rival, Kazumi Yoshida, becomes attached to the main character's mother, who taught her, and is grateful to her "adoptive mother". In the story, Shana changes from a "weapon" to a "human being", and the audience can't help but feel a lot of emotions and relief along the way. Shana's image as a haughty fighting loli was unique at the time, and her delicate and profound growth process further won her the hearts of the audience. In the real world, after running with 8 years, Shana finally won the 2016 World Meng Meng King crown, writing a colorful stroke in the history of anime, while highlighting its super high popularity charm.

In that work, there are multiple couples: there are school romances, bitter romances, life-and-death romances, sibling romances, brother-and-sister romances, and grandparent-and-grandson romances. "Shakugan no Shana" has been exploring the question: what is love? The hero and heroine are a couple, and the two of them are familiarizing and growing with each other in the process, from the initial strange relationship to the gradual mutual affection. Shana learns to think independently and emotionally aware, the hero Sakai Yuji is an ordinary person, but he is a "growth type" persona, he is not willing to be sheltered by Shana all the time, in the side by side with Shana in the fight to master the combat skills, from the beginning of the bewilderment to the later stand on its own, he metamorphosed into the same as Shana's powerful role, realize the two of them He becomes as powerful as Shana, realizing the "equality" of the two. Although some people criticize the hero for being indecisive, he is responsible for his beloved, which is fundamentally different from today's common "incompetent hero" persona, and Yuji's efforts and sacrifices to change Natsuna's destiny in the later stages of the work are even more touching. Shana and Yuji's love is pure and innocent, the two have never acted out of character before determining their feelings, and throughout the series, the two have only kissed once in the grand finale; after determining their feelings, the two are willing to take on responsibilities and difficulties for

each other [2]. This kind of warmth in the details of life in each other, by practical action "redemption" of each other's two-way run, is the real love. The publicity of the spirit of love, determination and struggle runs through the whole anime, which makes people receive education in a subtle way, further portrays the characters and sublimates the main idea of the work.

In addition, from a semiotic point of view, animated characters have specific auditory and tactile symbols in addition to the visual symbols of traditional design. In order to match these symbols, voice-over work, like theater performances, requires specific means to express them. Japanese animation usually focuses on simple lines when depicting characters, and some animation companies simplify the look of their characters even more to save money. It's like the famous "Kyoto face" in the anime industry - an anime with a single face, just a change of hair style and eye color is also a thing. In order to differentiate the characters, the voice actor must do his/her best to emphasize the differences in their voices. With the combination of voice acting expertise and creativity, the relationship between the voice actor and the character becomes refreshingly different. Japanese anime has a soulful character on screen thanks to the voice actors. Shana's CV Nail Miyagi Rie's interpretation can be said to be perfect, this soft neutral and chic transparent tone, not only successfully portrayed Shana's animation image, but also set off a "Nail Miyagi disease" craze in the world, led by Shana's "Nail Miyagi four Meng" is more Nail Miyagi's four moe, led by Nana, has become a classic in the history of voice acting and anime. This is the most direct embodiment of the "character-voice actor" animation model, that is: an animated character has become the label of a real voice actor. For example: "EVA" in the ishu Kaoru only one episode, but the short appearance time did not affect his popularity, and for his voice voice actor Ishida Akira also became popular, and gradually become Japan's outstanding voice actor leader; "Ryougou Haruhi melancholy" in the protagonist of the voice of Ryougou Haruhi Hirano Aya also rely on the role of popularity, and thus began to engage in a variety of fields, she also obtained and the protagonist of the Ryougou Haruhi She was also given the same title as the main

character, Ryomiya Haruhi: "Chief", and has become one with the character. The voice acting industry's dedication and creativity to anime characters helps accelerate the audience's perception of them. Rie Nail Miyagi's apt voice acting in Scorch Eyes of Shana has become a unique landscape in the anime, not only deepening the depth of the characters' settings, but also promoting the culture of the anime and the characters.

4. World Setting of Anime Film Shakugan No Shana Anime

In anime, everything can be divided into "subjective consciousness" and "objective existence". The subjective consciousness is the "character" and the objective existence is the "world setting". In other words, everything that can appear in an anime is a "world setting" except for thoughts. One of the most valuable things about "Shakugan no Shana" is that it breaks away from the old world system and world setting. In layman's terms, it has realized the seamless switch between "everyday" and "non-everyday". In the past, although there is also a contrast between "everyday" and "non-everyday" in the world system, the two are often integrated with each other and inseparable, and under the dominance of tragedy, the "non-everyday" will eventually affect the "everyday". Under the dominance of tragedy, the "non-everyday" will eventually affect the "everyday" story, and it is difficult to maintain a consistent atmosphere, which greatly narrows the creative space. However, unlike "Shana of the Burning Eyes" and later Ryouga Haruhi, the original light novels had to overcome this problem in order to pursue a long-term serialization, and did their best to separate the "non-everyday" from the "everyday".

An original idea often means investing a lot of time, energy and money, and in the era of "business is king", few anime producers are still willing to spend time and effort on the theme of the idea, and they are often more willing to learn from their predecessors. This is exactly the case with the "battle transformation" in the anime "Shakugan no Shana", which is actively borrowed and reasonably transformed from "The richer and more fancy the character's transformation, the stronger the character's ability is, and the producer tries to make use of this simple

relationship between energy and reference to stimulate the viewer's desire to watch: the contrast between the power of the weak and the strong has already been visualized, and whether the weaker side is stronger or not has been expressed. The contrast of power has been visualized, and whether the weaker side can kill the stronger side becomes the audience's main concern [3]. In Shana's world system, she has to deal with the destruction of the world by the Apprentice, and actually acts as a "hero" who "saves the world". However, with the "Seal" and the Fire Mist Warrior's characteristic of having to keep a low profile and stay hidden, the fights that Shana and other characters are supposed to be having do not leave any traces in the world at all, and in the true sense of the word, they can "leave their clothes after the incident, and hide their accomplishments and their names". Both sides had to use the "seal" to hide their identities. With this setting, the author has more control over the development of the story, and this change has greatly strengthened the plasticity and serial life of the work, and the new setting has also enhanced the commercial competitiveness of the work and established its epoch-making significance [4].

5. The Decline of Animated Works

Time has changed, and the anime industry has undergone a series of dramatic changes, belonging to the "Shakugan no Shana" era has passed: June 2013, the publication of the book "burning eyes of Shana book - the end of the chapter", announced the official end of the series; April 2020, "Shakugan no Shana" new short story published in the "Dengeki Bunko", and then there are the decline of the paper media in the context of the "Dengeki Bunko" of the The "Nail Miyagi disease" craze receded, the year's "Queen of Pride" Nail Miyagi Rie gradually retired to the second line behind the scenes; for the anime sang a number of OP and ED of the well-known anime singer Kawada Maami announced her retirement in 2016; for the anime voice of Kiyokawa Genmon and other old The old voice actors such as Motomu Kiyokawa, who voiced the anime, also passed away one after another.

As for why "Shakugan no Shana" has faded from the public's view, from the audience's point of view, most of today's anime fans do not have a good life in the real world, which

can be seen from the term "nowadays", which is the opposite of the playful "dead otaku" name. This can be seen in the term "nowadays", which is the opposite of the playful term "otaku" [5]. Watching anime is a way of self-relaxation and even escaping from reality for the majority of otaku. What they seek when watching anime is not moralizing, but a strong sense of self-incorporation: when the protagonist falls in love with a series of twists and turns, they also applaud and shed tears; when the protagonist fights monsters and upgrades, they are also thrilled with it. What most of them need is simple, direct visual impact and a popular plot that can easily trigger empathy, rather than obscure symbols and metaphors [6]. To put it plainly, today's viewers are looking for a simple and low-level "coolness" in their fast-paced lives. In the pursuit of "coolness", they also need to use their brains to interrupt the smooth viewing experience to consider the producer's hidden intentions, which is obviously not something the viewers are happy to do [7]. This is obviously not something that the audience is happy to do. Many viewers nowadays judge excellent animation works by the criteria of beautiful picture, shocking soundtrack, thrilling rhythm and imaginative imagination, which are only for the sake of sensory enjoyment, and the ideas, themes, skills and narrative techniques are not in their consideration [8]. The "Shakugan no Shana," which was born at the turn of the century, was longer than the latter but shorter than the former, and has naturally been replaced by newer works such as "LycoRecoil," which meets the needs of today's market.

6. Conclusion

Creators give all kinds of connotations to animation works, and it will produce discrepancies in the process of "transmission - acceptance", and the fundamental origin of such discrepancies is the transformation and domestication of human beings under the fast-paced life in the commercial society, whether it is paintings, films and TVs, music or literature, and the recipients' cognition of them always stays at the level of sense stimulation and is difficult to go further. It is difficult to go further. When all human beings are turned into an orange sea in EVA, the audience's mind is filled with such sensual and

vacant adjectives as "spectacular", "wonderful", "shocking", and so on, but as to what the work actually means, few people will know. As for what the work really means, few people will think deeply about it. As a kind of commercialized film and television works, the first thing that anime has to satisfy is the entertainment demand of people's mental relaxation, and on this basis, the transmission of profound thoughts cannot be guaranteed. The most fundamental and important point is that anime is virtual, and all kinds of exaggerated deformation in anime works do not exist in real life. The viewer may keep them in his mind and have them triggered by a real-life scene at some point, but that's all, the image suddenly flashes and is then pushed out of his thinking by the hectic real-life scene. The strong emotions of shock or emotion experienced during the viewing process will quickly fade away. [4] It is true that there are veteran anime fans and even the producers themselves who interpret various scenes in anime, and it is not excluded that there are people who try to figure out the creators' intentions during the viewing process. However, in front of the powerful real life and commercial logic, the deeper meanings and metaphors in most anime works can only be rejected by viewers who pursue sensual enjoyment.

Compared to certain fantasy battle anime, "Shakugan no Shana" falls short in creating passion. On the one hand, the depressing atmosphere originating from the setting, on the other hand, both Shana and Yuji tend to be calm and collected, with not much emotional outbursts, resulting in the battles lacking in exhilaration, with not many hot-blooded and exuberant climaxes, which restricts the further expansion of the commercial value. Not the kind of joyful harem-oriented works, but also not bitter and hateful darkness, for the "Shakugan no Shana", the most central plot is still the teenage girl's side by side fight, mutual understanding and support each other, to overcome all kinds of difficulties and obstacles, which is similar to the traditional adventure story. As a common theme in Japanese ACGs, adventure stories usually start with the main character mistakenly entering a different world and end with a triumphant return, or there is no crossing over plot, setting up an empty fantasy world, where teenage boys and girls, either in

groups of two or several, form a small team and go on adventures from place to place, exploring all kinds of mysterious places, discovering all kinds of novelties, and so on, in short, the essence of adventure stories lies in exploring the world and discovering all kinds of novelties, and so on. The essence of an adventure story is to explore the world. Shakugan no Shana has this in mind in terms of the male/female pairings, yet the story framework kind of goes against the grain. The anime version of the show, in particular, basically focuses on the city of Misaki, with the hero and heroine staying in one place for long periods of time without moving, and not leaving even when they want to for various reasons. In addition to a variety of roles and self-contained method, in the " Shakugan no Shana", not only the real world seems boring, the so-called "red world" is also insufficient portrayal, highlighting in fact is the character's behavior and internal state, not like the mainstream fantasy works in Europe and the United States, to create a large and complex, and clear structure of the fantasy world. Into the fast-paced era, the " Shakugan no Shana " such as although a certain depth of meaning and a huge worldview, but still essentially "slow" "bland" works naturally at a competitive disadvantage, inevitably faded out of people's horizons, and ultimately became

the fan mouth "tears of the times", "tears of the times". The "tears of the times".

References

- [1] Lv Mei and Song Shanshan. Introduction to Animation. University of Electronic Science and Technology Press, 2018.
- [2] Shao Yuhang. Japanese Anime Culture - On the Worldview in Anime Culture. Talent, 2013, 15:157-158.
- [3] Jia Ruikai, Exploring Resource Allocation and Impacts in Japan's Anime Industry," Media Forum. 2023, 6(18): pp. 55-59.
- [4] Zhao Dongmei and Bao Xinglong. On the Reasons for the Existence of Japanese Anime's "Spaced Love" Effect. Film Review, 2014, 17: 63-64.
- [5] Masahiro Koyama. An introductory study of Japanese anime. Ocean Press, 2017.
- [6] Xu Tingting. Research on the Development of China's Animation Industry. Cooperative Economy and Science and Technology, 2024, 12: pp. 22-24.
- [7] Wu Zhixin. Taste Animation Analyzing Culture. Zhejiang Gongshang University Press, 2020.
- [8] Xu Lihan. Subculture to the World - An Introduction to the Development of Otaku Culture in Japan. Proceedings of the International Academic Forum on Culture and Art Innovation, Beijing, China, 2022.