CROSS-MEDIA ART TRANSFORMATION - FROM THE PAINTING "THOUSAND MILES OF RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS" TO THE CREATION OF THE DANCE FILM "ONLY GREEN"

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ABSTRACT
This article aims to sort out the complete cross-media creation process and evaluate audience reception in the cross-media adaptation from A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains to the dance drama and subsequently the dance film Only Green. It uses literature research, observation, interviews and questionnaires, The result showed that the two-stage creation logic and the differences in media expression between stage and film, focusing on the three major film and television creation methods of lens language, montage narrative and digital special effects. As for the evaluation results, it was found that 58.06% of the respondents recognized the dynamic landscape presentation of digital special effects, 50.32% recognized the enhancement of dance details by the lens, 43.23% recognized the multi-time and space narrative of montage, and 96.77% believed that the film completely or basically retained the cultural core of the original work. Research shows that dance films are not simple remakes of stage plays, but rely on image media to reconstruct traditional cultural symbols, forming a cross-media transformation path of "original painting foundation - stage translation - image reconstruction", providing a reference for the film and television innovation of traditional art. The qualitative findings from in-depth interviews with college dance teachers and professional choreographers further reveal that cross-media transformation is not a replication of visual appearance, but a translation of the internal aesthetic principles of painting—line, spatial layering and rhythmic vitality—into bodily movement, and that film techniques (close-up and panoramic combination, montage editing and restrained digital effects) must always serve the continuity of the dance body itself.
Keywords: Cross-Media Art Transformation, The Painting a Thousand Miles of Mountains and Rivers, Only Green, Dance Film

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INTRODUCTION

At a time when digital technology empowers literary and artistic innovation, cross-media adaptation has become the mainstream path for the revitalization and inheritance of traditional culture, and cross-media and cross-field artistic integration have become an important development trend in literary and artistic creation. The contemporary transformation of the ancient painting "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" is very typical. It was first adapted into the dance poetry drama "Only Green", which was widely recognized for its rich oriental aesthetics. However, stage plays are restricted by a fixed venue, a single perspective, and stage presentation conditions. It is difficult to completely restore the flowing landscape artistic conception and multi-layered narrative structure of ancient paintings, and there are obvious limitations in artistic expression. To this end, the main creative team launched a dance film of the same name in 2024, using film lenses, montage techniques and digital special effects to break through the boundaries of the stage and complete the second artistic upgrade of the work, forming a three-level cross-media transformation chain of "ancient paintings - stage plays - dance films", providing a new paradigm for the imaging reconstruction of traditional art themes.

At present, academic circles have conducted research on the cross-media innovation, dance-film integration and cultural communication of "Only Green", which provides a theoretical basis for this topic. The film lens can actively guide the audience's visual narrative, break through the viewing limitations of stage plays, It delicately presents traditional cultural elements such as dance, calligraphy, and ancient techniques, creates a more vivid green aesthetic image, and achieves the artistic gain of "1+1>2" in cross-media communication. That is, dance uses body language to realize the dynamic translation of traditional painting, while film and television media break through the time and space limitations of the stage through lenses, montage and digital special effects. The integration of the two further enhances the details of movements, expands narrative space and aesthetic conception, and forms an artistic expression and communication effect that goes beyond a single medium. (Pan Ziyi, 2025). Cross-media narrative is not only an innovation in art forms, but also a reproduction mechanism of cultural memory in the digital era. It is of great significance to the dissemination of traditional culture and the construction of popular cultural identity. (Peng Xiaoxi, 2025). The cross-border integration of dance and film and television is a new trend in artistic development. The integration of the two can enrich the artistic expression of dance and film and television in both directions. It also explains the interactive value of dance and film fusion from the dimensions of expression techniques, emotional transmission, and cultural inheritance, and provides a reference for cross-border artistic creation. (Wang Chun, 2025). Generally speaking, existing research has fully affirmed the cross-media value of this work, but there is still a lack of systematic and detailed discussion on the logical differences in the layer-by-layer transformation of "ancient painting-stage-movie", the reconstruction path of classical aesthetics through film and television technology, and the mechanism of film making up for the shortcomings of the stage. There is still room for research expansion.

Based on the research perspective of cross-media art, this article takes the three-level work system of the original "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains", the dance drama and the dance film "Only Green" as the research objects, focusing on the cross-media art transformation mechanism of traditional Chinese style art and differentiated cross-media editing ideas, focusing on analyzing the image reconstruction path of classical aesthetics through new cross-media innovative creative techniques such as lens language, montage, and digital special effects. By comparing the differences in artistic expression between painting, stage, and film and television, we explore the logic of video media making up for the shortcomings of stage drama art, and summarize the cross-media transformation rules and editing paradigms of traditional fine arts adapting to different media. Theoretically, this study refines the research

dimensions of traditional art cross-media creation and artistic transformation, fills the gap in existing research on multi-level cross-media creation logic and innovative techniques, and enriches the theoretical system of traditional art cross-media research. In practice, the cross-media creation strategies and artistic transformation paths summarized in this article can provide practical reference for cross-media adaptation and innovative creation of national dance and traditional cultural relics, and help traditional culture achieve creative transformation and artistic dissemination relying on cross-media art forms.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The existing literature can be synthesized into two thematic strands. The first strand concerns the cross-media transformation path and the media-ontological distinctions among painting, stage and film. Li Xinyu (2025) traces the complete transformation chain of "Only Green" from the ancient painting to the dance drama and then to the film, showing that although the three media differ in form, they inherit the same cultural core of landscape sentiment and craftsman spirit and complete medium-specific translation of it. Peng Xiaoxi (2025) further argues that the work breaks through the expressive limitations of the static painting through a layered creation strategy combining stage bodily narrative and digital imaging technology, thereby completing the dynamic reconstruction and contemporary translation of traditional cultural memory in the digital era. From the perspective of time aesthetics, Li Zonghui (2026) identifies a fundamental media distinction: the dance drama relies on live bodily performance to form a Bergsonian continuous "experienced time", whereas the film constructs a Deleuzian sliced "viewing time" through editing; the two nevertheless achieve complementary cross-media resonance, as stage creation provides artistic atmosphere for the film, and cinematic thinking reversely empowers stage creation.

The second strand focuses on imaging technology, dance-film integration and cultural communication. Zhang Zixuan (2025) points out that in the transformation from stage work to film, "Only Green" becomes a dance-image work independent of stage art by virtue of diverse lens scales and scene expansion, and that such cross-media narrative attempts have expanded and deepened the effective dissemination of Chinese traditional culture. Wang Chun (2025) analyzes the interactive logic of dance and film in terms of expressive techniques, emotional transmission and cultural inheritance, and argues that their deep integration injects new vitality into both art forms. Wei Dandan (2026) examines how digital technology reshapes the generation of dance movements: AI-assisted concept drafts guide early choreography, LED virtual production couples dance movements with virtual landscapes in real time, and high-speed photography and post-production special effects dismantle and re-construct movement rhythm—enhancing image texture while simultaneously turning the dancer's body into a composite visual object.

Taken together, these studies have fully affirmed the cross-media value of the work from textual and creation-oriented perspectives, but most of them remain at the level of essentialist textual analysis from the viewpoint of the creator and the work, lacking empirical support at the audience level—neither systematic questionnaire evidence nor the professional perspectives of dance educators and choreographers. To address this gap, the present study adopts a mixed-methods design that combines an audience questionnaire with qualitative in-depth interviews, thereby supplementing the existing literature with both quantitative reception data and qualitative expert evidence.

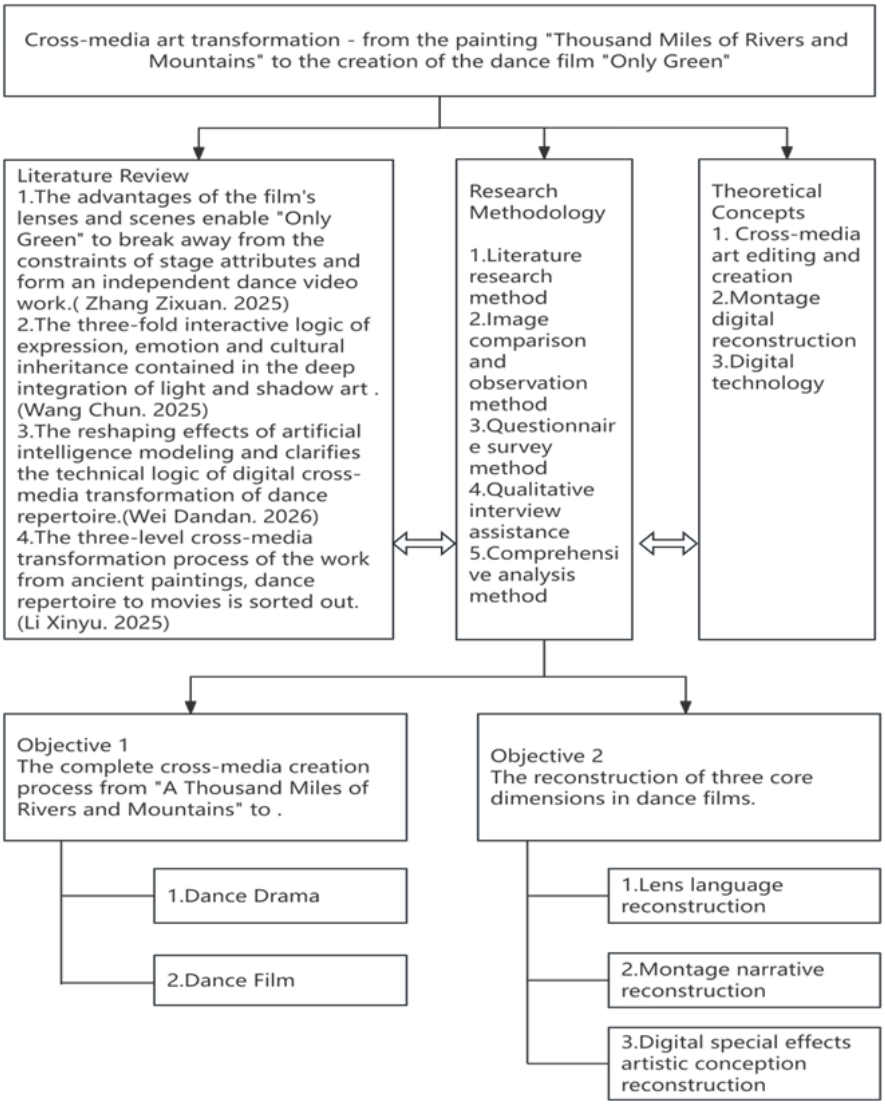


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
source: Zhangyanping

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1) Literature research method: sort out Chinese and English literature related to cross-media narrative, media aesthetics, and dance films;
2) Image comparison and observation method: Watch the stage play and dance movie versions simultaneously, and fill in the comparison and observation form for the two versions;
3) Questionnaire survey method: 155 questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate dance-major students to collect their evaluations of lens language, editing, special effects and cultural retention; the questionnaire consisted of structured items rated on a five-point scale, and the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) with SPSS; the internal consistency of the scale was examined by Cronbach's alpha.
4) Qualitative in-depth interview method: semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 college dance teachers and 1 professional choreographers/dance experts, covering four dimensions—the translation of painting imagery into bodily language, the construction of stage space, the differences between stage and film media, and cultural inheritance and dissemination. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through open coding and thematic synthesis to extract the professional perspectives that shaped the findings on choreography and media transformation.

5) Comprehensive analysis method: integrate qualitative text analysis and quantitative questionnaire data to comprehensively discuss the advantages and disadvantages of editing.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1) A complete cross-media creation process from "A Thousand Miles of Mountains and Rivers" to dance drama and then to dance film.

1.1 The first stage of choreography: transformation of ancient paintings → basic stage dance drama

It uses the visual and spiritual elements of static ancient paintings as materials to complete the single-layer translation of color, body, and space; it is limited to a fixed audience perspective, static scenery, and a single linear narrative, and cannot achieve cross-time and space expression and dynamic landscape pictures.

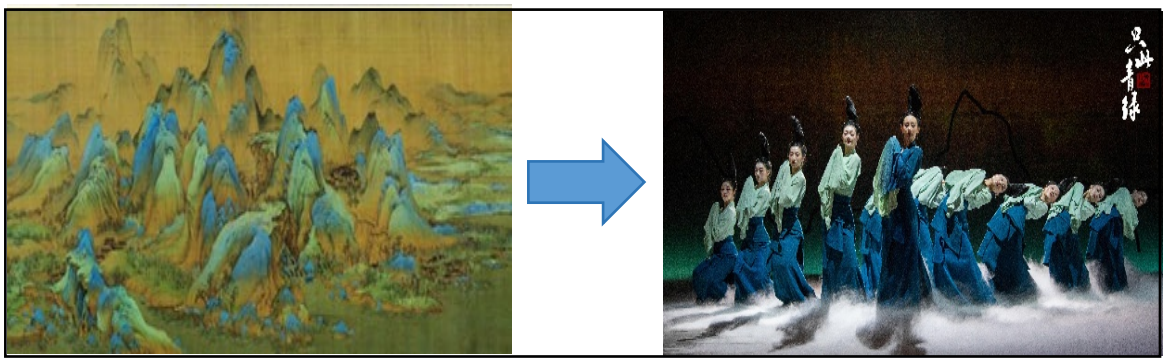


Figure 2 Cross-media transformation from the painting "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" to the dance drama "Only Green": the pictorial elements of color, posture and spatial composition are translated into stage bodily narrative and choreographic formation (left: detail of the painting; right: stage scene).
Image source: Official website of the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, China

1.2 The second stage of choreography: dance drama → secondary film and television choreography of dance film Three core innovative editing methods:

1.2.1 Lens language reconstruction: close-up captures micro-movements of fingertips and waist, panoramic view of thousands of miles of mountains and rivers, multi-angle mirror movement breaks the single perspective of the theater;

1.2.2 Montage narrative reconstruction: Double-line montage interweaves modern viewers and ancient landscape illusions to build a narrative across time and space and enrich the story level;

1.2.3 Digital special effects artistic conception reconstruction: dynamic ink scrolls, four-season landscape light and shadow special effects, realize the flowing green picture that cannot be completed on the stage, and integrate the virtual and the real to create an immersive ancient painting space.

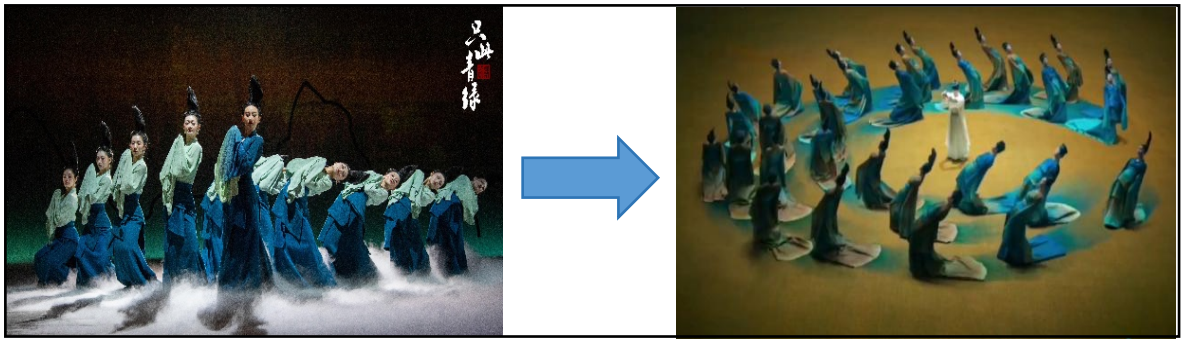


Figure 3) Stills from the dance drama "Only Green" (left) and the dance film "Only Green" (right): the film version reconstructs stage expression through close-ups of bodily details, montage editing and digital landscape effects, which illustrates the second-stage choreography analyzed in Section 1.2.
Image source: Official website of the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, China

2) Quantitative results of questionnaire survey (155 valid samples)
All 155 valid samples were from undergraduate dance majors.
Respondent profile and reliability: All 155 valid respondents are undergraduate students majoring in dance (51 males, 104 females; grade distribution: 6 first graders, 51 second graders, 27 third graders, and 71 fourth graders; watched the stage play version twice and the movie version once). The reliability of the questionnaire reached an acceptable level (Cronbach's α = 0.852).

Table 1 Proportion of audiences recognizing the media advantages of dance films

Innovation advantages of film media	**Select proportion**
Digital special effects restore dynamic green landscape panorama	58.06%
The lens magnifies the dancer's subtle body parts and enhances expression	50.32%
Montage editing realizes multi-time and space narrative	43.23%
Online and offline multiple channels to break the limitations of venue, time and space	38.06%

2.1 Core shortcomings of stage plays (high-frequency audience selection): fixed audience perspective, limited stage space, inability to present dynamic landscape light and shadow, and single narrative;
2.2 The proportion of film making up advantages: 58.06% approved the dynamic landscape special effects, 50.32% approved the lens to magnify body details, and 43.23% approved the montage multi-time and space narrative;
2.3 Special effects evaluation: 52.90% believe that the special effects are just right to serve classical aesthetics, 36.77% are moderately applicable, and only 10.33% think that the special effects cover up the dance itself;
2.4 Cultural inheritance: 96.77% of the respondents believe that the film completely or basically retains the cultural core of "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains".
3) Qualitative results of expert interviews. Thematic coding of the interview transcripts identified four core themes.
3.1 Painting-to-stage translation of imagery: the informants consistently emphasized that cross-media transformation is not a replication of the visual appearance of the painting but a translation of its internal aesthetic principles. As one college dance teacher (Interviewee L) explained, the charm of "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" lies in the brush-drawn lines, the layered superimposition of mountains, the rhythm of emptiness and substance, and

the scattered-point perspective of the scroll, and the true transformation extracts these static pictorial qualities and translates them into bodily movement, weight, group formation and stage composition. Another informant (Interviewee S) specified the four coordinating elements—group formation, spatial density and distance among dancers, depth-level staging and physical stage sets—through which the two-dimensional scroll is reconstructed as a living three-dimensional stage space. Interviewee X further mapped pictorial features onto bodily vocabulary: the steep contour of mountains corresponds to the deep backward bend of the torso (the well-known "qinglü waist"), the soft lines of flowing rivers to the continuous extension of arms and long sleeves, and the near-substantive/far-virtual layering of the painting to the amplitude contrast between front and back rows of dancers. The informants also warned of the most common pitfall, "emphasizing poses over movement": static freeze-frames pursued for visual impact fragment the flow of dance, so every classic pose should remain one instant node in a continuous chain of movement—"the pose is the wave on the river of movement, never the river itself" (Interviewee X).

3.2 Stage-to-film media reconstruction: the informants regarded the dance film as a second cross-media re-creation rather than a stage recording. Interviewee L noted that the theater prioritizes the overall composition and a continuous flow of movement, whereas the camera possesses a magnifying capacity for details—micro-movements of shoulder and neck, fingertips and facial expression—that the back rows of a theater can never perceive; yet frequent close-up switching turns the camera into a "cutting machine", so close-ups must be combined with panoramic shots to preserve the spatial integrity of group choreography (Interviewees L, X). Interviewee P systematically compared the two media in terms of spatial organization, viewing perspective and performance scale: stage dancers amplify external gestures for a distant audience, while camera performance requires inward restraint and subtle muscular control. Interviewee Q stressed that digital effects and lighting must remain subordinate to the dancer's body—"technology should know when to advance and when to retreat"—since the core subject of dance art is always the human body.

3.3 Cultural inheritance and dissemination: Interviewee Q summarized the creative principle as "keeping the core while releasing the form"—the Song-dynasty landscape spirit, craftsman spirit and the aesthetic ideal of human-nature unity constitute the non-negotiable cultural core, while visual forms (stage devices, costumes, digital effects) may be boldly modernized as long as they serve that core. Interviewee W, from the industry perspective, distinguished the two-tier dissemination value of the two versions: the stage drama offers an in-depth aesthetic experience for the theater-going circle, whereas the dance film, riding on cinema and streaming platforms, fulfills the mass popularization and international communication function; she also warned that the fragmentary re-editing of the film into short-video highlights (e.g., the "qinglü waist" clip) may dissolve the complete cultural context of the work unless platforms guide audiences back to the full version.

3.4 Implications for creative practice: the informants jointly proposed that creators should (a) fully recognize the ontological differences between stage and film media and avoid directly filming stage choreography; (b) establish the priority of the dance body, with lens, editing and effects serving the dance; (c) skillfully combine panoramic and close-up shots to balance grand imagery and individual details; (d) adjust performance scale to the medium; and (e) exploit—without abusing—the narrative capacities unique to the image medium, such as the time-space shuttle between the modern "scroll unroller" and the painted world (Interviewees S, P, W).

Table 2 Thematic coding of expert interviews

Theme	Representative viewpoints	Informants
Painting-to-stage translation	Translate line, spatial layering and scattered-point perspective into bodily movement and formation; avoid pose piling-up; keep the flow of movement	L, S, X
Stage-to-film media reconstruction	Camera as detail amplifier rather than cutting machine; panoramic-close-up combination; performance scale adjusted to the medium; effects subordinate to the body	L, X, P, Q
Cultural inheritance & dissemination	Keep the cultural core while releasing the form; two-tier dissemination value; guard against short-video fragmentation	Q, W
Creative practice implications	Dance-body priority; medium-specific staging; balance grand imagery and details; use the unique narrative capacity of images	All informants

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

1) Discussion

This study focuses on the three-level cross-media transformation of "Only Green" ("ancient painting - dance drama - film"), and conducts analysis based on quantitative audience questionnaire surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews with college dance teachers and professional choreographers. The research conclusions are effectively confirmed and complementary to the existing mainstream results in the academic field, and at the same time make up for the shortcomings of the lack of empirical data support in previous studies. The specific research comparison and innovative explanation are as follows:

1) The conclusion of this study on the transformation of ancient paintings into dance, poetry and drama media is highly consistent with the results of many existing studies. This study confirms that the dance poetry drama transforms the static mountain and river artistic conception and craftsman spirit of "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" into a dynamic stage body narrative through the dual-perspective narrative of the unfolding person, the pictographic dance vocabulary and the immersive stage device. It breaks through the static expression limitations of traditional ancient paintings and achieves the dynamic reconstruction of traditional cultural memory. This transformation path is consistent with the research conclusion of Li Xinyu (2025), which clearly sorted out the media iteration logic from painting to dance drama, and affirmed the theatrical translation value of dance drama to two-dimensional classical paintings; it also confirmed the layered creation strategy of the stage body proposed by Peng Xiaoxi (2025), proving that stage performance is an important way of contemporary translation of traditional aesthetics, which can transform static classical cultural images into on-site aesthetic experiences that the audience can perceive, and build a communication bridge between traditional painting and contemporary video art.

2) This study focuses on the cross-media transformation from dance poetry drama to dance film, especially the innovative use of montage techniques, lens language and digital technology, and forms mutual support with the research views of many scholars. This study found that the film version relied on multiple lens scenes, montage editing and digital special effects to break the time and space limitations of the dance drama, amplify the details of the dance performance, reconstruct the narrative rhythm, and create an image aesthetic system independent of stage art. This result is in line with the research of Zhang Zixuan (2025), which confirms that film relies on its own media characteristics to realize the rebirth of stage works through narrative and scene expansion, and deepens the communication efficiency of

traditional culture. From the perspective of time aesthetics and art integration logic, the research conclusion echoes the media time division and cross-media resonance theory proposed by Li Zonghui (2026), verifying that the sliced viewing time constructed by film editing forms a complementary and symbiotic relationship with the extended experience time of dance drama; at the same time, it fits the artistic interaction logic research of Wang Chun (2025), proving that montage and light and shadow technology are the core carriers of the deep integration of dance drama and film and television art, realizing the two-way empowerment of dance and film and television. In addition, the findings in this study of digital technology reconstructing dance movement rhythms and optimizing image texture are also effectively corroborated with Wei Dandan's (2026) technological empowerment research and Li Xinyu's (2025) cross-media narrative research.

3) On the basis of conforming to the theoretical framework of the existing literature, this study has formed obvious research supplements and innovations. Existing relevant research is mostly based on textual essential analysis, focusing on work creation strategies, media logic and technical aesthetics, focusing on the perspective of the creator and the work. There is generally a lack of quantitative empirical support at the audience level, and there is a problem of a single research dimension. This article introduces the dimension of quantitative analysis through audience questionnaire survey, and provides empirical data support for the cross-media communication and cultural identity construction paradigm proposed by Peng Xiaoxi (2025) from the perspective of the receiving end such as audience aesthetic perception and cultural identity. At the same time, combined with audience feedback, this study verified the core point of cross-media complementary resonance by Li Zonghui (2026), and also supported the dual attributes of digital technology proposed by Wei Dandan (2026). It not only empowers innovative expressions of traditional aesthetics, but also makes the dancer's body a pure visual object. Some audiences' differences in perception of the loss of stage texture also provide a realistic reference for the cross-media digital creation of traditional cultural IP.

4) The qualitative interview evidence provides the professional mechanism behind the quantitative findings. The questionnaire shows that 50.32% of respondents recognized the camera's magnification of bodily details, which is echoed by the informants' observation that close-ups capture micro-movements imperceptible in the theater; the 43.23% recognition of montage narrative corresponds to the informants' account of the time-space shuttle between the modern "scroll unroller" and the painted world; and the 10.33% who felt that special effects overshadow the dance corroborate the experts' warning about "technology encroaching on the dance body". The consistency between audience reception and expert judgment strengthens the validity of the cross-media transformation paradigm proposed in this study.

This study achieves the combination of theoretical results and empirical data, improves the research system of cross-media translation of "Only Green", and provides a more convincing practical paradigm reference for the modernization and imaging dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture.

2) Conclusion

2.1 The cross-media transformation of "A Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" is divided into two progressive stages of creation: ancient paintings turned into dance dramas, and dance dramas turned into dance films. Each stage relies on the characteristics of the medium to complete different levels of artistic reconstruction;

2.2 Dance films rely on the three core creative methods of lens language, montage editing, and digital special effects to solve the three limitations of stage drama's perspective, space, and narrative, and achieve the audio-visual sublimation of classical aesthetics;

2.3 The combined quantitative and qualitative evidence confirms that the overall effectiveness of film and television adaptation is outstanding, but there are still optimization problems such as fragmented editing, thin narratives and unbalanced special effects, which the interviewed

experts suggest be solved by panoramic-close-up combination, dance-body-priority editing and restrained use of digital effects;

2.4 The complete three-level cross-media editing paradigm proves that traditional art adaptation should adapt to the media characteristics in layers, first complete the basic aesthetic translation, and then rely on digital imaging technology to expand the communication boundary and realize the creative transformation of traditional culture.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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