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The Chinese and American elements of the Disney movie Mulan from the Cross-cultural Perspective

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Abstract: On the basis of drawing materials from Chinese historical stories and retaining traditional Chinese ideas and images, the Disney movie Mulan adopts a series of Hollywood story blending methods to make American-style transformation of characters and values, according to the sight of Americans the standard of Chinese beauty image is re-created for Mulan, and the ideas of feminism, individual heroism, and equality between men and women are vividly displayed in Mulan. At the same time, the characters and plots of the story have also been transformed in American style: several key characters and animals have been added throughout; on the basis of respecting the basic plot of the original story of Mulan, the feudal loyalty and filial piety story has been turned into a story of women's self-realization. The film enlightens us that only by fully understanding the cultures of the two countries can we better promote the cross-cultural communication and exchanges between China and the United States and even between China and the West.

Keywords: Mulan; Cross-cultural Perspective; Traditional Chinese culture; American elements.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the development of the trend of globalization, cultural exchanges between countries have become increasingly frequent, and cross-cultural communication has gradually deepened. Intercultural communication is a new term coined by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz in 1947 to describe the phenomenon of cultural fusion and convergence. As the birthplace of film factories, Hollywood has a long history of using films for cross-cultural communication. On the basis of understanding the culture of other countries, there are countless movies that incorporate the core values of the United States, and many of them have achieved good results. For example, classic images such as Spider-Man, Captain America, and Superman in the movie are deeply rooted. These films are both a successful cross-cultural communication and a covert marketing of American values [1].

Hua Mulan in Disney's 1998 animated version of "Mulan", formerly known as Hua Ping, this girl jumped up and down, flying over the eaves and walls since she was a child, making chickens and dogs jumping and being disliked by her neighbors. The family hopes that she can marry a good family and serve the whole family. Guangzong Yaozu. When Mulan was on a blind date, the northern ethnic minorities suddenly invaded and the imperial court was eager to recruit soldiers, Hua Mulan disguised herself as a man and joined the army for her father. The ancestors in the family were not at ease, so they asked Mushulong and Cricket to follow and protect them. With the help of Mushulong to set off the fire and explode, Mulan created a snow mountain collapse, almost killing the enemy on the mountain, and at the same time rescuing her comrade Li Xiang. Later, Li Xiang and other comrades found out that Mulan was a woman and found out her identity. Li Xiang, who is a general, should have punished her severely, but he considered the life-saving grace to avoid punishment, but everyone disliked her "unreal" even deceitful acts and left alone in the wilderness. When the general was triumphant, Mulan was shocked to learn that the Huns had sneaked into the capital while the two armies were fighting. Later, in a desperate situation, Mulan flew to the imperial city alone, mobilized Li Xiang and his party, and jointly forced the northern Hu people away, saving the life of the emperor and the people of the country. She was repeatedly retained by the emperor and granted an official title, but Mulan was thinking of her parents and family and asked to return home. General Li sent the helmet to Mulan's house, and with the support of the emperor, Mulan and General Li finally tied the knot.

2. Chinese elements in Mulan

2.1. Chinese traditional thought

China is an ancient civilization with a unique cultural system, which is deeply rooted in the traditional thoughts of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The Confucian thought of Confucianism and Mencius carried forward "the benevolent love others", "loyalty and forgiveness of the mean", the Taoist "harmony between man and nature", and the Buddhist "karma, be kind to others", and the whole society has nurtured its own unique set of cultural traditions and systems. In this tradition, men and women have a clear social division of labor, and "men's farming and women's weaving" is a clear portrayal of this social feature. In the traditional feudal society, women should keep their duties and obey the "three obediences and four virtues", which is clearly described in Chinese traditional poems. "Mulan" belongs to the direct extraction of Chinese classical themes from American animated films. In the film, Mulan's reasons for joining the army for her father and her brave and simple character are basically taken from the Northern Dynasty folk song "Mulan Ci" in the collection of Yuefu poetry in the Han Dynasty in China [2].

There are many written records in Chinese history about the story of Mulan. Among them, "Mulan Ci" mentioned: "Grandpa has no eldest son, and Mulan has no eldest brother." It can be seen that the "filial piety" behind the order of seniority and inferiority is the main motivation for Mulan to join the army for her father, and it also supports the story of Mulan Core values passed down from generation to generation. But in the animated film "Mulan", Mulan joined

the army because she couldn't bear her old and disabled father to fight on the battlefield, and at the end, he arranged for the father to put flowers on his daughter's head to highlight the father-daughter relationship, which reflects the reason why Mulan joined the army. More out of "love". Although "love" and "filial piety" both have family affection as the basis, the former cannot deeply interpret the core of Confucianism that the latter pays attention to.

The traditional Chinese concept emphasizes the righteousness of the ruler and the minister, the relationship between the father and the son, and the obedience of the husband and wife. In the "Three Cards", "the father is the son's guide" emphasizes that children must obey their father absolutely without any violation, which means that parents have an unquestionable supremacy in the traditional Chinese family concept. , the two are unequal. When Hua Mulan knew that her father was going to be injured in battle, she wanted to stop her father, but was firmly rejected by her father, so she angrily told her father that she would die in battle for honor. Such tough words are in traditional Chinese culture. is not accepted.

In traditional Chinese society, women do not have the freedom of marriage, and marriage is about "the order of the parents and the words of the matchmaker". In traditional concepts, the film successfully shows the Chinese marriage concept and the traditional concept of compliance with the ancestors. According to the tradition of the Chinese "parents of the parents", the woman's marriage is to help the matchmaker and find a good family [3]. In the film, the film also describes the scene where the matchmaker dresss Mulan in detail. At the same time, Mulan's family also believes that as long as "Mulan can be selected, the Hua family can light up the ancestors." The introduction of both men and women needs to be matched by a matchmaker, that is, the so-called "men and women do not make friends without matchmaking, and they are not well-known unless they have a matchmaker." In the film, the Hua family asked the matchmaker to have a blind date for Mulan's marriage, but Mulan's performance was disappointing and angered the matchmaker. After the blind date failed, Mulan felt sad and blamed herself for disappointing her parents, but her heart resisted such a life and was unwilling to be a victim of traditional morality. Joining the army for her father gave her a chance to escape her fate and live a free life.

2.2. Chinese traditional cultural elements

Hua Mulan's shape can be said to be very Chinese. Mulan's shape can be divided into two categories: before the army and after the army. Before joining the army, Mulan appeared as a daughter, so her body proportions were well-proportioned, her eyebrows and eyes were slender and her facial features were petite and charming, reflecting an aesthetic view of Eastern women in Western society. The clothing also follows the ancient Chinese clothing etiquette, mainly short-sleeved ruts and corset long skirts, reflecting the clothing style of ancient Chinese women, and the color matching is mostly elegant. Before Mulan's blind date, the film shows that the standards for women at that time were "loyalty, dignity, education, obedience", etc., all of which appeared in the form of Chinese characters. "Filial piety" is both the reason why Mulan's army is for his father's army, but also the core of Confucian ethics. It is mainly manifested as "the model of children in traditional Chinese families to obey the authoritative father's one -way."

The dragon-shaped incense cup that appeared at the beginning of "Mulan" is antique and has strong characteristics of the times. Mulan's parents gave Mulan and Li Xiang the necklace that symbolizes the polarities of yin and yang, the noble and magnificent ancient Chinese palace, and the simple and simple tables, chairs and screens in the roadside restaurant, especially the scattered peaks, The rice fields as neat as a chessboard, and the peasant women who rolled up their trousers and planted rice in the rice fields among the peaks of the willows, made China's unique natural environment and landforms better presented. Mulan shows its typical Chinese ecological culture, such as Chinese landscapes like ink paintings, Chinese courtyards, the Great Wall, temples, etc., which immediately bring foreign audiences into China's ecological geography.

In addition, traditional Chinese material cultures such as dumplings, noodles, dragon-headed cannons, sedan chairs, Beijing, Chinese Kung Fu, pandas, dragon and lion dances, and costumes of characters make foreign audiences immerse themselves in the exotic Chinese culture. In addition, Mulan and Li Xiang appeared on the way to escort the princess, the bamboo forest with dense and dense shadows, the horses very similar to the three-colored horse figurines of the Tang Dynasty, the awning boat, the folk juggling, the arena competition, the sales hut with strings of dried chili peppers, the ancient stone Arch bridges, scattered private houses, suspension bridges, stone lions, and traditional images such as the Great Wall beacon tower and wolf smoke conveying information all demonstrate the strong "Chinese flavor" of the Northern Wei Dynasty. Other traditional images, such as the matchmaker's marriage, the alliance of relatives, traditional snack dumplings, tapestries on the walls, festive red lights, red walls, palace-style buildings, imperial clothing, fireworks for celebrations and courtyards, etc. From the subtleties, people can feel the traditional Chinese imagery in the film. In addition to the reproduction of traditional Chinese imagery, the film also retains the clan culture, such as the ancestral hall, the memorial tablet for ancestors, and the shrine of the Mushu dragon that appear in the film, all of which are the specific image reproduction of the clan culture in traditional Chinese culture.

3. American elements in "Mulan"

Although "Mulan" has made a lot of efforts in Chinese elements, it also inevitably carries some American cultural elements.

3.1. Feminism and individual heroism

In Disney animation, Hua Mulan is heroic, tenacious, courageous, powerful and powerful. She conquered Hu people with her superhuman wisdom. She joined the army for her father in order to find self-worth; the animation is also to cater to the target audience and communication purposes, and to satisfy and spread Western audiences. liberal, individualistic outlook on life and values. American heroism advocates individualism, is more inclined to self-realization and self-transcendence, and pays attention to human nature. Heroes are omnipotent and extraordinary. They not only fight for the country and the people, but also pursue the liberation of individuality and the realization of self-worth. Mulan is not only a heroine, but also a rebellious girl with personality and self. The questioning of "Who am I" in the film is once again transplanted into traditional Chinese stories. Unconventional and virtuous, wearing a suspender, the lively and cheerful

Mulan is full of foreign appearances on blind dates. As soon as the soulless Mulan returned home, she sang angrily to the mirror: "I seem to be living under a mask, but I can't fool myself, my heart wants to fly freely..." When will I find myself? Undoubtedly, it is the awakening of the self, the trouble of realizing self-worth. When conscripting into the army to defend against foreign enemies, Mulan advised her father not to go out again. When I went into battle, my original intention was to protect my elderly father, and I gradually developed self-reflection: maybe I didn't come for my father, maybe I just wanted to prove that I could do something, I just wanted to prove myself. Sitting by the army's lake, looking at the reflection in the water and questioning his heart, he can't help but sing "When well my reflection show, who I am inside"; leading the army to fight the enemy and rescue the emperor reflects the challenge and resistance to the unfair order, the respect and maintenance of individual rights caters to the feminist trend to some extent. Mulan does not want to be a traditional good girl, but hopes to be able to control her own destiny, realize her self-worth, and pursue the liberation of her personality. This is precisely the individual heroism that American culture promotes [4]. As a result, the American version of Mulan transformed the Chinese-style Mulan's image of joining the army for the safety of the family and the country, and for the sake of filial piety, into an American-style image of pursuing independence and individuality.

In traditional Chinese society, women freely choose their beloved men and pursue them boldly, which is not recognized by orthodoxy. In the film, Mulan's behavior highlights the feminist spirit of a woman who is not afraid of difficulties and has the courage to fight for her legal rights in pursuit of a happy life and marriage equality. While establishing illustrious achievements and realizing the value of life on the battlefield, Hua Mulan also won love for herself. This is a bold and rebellious challenge to the traditional parents' orders and matchmaker's words. It is his bravery and daring to break barriers that highlights the unique wisdom and charm of non-same women. Li Xiang, a general who has won the love of both, has a marriage. autonomy.

While shaping the heroic image of the animated film "Mulan", it also used more brush and ink to emphasize the change process of Mulan from self-doubt to self-identification. In the animation, Mulan developed self-doubt after being abandoned by her peers, and then through the dialogue with Mushu, she found herself with the help of others, realized self-identity, and emphasized Mulan's psychological growth. However, both Mulan's self-identification and Mushu's self-identification carry the ceremony of coronation of the little ones. This narrative is a cater to the general public. This emphasis on self-identity and a sense of identity echoes American slogans such as personal struggles and personal dreams. It can be seen that the 1998 animated film "Mulan" spreads specific cultural concepts and American spirits in a covert way.

3.2. Consumer transformation of Chinese elements

The film's portrayal of the ancestors of the Mulan family is in stark contrast to traditional images. Under the ancient patriarchal system, the worship of ancestors prevailed. The ancestors were extremely noble and great, and the worship of ancestors had already evolved into a daily code of conduct. People follow the principle of life and death, and worship their ancestors' spiritual positions in family ancestral halls in strict accordance with their rank and rank, and worship them during festivals. In the movie, the tablets of Mulan's ancestors are steles, not the wooden masters in real life. After the ancestors woke up, they completely lacked the solemn demeanor they should have as their ancestors. Instead, Mulan quarreled fiercely because Mulan joined the army for her father, accusing each other and complaining. All the emotions of ordinary people, ancestors also have and are quite rich. And this is actually a reflection of American cultural values on Chinese elements: ancestors, like ordinary people, have emotions and desires, and they don’t need to pay their respects too much.

The prototype of Muju is the "dragon" of traditional Chinese culture. In the movie "Mulan", this little dragon is slender, like a lizard. It loves to speak big words, vanity, and strong, but heart is kind, bringing a lot of laughter and help to Mulan's existing career. A lot of laughter and tenderness have been added. But this is very different from the traditional dragon image of China. Dragon is the totem of the Chinese nation, symbolizing sacred and majestic. In ancient times, the emperor of the feudal society in China was called "true dragon emperor". Military power is sacred and supreme. However, when the United States produced the movie "Mulan", the image of the traditional dragon of China was comedy and humorous. The city of the city, these different understanding of the image of the "dragon" fully reflects the cultural differences of the East and the West.

Mulan's grandma is also portrayed as a very westernized fashionable grandma. When Mulan went on a blind date, her grandmother's parting instructions to her in the form of a song actually included lyrics such as "fascinating a man". When she saw Mulan came back with the sword and jade pendant that the emperor had given her, Mulan's grandmother said in a jealous tone with a little regret: "She should bring a man back!" I'm going to the next war, too." These transformations and additions to the characters' images make people laugh.

In addition, the plots such as the emperor bowing to Mulan and Mulan hugging the emperor are indeed in line with the atmosphere of family fun, but they are not in line with the order of superiority and inferiority in traditional Chinese culture. There are even many designs that go against history in the film. The character of the cricket uses the beating of his body to dip ink and write a fake military letter, but the background sound is the sound of a typewriter representing Western industrial civilization. The newspaper Mushu read had "Beijing Bugle" printed on it, but neither the newspaper nor "Beijing" matched the time of Mulan's story. The design of Mushu's counterfeiting of a series of items such as fake soldiers riding a national treasure panda and lying about the military situation is also an expression that fits the public consumption.

Through the redesign of the plot, Disney's series of animation "Mulan" respects the basic plot of the original Mulan story, turning the original "feudal loyalty and filial piety story" into a "female realization of self" story, from male gaze to female Stare, from the prince kissing the sleeping princess to the princess to save the prince [5].

In the character image design, the women, mainly Hua Mulan, are all dressed in traditional Chinese costumes, with a weak figure, long black hair, and triangular eyes, which is a typical image of an oriental woman in the eyes of Americans. At the beginning of the film "Mulan", what caught people's eyes was that Hua Mulan, wearing a modern camisole and knee-length shorts, ran out of the house, which is different

from the traditional Chinese aesthetic image of a beautiful woman with big eyes and double eyelids. Shawls with long hair, single eyelids, big mouths, thick lips, and shrugging their shoulders like typical Europeans and Americans when speaking, are obviously made in accordance with the standards of Chinese beauty in the eyes of Americans.

"Mulan" not only transforms the characters, but also implants American culture and values. Mulan believes that "a warrior can sometimes decide everything" (Mulan's dialogue in the cartoon "Mulan"). Although Hua Mulan went to the battlefield because she joined the army for her father, she thought, "Maybe it's not for my father, maybe it's to prove myself" (Mulan's dialogue in the cartoon "Mulan"). "After the Chinese heroines have crossed the ocean, they are full of self-awareness and self-respect, with the legendary spirit of modern feminists. This shows that Americans have a unique appreciation angle for Chinese women, and it is also Disney's strategy to attract global audiences and cater to the feminist trend of thought. ." After Disney's transformation of the characters, the ideas of feminism, individual heroism, and equality between men and women in American culture are vividly displayed in Mulan.

The different shaping of Mulan's image in "Mulan Ci" and the American movie "Mulan", which are in line with traditional Chinese values, reflects the fundamental difference in moral values between China and the United States. Chinese cultural traditions pay attention to filial piety, order the elders and the youngers, distinguish between the seniors and the juniors, and pay attention to respecting the parents and elders; while American films focus on Mulan's military experience and her personal talents in the military, which reflects the individual heroism of the United States . As long as a person has talent, even from humble beginnings, as long as he can persevere and work hard, he will eventually be successful. Mulan used her wisdom to help the army overcome various difficulties, and finally defeated the Xiongnu Danyu, saving the fate of the entire country [6]. As a woman, she has won everyone's sincere respect, honored her family, and realized her own worth.

4. Conclusion

On the basis of retaining some of the traditional Chinese thoughts and traditional images in the blueprint of Chinese historical stories, Disney's series of animation "Mulan" has boldly transformed it, which not only allows us to see the feminist consciousness, individualism and independence that are common in Hollywood blockbusters. The ideological consciousness is highlighted by the iconic western visual symbols.

Based on this, whether it is the propaganda of the national culture or the transformation of the foreign culture, it needs to be based on the in-depth understanding and study of the national history and cultural origin. At the same time, in the process of cross-cultural communication, there will inevitably be cultural collisions. It is very important to adhere to the original intention of creation in the collision and win the understanding and love of foreign audiences. These factors not only provide reference for the development of animation films in my country, but also provide positive significance for us to reflect and inherit the excellent traditional Chinese culture in the context of globalization. In the exchange and collision of Chinese and Western cultures, we must better learn and learn from the advantages of other countries' cultures, treat our own traditional culture, take its essence and discard its dross, and let our Chinese culture better go to the world and carry forward.

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