

An analysis of the new developments and dilemmas of Chinese comic adaptations from the perspective of cultural resonance in the new era ——The example of "White Snake" series of Light Chaser Animation

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Abstract. The film series "White Snake" of Light Chaser Animation is an attempt to internationalize Chinese comics in terms of cultural elements, characterization and core spirit. However, in the midst of continuous innovation, Chinese comics also face new dilemmas, and how to get out of this dilemma is the key to further development of Chinese comics in current era. By using both documentary and case study methods, I review the literature on the "White Snake" series to understand how the film has been received by audiences in China and the overseas market. What's more, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of adaptation of Chinese comics base on the various aspects of the adaptation and innovation of "White Snake" in the literature of others. Then, in the part of the study on new dilemmas, I use the method of comparative thinking to compare "White Snake" with the success of foreign films called "Kung Fu Panda" and "Dragon Ball" respectively, and come to the conclusion that national comics already have good innovation in terms of cultural elements and characterization, but in order to further develop Chinese comics, we need to combine the core spirit with the current trend of the times, and through the localization of foreign culture to arouse the cultural resonance of the new era.

1 Introduction

Domestic scholars have studied the aspects of aesthetic style, storytelling, characterization, audience identity, national sentiment and international perspective of national comic adaptations.

In terms of the domestic market, cultural symbols, group consciousness and story line construction should be interpreted to strengthen national identity. In line with the "new national trend", traditional culture and post-apocalyptic culture, scrap machinery and other hot culture nowadays are combined to increase the core competitiveness of culture. From the perspective of foreign markets, cultural communication should be spread in a pleasant way, taking reference from "deculture, reculture and transculture" approach of Disney and adhering to "bringism" to localize foreign culture and strengthen international vision. At the same time, it is necessary to expand the scale of national comic talents and strengthen the optimization and upgrading of the animation industry. Some scholars have also looked at feminism and self-awakening, for example, analyzing the adaptation of the image of White Snake and Green Snake in the context of gender ambiguity, which indicates the awakening of women's self-awareness and the reduction of the gaze perspective. And some scholars have found that the determination to control own

destiny from the film called "Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child". Others also have analyzed the spirit of defiance against authority and challenge to self in the film called "New Gods: Yang Jian"

This series of studies has informed and inspired researchers, both in terms of the animation case studies themselves and the domestic and international market response to animation. In a situation of research saturation, it is important to use new cases to draw new conclusions by comparison.

2 Cultural resonance

The word "resonance" originally means resonating sound, however by extension, it means the same thoughts and emotions arising from external objects. "Cultural resonance", as the name suggests, uses culture as a medium to create emotions between two parties, specifically a sense of belonging and identity. What's more, "Cultural resonance" can be subdivided into two categories. The first group is those who share the same background and living environment, where 'cultural resonance' often brings a sense of belonging and pride. The second group is those with different backgrounds and cultures. Due to the differences and diversity of cultures, this is where 'cultural resonance' often leads to respect, understanding and identity.

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"Cultural resonance" is both a common emotional phenomenon and a means of transmitting culture outwards. In people's daily lives, the phenomenon of "cultural resonance" can be seen everywhere in food, clothing, places of interest and so on, especially in film and television productions. In the case of "White Snake" series of Light Chaser Animation, the 'cultural resonance' is fully reflected in the innovation of the adaptation.

3 Innovation of cultural elements

There are three concepts of cultural elements. Firstly, material elements, which embody culture through physical objects, such as typical Hui-style architecture in China, Chinese costumes, embroidery, etc. Secondly, spiritual elements, which mainly refer to ideological concepts such as religion and philosophy. The most representative ones are Confucianism and Taoism. Thirdly, symbolic elements, which refer to a poem, a pose, a pattern and other symbolic elements, such as Disney's Mickey Mouse image. The "White Snake" series is a full adaptation of cultural elements, keeping up with the times and colliding with current cultural features to create a sense of identity and pride in traditional Chinese culture.

3.1 Worldview

"White Snake I" and "White Snake II:Green Snake" adopt completely different worldviews. Set at the end of the Tang Dynasty, "White Snake I" is set in the story of an emotional bond between the White Snake and the character Xu Xian's former life Xu Xuan, based on the poet Liu Zongyuan's "The Snake Catcher's Tale" of the Tang Dynasty. Light Chaser Animation adds a prologue to the traditional White Snake tale, which is aptly in line with recent female culture. Women today are more rational about love, and the controversy over the love between the White Snake and the coward Xu Xian is becoming more pronounced. So "White Snake I" rationalizes their love. Because of the traditional Chinese concepts of "past-life bonding and animal repayment", people are more in agreement with the story. The creators have sublimated the film's main theme and broadened its narrative space by re-drawing the picture of the late Tang Dynasty, thus presenting a vivid reconstruction of the story of the White Snake.[1]

"White Snake II" is innovative in a different way. For the background of the character of Green Snake is relatively blank, Light Chaser Animation created the "Shura City", which is full of pop culture. For instance, cyberpunk, as the background of the story, use the mode of adventure to meet nowadays hot topics and attract the interest of the younger generation. "White Snake II" combines cyberpunk and traditional culture, using cultural elements such as "infinite concepts, post-apocalyptic culture and steam machinery" in its worldview, in line with the contradictions of survival in such high-tech world. The broken living space in the virtual high-tech world and the world of the weak and the strong in the broken rules are the issues that people are

thinking about today.

3.2 Ink and wash style

The ink and wash style has been handed down since ancient times as an abstract artistic spirit. As in the case of the 'Taiji diagram', black and white symbolize 'yin' and 'yang', giving public a sense of emptiness and powerful inaction. "White Snake II" incorporates ink and wash style into the fights between Green Snake and Fahai (one of the characters), using brush strokes to highlight the flowing movements, allowing people to feel the sense of power conveyed by traditional ink and wash culture when watching the film and enhancing cultural confidence.

Why Chinese are so keen on using ink and wash style into film and television works and even daily life. It's apparent that through the development of ink and wash style paintings and writings ink and wash style also represents the culture of "Literary style". The ink style combined with the classic IP of "White Snake" can better illustrate the cultural heritage of the story.

3.3 Classic Song

The classic song 'A Thousand Years Waiting' appears at the end of all the films in "White Snake" series made by Light Chaser Animation. This song is the theme song of the most classic "Legend of the New White Snake", broadcast in 1992. With a familiar tune set to the highly symbolic beauty of West Lake, the new "White Snake" film has triggered memories and resonance with the classic film and television work.

What's more, in traditional Chinese music, pieces played by flute, guqin, and xiao are used in various plots. In the "White Snake" series of movies, the song "Why Ask" appeared twice. This piece uses the flute as the background music to promote emotional changes. Moreover, the lyrics of "Why Ask" are taken from "Five Poems on Difficult Journeys" by Tang Dynasty poet He Lan Jinming, which contains a long culture of ancient Chinese words.

3.4 Religious Culture

In the "White Snake I", Taoist culture runs through the film. "Taiyin Zhenjun", the villain character, is a Taoist title. The magic of "Qimen Dunjia" appears in the segment of the underground labyrinth in the film, which is also a specific representative technique of Taoism.

"White Snake II:Green Snake" incorporates Buddhist ideas. The title of "Sura City" comes from Buddhism. "Sura" refers to the half-human and half-god Hercules, who is irritable and active. This also proves that the "Sura City" is full of crises and is characterized by changeable forms.

3.5 Costume Culture

The costume of the main characters of "White Snake" series of Light Chaser Animation also indicates the traditional culture of China.

In the "White Snake I", the White snake's clothing is mainly fresh and elegant light-colored long skirts, matched with emerald green pearl hairpins. It shows that ancient Chinese women were constrained by the ritual and music system so the overall clothing was conservative, stable and elegant. However, compared with White snake, Green snake shows the innovation of the stereotype of clothing for Chinese women. In the "White Snake II", the Green snake dresses very boldly. A slim top with dark mechanical trousers, no extra headgear, just a high ponytail. Accomplished with the background of "White Snake II", Green snake represents the new generation of Chinese women. More specially, nowadays women in China prefer showing their beautiful figures with short top and trousers. Obviously, it's also a signal of mind emancipation. People are more advocating freedom, unfettered female image. Therefore, the change of women's thinking can be reflected from the clothing of the characters.

Clothing is an important way for women to express their self-awareness. In the "White Snake" series, the very important role called double-faced fox demon is a special symbol of a certain group of people. The fox demon wears a red and green traditional Chinese dress and has a pipe dangling from her mouth. On one side she is a delicate girl, but on the other side she is a weird fox demon. This changing clothes add mystery and vitality to the film. As the films reflect, she represents the inner struggle of modern people indicating that people are multifaceted.

4 Adaptation of characterization

In many film and television adaptations of the IP of "White Snake", White Snake sacrifices herself for Xu Xian to illustrate the love between human and demon and White Snake is the party who pays more. In "White Snake I" of Light Chaser Animation, White Snake follows the traditional, beautiful and gentle image, while the image of Xu Xuan is innovated to serve the overall characterization. Compared to the coward Xu Xian, who is afraid of the identity of the demon in the original version, Xu Xuan is a kind and brave person. When Xu Xuan learns of the identity of the White Snake, he willingly gives up his identity as a human to become a demon and stays with the White Snake for a long time, and eventually dies to save the White Snake. Obviously, the transformation of the male character is used to illustrate the awakening of women's consciousness. The idealization of love is used to break down the dichotomy of identity and the notion that women sacrifice more in love, providing a new perspective for people to think about when they are faced with emotional dilemmas and resonating with women's views on equality in love.

In previous adaptations of the "White Snake", the

image of the Green Snake has mostly served to shape the image of the White Snake, as a 'tool' to drive the plot forward. So there is more scope for creating the image of the Green Snake. In "White Snake II: Green Snake", the story is not about love but about the growth of women. After falling into the city of "Shura", the traditional concept of Qing (the Green Snake) makes her look for a man who is strong enough to protect her, but after experiencing betrayal she realizes that she cannot depend on others and that she must be strong enough to protect herself. Back to the shaping of the worldview, the City of "Shura" itself is a city of illusions made up of various obsessions, and everyone has obsessions, including Fahai. In the process of escaping from the city, she is able to reconcile with her obsessions. During the training, Xiao Qing defeats the conservative Fahai, symbolizing the overthrow of traditional male power and becoming an independent and powerful figure for modern women.

In the "White Snake" series, there is a female character who plays an important role throughout both films which is the double-faced fox demon. She is the boss lady of Bao Qing Fang (supermarket) and Wan Yi Supermarket. She has a sultry human female figure on one side and a cunning fox face on the other, deepening the mystery of the character. In both stories, she stands at God's perspective, the so-called 'NPC' player, and is a key player in pushing the plot forward. This "two-faced fox demon" characterization is in keeping with the versatility that women now enjoy, and has therefore made a strong impression on audiences, with subsequent stories based around her in the works.

5 Core Spirit

As for the innovation of the core spirit, "White Snake I" expresses the spirit of striving for love across class, while "White Snake II" expresses the spirit of not being dependent on men and being strong to truly protect oneself. However, as a film that conveys the awakening of women, there is several scenes of 'male condescension'. The overly explicit depiction of 'sex' in "White Snake I", as well as the revealing female dressing and the direct confrontation with men in Qing's bath in "White Snake II" are both controversial. These scenes also eliminate the depth of the consideration of the female psyche. Overall, the innovation of the core spirit may be subject to minor controversy, but the core itself must be treated with reverential caution. [2] "White Snake" series of Light Chaser Animation's has limited effect precisely because it does not conform to current trend of female consciousness in a full sense.

6 Cultural localization

In addition to its theatrical release in China, "White Snake" series has been shown in theaters in the United States, Japan, Thailand, Mongolia, the United Arab Emirates and other overseas countries, grossing \$61.631 million worldwide, with a total of approximately

\$500,000 overseas, mainly in France. The release of "White Snake II:Green Snake" in 2021 was largely influenced by the COVID epidemic.[3] This shows the limited influence of the "White Snake" series abroad and the root of which is that it is difficult to resonate with foreign audiences. Due to cultural differences between China and abroad, foreign audiences recognize and respect the Chinese culture in the film, but traditional Chinese elements such as "cultivating immortality, the different paths of humans and demons and past life reincarnation" do not evoke strong emotions in foreign audiences, and most foreign audiences do not even know the legend of the White Snake. Therefore, cultural localization is an important way for Chinese mythological IP to resonate with foreign audiences.

Produced by DreamWorks Studios in the US in 2008, "Kung Fu Panda" used the very Chinese image of the panda and kung fu elements, along with elements of "yin" and "yang" and "qi" movement, to generate much acclaim within China. Even while expressing the typical Western individual heroism, the identification of domestic audience and the pride in Chinese traditional culture have contributed to the success of "Kung Fu Panda". On the basis of the success of "Kung Fu Panda", we summarize the communication strategies of Hollywood films in China, outlining the experience and then explore relevant paths for the development of Chinese cinema and establish a correct concept of film communication.[4] The classic Japanese cartoon "Dragon Balls" was created based on the story of "Journey to the West" of the Four Great Masterpieces of China, combined with the system of Western fantasy novels to create a world full of hot-blooded fighting. In the process of creation, many technological elements were added to make its this world seem more realistic. [5] "Dragon Balls" began to get rid of the external setting after it received critical acclaim, adapting and innovating the worldview to continue a new story. Both of these are examples of foreign countries localizing classic Chinese culture and then using their own cultural cores to bring novelty and capture Chinese domestic market to rise cultural resonance. It can be seen that the best foreign cultures should be 'localized', combining Chinese and foreign cultures in order to take into account both domestic and international markets, and to promote the spread of Chinese culture abroad.

7 Conclusion

The "White Snake" series by Light Chaser Animation is part of its 'New Legends' series, which shows a systematic and complete development of innovation and development of classic IP in China. Despite its shortcomings, this is a positive attempt to improve the external communication of Chinese animation in a cycle of constantly finding new dilemmas and solving them. Hence it can be seen that Chinese comics have already made good innovations in terms of cultural elements and characterization, but further development of Chinese comics requires combining the core spirit with the current trends of the times, and localizing foreign

cultures to resonate with the new age culture.

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